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BIBLICAL METAPHOR: THE COSMIC GARDEN HERITAGE

ABSTRACT

An inquiry into the nature of metaphor, as it has evolved since Aristotle and particularly in the late twentieth century, allows fresh consideration of biblical texts. Using as a sample trope the ancient Near Eastern and biblical figure of the cosmic garden where humans live with the gods until they are exiled, the article works out the implications of the image, using prophetic texts and cognitive theory. Briefly and generally, then, three other texts are considered: Genesis 2-3, Deuteronomy, Song of Songs, where the figure is present but signifying differently. The article closes with a consideration of how moderns may be addressed by this biblical metaphor.

1. POINT OF ENTRY TO BIBLICAL METAPHOR

The challenge here is to discuss the historical development of metaphor theory, to exemplify metaphor with a pervasive biblical trope, and to demonstrate the gain from appreciating, and utilizing metaphor with biblical texts, both to understand them better and to be challenged by them afresh. I aim to show how the recognition of metaphoric language – language that is not literal but richly figurative – works productively for believing and critical interpreters, how it can contribute to the insight and self-knowledge – the well-being of communities interpreting biblical texts. In a short article and general article on a complex topic, it seems better to attempt clarity with one example than to risk confusing with a wider array of texts. Hence we will explore one root figure – the divine garden estate, found throughout biblical texts – and trust learning can be transferred. Pentateuchal passages (e.g., Genesis 2-3, Deuteronomy *passim*), prophetic texts (e.g., Isaiah 5; Jeremiah 2-10), and wisdom/writing material (e.g., Song of Songs *passim*) make extensive and distinctive use

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of the garden trope, each drawing on and elaborating images and scenes, from short and simple to more extensive.

2. RECOGNIZING METAPHOR

A first choice in reading is to discern metaphor's presence, or conversely to refuse or miss the possibility that biblical texts can be metaphoric or undervalue the implications of such imagery. Two grounding questions prompt this choice: First, is every claim made by or for God in the biblical text to be taken as transparent to its referents in a simple and straightforward way, or does some material work better when we bring ancient and partially unfamiliar information to bear? Though the garden metaphor at hand is surely familiar and easily accessible to moderns, when we draw on its ancient Near Eastern heritage, understanding will be deepened. Second, is image-laden language to be understood as literally true, or does its insight arrive via another pathway? For those who either claim explicitly or suppose pre-consciously that the Bible comprises only factual and literally accurate statements about God, with imagery's contribution simply to reinforce such truth, the way forward seems clear and simple. The counter to all metaphoric theory is the refusal to entertain the possibility that language is metaphorical at all, to insist that language is essentially literal, to read as though that were so, to fail to unpack the entailments of metaphoric discourse. Conversely, to admit metaphor as a useful strategy and to exploit it opens up vast semantic possibilities for biblical texts while not abandoning the claim that they mediate truthfully about creator and creation. It is this second choice we will pursue here.

3. APPRECIATING METAPHOR'S FUNCTIONING

Metaphor study has had three general theoretical phases in Western thought, each working its way into biblical interpretation and contributing to understanding and interpretation of texts (Harris 1992:222-228). I will sample each phase, commenting on its contribution to insight into biblical language about God and Israel as sharing a divine garden or heritage space, with deity as host and humans as invited guest and collaborative partner, though eventually as threatened with expulsion. Though the third phase of metaphor is new and least familiar, its contribution will be focal in this article.

3.1   Classic metaphor theory

From Aristotle until well into the twentieth century, metaphor was basically understood as the process of giving one thing the name that belonged properly to another, i.e., transferring qualities from one thing to another, inevitably with some degree of inappropriateness (Soskice 1985:1-14; Wheelwright 1962:21-25): A deity can be spoken of as though he were the owner of a garden or manse (though such is not literally the case), a complex and inclusive religious relationship as though it were a shared living arrangement (which it is not). Or metaphor was seen in terms of analogy: As deity and humans interact healthily or not, so God is also related with people in diverse ways. For some classical thinkers and those who drew upon them, such metaphoric language was optional and ornamental, valueless for essential theological meaning. For others, there was genuine insight to be gained by metaphor: To envision God's people as guests in serious breach of divine hospitality offers insight, bears practical significance. In either case, this transference model, where divine outrage was directed against God's relationship with Israel, masked the possibility that the proprietary and patriarchal household identity attributed to divinity derives from ascribing human behavior to God, rather than being suggested "from above" (so Jindo 2010:8-21).

