

YHWH is a Farmer; People are Plants

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METAPHOR AS THEOLOGY:

If YHWH IS A FARMER, then PEOPLE ARE PLANTS

Tell all the Truth but tell it slant-
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The truth's superb surprise

As lightning to the children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind-
Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Introduction

In an earlier paper on the topic of biblical metaphor,

1

I addressed the cognitive linguistic explanation of how metaphor works to enable us to understand and make sense of ourselves, the world, and God. That paper suggested that the enigmatic "revelation" of the Divine Name in Ex 3.14 was a divine refusal to use a metaphor to "explain" himself, since every metaphor conceals and misleads even as it reveals and explains. This paper extends my efforts to understand divine metaphors in Scripture.

I. The Nature of Metaphor

A metaphor is a tool (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) that we use in order to understand or refer to something "abstract" or "vague" (e.g., life, death, God) by comparing it to our personal experience or to common knowledge. We do this by "mapping" a concrete domain onto the abstract one-by "overlapping" two different domains

2

so that we create a theoretical "impossible domain" that lets us "pretend" that something that we understand by experience resembles the unknown domain-the object of our inquiry-so closely that we can use

the one to understand the other.

What allows us to do this is the existence of powerful "conceptual" or "root" metaphors upon which our understanding and interpretation of some aspect of existence depends. One of these impossible domains

1

"The Deceit of Metaphor: The Revelation of the Divine Name in Ex 3" (ETS Eastern 2004). Where that paper was specific,

however, aimed at answering the question of the meaning of the enigmatic 'ehyeh 'a

a

šer 'ehyeh (Ex 3.14), this paper attempts to

set forth the entire complex built around the conceptual metaphor YHWH IS A FARMER. It is available at www.fredputnam.org.

2

Much like fingerprinting software that seeks as many "matches" as possible in order to increase the probability that the

right person has been identified; see Putnam 2004. 2

("blends", Kösovec 2002, 228-30), for example, lets us imagine that PEOPLE ARE PLANTS

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as a way of dealing

with life and human experience, as seen in these examples.

"He's a late bloomer."

4

"She really blossomed when she reached twenty."

"Her career/marriage is flourishing."

"They're finally putting down roots."

"He uprooted his family for his job."

"His feet are firmly planted in reality."

"Her father had a fruitful life."

"They're just reaping what they sowed."

"He's a bad apple."

"She's a budding genius."

"He's been branching out lately."

"The apple/acorn doesn't fall far from the tree."

"A chip off the old block."

"Their relationship withered."

"... cut down in the prime of life."

"... to watch someone decay."

Even if we think these quaint or old-fashioned, most of us understand them all. We understand them without conscious effort-instantly-without puzzling over their meaning. How is this possible? Under all of the metaphors listed above (and a host of others) exists a "deeper" metaphor, PEOPLE ARE PLANTS, that lets us understand our lives in terms of what we know about the lives of plants.

resemble the roots of a tree (pun not intended!) that constantly produces new branches and leaves-the more prolific and productive ones let us create more sayings that depend on them, and understand expressions

when we first hear them. The culturally accepted

root metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS enables us to use the

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The use of "small caps" for conceptual metaphors is adopted from Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lakoff & Turner 1989, et al.

4

In Robert Krause's book for young children, Leo, the Late Bloomer, Leo the lion cub has to be reassured by his mother that

he is "a late bloomer" until one day ... he "Leo bloomed!" The book offers its young readers no further explanation, apart

from showing Leo doing all of the things that he had not done before blooming.

5

That some metaphors are culturally based became obvious to me when I told a class of Romanians that PEOPLE ARE PLANTS.

When it was translated into Romanian, the entire class burst out laughing. It turns out that calling someone a plant in

Romania is a good deal ruder than calling them a "blockhead" in English-hardly a compliment! They eventually settled on

3 shorthand of "Her career's blossoming!" without further explanation, and without fear of being misunderstood

(i.e., no one asks, "What kind of flower is she?"). Like a picture, a metaphor communicates a lot in a few words.

6

And it is far more efficient than trying to explain every detail of her career.

A root metaphor, in other words, helps us grasp a difficult concept, by giving us a language with which we can think and talk about what is vague or outside the realm of human experience. Rather like a window, a

root metaphor lets us see what is in a room. On one hand, a given window may or may not give us a

good view

of the room. On the other hand, if we look through several windows, at different heights or in different walls,

we may be tempted to conclude that we have seen the whole room as it really is; the more windows that are

available the more accurate we deem our understanding of what lies inside. The caveat is that no single window,

however, can show us everything, and every window distorts our view, however slightly.

II. Root Metaphors in Scripture

Scripture uses many metaphors, as nearly any book on hermeneutics makes clear (cf., e.g., Ryken 1992, 160-80

and Ryken 1982).

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They refer to God; to the world; to the human race; to individual men and women, to nations; &c. What is less commonly recognized is that many individual metaphors can depend upon, or derive

from, a single root metaphor.

One divine root metaphor is YHWH IS AN OBJECT/THING, from which come such secondary metaphors as YHWH IS A HORN [of salvation], and YHWH IS A CUP (Ps 16.5); another is YHWH IS A SAFE PLACE, which

underlies YHWH IS A DWELLING PLACE, FORTRESS, STRONGHOLD, CLIFF, CRAG, SHIELD, and REFUGE (cf., e.g., Ps

18.2-3). This list does not scratch the surface of the multitude of divine metaphors in Scripture.

The most productive root divine metaphor is YHWH IS A PERSON,

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out of which grow several secondary

root metaphors, including YHWH IS THE PERSON IN CHARGE, from which come the familiar biblical metaphors

omo es pom, "Men are apple trees", in which the positive connotations of beauty and fruitfulness were stronger than the

negative connotation of calling someone a "wooden head".

6

Once we start to notice metaphors, we see and hear them everywhere. We could play a game in which someone chooses a

root metaphor and everyone else has to come up with related metaphors, such as LIFE IS A DRAMA ("He really blew his lines",

"She's a real prima donne", "He missed his cue", "She's trying to upstage me!") or LIFE IS A JOURNEY ("detour", "just setting

out", "speed bump", "train wreck", "dead end", "blind alley", "one-way street", "where he'll end up", &c.).

