Theocharous, Myrto. "Wealth and Dehumanization: Ezekiel's Oracles against Tyre." *Poverty in the Early Church and Today: A Conversation*. Ed. Walton Steve and Swithinbank Hannah. London: T&T Clark, 2019. 109–119. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9780567677747.ch-018>>.

Downloaded from Bloomsbury Collections, www.bloomsburycollections.com, 26 April 2023, 13:09 UTC.

Copyright © Steve Walton, Hannah Swithinbank and contributors 2019. Released under a CC BY-NC-ND licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>). You may share this work for non-commercial purposes only, provided you give attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher, and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence.

Wealth and Dehumanization: Ezekiel's Oracles against Tyre

Myrto Theocharous

Introduction

The author of the book of Revelation, aiming to level a fierce economic critique against Rome as the prevailing empire of his time, makes use of Old Testament (OT) images and forms, one of which is Ezekiel's oracle against Tyre. As Richard Bauckham has shown in his study on the economic critique of Rome, Tyre was infamous enough for its excessive trade and economic exploitations to serve as an ideal prototype for the author of Revelation to use.¹

It is not the purpose of this paper to elucidate Revelation's use of the Tyrian descriptions but to go back to Ezekiel and explore Tyre in the prophet's imagination. What is particularly intriguing about Ezekiel's oracles against Tyre, specifically chapter 28, is that he does not hesitate to rewrite the primeval story of the creation, sin and fall of Adam in economic terms, in order to address the problems of his day. Humanity's creation and its fall is known from Genesis 2–3, it is briefly commented on in Job 15 and it is fully described again in Ezekiel 28 with the king of Tyre in the role of Adam.² Ezekiel presents us with what he views as proper Adam (i.e. human) vs profane Adam and the process of devolving from the first state to the last, that is, the dehumanization or de-Adamization process.³ As Andrew Mein notes, 'There has

¹ Richard Bauckham, 'The Economic Critique of Rome in Revelation 18', in *Images of Empire*, ed. Loveday Alexander, JSOTSup 122 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 47–90. Apparently, Tyre was useful not only for John's critique against Rome but also in a similar way for the author of the Sibylline Oracles (4.90, 5.455, 7.62). Strom finds the oracle against the king of Tyre serving as the background of Acts 12.20–23, Mark R. Strom, 'An Old Testament Background to Acts 12:20–23', NTS 32 (1986): 289–92.

² Williams states, 'In the Old Testament it does seem to be the only general parallel to Gen. 2–3.' Anthony J. Williams, 'The Mythological Background of Ezekiel 28:12–19', *BTB* 6 (1976): 49–61, here 53.

³ The term 'dehumanization' used here is not derived from any philosophical discussions on ontology. It is simply a way of describing how the biblical author views the role of humans within his religious framework or, rather, the failure of fulfilling that expected role. I often use the neologism 'de-Adamization' in order to keep the focus of the discussion within the boundaries of the biblical text.

been widespread agreement that Ezekiel represents an important milestone in the development of Israelite ethics.⁴ Ezekiel's attack on Tyre is merely a glimpse into his ethics, but an important one since he locates it in the foundations of world history.

The book of Ezekiel

Ezekiel is a prophet of the exile. The book talks about him and his prophetic activity taking place in Babylon among the community of Judaeon exiles in the year 597 BC. Mein alerts us to the importance of this context in examining the ethics represented in the book and notes that

as exiles these people belonged to two different moral worlds – two different realms of moral possibility. On the one hand, they were drawn from Judah's ruling élite, and, before their deportation, would have participated in decisions affecting major communal institutions like the temple and the army. But, on the other hand, their new status as a dominated minority within the huge Babylonian empire brought little or no political autonomy and posed serious threats to their communal identity. They were no longer able to participate in the main areas of political and religious life. Their moral world was sharply circumscribed, and it was really only in the spheres of family, business and immediate community that they could take moral decisions.⁵

However, the fact that they were members of Judah's ruling elite means that the message about Tyre's affluence and power was indirectly referring to the attitudes they once held in Jerusalem, their former aspirations. After all, a lot of the wording used against Tyre is similar to the wording used against Jerusalem in Ezek. 16 and elsewhere.⁶ Moreover, there are recognized allusions to Jerusalem's high priest in the oracle against the Tyrian ruler.⁷ At the same time, since the Judaeon exiles are now in the position of the dominated minority, they need to hear that God is just, not only in the way that he dealt with them, but also in how he will deal with anyone who appears unconquerable, even deified, and rejoicing at Jerusalem's demise (Ezek. 26.2).⁸

⁴ Andrew Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1.