3.2   Recent metaphor theory

In the twentieth century, crucial developments in theory brought new insight to this long-standing view of metaphor (Soskice 1985:24-53). Associated with the work of I.A. Richards, Max Black, and Paul Ricoeur, several clarifications and refinements were offered: Metaphor was affirmed as common rather than rare, as central to meaning rather than quasi-optional. Technical language became more standardized: the tenor (God's perfection and sovereignty) was the main point of interest and the vehicle (human dependency and inadequacy) the means of providing relevant information. Additional points emerged: Metaphor involved the juxtaposition of associated complexes rather than simply words; associations traveled both directions, not simply from vehicle to tenor; details of the metaphor could organize in a variety of ways rather than with a simple pattern; in a metaphor, some aspects of tenor and vehicle were highlighted and others suppressed; incongruity was a main factor in metaphor's communication. Metaphor theory and surely its biblical appropriation were substantially influenced by advances in sociological studies, by ideology criticism, and by developments in feminist theory (McFague 1982:145-192).

   With this more complex theory, many gains accrued as interpreters read more deftly. The God-human relationship was acknowledged to require a variety of images for its exploration, not simply one, however comprehensive it might be. The sharing of divine household space itself was shown troubled on both sides, with the demanding and even carping host exposed at least potentially as part of the problem in the relationship. Israel's pervasively hierarchical and patriarchal culture was exposed as a key player in the articulation of the divine viewpoint, with divine and male exclusivity-claims and jealousy recognized as projected from below rather than revealed from above. The silence of the accused – or the accuser's propensity to speak for them – appeared itself problematic. The pile-up of accusations – the guests as not only in violation but determinedly and chronically so, the indignant glee with which behaviors were detailed – appeared to many interpreters to approach the pornographic (Kirk-Duggan 2012: 243-258). The effect of religious ideology was adumbrated, the recognition that sacrally violent language can seem to justify abuse. But not yet fully articulated in interpreters' zeal to show the harm of the metaphor was a basic incongruity: Is "religion" well-described in this metaphorical trope? Is a human institution well-correlated with God's preferred ways? Are modern interpreters so blinded by western concern with rights, such that the patriarchal household is the only optic for appropriating the language?

3.3   Cognitive metaphor theory

The third major phase in metaphor study emerged near the end of the twentieth century, catalyzed by developments in general cognitive theory, in more accurate sociology of religion, and also in a more precise and critical general literary criticism. Though in dialogue and substantial continuity with earlier twentieth-century work, cognitive metaphor is sufficiently distinctive to justify separate book-length treatment (Van Wolde 2009; Kövecses 2002). Cognitive theory assumes several basic tenets: metaphor depends less on philosophy for its assertions than on neural science; it assumes that metaphor is a property of concepts, not words; metaphorical language is thoroughly pragmatic, not simply ornamental; it is not intrinsically rooted in similarity of linked items, though likeness may be involved; metaphorical language is ubiquitous and virtually effortless; it is necessary for cognition. Terminology changes, with the former "vehicle/tenor" pair replaced by new though similar pair: a target domain – the prime object of interest, but more abstract, least well known – and a source domain – better understood and hence the means of providing information about source – compose the metaphor. The result is that the metaphoric assertion is set up as TARGET IS SOURCE, or SOURCE – > [maps to] TARGET. That is, calling upon cognitive

theory's favorite example, if we wish to assert (metaphorically) that "life is a journey", the more common and better understood domain of journey becomes the source domain into which we may reach to find language to help us fill the target domain (more unknown, comparatively more difficult to talk about but actually what we wish to be able to articulate). So the characteristics of the journey map onto the features of life and give us insight. Since metaphor may be embedded or implied rather than stated directly, its presence may be tested by ascertaining that the assertion is not literally true or simply descriptive, and that its articulation and mapping provide the sense of encountering something that jolts one's default and literal understanding.