Another common root metaphor is HAPPY IS UP ("I'm feeling up today", "Her spirits rose", "That was a real upper",

"You boosted his spirits", "Being together gave me a real lift") and its opposite, SAD IS DOWN ("I'm depressed", "Her spirits

sank", "He's pretty low right now", "He fell into a depression"). If we try to imagine using a root metaphor to mean its

opposite, such as "Thanks for giving me such a good time-now I am so down!", we realize how strongly that metaphor

governs our thoughts. [Examples adapted from Lakoff & Johnson (1980, 15).]

7

Since Bullinger 1898 (at least), handbooks of biblical interpretation often explain metaphors and their interpretation as

though they were ornaments added to the text in order to make it more colourful, interesting, emotionally satisfying, or

otherwise "more"; they are little more than puzzles for the student to learn how to solve. The work of Johnson, Lakoff,

Turner, et al. suggests that conceptual (their term for what I am calling "root") metaphors structure our understanding of

reality which in turn determines our experience, so that the metaphors become the truth that they illuminate.

8

On the use of "YHWH" rather than "God", see Putnam 2004. Briefly stated, "YHWH" is not metaphorical, since it is a

proper noun [name], whereas in Moses' and Israel's initial experiences of YHWH-before they received, e.g., the covenant (Ex 4

YHWH IS A GOD, KING, JUDGE, FATHER, BETROTHED, RULER, SHEPHERD, POTTER, &c., most of which we tend

to read as theological truths that we then use to formulate our theologies and liturgical practice (in, e.g., our

prayers and hymnody).

It also gives rise to YHWH IS A HELPER (which in turn leads to YHWH IS A WARRIOR, DELIVERER, SAVIOUR, REDEEMER, HEALER, WATCHMAN, BUILDER). Some of these have also found their way into the

Church's religious language, unlike the root metaphor YHWH IS AN ANIMAL that underlies YHWH IS A LION (Ho

5.12-15; La 3.10), YHWH IS A MOTH (Ps 39.12; Ho 5.12-15),

9

and YHWH IS A BEAR (La 3.10). Every generic noun

or verb that is predicated of any part of his creation and of YHWH, in other words, is a metaphor.

III. Metaphor Webs

As fascinating and helpful as it is to study individual metaphors and to trace their presence in Scripture,
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neither root metaphors nor their "literary realizations"

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function in isolation. Every individual metaphor-those that we read, say, or think-depends on a root metaphor, and is therefore conceptually linked to other metaphors that grow out of the same root in what we might call a metaphor "web". In Scripture these webs link root metaphors that describe, e.g., YHWH, humanity (the human race, nations, individuals, his chosen people, gentiles), salvation, and judgment. Most root metaphors are themselves related to other root metaphors, and so forth, so that a series of interlocking "webs" of root metaphors gathers multiple aspects of existence into conceptual wholes that together explain God, humanity, creation, and the relationships between them. Each metaphor in a particular web strengthens its root metaphor's explanatory power by showing how some aspect of reality "fits" (or is connected to the rest of) that web. In other words, the larger the "web" of connected metaphors, the greater the explanatory power of-the better the "view" afforded by-the entire web, just as the insight offered by any individual metaphor within that web is enriched by its ability to connote other metaphors in its web.

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Together, these webs allow the biblical metaphors to reveal less-than-obvious relationships between these aspects of reality. As Fauconnier says, "[l]anguage forms carry very little information per se, but can latch on to rich preexistent networks ... and trigger massive sequential and parallel [cognitive] activations" (n.d.).

20-23)-the term "god" would have been metaphorical, and therefore highly prone to being misunderstood, especially in the highly polytheistic environment of Bronze Age Egypt.

9

If v['] is rendered "pus" (Ho 5.12; so NRSV), the image becomes less attractive!

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There are many studies of individual metaphors, e.g., Basson's recent "'People are Plants'-a Conceptual Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible" (2006).

11

I prefer the term "instantiation" to either "literary" or "linguistic" metaphor, because individual metaphors function whether or not they are written down, and because we cannot help but think in words, so that even our most heavily used root metaphors are themselves linguistic utterances.

12

Furthermore, it seems that tracing the parts of a metaphor web through the canon would help us understand the biblical community's mental image of the world, which could then both inform and critique our own view of reality. 5

This is more than a little abstract, so let us turn to the root metaphor YHWH IS A FARMER, a metaphor which must have had exceptional explanatory power in the biblical, since it is canonically ubiquitous, and since

its web is perhaps the best-developed in Scripture, explicitly

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encompassing nearly every major aspect of reality.

As mentioned above, the root of the root metaphor YHWH IS A FARMER is YHWH IS THE PERSON IN CHARGE, which grows out of YHWH IS A PERSON, which seems to be a genuinely "basic" or "root" metaphor-

that is, there is nothing "deeper" that underlies it, or upon which it depends for its meaning-which is itself

fundamental to many biblical metaphors that attempt to "explain" or "reveal" the divine, or to make it "comprehensible" (above). This section sketches the canonical occurrence of each of the metaphors in this web

explores and suggests some possible hermeneutical and theological implications.

A. YHWH IS A FARMER

This image is canonically ubiquitous; I note merely a few examples. In the beginning, after causing fruit trees to spring from the ground (Gn 1.11-12), God told the first man and woman to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gn 1.28);

14

he also "planted a garden in Eden" (Gn 2.8-9), a garden well-watered by four rivers.

Isaiah says that "My beloved planted a vineyard: ...", and describes YHWH as a farmer who prepares the ground for, and plants, a grapevine (Is 5.1-7a; cf. Jr 2.21; Ek 17.1-10; 34.29). This same image-that YHWH IS A

FARMER who planted Israel (2 Sam 7.10; 1 Chr 17.9)-encompasses his control over every nation (e.g., Jr

1.10;

12.14-17; 18.9); the "nations" are not only plants in his field, but were removed to make room for Israel (Ps

44.2; 80.8)-they are also chaff to be threshed, winnowed, and either blown away by the wind or burned (Ex

15.7; Is 17.13; 29.5; 41.2; Mi 4.12-13; Dn 2.35; cf. "judgment", below).

Notice in passing that the ease of movement from YHWH IS A FARMER to JUDGMENT IS WINNOWERING shows the tight weave of the metaphor web—each metaphor within a particular web is entailed in the rest, so that

to discuss one inevitably invokes another.

Jesus' parables constantly involve the world of agriculture; they are based on gardening, farming, and vintnery: the sower and the soils (Mt 13.1-9, 18-23); wheat and tares (Mt 13.24-30); the mystery of crop growth

(Mk 4.26-29); the mustard seed (Mt 13.31-32); the laborers in the vineyard (Mt 20.1-16); he also tells his followers that the fields are "white unto harvest" (Jo 4.34-37; Lk 10.2; Mt 9.37-38). Jesus' use of agricultural

pictures is usually explained as an example of his humiliation and the acculturation of his message (??)- he used

stories that they could understand and with which they would identify.