⁵ Mein, *Ezekiel*, 1.

⁶ See, e.g., the connections noted on being enamoured with one's beauty in John T. Willis, 'National "Beauty" and Yahweh's "Glory" as a Dialectical Key to Ezekielian Theology', *HBT* 34 (2012): 1–18.

⁷ Although some argue that Phoenician kings adorned themselves with precious stones like the high priest (Michael D. Coogan, *A Brief Introduction to the Old Testament: The Hebrew Bible in Its Context*, 2nd edn [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], 328).

⁸ See Carly L. Crouch, 'Ezekiel's Oracles against the Nations in Light of a Royal Ideology of Warfare', *JBL* 130 (2011): 473–92. Crouch argues that the defeat of the human king was tantamount to the defeat of the divine king in ancient Near Eastern ideology. So, the defeat of the king of Jerusalem posed a theological threat to those espousing the royal military ideology, that is, the deported elites. The use of oracles against the nations by Ezekiel is meant to reassert Yahweh's claims of divine kingship. The concern is that Yahweh's name is vindicated (478).

The literary context

From all the oracles given by prophets, Ezekiel's critique of Tyre is the longest since he dedicates three whole chapters to this city, four oracles in total. In the first oracle, in chapter 26, Tyre rejoices that the 'gateway of the peoples' is open to her, after the fall of Jerusalem, which calls for Yahweh's response and imminent manifestation of his poetic justice. God is stirring Nebuchadnezzar's armies, to bring destruction on the city of Tyre.⁹ In chapter 27, the second oracle is cast in the form of a 'dirge' (קינה *qynh*, 27.2). In this lamentation, Tyre is portrayed as a beautiful ship in the heart of the seas made up of a variety of materials from different nations, followed by a long list of merchandise Tyre traded in. This ship was so heavy that it sank in the heart of the seas and caused a great wailing to everyone watching from their shores. Ezekiel 28 begins the third oracle which is addressed to the prince of Tyre in the second person. The prince is portrayed as transgressing the boundaries of 'humanness' and assuming the status of a god by amassing great wealth. The punishment is similar to the first oracle: strangers will come against the king and he will die violently in the heart of the seas. Finally, the fourth oracle is again a lamentation (*qynh*, 28.12) for the king of Tyre, another title for the prince of Tyre of the previous oracle,¹⁰ only here the king is described as the perfect primal human in the garden of Eden, full of wisdom and beauty, who ended up corrupting his sanctuaries through his trading activities and was cast out as profane by God himself. He is annihilated by fire and returns to dust.

The wealth and dehumanization of Tyre

The oracles against Tyre focus on the city's trade, which is obvious from the uniquely high concentration of commercial terms in Ezekiel 26–28.¹¹ We shall concentrate on chapter 28 (two clear parts [vv. 1–10 and 11–19], brought together into a unitary composition),¹² where the word against Tyre climaxes and because nowhere else is the dehumanization of Tyre more evident. Chapter 28 zooms in on the king as the collective representative of Tyre.¹³ As Cooke says, 'In both passages [28.1-10, 11-19]

⁹ For the discussion concerning the date and the number of the neo-Babylonian sieges of Tyre see, Norman K. Gottwald, *All the Kingdoms of the Earth: Israelite Prophecy and International Relations in the Ancient Near East* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2007), 311–16.

¹⁰ For an explanation of the two different titles, see Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 93–96.

¹¹ Out of the seventeen times that the word רֹכֶלִים *rōkēlīm* ('merchants') occurs in the OT, eleven are found in Ezekiel and ten of these are found in his words against Tyre. The feminine noun רֶכֶל *rēkullā* ('trade, merchandise') occurs four times in the OT and all of these are found in Ezekiel's words against Tyre. Moreover, the highest concentration of the noun מַעֲרָב *ma'ārāb* ('merchandise, imports') is found in Ezekiel 27 (nine times out of twenty-three in the OT), and the word עֲבֹדָה *'izzābōn* ('goods, wares') occurs seven times in the OT, all of which are in Ezek. 27 (vv. 12, 14, 16, 19, 22, 27, 33). This concentration of terms shows that Tyre's commerce is the primary theme in these oracles.