The claim to be explored in this paper is that GOD IS A HOUSEHOLDER/GARDENER and ISRAEL/JUDAH IS A GUEST/TENANT/HELPER challenges a reader to find the human agricultural heritage as the vast pool of diversely productive information (so the source) about how God and Israel/Judah interrelate (target). It is immediately evident that the metaphor is more complicated than the simple one used as a sample just previously. Since metaphor theory had long seen that God is not literally a land owner and that a whole people is not literally a guest on a divine manor, cognitive metaphor continued to probe the implications of recognizing the presence of a non-literal and yet culturally grounded language. The literalism risked by loading a complex and problematic identity onto one player (whether deity or humans) becomes clear in the more complex theory. When the trope is unpacked and shown functional at a variety of levels, it becomes more difficult to literalize the metaphor. The challenge to factor dense metaphoric language more thoroughly emerged, as cognitive theory realized that distinctive and culture-specific metaphors like the one under consideration are themselves elaborations of basic and quasi-universal ones, also contributed and explored and used as examples in cognitive theory: A PEOPLE-GROUP IS A PERSON-GROUP, TRUST IS NEARNESS, PEOPLE ARE COMPLEXES. Cognitive theory early recognized that even a metaphor so apparently simple as the divine garden is in fact highly complex and thus in need of a more ornate and precise awareness of its components. To fill this need, frame semantics and blending theory emerged, offered here very simply and schematically to demonstrate the possibilities of the theory and its liberative possibilities in opposition to flatter and simpler reading.

Making use of cognitive theory's terminology and challenges, we can factor source and target domains in more detail, hence acquiring greater depth for appropriating the imagery in the Bible and beyond it. This particular metaphor provides us a perhaps too-rare opportunity to marry specific historical information "behind the text," – in this case its ancient

Near Eastern provenance and the political, socio-economic and religious realities of 8th-6th century Israel and Judah – with its literary metaphoric features.

Two distinct though related facets of source material are relevant. First is the ancient and rich heritage from Israel and Judah's older and wider neighborhood where the cosmic garden is prominent in literature and art. As described by Job Jindo (2010:chs. 4-5), the trope features the gods as responsible for cosmic harmony, various deities for various parts of the world. Human beings are invited to dwell in the divine heritage – garden, orchard, vineyard – to share responsibility for maintaining order. But the humans in general and their royal leader in particular are shown radically deficient in this role, and so the council of divinities decrees that they must answer for it. The grieving and affronted divine plaintiff brings charges, specifying in detail the grounds for the case against the accused while lamenting the consequences of their actions. The accuser, besides being lamenter, is also ultimately the judge, while a prophet figure is intercessor for the humans and messenger to them. But with human guilt undeniable, agents are appointed to wreak devastation, and the dwelling place becomes bereft of fruitfulness and joy. The heritage is desolated.

Jindo's formulation for the base or root metaphor works as follows in cognitive linguistic terms: THE COSMOS is A STATE, transposes to YHWH's ROYAL GARDEN is ISRAEL/JUDAH, or JUDAH maps to – > YHWH's ROYAL GARDEN. This basic metaphor has constelling component parts (sub-metaphors) and plays them out variously, though within the basic assertion. That is, the familiar data from ancient and likely familiar lore comprises the source domain for this metaphor.

A second major component of source material is the actual socio-economic and politico-religious character of the Israelite and Judean culture, such as it can be re-constructed for late monarchic period (eighth to sixth centuries). If Jindo's researches have provided a more general cultural background for the metaphor we are working on, the sociological investigations of Chaney (1989 *passim*) and Premnath (2003:25-42) have shed light on what was relevant more specifically. To summarize complex material efficiently brings us to the following: Mid-first millennium Israel and Judah comprised what we can call a basic subsistence agricultural society, where goods were produced and consumed locally, for the most part: grain, wine, and oil; wool, leather; fruit and honey; cultic offerings; progeny; livelihood. The context for this economic arrangement – which is simultaneously political, social, and religious – took shape around the patriarchal household, where men and women in various roles shared a way of life based on fruitfulness and an ancestral land/heritage system,

