

ISAAC M. ALDERMAN, *The Animal at Unease with Itself: Death Anxiety and the Animal-Human Boundary in Genesis 2–3* (Lanham, MA: Lexington/Fortress, 2020). Pp. 218. Hardback. US\$100.00.

Approaches that encompass emotion, cognition and the psychological study of the Hebrew Bible have been present in biblical studies for some time, along with trauma studies and the history of emotions. The study of terror in biblical texts, using Phyllis Trible's narratological approach, is well known, and since her seminal work, the role of terror in the shaping of texts is emerging. For example, Jeremiah Cataldo's monograph *Biblical Terror* examines the terror of annihilation and irrelevancy through the political lens of the Ezraic Pentateuch. Moreover, cognition and perspectival studies continue to appear in biblical studies, using garments, appearance, senses and embodiment.

In *The Animal at Unease with Itself: Death Anxiety and the Animal-Human Boundary in Genesis 2–3*, Isaac M. Alderman moves from the study of social and political survival to the emotive experiences of the anxiety toward death. Terror Management Theory was developed by Greenberg, Solomon, and Pyszczynski in their work *The Worm at the Core: On the Role of Death in Life* (London: Random House, 2015) as a response to earlier studies by Ernst Becker. Uniquely, this volume uses the theory to examine both the sources of the terror of physical death and the management of this terror, behaviourally. Alderman's study uses the complexities of behaviour management and human/animal embodiment to explain emotion and trauma in behaviour in Genesis 2–3. In this, it is reminiscent of J. Harold Ellens' psychological biblical criticism, but it fills a gap in scholarship by using a behavioural cognitive approach, rather than, for example, social psychology or sociological methods.

The approach acknowledges the difficulties of using cognitive linguistics and sciences, and behavioural psychology, by reading artefacts and archaeological data to make a statement about minds in the ancient world. Mainly Pentateuchal studies in rituals and transmissions of ideas are used in the section "The Cognitive Turn: Examples of Use of Cognitive Science in Biblical Studies" (12–16).

The volume is organised according to five main topics:

1. Definitions of Behavioural Psychology and Terror Management Theory.
2. Narrative echoes in managing the terror of death in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Vorlage.
3. Does the Hebrew Bible deny death?
4. Does the Bible use the disgust reflex connected to bodies of animals to manage the terror of death?
5. How specifically do clothing and garments of skin indicate a terror management strategy in Genesis 2–3?

Alderman considers the question: why do human traditions consider human life to be superior to animals? Is it due to technological and evolutionary factors,

culture, communication and consciousness, and/or a tradition of a unique relationship to a divine being? Alderman's study illustrates these ongoing scholarly discussions.

Many scholars of Genesis rightly emphasise the importance of the human-divine boundary in the ancient religious context. The empathy and nuances between human and divine are perennial themes in Genesis scholarship. But Alderman creates an empathy with the human-animal boundary as well, using similar methods, such as comparison of Genesis with the epic of Gilgamesh. After the opening chapter of Genesis, Chapters 2–3 begin a knotty exploration of integrating death, knowledge and human-animal existence. Human exceptionalism is not taken for granted here. Terror Management Theory applied to Genesis lays bare the emotion and behaviour triggered by a reminder of the human relationship to animals. For example, after creation, a reminder of death makes it clear that humans are not to be alone, and that animals are in some way not ultimate partners. The move from nakedness to being clothed is a way to place a buffer between humans and animals to stave off death, rather than a reaction to sexual activity. Hair and its removal are also mentioned as a changing tradition in the management of animal reminders. By examining the links and divisions between animals and the human species, the author's thesis is maintained (particularly through body covering) because of a human fear of mortality.

Of course, this discussion is limited by the enlightenment and Western philosophical traditions in both biblical interpretation and science. Indeed, the “animal that is at unease with itself” philosophical framework in the book, is purely Derridean. In addition, the term “reminder disgust” from Terror Management Theory, presents animals in a problematic categorisation based on human exceptionalism. Helpfully, the narrative is read as presenting this in some form, but free from a modern scientific basis for the category of “human” (87–89). One question that could be further examined would be, given the current Post-Humanism, how do interpreters read animal identity in biblical texts, as well as human identity?

Alderman shows an awareness of these limitations and nevertheless uses a careful exegesis to dive into the complications and clarity that cognitive science can bring to the Bible. This study serves as a showcase method for the further appreciation of the more-than-human world in all human cultures and interpretive approaches. Alderman strikes a balance, be it through the text of Genesis itself, through terror motifs, or in the use of biblical scholarship such as Barton and Wilkinson's edited volume *Reading Genesis After Darwin*. This volume can add dimension to the existing scholarship on the nature of humanity in the Bible and ancient ideas about humanity, existence and death.

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