¹² Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 88.

¹³ In the first part, the leader of Tyre is addressed as 'prince' (נָגִיד *nāgīd*) and in the second part as a 'king' (מֶלֶךְ *melek*). There are no strong grounds, however, in regarding these two as distinct individuals (see note 11). They are both references to the head of Tyre, the collective representative of the city.

the prophet is thinking, not so much of any particular individual, as of the nation whose character is embodied in the person of its chief.¹⁴ The city is thus personified in its leader.

The first part of the chapter begins and ends with a significant discourse marker involving the transgression of human boundaries. The phrase functioning as a bracket is ‘you are but a mortal (אָדָם *’ādām*), and no god (אֵל *’ēl*)’ repeated in vv. 2 and 9.¹⁵ This statement by God acts as a corrective to the blurring of boundaries of identity taking place in the king’s heart (לֵב *lb*) or self-perception (‘I am a god; I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas’, v. 2).

This part of the chapter is an insight into the arrogant heart and mind of the Tyrian king, but the text goes further to unpack what it is that generates and sustains this hubris. Of course, the author does not have access to the king’s psychological state, but it is *external* observations of Tyre and its king by the author, probably shared with his audience, that stir his imagination in assuming the king’s internal state of being. What is observable is a vast increase in wealth brought about by great wisdom or skill in trade (28.4-5). The Greek OT (LXX) actually translates the king’s ‘wisdom’ (חֵכְמָה *hokmā*) as scientific knowledge (ἐπιστήμη *epistēmē*), thus distinguishing it from the ‘god-fearing’ wisdom (σοφία *sophia*, e.g. Prov. 1.7). The author recognizes that the king’s arrogance and pride is actually derived from the success in his commercial endeavours (28.5). It is economic success that led him to value his own wisdom as extraordinary, even divine (28.2, 6). In other words, wealth accumulation and control over international trade function as external indicators of the state of the king’s heart. As 26.2 clarifies (‘Mortal, because Tyre said concerning Jerusalem, “Aha, broken is the gateway of the peoples; it has swung open to me; I shall be replenished, now that it is wasted”’, NRSV), this wealth accumulation is competitive in nature and benefits from the demise of economic rivals. For Ezekiel, the wealth accumulation of the king of Tyre signifies overstepping human boundaries. It is reminiscent of Deuteronomy’s warnings on the self-perception wealth accumulation may bring:

When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the LORD

¹⁴ G. A. Cooke, *The Book of Ezekiel*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936), 313. Similarly, Block links chapter 28 thematically with the attack against the entire city of Tyre:

Tyre’s trade and the manner in which she pursued it constitute the major thematic link with the prophet’s words against the city. The pairing of *rēkullā* and *hayil* in 28:5 echoes 26:12 and summarizes the long commercial list in 27:12–25. Since the king of Tyre embodies the collective spirit of the city, the references to his commercial ventures are not as unexpected in this chapter as some would imagine. On the contrary, his hubris is fed by his mercantile success. (Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 89)

Others think that Ezekiel had a specific king in mind, Ithobaal (or Ethbaal) II, who ruled over Tyre between 887 and 856 BC, although lack of personal details may indicate that this is aimed at any Tyrian king. Hector Michael Patmore, *Adam, Satan, and the King of Tyre: The Interpretation of Ezekiel 28:11–19 in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 4.

¹⁵ The prince of Tyre claims to be god in a generic sense (28.2), although the claim may also be taken to state equality with the head of the pantheon, El (Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 97).

your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery . . . Do not say to yourself, 'My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.' But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth. (Deut. 8.12-18 NRSV)

The morality of the king's trade will be commented on later.

The king assumes full control over seafaring,¹⁶ which, for the prophet, is essentially the same as claiming to 'sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas' (v. 2). This hubris, brought about by economic success, calls for a talionic form of response by God, making the punishment fit the crime: bringing the king down to the pit and handing him over to destruction by brutal nations. The realm over which he presided will become his burying place 'you shall die a violent death *in the heart of the seas*' (v. 8, my italics).¹⁷

The second section of chapter 28, which is a lamentation (*qynh*), mirrors the first section, only here, the description of the king's rise and fall is cast in primeval terms. It is pushed back to creation and, in a sense, is a rewritten story of creation and the fall.

