Boston College
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY CONTINUING EDUCATION
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Transcript of

"Reading the Hebrew Bible with Jesus"

presented on February 25, 2015
by Michael Simone, S.J.

Melinda Brown Donovan: Good evening, my name is Melinda Brown Donovan, and I serve the School of Theology and Ministry as Associate Director for Continuing Education. Now Father Richard Clifford of the Society of Jesus, my colleague at the School of Theology and Ministry, will introduce our speaker. Father Clifford is professor of Old Testament at the STM, and was also the founding dean of the School of Theology and Ministry. Father Clifford.

[applause]

Fr. Richard Clifford, S.J.:

When I looked at the board I thought that an introduction was not necessary. This is Michael Simone's–I would compare it to one's closet, when you go through somebody's room, you see the closet, they things they didn't think were posted. That is not enough of an introduction.

It's a great pleasure for me to introduce my colleague and my friend, Michael Simone, who, a former student and now a colleague at our School. Michael is a Jesuit of the Chicago-Detroit Province, and a native of Ohio. He's a graduate of John Carroll University and received the Master's of Divinity degree and Licentiate in Sacred Theology from Weston Jesuit School of Theology, which is now a component of the School and Theology and Ministry at BC. He then received the Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitics from Johns Hopkins University, and the topic of his dissertation was the biblical image of divine fire—how God appears to humans.

We are delighted to have him as a member of the Scripture faculty at the School, where he has served since last year. Father Simone has a wide-ranging experience of ministry, including service as chaplain at Perry Point, Maryland, the Veterans Center, Leader of Medical Missions in San Lucas in Guatemala, and a regular Sunday presider at St. Leonard's Parish in Boston's North End.

His research interests you'll hear about tonight include, beyond the particular topic of tonight's lecture, religious practices in ancient Israel and the archeology of worship in the ancient Near East. Please join me in welcoming Father Michael Simone.

[applause]

Fr. Michael Simone, S.J.:

I want to say something about the project that I'm sharing with you tonight. It's not a finished research project; I'm not about to give a completed academic paper. This is something that's been boiling on the back of my stove for a while. It's not even one of my main research projects, but this is something about which I have had a great interest in for quite some time. As I get time, in my spare moments, this is something that I'm going to continue to think about.

I'm trying to get into the mind of Jesus as he reads the Scriptures. This is no easy task, as I'll describe. I'm trying to get a sense of Jesus the theologian. So what I'm going to share tonight is just my beginnings, my primary source research, in that regard.

Now, before I begin, I want to point out that I have a bit of an axe to grind, as an Old Testament scholar. When I used to teach this class, when I used to teach at Johns Hopkins, when I would start my course on the Hebrew Bible, I would ask, how many people in the room were Christian and how many got some kind of Christian upbringing. I said, "Can you describe the difference between what we call the Old Testament and what we call the New Testament?" Usually when you ask that question, people will respond that the Old Testament has a God that's very severe, very harsh, very judgmental, a God who is distant and uncaring in many ways, whereas the New Testament has a God who's loving and kind and very close by, and intimate, and quite the opposite of the Old Testament God.

So I would give a diagnostic quiz on the first day of class, and I would give quotes from the Old Testament and the New Testament. I would say, "Based on what you know, if you know this material," and at Johns Hopkins, there were many students who didn't, but if you know this material, "tell me where which testament this is from." Now granted, I'm cherry-picking like crazy to find these quotes, but it wasn't really that hard. What I learned was that there were some students who knew their Bible very, very well, but there were a lot of students who, just looking at something, couldn't tell.

The reason for that, I think, is the Old Testament God is far more loving and far more intimate than we give him credit for. In fact, I've described it as kind of like adolescent levels of passionate love, at times. Read Isaiah 43. I have not expressed love like that about anyone since I was 17, and I wonder if any of you have either. Whereas the New Testament God can be just as harsh and just as exclusive. Jesus refers to the gentiles as dogs. As somebody who's descended from Romans, these are probably my ancestors that he's referring to, right? And Christ come again is the ultimate symbol of final judgments. In the antiphons before Christmas, we sing "what you open cannot be closed, and what you close cannot be opened." He is the master judge. So it seems like there's far more ambiguity here than we want.

So I want you to try to move this image out of your minds. If you ask most Catholics, the Old Testament is basically H.P. Lovecraft; it's a horror novel. The New Testament might as well be M. Scott Peck. This is not the case. I know this is really probably what's in most of our sub-consciences, but this is not the case.