This point is certainly well taken, but the farming parables also consistently allude to and invoke the multitudinous references to the root metaphors YHWH IS A FARMER and PEOPLE ARE PLANTS OF Tenach,

encouraging his hearers to identify with their ancestors and (implicitly) the god whom they worshiped with the

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"Explicitly" means that these developments can be read in the biblical text, they are not merely logical conclusions.

14

Perhaps this is not unlike people who tell their tomato seedlings to grow as they plant them. 6

God of Tenach. Not only, however, would the parables have caused their hearers to harken back to their

"Bible", and thus demonstrated the continuity of (and, since the increase of the canon by the inclusion of the

New Testament) the entire biblical revelation, they also reinforced the message that YHWH IS A FARMER and

PEOPLE ARE PLANTS, along with the more ethnically particularized metaphor ISRAEL IS A VINE (&c.). This resonance suggests that this metaphor was not merely an ornament, but instead had permanent and therefore

genuine explanatory power. It is a picture, but not "merely" a picture.

In private conversation with his disciples, Jesus explained that his "father is the vintner" who prunes the vine (John 15.1-2; further on this passage, below), just as the Apostle Paul depends on the same

metaphor to

describe Israel as an olive tree into which the wild olive branches of the Gentiles have been engrafted (Ro 11.17-

24); pruning and grafting are the task of the farmer, who is God himself.

Finally (without doing more than scrape the surface), John sees in the New Jerusalem which descended from heaven a the "river of the water of life", lined with "trees of life" whose leaves are for the healing of the

nations (Rv 22.1-2), trees planted by GOD THE FARMER for the blessing and life of his people.

Biblical authors across the entire canon use the root metaphor YHWH IS A FARMER in communicating one aspect of their message.

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B. PEOPLE ARE PLANTS

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Given the Bible's interest in the relationship between God and humanity, we might expect as a corollary to

YHWH IS A FARMER the root metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS;

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this too stretches across the canon, beginning with

the divine command to "bear fruit and multiply and fill the earth", which was originally given to the first man

and woman (Gn 1.28), was reiterated to Noah and his sons (Gn 9.1, 7), and to Abraham and his descendants

(Gn 17.6, 20; 35.11; 48.4; Ex 23.20; Lv 26.9), before they began to use it of themselves (Gn 26.22; 28.3; 41.52;

49.22), as narrators used it of them (Gn 47.27; Ex 1.7).

18

Other individuals are described, or refer to themselves, as plants (e.g., Jb 14.7-12; 29.19-20): fruit trees are transplanted by the farmer to places that he has prepared for them (e.g., Is 5.1-7; Ps 1.3), wheat is sown in the

field (Mt 13. Idolators are called "a root bearing poisonous fruit or wormwood" (Dt 29.18); in the historical books,

"The surviving remnant of the house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward" (2 Kgs 19.30

|| Is 37.31).

15

We might also say that they "assume" the root metaphor, since-to use meta-metaphoric language-roots

are by their nature

hidden underground. Root metaphors are in fact assumptions, unquestioned propositions, that shape our thought and

understanding so profoundly that we rarely recognize their influence until they are pointed out to us.

16

For another approach to this root [conceptual] see Bassoon 2006.

17

PEOPLE ARE PLANTS can refer to general human experience, so that all [human] flesh is "as grass" (Is 40.6-8), but this is

from a different metaphor web (LIFE IS A DAY)-these contexts do not picture farming activity, they merely describe the short

life cycle of grass (which was not grown as a crop in the ANE), and the certainty that it would soon fade (cf. Ps 90.5-6). 7

As noted above, human institutions-the nations-are also plants (e.g., Ek 17.24), "planted" in their lands by YHWH THE FARMER (e.g., Dt 29.28; Ps 9.6; Jr 18.7; Ek 17.1-8) who has the right to plant them wherever

he desires (Jr 17.6-8) and to "uproot" them as he pleases (Jr 1.10; 18.9). This applies to the ethnic Israel (1 Kgs

14.15; 2 Chr 7.20; Jr 12.14-17; 42.10; 45.4), as well as to the gentiles (Jl 4.13; Mi 4.12-13).

Plants are passive and helpless-they have no control over their circumstances (e.g., location; soil; weather: rain, heat/cold, wind)-and once planted, they are "stuck" in that place, unless they are transplanted, or

until they are harvested. But this farmer controls the rain and causes it to fall on both "just" and "unjust" (Mt

5.45),

19

and has dug out ditches for irrigation (Ps 1.3; Ps 65.10; Pr 21.1), so the plants need not worry nor fear (Mt 6.28-30).

Plants therefore depend on the farmer: he chooses them; prepares a place for them; sows seed or moves

(transplants) them to that place, or grafts them into another stock (also prepared for them); provides water,

fertilizer, and protection; prunes them to increase their yield; harvests what they produce (which is their raison

d'être); evaluates their needs, viability, and productivity; and decides when to uproot or destroy them.

The corollary NATIONS ARE PLANTS suggests that those entities that we see as great and powerful are no

less dependent upon the good will of the farmer than individual men and women, and that they are subject to

the same treatment and care as human beings

In this imaginary world in which YHWH IS A FARMER, PEOPLE ARE most clearly understood as PLANTS.

These first two root metaphors are probably so familiar that the preceding paragraphs merely state the

obvious.

This is not, however, the end of the metaphor web, which reaches out to encompass a way of viewing the world, the purpose of our lives, sin, the devil, salvation, death, judgment, resurrection, and eternity.

C. THE WORLD IS A FIELD/ORCHARD

In explaining the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus explicitly says that "the field is the world" (Mt 13.38), and identifies himself ("the Son of Man") as the landowning farmer ("the sower of good seed"). As a farmer sows seed or transplants trees and shrubs, so YHWH plants nations in their places on earth (above). Although this root metaphor is not as commonly invoked as others in this web, it

D. THE PURPOSE OF LIFE IS TO BEAR FRUIT

A natural question for human beings is "Why am I here?" The answer supplied by this metaphor web is that THE PURPOSE OF LIFE IS TO BEAR FRUIT [BE FRUITFUL]. Fruiting plants are valuable and receive good care (Is 5; Ps 1).