Ezekiel's purpose is not to replace the 'master' primeval story of Genesis by promoting a variant tradition. As Kvanvig writes,

Alternative stories . . . deviate from master narratives, but they do not contest them. They can add, move, and remove features from the master narrative in order to make new accents in it, but not to dissolve its communicative force. Alternative narratives can live together and lend authority to each other.¹⁸

Ezekiel's point is not to tell us that the king of Tyre is *like* the primal human; for Ezekiel, he *is* the primal human.¹⁹ It is as if Ezekiel has acquired new insight on how the world operates. Cosmic instability witnessed in the present was usually attributed by the ancients to a rebellious primeval act. For Ezekiel, this cosmic trauma that throws the world in disarray, primarily in the fall of Jerusalem, is no longer emphasized to have been brought about by a serpent's allurements or a woman's enticements. It is not even because this Adam desires the wisdom of the gods. This Adam *already* possessed this divine gifting, but it was self-referential. It was used to generate economic power with narcissistic results. It is this king, his actions and his coming demise that informs us of how humanity falls. It is the Tyrian king who shows us the significance of the creation

¹⁶ Maritime knowledge was a famous Phoenician trait attested in various sources of antiquity. Philo of Byblos and other classical writers say that the city of Tyre 'invented' ship-building. H. Jacob Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre: From the Beginning of the Second Millennium B.C.E. until the Fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire in 538 B.C.E.* (Jerusalem: Schocken Institute for Jewish Research, 1973), 24.

¹⁷ The city of Tyre was situated on an island before Alexander the Great connected it to the mainland by a dyke. It literally lay 'in the midst of the sea' (Ezek. 27.32) (Katzenstein, *History*, 9).

¹⁸ Helge S. Kvanvig, *Primeval History: Babylonian, Biblical and Enochic: An Intertextual Reading* (Boston: Brill, 2011), 8.

¹⁹ See these distinctions made by Dexter E. Callender, Jr, *Adam in Myth and History: Ancient Israelite Perspectives on the Primal Human*, Harvard Semitic Studies 48 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 87.

and fall story. By being presented as God's primal being, he is potentially *every* human and he becomes the paradigm of how Adam is de-Adamized. As Zimmerli puts it, this is 'Everyman's story'.²⁰ Ezekiel is redefining primeval sin in commercial terms. The controlling factor here is the Tyrian situation, and this is what motivates the author to adopt, perhaps, a sarcastic terminology in order to respond to Tyre's pride. But, while this creation language may be employed sarcastically to attack the Tyrian king, it functions at the same time as a commentary on the fall of Adam, perhaps seeking to deepen our understanding of its cause or even to redefine it. It gives economic ambition a primary place in explaining human corruption and makes economic greed and oppression to be the ground of dehumanization, that is, the fall of Adam.

The transition to this section is not at all unnatural since the language of the first section, about Adam wanting to be God ('El), brings to mind Adam's sin in the garden of Eden. The Genesis creation story does not mention elements such as the abundance of trade or violence. These are features taken from human history (Tyrian and possibly Israelite) and projected, although awkwardly, to the events in the garden of Eden (v. 13). The fame of Tyre's fauna may have also triggered Ezekiel's Eden language. Phoenicia's cedar forests were very famous. Amenhotep III admiringly calls this area the 'Land of Gardens' or the 'Land of the God' (cf. 28.13 and the 'mountain of God' in 28.16).²¹

The unfamiliar elements led many scholars to suppose a variant tradition of creation or borrowed mythological language from Mesopotamian myths.²² However, the text cannot be used safely to inform us of pre-existent ancient Near Eastern myths.²³

Some think that the text was once intended against Jerusalem's high priest due to the precious stones mentioned that match those on his breastplate. Whatever the text's prehistory, the chapter as it now stands is clearly against the Tyrian king, but the presence of these elements may very well indicate that the prophet is *indirectly* attacking his own religious leaders.²⁴

