

Foreword

ANYONE WHO KNOWS J. Gerald Janzen and his work knows the truth of the aphorism that “everything is connected to everything else.” Two vignettes about Janzen may thus serve as enlightening entrées into the present collection of essays—some old, many new, all of which in their present form are fresh and insightful, the latter being qualities that consistently mark the author and his mind. It is noteworthy that both vignettes involve Janzen’s beloved professor, Frank Moore Cross.

The first vignette: It was a summer night in 1967. Janzen was back in Cambridge, Massachusetts teaching during a break between his second and third years on faculty at his old seminary, The College of Emmanuel and St. Chad, which was his first academic appointment. He and his wife Eileen were having hors d’oeuvres with the Crosses, and, as the story goes, after chatting about various matters of academic interest, Janzen finally screwed up enough courage to ask his esteemed teacher if he (Cross) thought he (Janzen) might have a future in textual criticism—the subject of Janzen’s doctoral work at Harvard under Cross.¹ Cross chuckled and said, “Your mind is much too vivacious.” And, with that, they went in for dinner.

The second vignette: Fast forward many years later. Janzen is now an established scholar and giving a paper on Jeremiah at The Colloquium for Biblical Research, an elite group of scholars in Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, begun by Janzen and others from his student days at Harvard. During the paper, a debate broke out among those in attendance with regard to what methodology he was using. Janzen listened to one person say this, and another person that. As is his way, however, Janzen later put that moment together with yet another in which a student once asked Cross what it took to be a great epigrapher and Cross responded with “an *Eiferform*.” Janzen, who had not caught the answer aurally, thought Cross was using a German term. He figured it was a compound word, somehow related to

1. Subsequently published as Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah*.

German *Eifer*, “zeal, enthusiasm,” but for the life of him Janzen couldn’t recall this no doubt crucial *Gattung* from the Continent. Finally, he leaned over to his colleague (Pat Miller), and asked “What’s an *Eiferform*?” At which point Miller corrected him: “He said, ‘*An eye for form*.’”

Now, in Janzenesque style, for an exegesis of these vignettes that weaves them together into a meaningful unit that is, hopefully, greater than the sum of the parts—“hopefully,” because we are not as adept as Janzen in his own brand of exegesis, such that we are quite confident that he himself would do a far better job. (Rare indeed is the interpreter who is so self-conscious, so self-aware, and at every conceivable level!) First, then, there is Janzen the textual critic, who seized upon his dissertation topic when Cross offered it, in no small part because, by his own admission, it was the only one he could begin to fathom methodologically. We suspect this was due not to a lack of imagination, but to an overabundance of the same (recall the “too vivacious” mind). In Janzen’s own words, “The concreteness of the issues, the piece-by-piece detail of the data, anchored me—the journey of a thousand miles involving, not the superhuman feat of leaping tall buildings, or mountains, in a single bound, but thousands and thousands of baby steps, minute textual difference after minute textual difference, until finally I was able to finish.”² Far from a dead end, however, or an endeavor that simply (!) opened up to more of the same kind of work, Janzen did indeed develop, in the process of that dissertation, an *Eye-for-form* in Cross’s epigraphic sense, though, for Janzen, it was not about paleography but about text types, recensions, textual families—but above all, about words and words and words and the relationships of, and between, words. That disciplined attention ignited his *Eiferform*, which was, in truth, already present (and thus more fundamental than Janzen’s text-critical aspect)—that is, his passion for words and connections between and among them, and not only between biblical words, but between biblical words and all other words, wherever they are found, and however they cast light on the biblical words. This *Eifer* could not be contained or constrained by the standard run-of-the-mill textual criticism; again, Janzen’s mind is “much too vivacious” for that. So, while schooled in the *Eye-for*, Janzen’s more primal *Eifer* has taken the text-critical *Eye-for* to places, discourses, and disciplines that it rarely goes. Few indeed are the textual critics who cite Robert Frost, Alfred North Whitehead, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Hans Loewald . . . *in the same article*. Scratch that: there are no such textual critics save Janzen! And that is not a solitary,

2. Email correspondence, May 4, 2012.

virtuoso performance, it is a *matter of course* with Janzen: day in, day out, *Eifer* meets *Eye-for*, and vice versa—not only in his scholarly work, but even in his email correspondence, which is nothing if not an education in scholarly breadth, existential depth, and the art of the English language.³ And let us not neglect to mention the man’s memory: he never forgets a thing, and all that is remembered is somehow brought to bear in his *Eye-for-Eifer*.