18

Of twenty-eight occurrences of the root one-half are in Genesis hrp, prh, "be fruitful, give fruit", only three do not refer metaphorically to human beings (Gn 1.22; 8.17; Is 32.12).

19

Perhaps we ought to think of a greenhouse, rather than an orchard or garden. 8

The farmer wants the best crop possible (both quantity & quality) in return for his investment of time, labour,

and (possibly) silver; when cared for well, trees thrive under the gardener's care, growing lush and bearing fruit

(Ps 1.3). That care includes pruning, as Jesus explains (John 15.1-6), so that the remaining branches will be

encouraged to produce more fruit; the contrast is YHWH's refusal to care further for his worthless vine by

pruning, hoeing, or weeding it (Is 5.6).

The term "fruit" is another metaphor that depends on PEOPLE ARE PLANTS; it refers to the works of a man's hands (e.g., Pr 11.30; 12.12; Ec 2.18-20), to the outcome of one's words and way of speech (Pr 12.14;

13.2; 18.20, 21), to the general path of one's life (Pr 1.31; Ec 5.15; Mt 7.16-20), and helps us understand

Paul's metaphor about the fruit of the spirit (Ga 5.22-23), as well as his later statement about sowing and reaping (Ga 6.7-8). The metaphor web does not merely allow biblical authors to use the term "fruit"-it even explains what type of fruit we are to bear: the fruit that is the virtues of a righteous life. John the Baptist told the crowds, "Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance" (Lk 3.8a), to which Paul added the list of the fruit of the spirit (Ga 5.22-23); the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews said that the "fruit of righteousness" is the outcome of divine "fatherly" discipline (Hb 12.11). Farmers, however, uproot and destroy worthless trees that consistently produce bad fruit (Mt 7.16-20); a tree that fails to produce fruit may be valuable enough to try for yet one more growing season (Lk 13.6-9), but will eventually be destroyed so that another, that may better repay the investment in its health and growth, may be put in its place. Not only are weeds and non-bearing branches (suckers?) are taken away and burned (Mt 13.24-30; John 15.6), and chaff is threshed and winnowed out of the grain (Ps 1.4; Mi 4.13), a valuable tree, like an olive, may have new branches grafted into it in order to try to invigorate it (Ro 11.16b-24); a good farmer knows which can be healed, which cannot, and how much time and energy to devote to each one.

E. SIN IS BEING CHOKED BY WEEDS OR SCORCHED BY HEAT

This metaphor web not only says that SINNERS ARE CHAFF (above), but also identifies sin: SIN IS BEING CHOKED BY WEEDS OR SCORCHED BY HEAT. Although it rarely addresses the topic of sin, in the story of the sower and the soils, the "good seed" is either scorched at the root because of the shallow soil or choked by thorns (Mt 13.5-7, 20-22). As when it identifies the WORLD as A FIELD, this web does not address the subject of sin only tangentially. Now, since I am speaking to an evangelical audience-and since I am not a Pelagian!-let me hasten to add that this does not mean that sin is unimportant, merely that it is not as important within this metaphor web as are other ideas. 9

If we pause for a moment to consider the nature of this web, that is easy to understand. Plants are largely

passive-they respond to their environment. They may in time modify the micro-climate of their surroundings,
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but they cannot move, nor can they "decide" what kind of fruit to bear. This makes it extremely difficult to discuss sin in a meaningful manner; people are not passive inhabitants of their world. It is, if anything, striking that this metaphor web even extends to the subject of sin.

F. THE DEVIL IS A RIVAL FARMER; THE DEVIL IS WILD BIRDS

There are two root diabolic metaphors in this web: THE DEVIL IS A RIVAL FARMER, the "enemy", who sows weeds ("tares") amongst the good wheat sown by the farmer (Mt 13.24, 25, 28, 39); and THE DEVIL IS WILD BIRDS who snatch up the seed that falls on the path (Mt 13.4, 19). As with the idea of sin, this web does not address the devil in any detail (or very often) because plants themselves do not have enemies apart from other plants (and an occasional destructive wild beast). The concept of the devil fits other metaphor webs very well,
21
and is therefore more prominent in them; it adds relatively little to a web that views people as largely passive.

G. SALVATION IS BEING TRANSPLANTED

The process of being moved from one location to another that has been prepared by the farmer-being "transplanted"

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-is a strong image of divine care and provision (e.g., Ps 1.3a; 80.8-9; Is 5.2).

23

Salvation is not a major theme in this web.

H. DEATH IS HARVEST

As a farmer orders the reaping of the harvest, so in the book of Revelation, the entire earth is harvested by one swing of an angel's sickle (Rv 14.14-20; cf. Jl 4.13 [ET 3.13]), which suggests how tiny the "field" is. When the grain is cut, the plant dies, but that was why it was planted and grown. I cannot yet account for the

more

complex image that is entailed when the plant is a grape vine, fig, olive, or date tree (picking the fruit was considered the "death" of the fruit, since it will certainly not be given opportunity to grow into another tree).

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For a stirring [fictional] account of this, see Jean Giono's short story, "The Man Who Planted Trees"; for an autobiographical description of this, see Paul Brand, "A Handful of Mud".

21

If, e.g., YHWH IS A KING then THE DEVIL IS A RIVAL KING [INSURRECTIONIST/ANARCHIST]; if YHWH IS A SAFE PLACE, then THE DEVIL IS OUR ENEMY.

22

Although this nuance is lost in translation, štl (in, e.g., Ps 1.3; Ps 80.8-9; Ek 17.22-23) is better rendered "transplant" than "plant".

23

This image is echoed by one from the metaphor web of kingship and citizenship: Paul says that God "delivered us from from the authority of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son" (Col 1.13). 10 I. JUDGMENT IS WINNOWING

Threshing and winnowing together separate the grain from the chaff, just as YHWH, like an ANE king, was a judge who divided innocence from guilt, and who decreed that the guilty be punished. Together these lead to the root metaphor JUDGMENT IS WINNOWING, the separation of the just (the innocent) from the unjust (the guilty). This is explicitly connected to kingship twice in Proverbs: a king "winnows the evil" (20.26) "with his eyes" (!) (20.8), so that the image of judgment as winnowing links two metaphor webs: YHWH IS A FARMER and YHWH IS A KING (cf. Pr 20.8, 26). The primary emphasis in these images is the loss of the chaff, as it is borne away by the wind-the wicked are removed from the presence of the righteous.