The king of Tyre is Adam, the primal human, because he was created (בָּרָא *bārā'*, cf. Ezek. 28.13) by God, a verb used of the creation of Adam in Gen. 1.27-28 and an indication that Ezekiel is adapting a well-known biblical tradition.²⁵ This Adam was created as a representative of God, in his image and likeness, as the characterization 'signet of perfection' communicates in v. 12. To be God's signet ring means that he was assigned a role to represent the divinity, authorized by God himself. We could say that the seal represents or signifies the 'essence' of a person. Joseph, for example, practically becomes the essence or avatar of Pharaoh as the bearer of Pharaoh's seal (Gen. 41.40-44).²⁶ Indeed, the LXX seems to have seen some identification with the 'image and likeness' language of Gen. 1.26 and translates 'seal of likeness' (ἀποσφράγισμα ὁμοιώσεως *aposphragisma homoiōseōs*). The 'signet' metaphor has strong associations

²⁰ Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, Hermeneia; trans. James D. Martin (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 95.

²¹ Katzenstein, *History*, 8-9, 47-8.

²² For an overview see Williams, 'Mythological Background', 49-61.

²³ See the primeval language employed against Egypt and Assyria in Ezek. 29.3 and 31.2-9 (Williams, 'Mythological Background', 59).

²⁴ Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, 106-7, 111.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

²⁶ Callender, *Adam*, 93-4.

with royal imagery, and kings in Mesopotamia did consider themselves as vice regents of their god.²⁷ What is striking, here, is that Tyre's god is not mentioned, but the king of Tyre is presented as YHWH's regent. Such characterization was used of Judahite kings Jehoiachin and Zerubbabel in Jer. 22.24 and Hag. 2.23,²⁸ thus a further indication that Ezekiel may be *indirectly* speaking of his own people's downfall.

Wealth, wisdom and beauty are presented as God's endowment on the king of Tyre, which he will eventually defile.²⁹ Beauty strongly suggests physical beauty as it is used physically of Jerusalem (16.14, 15, 25) and also in ancient Near Eastern descriptions of the creation of the king.³⁰ Corral says that in the context of the oracle, beauty refers to the magnificence and opulence that Tyre manifested to the beholder. It is Tyre's prosperity, since it says that it was 'builders who perfected your beauty' (27.4).³¹ Even as early as in the letters of Rib-addi, king of Byblos, Tyre's beauty is compared to that of Ugarit. The king of Tyre himself, in his correspondence with Akhenaton, refers to his city as 'a great city'. But also, classical writers share this view of Tyre. Curtius, for example, says that Tyre excelled all the cities of Syria and Phoenicia in size and glory.³²

The king is covered in precious stones, enhancing his beauty, but the significance of the stones lies in the list as a totality.³³ The enumeration of the stones in v. 13 is set up to recall the high priestly breastpiece and reveal the priestly orientation of the primal human.³⁴ This element emphasizes the sacredness of this state of Adamhood.

In v. 14, the king is portrayed as a cherub or as being *with* a cherub. The Masoretic pointing suggests quite clearly that the cherub and the first human figure are one and the same, despite the fact that in Gen. 3.24 there is a distinction between human and cherub.³⁵ Of course, this phrase may also be taken metaphorically meaning 'you were *like* a cherub'. The Greek and Syriac versions suggest that one should read 'you were *with* the cherub' rather than 'you *were* the cherub'.³⁶ This lack of clarity has sparked a variety of interpretations. In Second Temple times and after Origen, people associated this text with the fall of Satan.³⁷ The rabbis, however, thought that this text speaks of

²⁷ Callender, *Adam*, 96–7.

²⁸ Block, *Ezekiel* 25–48, 105.

²⁹ See also Callender, *Adam*, 105.

³⁰ Callender, *Adam*, 97–100.

³¹ Martin Alonso Corral, *Ezekiel's Oracles against Tyre: Historical Reality and Motivations* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2002), 158.

³² Katzenstein, *History*, 15–17, 31.

³³ The list in MT Ezekiel 28 does not contain all the precious stones from the priest's breastpiece. The LXX lists the twelve stones, instead of the MT's nine, in agreement with LXX Exod. 28 (Callender, *Adam*, 102).

³⁴ Block, *Ezekiel* 25–48, 106–7; Block, however, believes the connection with primeval stones (cf. Gen. 2.12) is stronger (111). He thinks that the connection with the high priest should not be exaggerated. The imagery simply functions as evidence to the wealth and splendour of the king (112). See also Callender, *Adam*, 103–4.

³⁵ Callender, *Adam*, 109.

