GRANDEUR AND GRACE:
GOD'S TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE
IN PSALM 113

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Psalm 113 is a rich treasury for all. Literally, it is a masterpiece of semantical, syntactical, and structural development. The Spirit of God inspired this psalmist to combine beauty with bounty, resulting in a highly functional piece of art that amplifies the psalm's theological substance and applicational summons. Liturgically, this hymn of praise has played a significant role in both Passover week and Passion week. Applicationally, it has served as a well of refreshment for needy people throughout its history. Theologically, the psalm's message of God's transcendence and immanence provides substance to the promise of refreshment. Today Psalm 113 continues to invite the people of God to come and drink deeply.

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A TRANSLATION

1 Praise the LORD!
O servants of the LORD, praise Him!
Praise the name of the LORD!

2 Let the name of the LORD be blessed
both now and forever!

3 From east to west,
let the name of the LORD be praised!

4 The LORD is high above all nations;
His glory rises above the heavens.

5 Who is like the LORD our God,
who is enthroned on high,

6 who condescends to care for things
in the heavens and upon the earth?

1 This essay was originally presented at the Forty-first Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in San Diego, CA, in November 1989 and has been adapted for incorporation in this issue of The Master's Seminary Journal.
7 He lifts up the downtrodden from the dust;
8 He raises the destitute from the dump
to make them dwell with nobles,
   with the nobles of His people.
9 He makes the woman barren in household to dwell
   as a joyful mother of sons.
Praise the LORD!

INTRODUCTION

One reason for the spiritual poverty of some Christians is their ignorance of or failure to reflect on who God is. In so doing, they have robbed themselves of a vital source of help and encouragement. No better solution to their problem is available than a careful study of Psalm 113.

"Presence-theology" discussions and debates about whether or not in the OT the LORD is ever genuinely conceived of as dwelling on earth have generally been counter-productive in the edification of the church. Finite and fallible deliberations, energized by overly simplistic assumptions, have both impugned key texts and skewed their balanced theology. Conclusions that see contradiction rather than complementary truths have resulted, especially in reference to God's transcendence and immanence. Consequently, this investigation will undertake a long-overdue examination of the psalm's data without recourse to critical agenda.

Psalm 113 provides a natural theological entrance into two corollary truths about God, His transcendence and His immanence. As in other texts, God's attributes of greatness and goodness, His characteristics of grandeur and grace, harmoniously blend in a theologi-

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cal duet. The psalm is an excellent avenue to a deeper appreciation of God's attributes.

LITERARY ENHANCEMENTS

Before proceeding with an exposition of the psalm, a look at how its two great themes are enhanced by a variety of stylistic features is beneficial.

Semantical

Word-plays on the roots רָם (rwm, "to be high, exalted") and יָשָׁב (ysb, "to dwell") magnify this psalm's astounding development. God's rank, appropriately summarized by the qal forms רָם (ram, "he is exalted") and לֶשֶׁב (lasebet, "to dwell") in vv. 4a and 5b, does not inhibit God's ability to rescue those in distress, as well depicted in the corresponding hiphil forms יָרָם (yarim, "to raise, lift up"), לֶחָוסִי (lehosibi, "to make [them] dwell"), and מָזָּסִי (mosibi, "to make [her] dwell, abide") (i.e. vv. 7b, 8a, 9a). This exalted One mercifully and characteristically exalts lowly and exasperated people. He who is transcendent enables them to transcend their stifling circumstances.

Syntactical

Syntactical subtleties also accentuate the psalm's theological motifs. For example, the introductory crescendo of hallelūs (i.e., "praises") (v. 1) establishes the priority of praise to Yahweh. Then in the next two verses an inverse parallelism of four lines conveys the propriety of praise. The pual participle מְבוֹרָךְ (meborak, "blessed")

3 Cf. Leslie C. Allen, Psalms 101-150 (Word Biblical Commentary; Waco, TX: Word, 1983) 100.
4 Most interpreters construe מָזָּסִי as a hiphil participle from בַשׁ (i.e. "who transforms ...").
5 A bridge to this chiasm is provided by the מַהְוָה מָזוּשִׁים at the end of v. 1, since occurrences of מַהְוָה מָזוּשִׁים serve as book ends for vv. 2-3.
from יְּרָבָּע (brk, "to bless") in v. 2a is paralleled by its counterpart מַעְרַל (mehullal, "to be praised") in v. 3b. Correspondingly, the צָד (cad, "unto, until") . . . מִן (min, "from") prepositional combination of v. 2b is immediately followed by its counterpart in v. 3a.