J. DAMNATION IS BEING BURNED/BLOWN AWAY

As chaff is blown by the wind (Ps 1.3; Pr 20.8, 26), to be neither mourned nor traced, and as pruned

branches

and weeds are burned (Mt 13.??; John 15.??), so the wicked will be removed from the presence of the just, destroyed for ever.

K. RESURRECTION IS NEW SEED FROM A [DEAD] SEED

If a grain of wheat dies [in the right way-i.e., not merely by rotting] it bears more grains, or "fruit" (John 12.24).

Danger of reading this as reincarnation-resurrection is not a major aspect of this web.

L. ETERNITY IS A NEW ORCHARD/FIELD

New Jerusalem has river of life and trees of life (Rv 22.1-2): a renewed "garden". Eternity is not a major aspect of this web.

IV. The Metaphor Web & the Incarnation

When we look at the gospels, we find that some of the imagery changes. God is still a farmer, the world is a field, and people are plants. John warned the crowds, saying
Indeed the axe is already lying at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit is being cut down and thrown into the fire. (Lk 3.9)

And, as Luke tells us a few verses later, when the people wondered if John the Baptist might be the Messiah ["Christ"], "John answered by saying to them all:

11

"I baptize you with water, but one who is mightier than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into his barn; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Lk 3.16-17)

In explaining the parable of the wheat and the tares (Mt 13.24-30), which I have mentioned several times above, Jesus called himself the farmer, saying that "The sower of the seed is the son of man" (Mt 13.37-

39a). Jesus, you see, is a farmer.

In the parable of the rented vineyard, he presented God as a farmer, and the Christ as his son. The incarnation reveals CHRIST [IS] as THE FARMER[’S HEIR], who ran errands for his father, the farmer. Immediately after telling his followers that "the hour had come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (John 12.23), Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it

remains alone;

but if it dies, it bears much fruit (John 12.24). A little later, Jesus called himself "the true vine" and his followers

the branches (John 15.1-8), as we have seen (above).

In what we can describe only as incomprehensible, the farmer (God) became a plant (Jesus). The metaphor shifts focus. Now, instead of YHWH IS A FARMER the metaphor is THE CHRIST IS A PLANT.

24

This is not exactly new news, however, since we read in Isaiah:

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. (Is 11.1)

and

For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,
And like a root out of parched ground ... (Is 53.2)

The metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS functions within prophecy in order to portray judgment on the nations (above), but also to picture redemption.

Imagine be[coming] a plant. If God said, "Would you be willing to take the good news of redemption to the plant kingdom?" "Not too bad", you think, "as long as I could be an oak, or a fruit tree, or a flowering shrub."

Some people might choose something long-lived, like a sequoia, or something beautiful, perhaps a dogwood or

trillium, or even a daisy. And of course some would choose to become poison ivy or crabgrass.

But becoming a plant, as in becoming incarnate, means being a plant: stuck in one place, roots in the ground, no pizza, no movies, no friends; out in the weather all year round, no choice but to bear fruit (nuts,

flowers, &c.) in season, losing your leaves (unless you become an evergreen, being pruned if you're a fruit tree or

vine. Long life as a bristlecone pine sounds great, until you remember that they grow on mountains on the Pacific

coast, all by themselves. Three thousand years of being blasted and twisted by the wind, having only a few scraggly

needles, might get a bit old (no pun intended).

24

This "great reversal" is adumbrated in verses such as Ho 14.9 [ET 14.8]: "Ephraim, what do I still have to do with idols? / I

answered them and I look after you; / I am like a spreading cypress- / From me comes your fruit." 12

Perhaps this is something of what it meant for the Son of God to become human.

And, furthermore, just as plants are grown for their fruit, just as wheat is cut, gathered, threshed, winnowed, and ground into flour for bread, and just as grapes are cut off the vine, gathered, and

smashed so that
their juice can be made into wine, so Jesus Christ suffered and died so that he, the bread of life, might become the
living bread that would feed his people and the wine that would satisfy their thirst.

He said of the bread (which came from grain), "This is my body", and of the wine (from grapes), "... this is my blood of the covenant" (Mt 26.26-28).

And then, when he had lain in the ground for three days and three nights, God raised him from the dead. Paul says, "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep" (1 Cor 15.20, 23), as

the first of a new crop-made up of all who have been transplanted by God into his garden, and whose fruit

demonstrated that they were wheat and not tares; they will live for ever in the new garden in which there is no

more sowing or reaping.

God the Son became a plant so that by rotting and dying he might bear much fruit, which was nourished by his dying body. He was harvested, threshed, and winnowed so that his body might become bread to

nourish his people; he was harvested and crushed so that his blood might become wine to gladden their hearts.

This is the gospel according to the web of metaphor formed by YHWH IS A FARMER, PEOPLE ARE PLANTS, &c.

Incarnational Metaphors

incarnation GOD THE SON IS A PLANT

ministry CHRIST'S MINISTRY WAS TO BEAR FRUIT

crucifixion CRUCIFIXION IS BEING PLANTED! (John 9.23-24)

CRUCIFIXION IS GERMINATION

CRUCIFIXION IS HARVEST

CRUCIFIXION IS JUDGMENT

CRUCIFIXION IS THRESHING & WINNOWING

resurrection CHRIST IS THE FIRST FRUITS

V. Seeing with New Eyes: Metaphor Webs as World-Ordering Constructs

Metaphor webs in Scripture-as opposed to individual metaphors-link multiple existential maps into conceptual

wholes, each of which offers us a rich and unified view of reality. Not only does a web give its individual metaphors greater explanatory power than it has by itself,

25

it also-and primarily-offers a vantage point from

which to see and make sense of ourselves and our experience. To paraphrase Sir Philip Sidney (1595), a metaphor

25

This resembles the point made by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and Lakoff & Turner (1989), et al., i.e., that root metaphors

(which they call "conceptual" metaphors) allow us to discover, use, and understand individual metaphors that grow from

that root. I prefer the term "root" to "conceptual" because the latter seems too abstract a label for something that functions

best when it removes the object of its attention from the realm of abstraction in order to place it firmly within the world of

concrete experience. 13

web is an artificial "sub-reality"-a "golden world"-that we are invited to enter; once within, we must suspend

our judgment for the sake of the insight that that world affords. When we do this, we will find that viewing

"our" world from within that world enables us to make sense of what we experience and "know".

Metaphor webs

enable us to structure our experience by means of one aspect of existence.