³⁶ Block takes the king as a cherub and notes that it reminds us of the cherubim guarding the entrance to the tree of life. However, he notes that this cherub is not two but only one, and it walks about in the garden. It is not stationed, so this departs from what we know from Genesis about cherubim (Block, *Ezekiel* 25–48, 112–13).

³⁷ See James Barr, "Thou art the Cherub": Ezekiel 28.14 and the Post-Ezekiel Understanding of Genesis 2–3, in *Priests, Prophets and Scribes: Essays on the Formation and Heritage of Second Temple Judaism in Honour of Joseph Blenkinsopp*, ed. E. Ulrich, J. W. Wright, R. P. Carroll and P. R. Davies, JSOTSup 149 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 213–23. This interpretation arose in the context

Adam.³⁸ What we certainly know about cherubim is that they are closely associated with YHWH's presence and that they are also associated with kings in ancient Near Eastern iconography.³⁹ In other words, the text communicates that the Tyrian king, as Adam, is in the closest proximity possible to the divine, where cherubs are, and is nearly identified with God, especially given the fact that he is a human in the divine habitation, the holy mountain of God, and walks among stones of fire (v. 14). These stones enhance the brilliance and magnificence of the picture⁴⁰ as well as the sense of proximity to the divine presence and glory, which is usually manifested through fire.⁴¹ Identification with YHWH is possibly further enhanced by the verb 'to walk' in the hiphil stem (הִתְהַלֵּךְ *hithallāktā*), for the hiphil participle of this verb is used of God himself in the garden of Eden in Gen. 3.8.

In v. 15, Ezekiel locates the moment when 'malice' (עוֹלָתָה *'awlātā*)⁴² was found in God's perfectly created being.⁴³ This word is the opposite of perfection or completeness (תָּמִים *tāmīm*), and its presence within the king marks the end of his period of perfection and the beginning of his dehumanization/de-Adamization.

How did 'malice' find its way into the king? Verses 16 to 18 show the way the king had gradually corrupted his perfect nature through the use of the preposition ב/ב (because, in or through): 'because of the abundance of your trade they filled your midst with violence, and you sinned'; where the more common root for 'sin' (חָטָא *ḥt'*) is used.⁴⁴ A second ב/ב preposition stating the cause of profanation or acquiring a proud heart is found in v. 17: 'because of your "beauty" or "splendour" (יָפִי *yāpī*).⁴⁵ Beauty, that is, Tyre's prosperity and luxury, became another ground for hubris giving the illusion of power and self-accomplishment. It is worth noting the repetition of 'multitude' or 'abundance' in v. 16 (בְּרֹב *bērōb*) and v. 18 (מֵרֹב *mērōb*). Excess seems to be a key component in the dehumanization process and excess fills with 'violence'.

of anti-Marcionite apologetics. Marcion said that since the devil is the one who beguiled Adam into sinning and the devil is created by God, then God is the one to blame for the existence of evil. Tertullian agrees that the devil is culpable, but traces the origins of evil in the devil himself. Taking Ezekiel 28 to be prophetic of the devil, he argues that he was initially created pure. He resists reading Adam or the king of Tyre in the text since that would not harmonize with what he knew from the Genesis creation story (Patmore, *Adam*, 43–8).

³⁸ Patmore, *Adam*, 43–8.

³⁹ Callender, *Adam*, 111.

⁴⁰ Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 114.

⁴¹ Callender, *Adam*, 119.

⁴² The word עוֹלָה *'awlā* has a broad range of meaning, but it is usually defined as 'badness, malice or injustice' (HALOT s.v.).

⁴³ In his original state, the king of Tyre was blameless; cf. Noah (Gen. 6.9) and Abraham (Gen. 17.1) (Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 116).

⁴⁴ Also, Zimmerli renders the ב/ב prepositions with 'through' (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 86). Greenberg stresses the causal nature of this ב/ב preposition rendering it as 'because' in 28.16 and 28.18 (Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, AB 22A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 579–80). I think the so-called *causal beth* is the most appropriate category for the use of the preposition here; see Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 198; and Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 105.

⁴⁵ The same language is used of Jerusalem's beauty which was perfect and bestowed by God himself (Ezek. 16.14–25).

