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.

1This 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.
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?
7 He lifts up the downtrodden from the dust; 
   He raises the destitute from the dump
8 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 theological 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 wr (<wr, "to be high, exalted") and bvy (yb, "to

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dwell") magnify this psalm's astounding development. God's rank, appropriately summarized by the qal forms */rm* ("he is exalted") and */lebet* ("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 */yrm* ("to raise, lift up"), */yyoh* ("to make [them] dwell"), and */yyom* ("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 hallels (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 */Ob* (mbrk, "blessed") from */rb* (brk, "to bless") in v. 2a is paralleled by its counterpart */lh* (mhulll, "to be praised") in v. 3b. Correspondingly, the */d* (#ad, "unto, until") . . . */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 *hy* (yh, "the LORD") of v. 1a, the *hwhy* (ywh, "the LORD") of v. 1b, and the circumlocution *hwhy < if ywh* ("the name of the LORD") of vv. 1c, 2a, and 3b anticipate the exalted one, ywh, who is the subject of v. 4a. The Tetragrammaton is followed by another significant circumlocution in v. 4b, *odob* (kbd, "His glory").

Especially important in v. 4 are the corresponding phrases with */l* (#al, "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

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3Cf. Leslie C. Allen, Psalms 101-150 (Word Biblical Commentary; Waco, TX: Word, 1983) 100.
4Most interpreters construe */yyom* as a hiphil participle from */bvy*; contra. David Freedman, "Psalms 113 and the Song of Hannah," Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1980) 249, who suggests it derives from */bwv* (i.e. "who transforms . . .").
5A bridge to this chiasm is provided by the */hwhy < if/ at the end of v. 1, since occurrences of */hwhy < if* serve as book ends for vv. 2-3.
*rb* is part of a repertoire of Old Testament praise synonyms; cf. *llh*, *hdy*, *nr*, *ryv*, *ldg*, *wr*, *rmz*, etc.
7The */odob* of v. 4b may be construed as standing at the head of a parallel noun clause or as also governed by the */< if* 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).
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 documented by selected examples of intervention (vv. 7-9).

The rhetorical question 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. Both usages serve as reminders of the LORD's uniqueness. 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 unyOl eq O(,') hwhy (yhwh @ eq O (+,el) eq \ 0 (~,o)h eq \ 0 (=,e)n eq \ 0 (=,u), "the LORD our God") (v. 5a). Furthermore, the tight apposition of ... y eq O(I,h)y eq O(I,B) eq O(I,g) eq O(a,M) eq O(a,h) (hammag eq O (+,eb) eq \ 0 (=,i)h eq \ 0 (+,i), "to make high, exalt") (v. 5b) with ... y eq O(I,l)y eq O(I,p) eq O(I,v) eq O(a,M) eq O(a,h) (hamma eq O (+,s)p eq \ 0 (=,i)l eq \ 0 (=,i), "to make low, condescend") (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).

Structural

Depending upon emphases on form and/ or content, the psalm may be


10Besides the impacting reversal of order (i.e. v. 4: earthly, heavenly; v. 6: heavenly, earthly), the shift from the preposition l in v. 4 to occurrences of in v. 6 contributes to the change in mood (i.e. from separation to involvement).

11Obviously, 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).

12Survey BDB, pp. 567-68, for the proper names built upon this theological formula.


14Through a less formal syntactical relationship, even the anarthrous participles of vv. 7-9 continue as vital links in a strong theological chain.

divided differently into major sections. A basic analysis of the psalm's form leads to the following twofold division: "a hymnic introduction" (i.e. vv. 1-3) and "the reasons why God is worthy of praise and homage" (i.e. vv. 4-9). 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:

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:

2D. (v. 2) considered temporally

2D. (v. 3) considered geographically

2B. (v. 4) The worshipful recognition of God's transcendence

2C. (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

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16For an excellent survey of the options, see Allen, Psalms 101-150 99-100.
19See Allen, Psalms 101-150 99.
20Cf. 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).
21Kidner, Psalms 73-150 401.
22I.e. Kidner's title for Psalm 113 (ibid.).
is uncompromising (i.e. it does not come at the expense of His transcendence).  

2C. (v. 6) The interrogative of v. 6 reveals that God's immanence is unassuming.  

3B. (vv. 7-9) The illustrations dramatize His immanence.  

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." The specific details of its early usage are unknown, although "the setting was clearly cultic."  

That it came to be recognized as "a classical Hebrew hymn" 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." 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."  