The biblical authors did not use this metaphor map of farming as a "pretty picture" or an object lesson; Jesus did not preach parables about farming and gardening merely because his culture was agrarian.

Instead, this

network of pictures occurs throughout Scripture because the farmer-plant relationship represents a valid way of

understanding the true nature of God and his creation, including his works of creation, providence, redemption,

judgment, and renewal. Its consistency and biblical ubiquity suggests strongly that we are meant to take the idea

of human planthood and divine husbandry seriously.

Theological metaphors are not pictures that become useful once we figure out their theological significance; they are divine metaphors because they are true. A metaphor, after all, must be true. That

is, it must

fit the way things are-it must correspond to that which exists.

26

This "fit" with reality lets us use it to understand an aspect of God's person and work.

If YHWH really were a farmer, then we would be plants; if we really were plants, then YHWH would be a farmer. YHWH, of course, is not really a farmer-he does not depend on the rain and soil for food or

income, nor

are we really plants-we move around from place to place, we talk, we invent and develop things that did not

formerly exist, we love, &c. All metaphors have, in fact, what we might call "slippage"

27

-that aspect of the

concrete, experiential "half" of the metaphor that does not quite fit what is being explained.

28

YHWH is the only

"farmer" who does not plant his fields and then wait to see whether or not the weather cooperates, since he

controls the weather, granting or withholding rain and sun as he pleases (power given to no human farmer).

29

Despite slippage, this web presents us with valid insight into ourselves, into our place and purpose in the world,

and into our relationship with YHWH as the one who has [trans]planted us, tends us, waters us, prunes us, and

who will in time harvest us.

Webs suggest the value of one aspect of existence for understanding God, his creation, humanity, and the relationship between us;

30

they encourage us to attend to, and to seek to understand, that part of life-the

26

As Lakoff & Turner (1989) might say {do they??}, the "fit" between the two domains linked by the metaphor-that which

allows one to be "mapped" onto the other, must "work" cognitively and intuitively (cf. Fauconnier).

27

In the fabric industry, "slippage" refers to open spaces in fabric caused by the sliding of weft threads or shifting of warp

threads. In think of metaphors as functioning within "webs", this definition seems singularly à propos.

28

Textbooks often warn against "pressing" or "over-extending" metaphors by trying to to make every detail of the picture

"work".

29

Whether we call this "slippage", or think of it as a lack of "overlap" between domains (as in a Venn diagram), or use some

other metaphor(!), we are at this point in what Kövecses calls a "blended space" (2002, 227-30), an "impossible domain" in

which God really is a farmer, digging in the dirt and praying for rain, and people really are plants, stuck in one spot and

entirely dependent on the climate as to whether or not they survive and flourish, or wither and die.

30

Human beings are, of course, part of the created order, so that reality has two fundamental aspects-the Creator and the

created-not three. On the other hand, human awareness of the rest of the created order as something "other", "separate", 14

particular thing that is-to which each one points, since, e.g., deeper understanding of the plant kingdom and of

farming will depend our understanding of ourselves and our faith.

31

Perhaps, therefore, metaphor webs are the

Bible's way of "doing" theology: each one presents a cohesive and coherent (and biblical!) way of approaching

the great questions of human existence: Why are we here? Where did we come from? Where are we going?

If this is a valid conclusion, then biblical theology is primarily pictorial, concrete, and existential-it uses normal human experience to describe what no human being has experienced (immediate and full knowledge of

God, death, judgment, &c.) and what "everyone knows", but cannot fully grasp, such as the progress of our lives.

In place of abstract statements and [mere] propositions,

32

it offers a way of seeing and thinking about our lives

that "make sense" because we have experienced them.

Scripture uses many metaphor webs (remember the analogy of the windows), which is exactly what we would expect: the clay cannot really know or understand the potter (to use another root metaphor).

And

furthermore, differences between individuals, tribes, cultures, churches, &c. mean that different metaphors will

"speak" to different individuals, tribes, cultures, churches, &c., so that this approach to Scripture calls us to

humility: we dare not claim that our view through this particular window or that is the only, the true, or even the

best view of this great and mysterious room into which we long to peer. Rather, we ought to find ourselves saying

to those around us, "This is a great view-take a look!"

33

Identifying and explicating biblical metaphors, and exploring their relationships to other metaphors in metaphor webs offers us "new eyes"-new ways to see and understand reality by means of divinely inspired

metaphors. And so we see that metaphors are not ornaments added to the message of Scripture in order to make

it easier to understand or somehow more palatable, but are instead the Bible's way of "doing" theology-
of
interpreting and explaining reality and of molding our understanding so that we see ourselves, the
world, and
God aright.
Thanks for coming ... and for staying.

Frederic Clarke Putnam, PH.D.
Hatfield, Pennsylvania
Lent MMVIII

"different", or "external" [to humanity] suggests the general validity of the threefold division of Creator,
humanity, and [the
rest of] the created order.

31

An outstanding example of this is the set of books by Philip Yancey and Paul Brand: *Fearfully and
Wonderfully Made* and *In
His Image*, in which they use the perspective afforded by modern medicine to better understand the
root metaphors *THE
CHURCH IS A BODY* and *CHRIST IS THE HEAD* (among other applications).

32

I first typed this sentence with the words "... infinity and ineffability" to describe God, but then realized
that this is to fall
into the very trap that the biblical authors and their metaphors avoid. I am not denying that the Church
speaks "the
language of Zion, but with the unmistakable accents of the [Platonic] Academy", as Pelikan so gracefully
said (1984, 12),
merely asking how closely we have looked at how Scripture itself "thinks" about such things.

33

I strongly suspect that claiming that one metaphor is "central" or "best" means merely that we find this
metaphor or that
more helpful, not that the metaphor itself is actually "best" or "most important". 15

Epilogue: On Method & Boundaries

In this paper, I have assigned "mappings" only when explicitly warranted by Scripture. That is, I have not
created,
dreamed up, or invented any of the categories listed above, nor have I posited non-canonical root
metaphors. A
natural question that this approach raises is "How do we know when to stop". The answer that I have
chosen is

"When we run out of data".