Verse 4, containing explicit assertions of God's transcendence, is highlighted by progressions and parallels. The abbreviated יה (yh, "the LORD") of v. 1a, the יהוה (yhwh, "the LORD") of v. 1b, and the circumlocution יהוה sem yhwh ("the name of the LORD") of vv. 1c, 2a, and 3b anticipate the exalted one, yhwh, who is the subject of v. 4a. The Tetragrammaton is followed by another significant circumlocution in v. 4b, כֹּבָד רוֹא (kebodo, "His glory").

Especially important in v. 4 are the corresponding phrases with צָל (cal, "above"), a preposition eminently suited to convey the concept of transcendence. An upward and outward movement from over/above all people/nations (v. 4a) to over/above the heavens (v. 4b) emphasizes the concept, possibly creating the impression that God is far removed from the cares of His creatures and creation. Nevertheless, the widening concentric circles of transcendence subsequently reverse, and the reality of the LORD's immanence emerges (vv. 6-9). This "reversal" is dramatically portrayed through a downward and inward movement (v. 6): He makes low to care for matters not only "in the heavens" but also "upon the earth." This reality is vividly 6 7

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6 יְּרָבָּע is part of a repertoire of Old Testament praise synonyms; cf. הלל, זָמַר, נַדֵל, שָׁדָי, יְהִי, etc.

7 The כֹּבָד רוֹא of v. 4b may be construed as standing at the head of a parallel noun clause or as also governed by the כֹּבָד of v. 4a. Concerning the latter option, Buttenwieser translates, "His glory transcends . . .," arguing that "ram is a case of zeugma and is to be construed as a predicate also with kebodo" (Moses Buttenwieser, The Psalms Chronologically Treated with a New Translation [New York: KTAV, 1969] 348).


10 Besides the impacting reversal of order (i.e. v. 4: earthly, heavenly; v. 6: heavenly, earthly), the shift from the preposition צָל in v. 4 to occurrences of כֹּבָד in v. 6 contributes to the change in mood (i.e. from separation to involvement).
documented by selected examples of intervention (vv. 7-9).

The rhetorical question\(^\text{11}\) of v. 5 is pivotal. Patterns of the basic "who-is-like" formula recur throughout the Old Testament (e.g. Exod 15:11; Deut 3:24; Ps 35:10; Isa 40:12 ff.; 46:5; etc.) as a part of theological affirmations and in personal names.\(^\text{12}\) Both usages serve as reminders of the LORD'S uniqueness.\(^\text{13}\) There is no one like Yahweh!

In the middle of v. 5 comes a shift of emphasis from being to doing. Yet the articular causative participles of vv. 5b and 6a still function substantively in apposition with the LORD 'elohenu, "the LORD our God") (v. 5a).\(^\text{14}\) Furthermore, the tight apposition of . . . hammagebihi, "to make high, exalt") (v. 5b) with . . . hamma spili, "to make low, condescend" )\(^\text{15}\) (v. 6a) is extraordinary. The LORD who literally "makes high to dwell" (i.e. a poignant summary of His transcendence) is the very one who "makes low to see," that is, to care for the needs of His subjects (i.e. an arresting introduction to His immanence). By this stark apposition transcendence and immanence join hands in complementary manifestation of the incomparable one (i.e. v. 5a).

\(^\text{11}\) Obviously, when proper attention is paid to the immediate context, "there is . . . much more than rhetoric in the question of verse 5, ‘Who is like the Lord our God?’" (Derek Kidner, Psalms 73-150 [Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1975] 402).

\(^\text{12}\) Survey BDB, pp. 567-68, for the proper names built upon this theological formula.


\(^\text{14}\) Through a less formal syntactical relationship, even the anarthrous participles of vv. 7-9 continue as vital links in a strong theological chain.

Depending upon emphases on form and/or content, the psalm may be divided differently into major sections. Most structural analysts, however, prefer a threefold division. A few of these end divisions after vv. 1 and 3 (i.e. vv. 1, 2-3, 4-9), while the majority prefer the following strophes: vv. 1-3, 4-6, 7-9.