Janzen first told us the *Eifer* story as a kind of justification for what others might deem a haphazard or altogether random moving among texts (he once described it as “snuffling,” as pigs do when they root around for truffles), but we think it is an apology in the best and classic sense of the word: an explanation (*apologia*) of how his vivacious mind (*Eifer*) and insightful eye (*Eye-for*) work. They simply cannot be held in check, and the connections—as organic as embedded hyperlinks in a website (indeed, *more* organic than that)—reach out to the most unlikely places but are, consistently and compellingly, established by Janzen’s attention to fine (textual) detail after fine (textual) detail. So it is that the present volume is not restricted to the Old Testament (Parts One–Three), but consistently makes profound recourse to the New Testament (Part Five), and the two parts are united by what amounts to a short monograph on resonance (Part Four) that alone is worth the price of the volume.

Since Janzen has provided a more detailed overview of the book, its parts, and its overall design (see the Introduction), we will not repeat such information here. We content ourselves with saying that the reader of the present collection has in their hands a great gift. Said reader is about to enjoy the benefits of a master exegete, who, in the famous words of Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687–1752)—“applies the text wholly to himself and applies himself wholly to the text.” And here, by his own account, is this master exegete’s magnum opus: a profound, wide-ranging, passion-filled “snuffling after,” ultimately, what it means when people pray and how that

3. We cannot resist one example, though it could be repeated *ad infinitum*, from one of Janzen’s emails (this one dated February 18, 2010): “But he [speaking of Richard B. Hays’s work; see especially chapter 14] nowhere says where it [resonance] lies on the spectrum; and the use of the term in a couple of the authors he draws on, together with a couple of instances in his own use, is teasingly suggestive in ways he may not fully have recognized, and that in any case connect beautifully with what is implicit in Pat’s usage [speaking here of Miller’s presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature; see chapter 14]; and, moreover, suddenly taps into a hermeneutical project that had lain, I thought, abandoned within me like a gold-mine shaft in Montana whose mouth had silted up through disuse and become hidden from view by a growth of desert shrubs.”

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prayer can (and does!) make all the difference in the world: the biblical one and the one here and now.

It has been a great privilege for us to work on these essays with Gerry because working with him is consistently a joy and an education—both an education in joy, and a model of how joyous learning can be. We thank him for his good humor and patience during the editorial process and for teaching us so much along the way. We also thank the publishers who granted permission to reprint chapters 1–7 and 12–13 (see the Acknowledgments for original publication details). Note that even the previously published chapters have been edited to bring them into conformity with the rest of the volume and to update them in certain ways. One such way is the simplified transliteration schema that is adopted throughout the volume. Despite the fact that so much of Janzen’s work depends on technical knowledge of the original biblical languages (even the scripts), so as to trace intertextual resonance through similar if not identical words, roots, phrases, and the like, the exegetical points are clear even in simplified transliteration. The simpler form was adopted since we believed that scholars accustomed to the languages would not be bothered by the simplification, whereas other readers who were not accustomed to the languages or to highly technical diacritical markings, might be put off by them, and miss out on the many gifts this collection offers.⁴

Our thanks also go to Deborah Van Der Lande for her help with electronic manipulation of the previously published essays, and, especially to Kevin J. Barbour, who labored tirelessly on the transliterations and in tagging the manuscript for the typesetter. Finally, Henry M. Huberty compiled the indices and Aubrey Buster helped in reading the proofs. The work of Barbour and Huberty was supported by grants from the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, which has our gratitude.

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4. Note that this practice of simplified transliteration was extended even to citations of other works—once again for the sake of making this material widely accessible. Readers should note, however, that cited works often use the original scripts or technical transliteration in place of the simplified forms found here.