to be maintained over against the threat of its being absorbed into ever-larger units as a result of royal power (whether in Jezreel, Samaria, Jerusalem) and imperial threat behind that (Assyrian and Babylonian).[11] As imperial shadows fell closer – whether from north, south, east or west as they did by turns – leaders (various elites, including minimally kings and their palace bureaucracies, powerful nobles, at least some priests and prophets) were caught on the horns of a dilemma: To meet the demands for tribute, the subsistence and heritage-based society had to be re-ordered towards a more "efficient" command economy, resulting in greater flow towards "headquarters," i.e., the palace (local and foreign). Pressure for greater efficiency and outcome was exerted on the ancestral heritage system, comprising domestic households, reliant upon the cycles of fruitfulness that allowed survival: fertility of womb, ground, livestock, basket, kneading-bowl, as Deuteronomy compactly has it (28:4-5). We may accurately call this system the patriarchal household, so long as we recall it is populated by men and women – parents, elders, and offspring, by animals and plants, by deity and ancestors, by slave and free, all seen as working in a particular way for productive survival. From the perspective we can construct for elites, to play the major powers off each other, to seek allies of Judah's own small size, and to wring from their own people as much as they could manage seemed a sensible choice.[22] The efforts of leaders to make effective alliances and command tradeable products was a matter of exerting control on those producing goods. That is, Judah's political and religious leaders presumably felt constrained to urge a policy that would work effectively *for themselves* under the circumstances to salvage what was salvageable, their own positions not least of all. As a survival strategy, it was ultimately ineffective.

So far as religion is concerned, the viewpoint implicit in the material as extant in biblical texts suggests an effort to move closer to aniconicity than will have been the preference of neighboring systems or practiced earlier

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1   Premnath, 20-24, lists the systemic character of a culture undergoing such stress; his book then explains in fuller detail and works with prophetic texts to show processes operative.

2   It is not difficult to understand how people, pressed "suddenly" by difficult choices they had not anticipated having to select, might think there were alternatives at least for them that would not be so dire as some urge as necessary. Presently, gasoline has become comparatively expensive and the accumulated fuller costs of our dependence on oil are undeniable. And yet few people directly involved are contemplating or even imagining a basic change in our whole manner of living that relies on costly and thirsty machines. We somehow think a major change will not be necessary, at least for us. In fifty years, it will seem obvious that we have had our heads in the sand for some time.

within Yahwism, urging a praxis more aniconic than visual, more mono-theist than multi-theist.[3] A shorthand name for this is "Yahweh alone," with distinct but related foci: the deity with no peers or dependents, and that deity as over-against foreign systems pressing their demands. Disputed between canonical prophets and their opponents is what is entailed by living as YHWH's people on the land YHWH loves and has shared with a particular people (as distinct from others): how to live responsibly and suitably in the divine garden into which their deity has invited them.

Several misapprehensions were abroad: The large nations supposed, as empires do, that the small patch of conveniently located territory was theirs for the taking, to be exploited as needed. Whether the heritage was conquered and burned, dominated and annexed, or simply pillaged for its produce, all participants needed to be shown another reality. For the leaders of God's people, notably kings but the other elites as well, the error seems to have been to suppose that they were in charge and could negotiate freely and safely with one powerful overlord or another while, hoping to avoid or delay something unpleasant, certainly planning to maintain their own privileged positions. We may suppose that the sages, scribes, priests and prophets were tempted to contribute their particular skills to that mistaken and myopic royal belief. Kings and their surrogates would have to learn a different way, for everyone's sake.

Another way to suggest the conflict implied in the cosmic metaphor is to suggest that the prophets contested the notion that the garden heritage had come without strings, i.e., that people could inhabit it as they pleased without consequence. But some practices destroy the garden and threaten its inhabitants. It works to hear some of the charges of "false worship" as representing the mistaken notion that YHWH did *not* have clear expectations about and limits regarding worship (and of course also treatment of the poor). To live appropriately was to farm and herd locally, to worship and exchange goods in such a way that YHWH's ways were respected, so the land would be passed on in good condition to heirs. When adjacent empires threatened, such living was much more difficult, perhaps we now assess, impossible. But biblical claim is that YHWH's people must attempt to live responsive and faithful to YHWH's ways. The danger was to refuse to see that to live on the heritage and violate these "divine" norms was deeply offensive to God – at least the deity as constructed in the pre-exilic prophets. The heritage was not an