There is slippage, and there are "holes" in various webs. Some are robust and full, offering a view of

nearly the whole of our experience (e.g., YHWH IS A FARMER, YHWH IS A SAFE PLACE); others are very small and account for only a small fraction of reality (e.g., LIFE IS A DAY). Not every web, for example, offers explicit metaphors about YHWH. And this is as it should be. When we focus our attention on the nature of our existence coram Deo, as in YHWH IS A FARMER and PEOPLE ARE PLANTS, we do not find a great deal of information about the devil, about hell, about salvation, or about eternity. They are mentioned-this is an exceptionally full web, after all-but the implications of the root metaphor are not explored in great detail. This suggests that we are best served by letting each web speak for itself, being sure that we understand it, ...

things are left out on purpose
coherence
cohesion
consistency
fulness-all webs together, no web in particular (no "best" or "true" window)

16

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17

Appendix I: YHWH IS A FARMER; PEOPLE ARE PLANTS

Root/Primary metaphor YHWH IS A PERSON

Secondary metaphor YHWH IS THE PERSON IN CHARGE

Tertiary metaphor YHWH IS A FARMER

The Metaphor Web PROVIDENCE IS [PLANT] HUSBANDRY

YHWH YHWH IS A FARMER

the world THE WORLD IS A FIELD/ORCHARD

humanity PEOPLE ARE PLANTS

nations NATIONS ARE PLANTS

king A KING IS A TOOL (uproots, winnows,

life THE PURPOSE OF LIFE IS TO BEAR FRUIT

sin SIN IS BEING CHOKED BY WEEDS OR SCORCHED BY HEAT

devil THE DEVIL IS A RIVAL FARMER

salvation SALVATION IS BEING TRANSPLANTED

revelation YHWH'S WORD IS WATER(?)

death DEATH IS HARVEST

judgment JUDGMENT IS BEING THRESHED & WINNOWNED

resurrection RESURRECTION IS THE GROWTH OF A SEED INTO NEW PLANT

eternity ETERNITY IS A NEW ORCHARD/FIELD

Incarnational Metaphors

incarnation GOD [THE FARMER] IS [BECAME] A PLANT

ministry CHRIST'S MINISTRY WAS TO BEAR FRUIT

crucifixion CRUCIFIXION IS HARVEST

CRUCIFIXION IS THRESHING & WINNOWNING

CRUCIFIXION IS BEING PLANTED! (John 9.23-24)

resurrection CHRIST IS THE FIRST FRUITS

This accounts for many, but not all,

34

biblical instantiations of the root metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS,
SALVATION IS BEING TRANSPLANTED, DEATH IS HARVEST, JUDGMENT IS THRESHING AND WINNOWING.

It also

accounts for the language of the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and eternity. It may account for
water as

an image of the word of God (Pr 18.4).

YHWH farmer or vintner landowner

people plants

LIFE IS A DAY

tenants

world/creation garden/field

NATIONS ARE PLANTS

property

work growth, fruitfulness faithfulness, work

salvation being transplanted

NEW CITIZENSHIP

master's approval

Scripture [water?] instructions

death harvest

judgment threshing & winnowing

YHWH IS A KING ☞ JUDGE

giving an account

eternity New Jerusalem as "garden"

(trees of life, waters of life)

Jesus Christ

34

It does not underlie, e.g., people being described as wildflowers or "one-day" plants, which blend the
root metaphors

PEOPLE ARE PLANTS and LIFE IS A DAY. 18

incarnation farmer ☞ plant murdered son/heir

life harvest ("fishers of men", "fields") work

crucifixion planting: dying in order to live (John 12.24)

harvest: being threshed, winnowed

murder of son/heir

resurrection first fruits

eternity

Appendix II: Some Divine Metaphors in Scripture

YHWH IS A PERSON YHWH IS A PLACE YHWH IS AN ANIMAL

IN CHARGE HELPER SAFE PLACE

god redeemer stronghold dwelling lion

king fortress temple moth

commander warrior strong tower bird

judge watchman bear

master advocate? shield

husband/betrothed builder

landowner champion? hiding place

farmer healer refuge

teacher savior

father deliverer shade

shepherd sustainer mountain

guide help crag

homeowner defense cliff

conqueror

potter portion of [my] inheritance

maker

one who feeds

glory

cup

horn of salvation

salvation

gladness

confidence

song

strength

sun/light

19

Appendix III:

Scripture often uses "overlapping" or "entangled" metaphors-much like the "mixed" metaphors that my English

teachers told me to avoid. Some of our perception that this as a problem comes from reading

(interpreting)

metaphors individually, rather than seeing them as functioning within the conceptually coherent, large-scale

epistemic construct of their metaphor "web". In Jr 24.6-7, for example, we read that plants have hearts:

hb'Ajl. ~h,yle[] ynly[e yTim.f;w> and-I-will-place my-eye upon-them for-good
taZO; #r,a'h'-l[; ~ytibovih]w: and-I-will-bring-them-back upon-the-land the-this
~ytiynlb.W and-I-will-build-them
sroh/a, aOlw> and-not I-will-tear-down
~yTi[.j;n>W and-I-will-plant-them
`vATA, aOlw> and-not I-will-uproot (Jr 24.6)
ytiao t[;d;l. ble ~h,l' yTit;n"w> and-I-will-give to them heart to-know me
hwwhy ynla] yKi that I YHWH
~[l. yli-Wyh'w> and-they-will-be for-me for-people
~yhiOlale ~h,l' hy<h.a, ykinOa'w> and-I I-will-be for-them for-god
~B'li-lk'B. y[;ae Wbvuy"-yKi for they-will-return unto-me with-the-whole-of their-heart

And I will set my eye upon them for good,
And I will return them to this land,
And I will build up,
And I will not tear them down,
And I will plant them
And I will not uproot them,
And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am YHWH,
And they will become my people,
And I will become their god, for they will return unto me with their whole
heart. (Jr 24.6-7).

The primary metaphors in these verses are YHWH IS A PERSON and YHWH IS A GOD; YHWH describes himself as a PERSON ("my eye"), which leads to the secondary root metaphor YHWH IS THE PERSON-IN-CHARGE, which allows him to assume a variety of "in-charge" rôles: YHWH IS A LEADER ("bring them back"), YHWH IS A BUILDER ("build"), YHWH IS A CONQUEROR ("tear down"), YHWH IS A FARMER ("plant", "[not] uproot"), a YHWH IS A GOD ("god"), and even YHWH IS A HEALER [SURGEON] ("give them a heart"). The relationships among the metaphors used in these vv. can be diagrammed (without implying a hierarchy among the metaphors that grow out of YHWH IS THE PERSON-IN-CHARGE).

YHWH

YHWH IS A PERSON

YHWH IS THE PERSON-IN-CHARGE

YHWH IS A LEADER YHWH IS A FARMER YHWH IS A CONQUEROR

YHWH IS A GOD YHWH IS A BUILDER

YHWH IS A HEALER [SURGEON?]