Kidner's "high above ..." (i.e. vv. 1-4)/"far down ..." (i.e. vv. 5-9) separation represents a twofold division based largely on thematic considerations. This breakdown naturally emphasizes the psalm's overarching pedagogy: there is "nothing too great for Him, no-one too small." A shift to the interrogative motif at v. 5 lends some weight to this twofold division (i.e. coming between vv. 4 and 5). The following propositional outline attempts to integrate the psalm's various literary phenomena with its two thematic divisions:

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16 For an excellent survey of the options, see Allen, *Psalms 101-150* 99-100.
20 Cf. the strophic and poetic analyses of K. K. Sacon, "A Methodological Remark on Exegesis and Preaching of Psalm 113," *Nihon no Shingaku* 25 (1986) 26-42 (see Old Testament Abstracts 10/1 [Feb. 1987] 65); Peter C. Craigie, "Psalm 113," *Interpretation* 39/1 (Jan. 1985) 70-74. Craigie astutely develops the strophes in reverse order because "we will only be able to respond honestly to the opening summons to praise when we have perceived God's merciful dealings with human beings (vv. 7-9) and his majesty in heaven and earth (vv. 4-6)" (ibid., 71).
21 Kidner, Psalms 73-150 401.
22 I.e. Kidner's title for Psalm 113 (ibid.).
Two choruses of thanksgiving flow from primary theological incentives.

1A. (vv. 1-4) The first chorus of thanksgiving flows from the incentive of God's transcendence.
1B. (vv. 1-3) The worshipful response to God's transcendence
   1C. (v. 1) The exhortation:
      1D. Its reverberation: the threefold *hallel*
      2D. Its responsibility: the servants/worshippers of the LORD
      3D. Its Recipient: the LORD
   2C. (vv. 2-3) The extent:
      1D. (v. 2) considered temporally
      2D. (v. 3) considered geographically
2B. (v. 4) The worshipful recognition of God's transcendence
   1C. (v. 4a) He transcends all that is earthly
   2C. (v. 4b) He transcends all that is heavenly
2A. (vv. 5-9) The second chorus of thanksgiving flows from the incentive of God's immanence.
1B. (vv. 5-6) The interrogatives develop His immanence
   1C. (v. 5) The interrogatives of v. 5 reveal that God's immanence is uncompromising (i.e. it does not come at the expense of His transcendence)\(^{24}\)
   2C. (v. 6) The interrogative of v. 6 reveals that God's immanence is unassuming
3B. (vv. 7-9) The illustrations dramatize His immanence

\(^{24}\) This particular reminder of an uncompromised transcendence at the outset of a consideration of our LORD'S immanence* is supported by scriptural parallels. The most obvious example is Isaiah 57:15:

1A. He has a transcendent manifestation of glory above (Isaiah in introducing the LORD focuses upon His transcendence)
1B. He is separate in position: "Thus says the high and lifted up One"
2B. His is separate in existence: "who perpetually exists"
3B. He is separate in character: "whose name is holy"
2A. He has an immanent manifestation of grace below (the LORD in speaking focuses upon His own immanence)
  *1B. He is near but without compromise: "I dwell in a high and holy place"
  2B. He is near with grace: "and with the crushed and lowly in spirit"
  3B. He is near with purpose: "in order to revive ..."

\(^{25}\) The ultimate proof of this came in the Incarnation.
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1C. (vv. 7-8) The general illustration of God's concern for the downtrodden

2C. (v. 9) The special illustration of God's consolation for the childless

BACKGROUND

Another helpful preliminary to the psalm's exposition is an awareness of its background. Leslie conjectured that Psalm 113 "is a liturgical choir hymn which was sung antiphonally by two Levitical choirs."26 The specific details of its early usage are unknown, although "the setting was clearly cultic."27

That it came to be recognized as "a classical Hebrew hymn"28 is confirmed by its inclusion in the "Hallel" (i.e. Psalms 113-118) which "is recited on all major biblical festivals, with the exception of Rosh Ha-Shanah and the Day of Atonement."29 This grouping "is also recited during the Passover seder service (Tosef., Suk. 3:2), when it is known as Hallel Mizri (‘Egyptian Hallel’) because of the exodus from Egypt which the seder commemorates." The latter use probably relates to "The Last Supper":31

It is interesting to recall that probably just as Jesus and the disciples sang a hymn after they had eaten the Passover meal (Matt. 26:30)–almost certainly Pss. 115-118–so most likely before the meal they had sung Pss. 113-114.32

Craigie's summary helps to complete the historical survey of Psalm 113

27 Allen, Psalms 101-150 99.
28 Craigie, "Psalm 113" 70.
32 Leslie, The Psalms 192-93.
in worship:
With the passage of centuries, the psalm became more closely associated with the celebration of Passover. Indeed, in the modern Passover Haggadah, Psalm 113 is still recited in the context of the blessing of the cup of wine, prior to the participation in the Passover meal as such. And in Christianity, Psalm 113 was traditionally designated as one of the Proper Psalms for evening worship on Easter Day, thus linking the Christian use of the psalm to its more ancient Jewish antecedents. In both Judaism and Christianity, Psalm 113 was a special psalm, employed in the worship of God at those times in the liturgical calendar when praise par excellence should be addressed to the Almighty.  