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3   The complex discussion of how Israelite religion emerged from its multiple and image-laden roots to be more closely aligned with what can be called or loosely equated with monotheism can be sampled in the work of Mark S. Smith (2001:3-24,167-178).

entitlement but a gift. God's people in general would need to understand, more broadly, what is entailed in dwelling in the garden of the gods. The challenge was not and is not a matter of facts but of viewpoint, attitude. The heritage claim was not and is not susceptible to proof, remaining a matter of faith and commitment. Existentially, it matters where humans see ourselves living – on commodity real estate or in the cosmic garden – and it will affect our behavior. The role of the classic prophets was to find the best ways to re-orient the view of mistaken people (Green 2013:3-11).

With such a texturing of source information the metaphor now factors as follows:

YHWH's HERITAGE is JUDAH/ISRAEL, or, ISRAEL/JUDAH maps to – > YHWH's HERITAGE/THE 'FAMILY FARM' WAY OF LIFE (target maps to source: to analyze what is happening more tangibly provides insight into what is less obvious but needs to be known). So the fuller *source domain* is the imaginative world of mythic narratives and more existential local patriarchal household, including of course the male and female as spouses but covering more as well; it includes worship not just narrowly considered but *a whole relationality* including politics, economics, ecology and worship (which together comprise Yahwistic religion).

The target or urgent center of interest and contestation to be illuminated comprises the specific choices around the centralization and urbanization press, whether the "pressure" comes from Davidic kings or from Babylonian policies and armies: the threat imposed by the heavy hand and bruising heel of Assyria, Egypt, Babylon and by local elites, insofar as they participate. The value of the metaphor is to make reliably clearer what the ancient wisdom suggests. One way to phrase the matter under intense consideration is whether to be the people of YHWH is possible when not living in a particular way on the heritage of Israel/Judah. Is Yahwism compatible with market economics, with imperial domination, with exile?

The steps of specifying the components of source and target expands the reach of the metaphor considerably to entertain the following sets of relations: A new chart shows the overlap, with details from classic prophetic language adding specific detail:

threat to orderly, fruitful survival
relational inequity among elites/peasants, males/females, deity/humans
exclusivity claims and violations
reliance on international players: alliance partners, deities
disintegration

target domain: Yahwism threatened :   *source domain: household stressed:*
God-human-relationship: violated   =   husband-wife relationship: violated
transgressive acts in social body   illicit acts by female in household
    religion–betrayed   patriarchy–under attack or threat
    YHWH alone–transgressed   social mores–violated
    love claims–pressed but disregarded   husband's role–threatened
    past claims–pressed but renounced   family structures–threatened
    worship–flawed   inheritance–made questionable
    future gifts–owed but rejected   household goods–plundered
    reaction/cure–repudiation   reaction/cure–punishment
        anger/outrage   anger/outrage
        destruction   shaming

Yahwism threatened is household stressed:
threat to larger unit is visible in household
confusion of authority destabilizes and threatens productivity
fertility is threatened by various players
contestation or uncertainty of "father's" authority leads to confusion
patriarchal honor is risked as "father" is disregarded
behaviors as aberrant domestically and internationally
reaction of authority to blame deviant for lack of control
conflicting sense that the needs of the players are not being – cannot be – met
temptation to select alternative partners in order to attain desired/needed goods
violence threatened as an antidote to the ensuing chaos.

4. GLANCING AT OTHER COSMIC GARDEN TEXTS

Though the detail for the present analysis is drawn primarily from Jeremiah (and other prophetic texts: one thinks readily of Isaiah 5), we can – still at the macro level – consider briefly and suggestively three other biblical books where the basic metaphor works out quite differently, though still fruitfully, perhaps offering some fresh insight. The question is what possible target domain the cosmic garden illumines in its particular source material.