20

Here, as at other times, a biblical author seems to have used available metaphors that suited his purpose, without implying that two particular metaphors are related, and without encouraging us to construct a web within two (or more) function. So, although we could probably come up with some interpretation by which the Israelites thought that plants had hearts, I think that we would be pushing our system (our way of organizing reality) onto theirs.

In other words, we can "work out" what a particular metaphor implies about death, judgment, the world, life, &c.; without any biblical backing. If YHWH IS A LION, then PEOPLE ARE PREY, but DEATH IS ...? We may well be more clever than knowledgeable, and so we can construct complete schema, which will be, however, our explanation of how a metaphor web "should" work out, even if that web does not address a particular aspect of existence. Consistency demands neither complete coverage nor exhaustive explanation. We must therefore be cautious, because we do not know how their conceptual "maps" might or might not relate to ours. For example, we are often told that, e.g., "YHWH is my shepherd" (Ps 23.1) is a "royal image", because many ANE kings called themselves the shepherds of their people or nation (??modern commentaries??). And this makes sense, since a king looks after his people as a shepherd looks after his sheep, protecting them from their enemies and watching over their welfare throughout their everyday lives. We do not know, however, and we must not assume, that this was the logic behind the use of "royal shepherd" imagery. It is far more likely, in fact, that the imagery developed in the opposite direction. We can be fairly certain that shepherds were caring for their flocks long before kings ruled over lands, or even cities. It

would be, in fact, more in keeping with their experience for them to have identified kings as shepherds because they understood shepherds first and, based on that experience, came to view kings in that light.

Appendix IV: "Slippage" in Metaphor

The Bible says that "YHWH is [a] King" (Ps 10.16; 29; 10; 84.4; 95.3; 98.6; Is 6.5; 33.22; 44.6; Jr 46.18; 48.15;

51.57; Zp 3.15; Zc 14.9, 16, 17) or "YHWH reigns" (Ps 93.1; 103.19), and we accept this as a true statement. But

it is not a literal statement. YHWH is a king, but his kingship differs drastically from any kings that we know of.

Human kings need bodyguards to protect themselves, and armies to protect their nations. They fear assassination, coups, and war. When enemies arise, they consider their strength relative to the strength of the

nations, including the size of their armies, and seek allies or even sue for peace rather than fight, if the odds are

too heavy for them. Human kings require counselors and governors—an administration that can oversee and

govern on their behalf; they need income from taxes, duties, fines, and levies; they require an enormous amount

of human support in order to maintain themselves and their kingdoms; they worry about their successor(s) and

the stability of their kingdom.

God is a king. Yes, but ... not really. This is a metaphor, granting us insight into something that we cannot understand unless we can relate it to something familiar, not by saying that two different things are

exactly equal, but trusting the hearer to understand the point.

Connected to the root metaphor YHWH IS A FARMER, the root metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS suggests divine care, provision, oversight, maintenance—in a word, what we refer to as "providence". In

relationship to

the root metaphor LIFE IS A DAY, however, PEOPLE ARE PLANTS refers not to the well-tended plants of vineyard or

orchard, or to deliberately planted crops of grain, but to the brevity of life through the metaphor of wild flowers

that spring up in the morning, flourish, and wither and die by evening (e.g., Ps 90.5-6), in the hot wind of divine

anger.

Paper Proposal

ETSE

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TITLE: YHWH IS A FARMER: Metaphor as Biblical Theology

PRÉCIS: Scripture rarely presents its theological claims in logical or organized fashion, but rather makes relatively few overt or direct statements, relying instead on indirection, using metaphor-truth "at a slant".

Biblical divine metaphors occur within "metaphor complexes", which are constellations of metaphors that individually describe, e.g., YHWH himself; humanity (often, but not always, his chosen people); salvation; and judgment. In combination these complexes depend on and reveal less obvious relationships between these aspects of reality.

This paper briefly explores what is perhaps the most highly developed of these metaphor complexes-YHWH IS A FARMER³⁵

-and shows how it unifies a complex web of metaphor that explicitly

36

encompasses nearly every major aspect of reality. It also demonstrates what is perhaps most striking about biblical metaphor complexes: the "Great Inversion" occasioned by the incarnation.

FURTHER

COMMENT:

Since the publication of Bullinger's *Figures of Speech in the Bible* (at least), handbooks of biblical interpretation often explain metaphors and their interpretation as though they were ornaments added to the text in order to make it more colourful, interesting, emotionally satisfying, or otherwise "more"; they are little more than puzzles for the student to learn how to solve. The work of Johnson, Lakoff, Turner, et al. suggests that conceptual metaphors structure our experience and understanding of reality, so that the metaphors become the truth that they illuminate.

Without trying to claim too much, this paper may imply a different way of thinking about the nature of Scripture, the nature of its communication, and the task of biblical theology.

This paper builds upon, and to some extent depends upon, my paper, "The Deceit of Metaphor: The Revelation of the Divine Name in Ex 3" (ETS Eastern 2004). Where that paper

was specific, however, aimed at answering the question of the meaning of the enigmatic 'ehyeh ' a šer 'ehyeh (Ex 3.14), this paper attempts to set forth the entire complex built around the conceptual metaphor YHWH IS A FARMER.

35

The use of "small caps" for conceptual metaphors is adopted from Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lakoff & Turner 1989, et al.

36

"Explicitly" means that these developments can be read in the biblical text, they are not merely logical or inferred

conclusions. 22

Appendix V

In the first, Gerard Manley Hopkins reflects on the opening verses of Jeremiah 12, where Jeremiah compares himself to a dry, barren plant and his enemies the false prophets to fruitful plants:

Justus quidem tu es, Domine, si disputem tecum; verumtamen
justa loquar ad te: quare via impiorum prosperatur? &c. (Jerem. xii 1)

Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend
With thee; but, sir, so what I plead is just.
Why do sinners' ways prosper? and why must
Disappointment all I endeavor end?
Wert thou my enemy, O thou my friend, 5
How wouldst thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost,
Defeat, thwart me? Oh, the sots and thralls of lust
Do in spare hours more thrive than I that spend,
Sir, life upon thy cause. See, banks and brakes
Now, leavèd how thick! lacèd they are again 10
With fretty chervil, look, and fresh wind shakes
Them; birds build-but not I build; no, but strain,
Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes.
Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889; 1918)