Verses 7-9 of the psalm have been seen as "a connecting link between the Song of Hannah and the Magnificat of the Virgin." In fact, Craigie calls 1 Samuel 2:1-10 the prehistory of Psalm 113:7-9 and Luke 1:46-55 its posthistory.  

EXPOSITION

The psalm opens and closes with הֵלֵלוּ יְהֹאָדָע (halelu yah, "praise the LORD"), a fitting boundary, since

Psalm 113 bids all men to let the praise of God resound all the world over and motivates the appeal with the declaration that this incomparable God, transcending the heavens in glory, is the Sovereign of the world who controls the affairs of men below from his throne on

33 Craigie, "Psalm 113" 70.
35 Craigie, "Psalm 113" 71.
36 See Sawn in OTA 10/1 (Feb 1987) 65. There is no solid evidence for suggesting that both occurrences are later liturgical additions (e.g. Buttenweiser, The Psalms 348). Additionally, the placement of the final הֵלֵלוּ יְהֹאָדָע before Ps. 114 (LXX 113) in the LXX is incorrect. Consequently, two of the twenty-four occurrences of the formula הֵלֵלוּ יְהֹאָדָע bracket this great hymn.
Outside this psalm, the reverberating invitations to praise in v. 1 most closely parallel Ps 135:1.38

Selected from an arsenal of worship synonyms,39 "praise") is especially suited to elicit jubilant praise40 from the community.41 The vocative construction הָלָל לַבְּנֵי יְהוָה ("servants of the LORD")42 is a designation for the "worshipping community,"43 "the loyal among Israel."44 It is also noteworthy that the

37 Buttenwieser, The Psalms 348.
38 If the hallel pattern of Ps 113:1 is designated as a, b, c, then the corresponding hallel exhortations of Ps. 135:1 reflect an a, c, b order.
39 For some of the most important ones, note H. Ringgren, "hallel hll I and II," TDOT 3:406; and L. J. Coppes, "hallel II," TWOT 1:217.
40 TDOT 3:404; Coppes adds, from an overall assessment of הָלָל, that "belief and joy are inextricably intertwined" (TWOT 1:217).
41 Ringgren notes that the summons to praise with הָלָל is almost always in the plural being associated with the community, while הָלָל לַבְּנֵי is generally singular being associated with the individual (TDOT 3:408). Cf. Coppes' discussion of the propriety of such a corporate response (TWOT 1:217).
42 LXX tradition takes הָלָל as the object of הָלָל לַבְּנֵי, thereby construing the as an independent vocative. (i.e. as if it were לַבְּנֵי כָּבֵד). As Allen notes in the reference to this tradition, "Probably at some stage abbreviation . . . has been assumed" [emphasis mine] (Psalms 101-150 99).
44 A. Cohen, The Psalms, Soncino books of the Bible (London: Soncino, 1945) 378; in the light of v. 3, Cohen widens the scope of inclusion, commenting "the call is made to all, Israelites and Gentiles, who acknowledge God" (ibid.). On the other hand, some would restrict הָלָל לַבְּנֵי to the Levitical circle. Both Allen and Anderson entertain this option; however, they commendably opt for the more comprehensive interpretation (see Psalms 101-150 99, and Psalms 2:780, respectively).
root דְּבַר ("to serve, worship") denotes both service and worship, emphasizing "the privileges of the worshippers as well as their duties and responsibilities."  

"The name of the LORD" (הֵרָא שֵם [‘et—sem yhwh]) is the object of the third echoing imperative from הִלָּל. Remembering that sem "in the OT often included existence, character, and reputation," the name of the LORD "signifies the whole self-disclosure of God." Passages such as Exodus 33:19-23 and 34:5-7 indicate that sem, when applied to God, encompasses the totality of His attributes and actions.

The origin of the Tetragrammaton יְהֹוָה is in question. "While no consensus exists, the name is generally thought to be a verbal form derived from the root הָיוָה, later הָיוָה, ‘to be at hand, exist (phenomenally), come to pass.” Significantly, "the consensus of modern scholarship supports the biblical text [cf. Exod. 3:14] in associating the name of Yahweh with the root הָיוָה..."  