4.1 Genesis 2-3

The narrative that now opens the biblical account of creator and creatures so memorably is, of course, transparently a cosmic garden text. Utilizing

the imagery, the narrative functions metaphorically rather than literally as a sort of video of human origins, the role it has been assigned and holds so tenaciously in Christian theology. The details of the story emphasize first the mutual relatedness of all the players: dust, water, vegetation, animals, humans, deity – all working to mutual benefit (Trible 1978 *passim* remains an excellent source of such detail). The aftermath shows just as clearly the breaches among all players: humans from deity, from each other, from the garden and its members – with deity and garden interdicting the humans from their former access. This particular narrative raises the "how" question for consideration, with the source details stressing that the garden itself, its flora and fauna, occasion for the humans some limit they cannot navigate well. Hidden beneath the how is the why: Why should the humans be unable to live in intimacy with and in the heritage that was offered them? How did it come about that the human guests were not able to live within the divine garden?

If we read this story over against all that has been suggested by our work on prophetic texts, the target question provoked may be something like the following: As the people of YHWH, long-accustomed to life in the heritage land on the west side of the Jordan River, come to experience how they can survive and even thrive elsewhere, the challenge is to "re-survey" the garden. Does YHWH's garden comprise a particular set of compass co-ordinates, even a particular way of worship and livelihood? Or is a wider garden possible, necessary, inevitable? The story of the original forebears, especially understood as an exilic text as is currently the situation (Ska 2006:184-229), may no longer *lock into* a story of a primordial fall or rift – though it can surely bear that freight – but may also be a narrative grounding a sort of brave new world experience related to historical exile, where humans have acquired a certain dreadful and perhaps regrettable experience but are challenged that a future with the deity is still possible for them. The old garden, no, but an existence on the land and a new strugglous relationship with it that is workable, yes. The metaphor helps those who enter it find their way past one garden gate, which however, offers them a new access to a heritage.

4.2   Deuteronomy

The whole macro narrative of this hinge book, situated now between the Torah and the Deuteronomistic History/Former Prophets, is massively underwritten by the garden metaphor. How will God's people, listening to Moses recite their long past while perched on the edge of the land and longing to enter it – though soon to be without their leader and primary storyteller – understand their challenge and responsibility? How does old

experience of failure to settle well in the land and consequent need to leave it, a recital that the book of Deuteronomy constantly reviews (e.g., ch. 4), seed as well the possibility that this time the sojourn in the garden might go better, last longer, bear better fruit? That the narrating voice of Moses knows both the failure that has accrued and is likely to repeat but can also speak of fresh possibilities and fertile future is realistically hopeful.

The source domain of this particular version of the cosmic garden stresses, in a way different from the Genesis text, the possibility of return, and hence a plausible target for filling out is the matter of how a fresh return from a bitter exile can be different from what preceded it. The land, with its texture of social and economic detail as described and advised in chs. 12-26, makes explicit the sets of God-given limits within which the humans must agree to live if the sojourn is to endure. Unlike the garden Eden (noted above) and the Song of Songs lovers' gardens (see below), however, the Deuteronomy land is not paradisaical but almost painfully prosaic. To garden or farm with the deities is hard work, involves exacting relatedness. The default valence of the metaphor is reminiscent of the world into which the man and woman found themselves post-Eden, with the question being: How to flourish now in the present garden, the only one presently on offer? How to learn from past experience? How to avoid the behaviors that have proved troublesome in the past?

4.3   Song of Songs

We have, again, a garden text where it seems that only love is found, where only joy and fulfillment abound. To live in the lush and sensuous matrix that the female and male characters articulate throughout this book seems wholly halcyon, idyllic, and far removed from the more threatening shame- and guilt-laden spaces that normally comprise the metaphor under question (Exum 2005:3-13). The basic metaphor is factored into detail of sight, sound, texture, smell and feeling, comprises flora and fauna in all their splendor and variety. The garden is, in a sense, the man and woman's love relationship. Though it is true that the deity is not mentioned, it is difficult to imagine a canonical biblical text that does not assume that the creation in which the lovers flourish and thrive is God's creation, perhaps innocent in some way of the tensions and problems the prophets knew. Yet this is not quite Eden's garden, nor is it the socio-political and economic manor of Deuteronomy. At least four times in the short book (1:6; 3:1-4; 5:5-7; 8:8-10), the woman experiences the loss of the one she loves, finds herself ill-used as she seeks him. Her brothers, mentioned fleetingly, open her discourse with rebuke and remain a threat at the end.