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  

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24This 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)  

2B. He is separate in position: "Thus says the high and lifted up One"  

3B. He 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..."  

25The ultimate proof of this came in the Incarnation.  


27Allen, Psalms 101-150 99.  

28Craigie, "Psalms 113" 70.  


meal they had sung Pss. 113-114.32

Craigie's summary helps to complete the historical survey of Psalm 113 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.33

Verses 7-9 of the psalm have been seen as "a connecting link between the Song of Hannah and the Magnificat of the Virgin."34 In fact, Craigie calls 1 Samuel 2:1-10 the prehistory of Psalm 113:7-9 and Luke 1:46-55 its posthistory.35

EXPOSITION

The psalm opens and closes with הֵהלַת, (hal eq \O(A,y) ul eq \O([,l) eq \O(a,h) (hal eq \O(+-,e)l eq \O(=,u) y eq \O(-,a)h, "praise the L ORD"), 36 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 high.37

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 הֵהל (hll, "praise") is especially suited to elicit jubilant praise40 from the community.41 The vocative

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32Leslie, The Psalms 192-93.
33Craigie, "Psalm 113" 70.
35Craigie, "Psalm 113" 71.
36See Sacon in O TA 10/1 (Feb 1987) 65. There is no solid evidence for suggesting that both occurrences are later liturgical additions (e.g. Buttenwieser, The Psalms 348). Additionally, the placement of the final הֵהל before Ps. 114 (LXX 113) in the LXX is incorrect. Consequently, two of the twenty-four occurrences of the formula הֵהל bracket this great hymn.
37Buttenwieser, The Psalms 348.
38If the הֵהל pattern of Ps 113:1 is designated as a, b, c, then the corresponding הֵהל exhortations of Ps. 135:1 reflect an a, c, b order.
39For some of the most important ones, note H. Ringgren, "11l h, "Belief and joy are inextricably intertwined," TDOT 3:406; and L. J. Coppes, "11l I, II," TWOT 1:217.
40Ringgren notes that the summons to praise with הֵהל is almost always in the plural being
construction hwhy y eq \O(E,d) eq \O(\[,b) eq \O(a,;) (#ab eq \O(+,e)d eq \O(=,e) yhwh, "servants of the LORD") is a designation for the "worshipping community," the "loyal among Israel." It is also noteworthy that the root db; (#bd, "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" (hwhy < eq \O(E,y )/ eq \O(e,') [eq \O(+,s) eq \O(~,e)m yhwh]) is the object of the third echoing imperative from hll. Remembering that eq \O(+,s) eq \O(−,e) m "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 eq \O(+,s) eq \O(−,e) m, when applied to God, encompasses the totality of His attributes and actions.

The origin of the Tetragrammaton yhwh is in question. "While no consensus exists, the name is generally thought to be a verbal form derived from the root hwy, '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 hyh." The jussive exhortation y eq \O(I,h) eq \O(\[,y) (y eq \O(+,e)h eq \O(=,i)) 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 associated with the community, while hdwh 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).

LXX tradition takes hwhy as the object of ul, thereby construing the y as an independent vocative (i.e. as if it were <y). As Allen notes in the reference to this tradition, "Probably at some stage abbreviation . . . has been assumed" [emphasis mine] (Psalms 101-150 99). W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, "paw Ueo," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament [TDNT] 5:475, n. 122.

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 hwhy y 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).

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).


"comprises primarily the whole self-revelation of Yahweh to his people; the phrase may be a circumlocution for 'Yahweh' (Psalms 2:780). Kidner's reference to "the Revealed" is also telling (Psalms 73-150 401).


propriety of universal praise. Indeed, "no less response in space or time is worthy of him."\(^{51}\)