The jussive exhortation נַחֲלָת (yehi) standing at the head of vv. 2-3 (i.e. "May/Let the name of the LORD be . . .") centers on the priority of praise, and the subordinate pual participles in these two verses with their compound prepositional phrases combine to introduce the propriety of universal praise. Indeed, "no less response in space or time is worthy of him."

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45 E.g. its occurrences in 2 Kgs 10:18-24 and Jesus' association of the twin concepts in Matt 4:10 (referring to Deut 6:13).
48 Ibid.; cf. Delitzsch, Psalms 3:204-05. Anderson corroborates, noting that "שֵם יְהֹוָה" "comprises primarily the whole self-revelation of Yahweh to his people; the phrase may be a circumlocution for ‘Yahweh'" (Psalms 2:780).
51 Allen, Psalms 101-150 101.
Blessing formulas are common throughout ancient Near Eastern literature. The Old Testament is saturated with them (for an identical parallel to Ps 113:2a, see Job 1:21). Based on the previous *hallel* and a subsequent parallelism with מֶהוּלָל (mehullal, "being praised") in v. 3b, יְהִי שֵם יהוה מְבוֹרָק ("let the name of the LORD be blessed") stands as "an expression synonymous with 'Praise the LORD.'" Such praise is to be unrestricted in its duration (i.e. מָשָׁה יָדְרָם תּוֹלֵל [meattah wead—olam]). Literally, it should continue "from now and forever," i.e. "forever, without ceasing."

In the middle of the inverted parallelism of vv. 3.-4, a spatial focus replaces the emphasis on time: מִמְּמִזְרָח—סֶם אֵד—מָבוֹרָק ("from the sun's place of rising to its entrance," "throughout the world from east to west." (v. 4a). Concerning מֶהוּלָל (mehullal, "being praised") (v. 3b), "the part. pual describes God as 'worthy of praise.'" The following assertions of His transcendence and immanence support the praiseworthiness of His name always and everywhere.

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52 For a survey, see J. Scharbert, תְּרֵם, " TDOT 2:284-88; for a condensed presentation, see T. N. Oswalt, תְּרֵם, " TWOT 1:132-33.
53 Anderson, Psalms 2:780.
54 For occurrences of this identical compound, cf. Pss 115:18; 121:8; 125:2; 131:3; Isa 9:6; 59:21; Micah 4:7; and for similar compounds, cf. Pss 41:14; 90:2; 103:17; 106:48; Jer 7:7; 1 Chr 16:36; 29:10.
55 BDB, 763.
56 Anderson, Psalms 2:780.
57 Cf. BDB, 99-100, 280-81. See also this compound prepositional phrase in Ps 50:1; Mal 1:11.
59 Cf the occurrences of the pual participle from לִלְךָ in Pss. 18:4; 48:2; 96:4; 145:3.
60 J. Herrmann and H. Greeven, "אֶנֹךְ מִעָלָה," TDNT 2:786; for some discussion see TDNT 3:409.
One of the major spheres of usage of רומ (rum, "to be high, exalted") (cf. ram at the head of v. 4) is "height as symbolic of positive notions such as glory and exaltation." Besides v. 4a, several passages corroborate God's exaltation, e.g., Ps 46:11; 99:2; 138:6; Isa 6:1; 57:15; etc. Furthermore, the prepositional phrase חל-כל-גוים (cal-kol-goyim, "above all nations") provides greater resolution to this portrait of God's transcendence. When attention is fixed upon the exalted LORD, all the goyim pale into insignificance (cf., e.g., Ps 46:11; Isa 40:17).

The LORD'S kabod (v. 4b), like His sem, refers to "God's self-disclosure," often standing for "Yahweh himself." It is that very "glory," representing all He is and does, that surpasses the highest heavens.

These affirmations of transcendence (v. 4) are a powerful incentive for the invited praise (vv. 1-3). Although the order is switched, similar choruses in Psalms 57:6, 12 and 108:6 also observe the priority and propriety of praise: "Be exalted above the heavens, 0 God; and Your glory, above all the earth!"