What target situation and challenging question can plausibly be prompted by this particular source domain? Moderns quickly note the distinctive role assigned to the female and the feminine (cf. Exum 2005:ch. 7), as ancient commentators were alert to the virtually unprecedented absence of God from the book's discourse (Norris 2003, xvii-xxi). Perhaps the rearrangement of the male/female and the divine/human roles are what the garden language calls attention to, challenging readers to find themselves in radically new circumstances. It is the generous "othering," the capacity of characters to construct and relate with each other so spaciously and generously – the woman's brothers and shadowy sentries providing a threat that seems distant and manageable? Is the target, as Jewish and Christian ancients imagined, the creator/creation relationship at its most wonderful? How to live well in that particular garden? How to understand what it entails, prefers, prompts, prohibits?

5. GAINING RICHER READING SCOPE

What have we gained from the dynamics of reading the metaphor capaciously? The cosmic garden functions as a world – as worlds – in which readers find themselves bidden in order to ponder the question of how to live as God's people: to survive, to thrive, to face dread changes and anticipate relief from them. Even at this general level, the challenge of seeing a better known source domain to help us feel our way toward the target realm for the biblical people makes a challenging reading assignment. To factor the domains and register the collaborative richness of the component sub-metaphors and other analogical tropes promises to repay the effort. To allow the basic metaphor to shift its basic texture from one situation to another keeps it fresh. Kaleidoscopically, fresh insight continues to generate. But how does the cosmic garden heritage metaphor address us, reading these materials many centuries removed from the biblical circumstances?

The final aim of this piece, built upon and drawing from our insights about the cosmic garden heritage as we have considered it, is to allow it to illumine our own existential situation.[4] Returning to the basic insight developed from the prophetic materials, enriched and ramified by our quick look at three other instances, can be restated once again: The basic metaphor *target* – a SUSTAINABLE WAY OF LIVING PRODUCTIVELY OUR RELATIONSHIP

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4   McFague 2001 brings together classic (i.e., pre-cognitive) metaphor theory, a deep familiarity with biblical texts, and a keen sense of the ecological crisis. Fuller philosophical and historical information is available in Berry (2009), Cannato (2010), Delio (2011), Tucker (2003).

WITH GOD includes what we moderns parcel out as political, economic, ecological, and cultic, amply present in the biblical passages. The *source domain* is THE WAY OUR HOUSEHOLDS ARE RUN. As twenty-first century global citizens, we share with the mid-first millennium prophets a sense of crisis, fear for productive survival at a level far greater than pertained in their day. Since the threats are all to easy to name, we can instance simply the weather changes brought about by the rise in earth's temperature and the crises implied in the irreversible pollution of the world's oceans. How can earthlings of all sorts find the resources for survival in the cosmic garden provided for all of us by the creator? What behaviors of ours are incompatible with a healthy garden? What wreaks havoc in and ultimately threatens to destroy the garden, such that our exile from it will be terminal? This time the opponent is not other nations, is not reducible to the anger of the gods, is no longer nameable as "natural disaster".

Insights from "big history," big science," collaborating to evolve "big spirituality" with its opportunities for wider and deeper consciousness of being and presence assist the wisdom texts of Genesis, Deuteronomy and Song of Songs help us see more clearly that we *are* the garden, to grasp the urgency of gaining capacity and consciousness to see ourselves not as autonomous users but as co-participants. How we live with a divine presence that is not simply an enforcer, a sanction, an authority will change the nature of our presence. To appreciate that co-creatures rely upon our self-knowledge as garden guests/hosts is key. To learn to "other" very differently, to re-think radically the nature of our relatedness with every other creature and with our creator is our challenge if we are to survive and thrive.

As the prophetic texts begin to underline for us the dire circumstances we face, the Genesis narrative stresses for us the nature of relationships gone awry, how it happened. The Deuteronomy detail raises for us the question of reversibility: How many times can we start afresh, be invited back once we have found ourselves expelled? The Song of Songs discourse reminds us of what is on offer, begins to suggest an intimacy worth the struggle to learn to other differently. The cosmic garden heritage is there for us, available in our tradition, waiting to be appropriated in lives of deeper consciousness.

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Key words	*Trefwoorde*
Metaphor	Metafoor
Cognitive metaphor	Kognitiewe metafoor
Cosmic garden	Kosmiese tuin