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).\(^{52}\) Based on the previous parallels and a subsequent parallelism with \(\text{eq } \text{O}(A, L) \text{ eq } \text{O}(U, h) \text{ eq } \text{O}(l, m) \text{ (m eq } \text{O}(+, e)h \text{ eq } \text{O}(-, a), \text{ "being praised"}) in v. 3b, \(\text{eq } \text{O}(A, r) \text{ eq } \text{O}(j, m) \text{ hwhy } \text{eq } \text{O}(E, v) \text{ y eq } \text{O}(I, h) \text{ eq } \text{O}(i, y) \text{ y eq } \text{O}(+, e)h \text{ eq } \text{O}(=, i) \text{ eq } \text{O}(+, s) \text{ eq } \text{O}(=, e) \text{ m ywhh m eq } \text{O}(+, e) \text{b eq } \text{O}(-, o) \text{ eq } \text{O}(-, a) \text{, "let the name of the LORD be blessed"}) stands as "an expression synonymous with \text{"Praise the LORD."}\(^{53}\) Such praise is to be unrestricted in its duration (i.e. \(\text{eq } \text{O}(A, l) \text{ o;>d eq } \text{O}(a, ;) \text{ eq } \text{O}(i, w) \text{ h eq } \text{O}(A, ?) \text{ eq } \text{O}(a, ;) \text{ eq } \text{O}(E, m) \text{ [m eq } \text{O}(=, e) \text{att eq } \text{O}(~, a) \text{h w eq } \text{O}(+e) \text{ad`} \text{ eq } \text{O}(=, o) \text{eq } \text{O}(~, a)m])\).\(^{54}\) Literally, it should continue "from now and forever,"\(^{55}\) i.e. "forever, without ceasing."\(^{56}\)

In the middle of the inverted parallelism of vv. 3-4, a spatial focus replaces the emphasis on time: \(\text{o'ob eq } \text{O}(i, m)>d \text{ eq } \text{O}(a, ;) \text{ v eq } \text{O}(e, m) \text{ eq } \text{O}(e, v)>i \text{ eq } \text{O}(a, r) \text{ eq } \text{O}(i, z) \text{ eq } \text{O}(I, m) \text{ eq } \text{O}(I, M) \text{ eq } \text{O}(I, m) \text{ (mimmizra eq } \text{O}(>, h) \text{ eq } \text{O}(+, s) \text{eme eq } \text{O}(+, s) \text{ #ad`m eq } \text{O}(+, e) \text{b eq } \text{O}(=, o) \text{eq } \text{O}(=, m) \text{m eq } \text{O}(+, e) \text{ #m eq } \text{O}(~, o) \text{w eq } \text{O}(+, e) \text{ #a`m eq } \text{O}(~, a) \text{m} \text{, "from the sun's place of rising to its entrance,"}\(^{57}\) "throughout the world from east to west."\(^{58}\) (v. 4a). Concerning \(\text{eq } \text{O}(A, L) \text{ eq } \text{O}(U, h) \text{ eq } \text{O}(l, m) \text{ (m eq } \text{O}(+, e)h \text{ eq } \text{O}(-, a), \text{ "being praised"}) \text{ (v. 3b), }\)\(^{59}\) "the part. pual describes God as \text{"worthy of praise."}\(^{60}\) The following assertions of His transcendence and immanence support the praiseworthiness of His name always and everywhere.

One of the major spheres of usage of \(\text{ur (r eq } \text{O}(+, u)m, \text{ "to be high, exalted") (cf. r eq } \text{O}(~, m) \text{ at the head of v. 4) is height as symbolic of positive notions such as glory and exaltation."}^{61}\) Besides v. 4a, several passages corroborate God's exaltation, e.g., Ps 46:11; 99:2; 138:6;\(^{62}\) Isa 6:1; 57:15;\(^{63}\) etc.\(^{64}\) Furthermore, the

\(^{51}\)Allen, Psalms 101-150 101.
\(^{52}\)For a survey, see J. Scharbert, "\(\text{rb,}\)" TDOT 2:284-88; for a condensed presentation, see J. N. Oswalt, "\(\text{r,}\)" 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 \(\text{1lh in Pss. 18:4; 48:2; 96:4; 145:3.}\)
\(^{60}\)J. Herrmann and H. Greeven, "\text{exomai,}\)" TDNT 2:786; for some discussion see TDOT 3:409.
\(^{61}\)A. Bowling, "\text{ur,}\)" TWOT 2:837.
\(^{62}\)Note the interesting juxtaposition of the roots \(\text{wr and lfv in Ps 138:6; cf. Ps 113:4a with 113:6a ff.}\)
\(^{63}\)Note the parallelism between \(\text{< and the root } \text{`cn in both of these verses from Isaiah.}\)
\(^{64}\)For some pertinent observations, see Robert Baker Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament
prepositional phrase <eq O(I,y)O>l eq O(A,K)>l eq O(a,;)
(#al`kol`g eq O(=,o)yim, "above all nations") provides greater resolution to this portrait of God's transcendence. When attention is fixed upon the exalted LORD, all the g eq O(=,o)yim pale into insignificance (cf., e.g., Ps 46:11; Isa 40:17).