The implied response to the rhetorical questions in v. 5 is "No one!" Not one compares with "the LORD, our God." It seems that

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62 Note the interesting juxtaposition of the roots רומ and שמם in Ps 138:6; cf. Ps 113:4a with 113:6a ff.
63 Note the parallelism between קד and the root נעש in both of these verses from Isaiah.
64 For some pertinent observations, see Robert Baker Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) 35.
65 Cf. חל-כל-גוים in Ps. 99:2.
67 Anderson, Psalms 2:781.
68 For a concise summary of the conjectural emendations and transpositions which have been suggested in vv. 5-6 of the MT, see Allen, Psalms 101-150 99, n. 6a. His first observation (i.e. no transpositions) is preferable, his last is permissible, and the others are unacceptable.
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'אֵל אָבֵנוּ ('elohenu, "our God") has covenantal overtones69 and anticipates the gracious interventions of vv. 7-9.70 Yet it must be remembered that this personal God "makes high to dwell" (v. 4a).71 Expressed in the participle מָצֹא (hammagbihi, v. 5b), the verb גֶּב (gabah, "to be high, make high"72), a synonym of רֻם (rum) and an antonym of לִפְנֵי (sapal, "be low"),73 "is often used to describe the greatness, height, or high position of a person. ..."74 Gabah combines idiomatically with the complementary infinitive לְאָבֵט (from בָּט) [yasab, "to dwell"] in a vivid statement of the LORD's exalted enthronement: "who is enthroned on high."75

Even though v. 6a is conceptually antithetical to v. 5b, it is also syntactically appositional.76 Delitzsch captures the apparent irony of a transcendent/immanent God:

He is the incomparable One who has set up His throne in the height, but at the same time directs His gaze deep downwards ... in the heavens and upon the earth, i.e. nothing in all the realm of the creatures that are beneath Him escapes His sight, and nothing is so low that it remains unnoticed by Him; on the contrary, it is just that which is lowly, as the following strophe presents to us in a series of

70 Consequently, amidst a recapitulation of God's transcendence (v. 5), the stage is set for a concentration upon His immanence (vv. 6-9).
71 On the hiphil expressing action in a definite direction see, once again, GKC 350 (para. 114n).
73 Ibid., 2:357-58; note the textual documentation cited for both assertions.
74 Ibid., 2:358; concerning the theological significance of גֶּב, Hamilton appropriately notes that "God's position is said to be 'on high' (Ps. 113:5; Job 22:12) and his ways are 'higher' than those of mankind (Isa. 55:9)" (V. P. Hamilton, "גֶּב," TWOT 1:146).
76 See the discussion above under syntactical enhancements.
portraits so to speak, that is the special object of His regard.\textsuperscript{77}

Consequently, while the \textit{hammagbihi} of v. 5b trumpets exaltation, the \textit{hammaspili} of v. 6a whispers condescension.\textsuperscript{78}

The complementary infinitive \textit{חָמְסִי} (\textit{lirot}, "to see"), from the common \textit{חָאשָׁ} (\textit{ra’ah}), carries an uncommon theological significance. In contexts such as this and Gen 22:8, 14; 29:32; 1 Sam 1:11;\textsuperscript{79} 2 Sam 16:12; Ps 106:44, \textit{ra’ah} means to look at with interest, kindness, and helpfulness.\textsuperscript{80} Used here to confirm the LORD's intervention, it is acceptably rendered, "Who condescends to care for"\textsuperscript{81} (things) "in the heavens and upon the earth." His gracious condescension more than compensates for life's hard conditions (e.g. vv. 7-9).

The anarthrous causative participles of vv. 7-9 (i.e. [\textit{megimi}, \textit{raising up}], [\textit{yarim}, "lifting up"], [\textit{mosibi}, "causing to dwell"]) illuminate His merciful immanence via forceful illustrations. In vv. 7-8 a general but extremely significant illustration of God's active concern for the downtrodden arouses the reader's amazement first. Then another unexpected example follows: God's consolation for the childless (v. 9). In reference to both illustrations, Allen recalls that "the third strophe [i.e. vv. 7-9] uses 1 Samuel 1-2 to illustrate this grace in terms of the providential reversal Yahweh brings about, raising the socially underprivileged to positions of respect."\textsuperscript{82}

Kidner appropriately digresses regarding the theological ramifications of this psalm's great climax:

Consciously . . . those verses look back to the song of Hannah,

\textsuperscript{77} Delitzsch, Psalms 3:205.

\textsuperscript{78} In reference to \textit{לי酚}, Austel notes that "though the idea ‘be low’ in the physical sense underlies the verb and its derivatives, its most important use is in the figurative sense of ‘abasement,’ ‘humbling,’ humility’" (H. J. Austel, "לי酚," \textit{TWOT} 2:950). An examination of the roots \textit{רומל} and \textit{רומל} in PS 138:6a would be appropriate here.