The Hebrew word for violence, חָמָס *hāmās*, is reminiscent of eighth-century prophets,⁴⁶ who similarly pointed out the oppressive practices of the rich (e.g. Amos 3.10; 6.3; Mic. 6.12). Classical, biblical and other ancient Near Eastern sources are unanimous concerning Tyre's unjust practices such as tricking people into exchanging items of high value, like silver, for very cheap goods and participation in the slave trade.⁴⁷ The biblical record mentions Tyre's involvement in slave trade in Amos 1.9, Joel 4.6 and Ezek. 27.13.⁴⁸ Classical authors considered the Phoenicians to be greedy and oppressive pirates (Homer, *Odyssey*, 14.288–90; 15.415–16; Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.1; 2.54.).⁴⁹ They obtained their slaves through kidnapping or raiding and they treated them as any other commodity.⁵⁰ Moreover, after the destruction of Jerusalem, Tyrian merchants were selling Judaeans to Edom and the Greeks.⁵¹

Verse 18 is also a testimony to the immoral practices involved in Tyre's trade: 'Because of the multitude of your iniquities (רַב־עֲוֹנוֹתַי *āwōnēkātāi*), in the unrighteousness (בְּעָוֶל *bē'ewel*) of your trade.' The first word עֲוֹן *āwōn* is more generally used for 'sin', but the next word עָוֶל *āwel* is more specific to dishonesty and injustice and regularly used of economic transactions (e.g. Ezek. 18.8; 33.15; Lev. 19.15, 35; Deut. 25.16).⁵²

Practices connected with עָוֶל *āwel* elsewhere in the OT include usury: the extraction of high interest and extra demands on loans given to people in financial need (Ezek. 18.8). Also, withholding pledge taken from debtors or seizing the debtors' possessions (Ezek. 33.15).⁵³ For Ezekiel, at least in some oracles (e.g. chapters 11, 22 and 34), injustice is also responsible for the fall of Jerusalem. In particular, 'the leaders of society, the king and ruling classes, are attacked for their greed and violence.'⁵⁴ Ezekiel 45.9 is representative: 'Thus says the Lord god: Enough, O princes of Israel! Put away violence and oppression, and do what is just and right. Cease your evictions of my people, says the Lord god' (NRSV). As already mentioned, although the oracles we are examining are levelled against Tyre, they are indirectly to be heard by the deported Judahites. Thomas Renz says that 'the picture of Old Israel is hidden in the oracles against Tyre and Egypt. Old Israel is no longer "Israel," it is "Tyre" and "Egypt".'⁵⁵ The profanation of beauty and splendour was after all primarily an accusation against Jerusalem (cf. Ezek. 16).

Although trade is absent from Genesis 2–3, by seeing the oppressive dimensions of excessive unjust trade, Ezekiel does not hesitate to read it in the creation story and

⁴⁶ Paul M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 180.

⁴⁷ For examples from the classical sources, see Corral, *Ezekiel's Oracles*, 71–2.

⁴⁸ See also Patricia J. Berlyn, 'The Biblical View of Tyre', *JBQ* 34 (2006): 73–82, here 73.

⁴⁹ As early as the thirteenth century BC, there are traces of Phoenician slave trade, and in the first millennium it is documented everywhere in Northern Mesopotamia (Corral, *Ezekiel's Oracles*, 67).

⁵⁰ The Phoenicians of Sidon, especially, were very successful in combining trade with kidnapping (Homer, *Odyssey*, 14.287–98; 15.403–84; Corral, *Ezekiel's Oracles*, 125).

⁵¹ Corral, *Ezekiel's Oracles*, 127.

⁵² Similarly Mein, *Ezekiel*, 197.

⁵³ For some of these practices see, Samuel L. Adams, 'The Justice Imperative in Scripture', *Int* 69 (2015): 399–414.

⁵⁴ Mein, *Ezekiel*, 94.

⁵⁵ Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel*, VTSup 76 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 177.

assign to it the place of 'primal sin,' the sin of humanity's fall that is able to turn a proper Adam into a profane Adam.

The language of profanation is telling of Ezekiel's priestly background. The root חלל *hll* permeates the entire book and it is used three times in this chapter (vv. 7, 16 and 18). By using the symbolic language of the Jerusalem temple beyond the priestly sphere, Ezekiel achieves the 'ritualization of ethics'.⁵⁶ In the context of exile where there is no temple, the values of purity and the danger of profanity which once made sense only within the context provided by the temple are still valid and extended beyond a localized Jerusalemite context.⁵⁷ Where is the sanctuary now and how does one profane it? Are the words to the Tyrian king 'you profaned your sanctuaries' (v. 18) to be taken literally?⁵⁸ Or are people warned against greed and economic injustice as equivalent to ritual uncleanness?