The LORD's k eq O(=,o)d (v. 4b), like His eq O(=,o)yim (v. 4b), like His eq O(+,s) eq O(=,e)m, 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, O 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 uny eq O(E,h)O1 eq O(,i) (@ eq O(+,e)l eq O(=,o)h eq O(=,e)m eq O(=,u), "our God") has covenantal overtones and anticipates the gracious interventions of vv. 7-9. Yet it must be remembered that this personal God "makes high to dwell" (v. 4a).

Expressed in the participle y eq O(I,h)y eq O(I,B) eq O(I,g) eq O(a,M) eq O(a,h) (hammag eq O(=,i)h eq O(=,i), v. 5b), the verb H eq O(a,b) eq O(A,G) (g eq O(=,a)bah, "to be high, make high")72), a synonym of r eq O(=,u)m and an antonym of l eq O(a,f) eq O(A,v) (eq O(+,s) eq O(=,a)pa, "be low")," is often used to describe the greatness, height, or high position of a person. . . "74 G eq O(=,a)bah combines idiomatically with the complementary infinitive l eq O(=,a) eq O(+,s)bet (from b eq O(a,v) eq O(A,y) l y eq O(=,a) eq O(+,s)ab, "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. Delitzsch captures the apparent irony of a transcendent/ immanent God:

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) 35.
65Cf. < with <y l>l in Ps. 99:2.
67Anderson, Psalms 2:781.
68For 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.
70Consequently, amidst a recapitulation of God's transcendence (v. 5), the stage is set for a concentration upon His immanence (vv. 6-9).
71On the hiphil expressing action in a definite direction see, once again, GKC 350 (para. 114n).
73Ibid., 2:357-58; note the textual documentation cited for both assertions.
74Ibid., 2:358; concerning the theological significance of H, 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, "H," TWOT 1:146).
76See the discussion above under syntactical enhancements.
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 portraits so to speak, that is the special object of His regard.\footnote{Delitzsch, Psalms 3:205.}

Consequently, while the hammagb \textit{exaltation}, the hamma \textit{condescension}.\footnote{In reference to \textit{I}, 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,’ ‘humbility’” (H. J. Austel, \textit{“I,” TWOT} 2:950). An examination of the roots \textit{\textless wr} and \textit{\textless lv} in Ps 138:6a would be appropriate here.}

The complementary causative participles of vv. 7-9 (i.e. \textit{\textless y} \textit{raising up}\footnote{In light of these particular texts, note the appropriateness of the illustration in Ps 113:9.}, \textit{\textless y} \textit{lifting up}\footnote{BDB, 907-8.}, \textit{\textless y} \textit{causing to dwell\footnote{Cf. Anderson, Psalms 2:781.}]) 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 \textit[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.”\footnote{Allen, Psalms 101-150 101.}

Consciously . . . those verses look back to the song of Hannah, 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.83

The dal (poor) and the oy (needy),84 normally social outcasts, are the focal point
of God’s bold intervention in vv. 7-8.85 Although “the dal was not numbered
among dependents who have no property,”86 he still represented “those who
lack.”87 The plight of the oy in the Old Testament generally seems to
be more aggravated: “The destitution of the oy is to be inferred from the
whole tenor of the appropriate psalms: it manifests itself in affliction, illness,
loneliness, and nearness to death.”88 Therefore, he represents those who are
materially, socially, and spiritually in need.89 God really cares for such people!90

In the parallelisms of v. 7, the dal was associated with the r (dust, “an emblem of lowly
estate,”91 and the oy with the Op (ash-heap, refuse-heap, dung-hill,92 certainly “an emblem
of deepest poverty and desertion.”93 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.94

But the LORD mercifully extricates the needy from (cf. the two occurrences

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83Kidner, 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).
84For other combinations of dal and oy in various contextual settings, see 1 Sam 2:8; Isa 14:30;
25:4; Amos 4:1; 6:6; 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
oy belong to the same group as the feeble, hungry, poor, and godly” (P. J. Botterweck, “oy,”
TDOT 1:40).
85For a good review of the humiliation of such people along with God’s interest in them, see W.
87L. J. Coppes, “1,” TWOT 1:190. Coppes concludes that “we might consider dal as referring to
one of the lower classes in Israel” (ibid.).
88TDOT 1:36; Botterweck’s whole survey is illuminating (ibid., 36-37).
90Cf. "The dallim Under the Protection of Yahweh, the King, and His Fellow Men (Psalms)" in
91Delitzsch, Psalms 3:205.
92BDB, 1046.
93Delitzsch, Psalms 3:205.
94Anderson, Psalms 2:781-82.
of, $\text{eq} \overrightarrow{b}(I,m)$ [min, "from") such dire circumstances. He "lifts up, raises"\textsuperscript{95} them from their predicament. The lifted up and exalted One (vv. 4-5) "can make men high in rank (i.e. 'exalt' them . . .)."\textsuperscript{96} Verse 8 confirms that by its progression from extrication to exaltation.