\textsuperscript{79} In light of these particular texts, note the appropriateness of the illustration in Ps 113:9.

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{BDB}, 907-8.

\textsuperscript{81} Cf. Anderson, \textit{Psalms} 2:781.

\textsuperscript{82} Allen, \textit{Psalms} 101-150 101.
which they quote almost exactly (cf. 7, 8a with 1 Sa. 2:8). Hence the sudden reference to the childless woman who becomes a mother (9), for this was Hannah's theme. With such a background the psalm not only makes its immediate point, that the Most High cares for the most humiliated, but brings to mind the train of events that can follow from such an intervention. Hannah's joy became all Israel's; Sarah's became the world's. And the song of Hannah was to be outshone one day by the Magnificat. The spectacular events of our verses 7 and 8 are not greater than this domestic one; the most important of them have sprung from just such an origin.

The לְדָי (dal, "poor") and the קְבִּיָּא (ebyon, "needy"), normally social outcasts, are the focal point of God's bold intervention in vv. 7-8. Although "the dal was not numbered among dependents who have no property," he still represented "those who lack." The plight of the 'ebyon in the Old Testament generally seems to be more aggravated: "The destitution of the ‘ebyon is to be inferred from the whole tenor of the appropriate psalms: it manifests itself in affliction, illness, loneliness, and nearness to death." Therefore, he represents those who are materially, socially, and spiritually in need. God really

83 Kidner, Psalms 73-150 402. There are no compelling reasons to construe these illustrations corporately as a reference to Zion according to targumic tradition (e.g. Cohen, Psalms 378; and Buttenwieser, The Psalms 248).

84 For other combinations of לְדָי and קְבִּיָּא in various contextual settings, see 1 Sam 2:8; Isa 14:30; 25:4; Amos 4:1; 8:6; Pss 72:13; 82:4; Prov 14:31; Job 5:15-16; etc. Commenting upon this particular combination in our psalm, Botterweck concludes that "according to the context, the dal and the ‘ebyon belong to the same group as the feeble, hungry, poor, and godly" (P. J. Botterweck, "نموذج", TDOT 1:40).

85 For a good review of the humiliation of such people along with God's interest in them, see W. Grundmann, "ταπείνος", TDNT 8:9-10.


87 L. J. Coppes, "לְדָי", TWOT 1:190. Coppes concludes that "we might consider dal as referring to one of the lower classes in Israel" (ibid.).

88 TDOT 1:36; Botterweck's whole survey is illuminating (ibid., 36-37).

89 Cf. L. J. Coppes, "نموذج", TWOT 1:4-5.
In the parallelisms of v. 7, the *dal* was associated with the *apar* ("dust," "an emblem of lowly estate;" and the *ebhyon* with the *aspot* ("ash-heap, refuse-heap, dung-hill," certainly "an emblem of deepest poverty and desertion.") Anderson briefly describes the imagery of such an ancient garbage dump as this when he comments,

> It was the rubbish heap outside the village or town, which had become the pitiful shelter of the poor, the outcasts, and the diseased (cf. Lam. 4:5; also Job 2:8). There they begged, ransacked the refuse dump to find some scraps of food, and slept.

But the LORD mercifully extricates the needy from (cf. the two occurrences of *min* ["from"]) such dire circumstances. He "lifts up, raises" them from their predicament. The lifted up and exalted One (vv. 4-5) "can make men high in rank (i.e. 'exalt' them ...)." Verse 8 confirms that by its progression from extrication to exaltation.

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92 *BDB*, 1046.
95 Cf. *BDB*, 878-79, 927; the hiphils from *mu* and *qet* are near synonyms as shown by their parallelism here. Interestingly, since *mu* is synonymously related to *mu* it not only relates semantically to God's description as *mu* in v. 4 (cf. the previous discussion under semantical enhancements), but also conceptually, to the root *mu* in v. 5 (cf. R. Hentschke, "*Qet*," *TDOT* 2:357-58, for a general discussion of these synonyms). In reference to *mu* with God as subject, Copes observes that "the word may denote his creative, saving, and judging action" (L. J. Copes, "*mu*," *TWOT* 2:792); cf. A. Oepke, "`egiρω," *TDNT* 2:334.
96 A. Bowling, "*vot*," *TWOT* 2:838.
The LORD's intention is "to cause [them] to dwell,"\textsuperscript{97} "to make (them) sit" (i.e. \textit{lehosibi})\textsuperscript{98} in fellowship with \textit{nedibim} \textsuperscript{99} (nobles, princes), those of "exalted material and social position."\textsuperscript{100} Verse 8 is therefore "a figure for elevation to the highest rank and dignity,"\textsuperscript{101} and compared with the plight of v. 7, it "is meant to bring out by way of contrast the magnitude of divine power and grace."\textsuperscript{102}