Finally, the fall of the king involves his casting on the ground and turning into ashes on the earth (vv. 17-18). Ashes on the ground is an indication that this primal human will return to where he was created from. It is a statement highlighting his fallen humanity, as in Gen. 3.19.⁵⁹

Conclusions

The focus of this essay was the city of Tyre, its trade and unjust practices. We have examined Ezekiel's oracle against Tyre, focusing particularly on chapter 28 where the king of Tyre is addressed. We saw how Ezekiel casts the sin of Tyre in primeval language, portraying the Tyrian king as the primal human in the garden of Eden and explaining how he came to be 'de-Adamized', losing his proper humanity and returning to the ground. Through this oracle, Ezekiel effectually makes wealth accumulation through unjust means the primal sin of the fall of humanity. He gives sin an economic value.

Naturally, the question arises whether all accumulation of wealth is critiqued or only that which results from unjust means. First, we need to keep in mind that the responsibility of a ruler in the ancient Near East was to use his power to alleviate the suffering of the poor, the widow and the orphan.⁶⁰ The king is not the primary beneficiary of his wealth and power, and is therefore judged by whether he has used it for justice and equity or not. Therefore, we could say that the presence of injustice and unalleviated suffering in a king's realm would be enough to trigger the critique of his wealth. Second, Ezekiel goes deeper than that, prior to the observation of unjust means or oppression. The first of the two parts of chapter 28 does not hint on immoral

⁵⁶ Mein, *Ezekiel*, 261.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Corral thinks that the sanctuaries refer to the temples of the Tyrian god Melkart (Corral, *Ezekiel's Oracles*, 162-63). Callender, though, wonders why a Yahwistic prophet would care about the ritual correctness of a foreign ruler with respect to his foreign god. He thinks that 'sanctuary' can be understood as homologous with the concept of garden (Callender, *Adam*, 127). See also 5.11, 23.38-39.

⁵⁹ Callender, *Adam*, 130.

⁶⁰ H. G. M. Williamson, *He Has Shown You What is Good: Old Testament Justice Here and Now*, Trinity Lectures, Singapore, 2011 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 25-32.

practices, but what is presented as problematic with wealth is the elevated self-perception it generates (cf. Deut. 8.11-18), what one says in his 'heart'. Greed and the 'isolating' autonomy brought about by one's wealth is critiqued in the New Testament as well, even where immorality is not the cause of wealth abundance (e.g. the rich fool in Lk. 12.13-21). What is at stake is the maintenance of the boundaries between a contingent human and his God.

Callender says, 'We are not faced only with the task of discerning the essential boundaries between humanity and the divine but ultimately the very task of *defining* humanity and the divine.'⁶¹ Ezekiel, through this oracle, does exactly that. He defines for us what Adam is and what *El* is – what it means to be human and how one is dehumanized. The irony is that being proper Adam means having the closest proximity possible to God and behaving just like him. It means *already* having access to divine presence, sitting in 'the seat of the gods', being the authorized representative of the deity and possessing all the wisdom and knowledge necessary for ruling. Being Adam is actually an existence in sacred space, a 'transcendent' existence. It means leading a life of maintaining the world as sacred space. But it is simultaneously a dangerous space where 'Adamhood' is always at stake. In this oracle, wealth accumulation together with its unjust inner workings is what places humanity in immediate danger of profanation and jeopardizes our identity as humans. Attempting to supersede one's humanity economically is precisely how one loses one's humanity and ends up as good as dead.⁶²

Gary Anderson said, 'How we talk about sin, philosophers would argue, influences what we will *do* about it.'⁶³ So, in attributing humanity's fall to such wealth accumulation, Ezekiel calls us to imagine what the *reversal* of the fall would look like.

⁶¹ Williamson, *He Has Shown You*, 17.

⁶² Zimmerli juxtaposes the story of the king of Tyre to the counterstory of Jesus as proclaimed in Phil. 2.5-11 who did not regard his 'giftedness' and 'nobility' as 'a thing to be grasped' (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 95).

⁶³ Gary A. Anderson, *Sin: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 13.