The Lord's intention is "to cause [them] to dwell,"\textsuperscript{97} "to make (them) sit" (i.e. $\text{eq} \overrightarrow{0}(I,m)$ \text{eq} $\overrightarrow{0}(=,o)$ \text{eq} $\overrightarrow{0}(s)$ \text{eq} $\overrightarrow{0}(=,i)$ \text{eq} $\overrightarrow{0}(=,i))^{98}$ in fellowship with\textsuperscript{99} $\text{y eq} \overrightarrow{0}(I,b) \text{y eq} \overrightarrow{0}(I,d) \text{ eq} \overrightarrow{0}(I,n)$ \text{eq} $\overrightarrow{0}(+,e)$ \text{eq} $\overrightarrow{0}(=,i)$ \text{b eq} $\overrightarrow{0}(=,i)m$, "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.

Although the syntactical options of v. 9 are diverse,\textsuperscript{105} the overarching impact of its illustration is incontestable. The gracious Lord "makes the woman barren in the household to dwell\textsuperscript{106} as a joyful mother of sons," i.e. "he grants her

\textsuperscript{95}Cf. BDB, 878-79, 927; the hiphils from \text{<uq} and \text{<ur} are near synonyms as shown by their parallelism here. Interestingly, since \text{yy} is synonymously related to \text{<y}, it not only relates semantically to God's description as \text{< in v. 4 (cf. the previous discussion under semantical enhancements), but also conceptually to the root \text{hbg} in v. 5 (cf. R. Hentschke, "H," TDOT 2:357-58, for a general discussion of these synonyms). In reference to \text{<uq} with God as subject, Coppes observes that "the word may denote his creative, saving, and judging action" (L. J. Coppes, "<uq," TWOT 2:792); cf. A. Oepke, "Gev," TDNT 2:334.

\textsuperscript{96A} Bowling, "<ur," TWOT 2:838.

\textsuperscript{97}BDB, 443.

\textsuperscript{98}Most emend the final \text{y} of the MT to \text{w} 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 -y" (Psalms III: 101-150 130); Delitzsch says, "ver. 8 shows how our Ps. oxii in particular delights in this ancient i, where it is even affixed to the infinitive as an ornament" (Psalms 3:204); and Buttenwieser argues, "Though Gr. reads \text{lhshb}, the reading of the Hebrew is equally correct: according to this reading the objects of vs. 7 are to be construed also with \text{lhshb}, being a case of brachylogy" (The Psalms 249).

\textsuperscript{99}The two occurrences of \text{< in v. 8 balance the two occurrences of \, in v. 7. \, in such contexts emphasizes "fellowship and companionship" (BDB, 767).

\textsuperscript{100}L. J. Coppes, "b," TWOT 2:555. His brief summary of the major synonyms of \text{by} is quite informative (ibid.).

\textsuperscript{101}Kirkpatrick, The Book of Psalms 679.

\textsuperscript{102}TDOT 3:228.

\textsuperscript{103}Cf. other occurrences of the adj. \text{x} in Gen 11:30; 25:21; 29:31; Judg 13:2-3; 1 Sam 2:5; and Job 24:21.

\textsuperscript{104}Anderson, Psalms 2:782.

\textsuperscript{105}E.g. BDB, 443; Buttenwieser, The Psalms 349; Delitzsch, Psalms 3:206; etc.

\textsuperscript{106}Again, note the causative verbal from \text{b} (i.e. \text{yom}, v. 9; cf. \text{yyoh}, v. 8).
security." Consequently, He not only prospers the poor (v. 8), but He also blesses the barren (v. 9). The appropriate $H eq \O(A,y) ul eq \O([,l) eq \O(a,h)$ (hal $eq \O(+,e)l eq \O(=,u) y eq \O(=,-,a)h$, "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.108

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 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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107 Anderson, Psalms 2:782.