Barrenness (v. 9) in the cultural context of the Old Testament was a pitiful status.\textsuperscript{103} "The lot of a childless wife must have been hard (cf. 1 Sam. 1:6), for barrenness was often regarded as a disgrace and a curse from God (cf. Gen. 16:2, 20:18; 1 Sam. 1:5; Lk. 1:25 . . .)"\textsuperscript{104} It is no wonder that, from a woman's perspective, a barren womb was among the insatiable things in Proverbs 30:15-17 (cf. Rachel's agonizing cry in Gen 30:1). From a man's perspective, it occasioned ultimate frustration as indicated by Abraham's response in Gen 15:2 and Jacob's in Gen 30:2.

\textsuperscript{97} BDB, 443.
\textsuperscript{98} Most emend the final \textit{y} of the MT to \textit{l} based largely on LXX and Syriac tradition (e.g. GKC, 254 [par. 90n]), but there are other options: Dahood takes it as a "third-person suffix -\textit{y}" (\textit{Psalms III}: 101-150 130); Delitzsch says, "ver. 8 shows how our Ps. cxiii in particular delights in this ancient i, where it is even affixed to the infinitive as an ornament" (\textit{Psalms 3:204}); and Buttenwieser argues, "Though Gr. reads \textit{lehoshibo} & the reading of the Hebrew is equally correct: according to this reading the objects of vs. 7 are to be construed also with \textit{lehoshibi}, being a case of brachylogy" (\textit{The Psalms 249}).
\textsuperscript{99} The two occurrences of \textit{Mfi} in v. 8 balance the two occurrences of 7 in v. 7. \textit{Mfi} in such contexts emphasizes "fellowship and companionship" (\textit{BDB}, 767).
\textsuperscript{100} L. J. Coppes, "\textit{bdanA}," \textit{TWOT} 2:555. His brief summary of the major synonyms of \textit{Mfi} is quite informative (ibid.).
\textsuperscript{101} Kirkpatrick, \textit{The Book of Psalms 679}.
\textsuperscript{102} \textit{TDOT} 3:228.
\textsuperscript{103} Cf other occurrences of the adj. \textit{rqAfA} in Gen 11:30; 25:21; 29:31; Judg 13:2-3; 1 Sam 2:5; and Job 24:21.
\textsuperscript{104} Anderson, \textit{Psalms 2:782}.
Although the syntactical options of v. 9 are diverse, the overarching impact of its illustration is incontestable. The gracious LORD "makes the woman barren in the household to dwell as a joyful mother of sons," i.e. "he grants her security." Consequently, He not only prospers the poor (v. 8), but He also blesses the barren (v. 9).

The appropriate הָלָל יְהוָה (halela yah, "praise the LORD") closes the psalm.

What a majestic God Psalm 113 reveals! Yet his grandeur does not nullify His grace, and conversely, His grace does not undermine His grandeur:

The bridge which man himself cannot throw across to reach the remote, transcendent God nevertheless exists; it is built by God himself so that in spite of all the disparity between God and man a communion exists between them which enables man to believe that the God who is far off is also the God of the here and now. What remains a mystery to the mind of man is revealed to the eyes of faith: that the exalted God not only looks down upon men but inclines graciously to them.

CONCLUSION

Since God is supreme in the universe for all time and yet has still shown concern for His creatures, how should His children respond? Certainly a reverent gratitude is in order, as is a God-consciousness that pervades every activity and attitude. In times of need, reminders of a transcendent God's involvement in human life can be important sources of strength. These and other lessons derive from Psalm 113, a gem among gems. Disclosures about God that arise from the exquisite beauty of the language should be adorning the Bride of Christ. Furthermore, preachers and teachers of God's word should shine their expositional floodlights on this Scripture more regularly. God's infinite

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105 E.g. BDB, 443; Buttenweiser, The Psalms 349; Delitzsch, Psalms 3:206; etc.
106 Again, note the causative verbal from יָבֵא (i.e. מְבָא, 9; cf. לִבָּא, v. 8).
107 Anderson, Psalms 2:782.
greatness and inexplicable grace need more attention. The richly blessed should voice spontaneous thanksgiving and praise to Him who reigns in heaven and yet responds to human needs.

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