The Old Testament tells the story of faith in the midst of catastrophe. And reading about catastrophe over, and over, over again, I won't deny, can be kind of wearing. But the key element there is constant faith and growing faith, continuous faith. The New Testament tells the story of victory, maybe success in the midst of trial, and who wouldn't want to read that story? Certainly, it makes sense to me, from a literary perspective, why we would be more attracted to reading the New Testament.

But I'm a lover of the Old Testament. I'm just a humble parser of verbs and digger of artifacts. I'm envious of New Testament scholars: they work in climate-controlled environments, in museums and libraries, and wear surgical masks as they look at papyri. Never met an Old Testament scholar who had to dig through a burned-over grain silo to get to what he wanted to see.

But I'm fascinated by the fact that I'm looking at the same texts that Jesus was looking at. There's not much that connects us to Jesus. When we really get down to it, there's not much that connects us to Jesus. Other great religious figures left behind writings, left behind liturgies, left behind codes of

law to govern their community. Jesus didn't leave us much. We have a lot of writings about Jesus from the early Church. But from him, himself, we don't have much. The two things I've come, in my own desire to meet Jesus the theologian, the two places I keep coming back to are the Lord's Prayer, which I think, among the texts of the New Testament, we can have some confidence that this was a prayer that Jesus said, maybe not the same way every time. Maybe that's why we have variations, which I'll discuss in a minute, but that these are probably Jesus's real words.

And then the other thing we have is the Hebrew Bible. So when I say Old Testament, I'm talking about the book that Catholics use, which is expanded. It's not just the Hebrew Bible plus a number of ancient Greek documents that became, for us, canonical. But for Jesus, the Hebrew texts were the ones he might have known the best. It's kind of thrilling to read those and think, *my eyes are passing over the same words that Jesus's eyes may have passed over, if he could read, or the same words that he might have heard proclaimed*, more likely, in a synagogue or among friends, or in discussion. There's a thrill to that for me. And that's maybe the intuitive kick in the gut that makes me keep this project going, even though, as a scholarly project, it's pretty hard to do because, again, we're not working from much evidence. But certainly, as a person of faith, to be connected to Christ in this way is something I often find very moving.

I want to talk about what we really do have to work with. Jesus didn't have a Bible, obviously, as we do today. I meant to bring one. But he didn't have books, the codex, as we have today is probably something that was probably invented around his lifetime, definitely in the first century. He wouldn't really have understood it; he had scrolls. And *he* didn't have them, scrolls were very expensive. Scrolls might have been available in his local synagogue; Luke seems to think so. When Luke describes the synagogue at Nazareth, he describes it as having at least one scroll, the scroll of Isaiah. There was, most likely, a Temple library in Jerusalem. Who had access to that, whether Jesus would have had access to that, we don't know. But when he would have thought of these documents, he would have thought specifically of scrolls that were expensive artifacts and for public use.

It's conceivable that Jesus was not literate. It's entirely conceivable that Jesus was not literate. Luke seems to think that he was, but only Luke mentions Jesus's literacy. There's that great scene in John's Gospel, where Jesus, interrupting the stoning of the woman caught in adultery, traces on the ground. But the word used there doesn't necessarily mean he was writing words, just means he was doodling, maybe to kill time. Luke has Jesus reading, but this is, as John Dominic Crossan pointed out, this is a much better description of Luke than it is of Jesus. So we have to keep open the possibility that even if he could read, he probably didn't read as well as any of us.

Where I go for this bit of information is Augustine's awe at St. Ambrose. Augustine, in *Confessions*, book VI, chapter 3, talks about why he thought St. Ambrose was such a genius. The reason why is when St. Ambrose read, he didn't have to voice the words out loud as he read. He could read silently to himself. That's pretty significant, when you think about Augustine's literary output. The fact that he could only read by reciting a text out loud is pretty astonishing. The way we separate words and sentences and use capitalization, that's the invention of medieval monks who, because of vows of silence, were not able to read those texts out loud.

Speaking of those medieval monks, while I was at Johns Hopkins, the creative writing department did a study on how different reading is today from when it was at other points in history. What they determined was that a person who sits on a public transit conveyance and reads all of the advertisements in maybe 75 seconds, is probably reading more in those 75 seconds than a medieval monk would have read in a month.

Reading, even in those days, even among people who were committed to preservation of texts, was not something that was engaged as much as we do, or even practiced in the way we understand it.

So my whole project, how was Jesus reading the Old Testament, needs to keep this in mind; that Jesus is not reading quite the way we read, and maybe wasn't even reading himself, but listening to a technician read, somebody who had literacy.

What I'm looking for though—I'm assuming he knew these texts in one way or another, and I'm also assuming, as I said, that the Lord's Prayer, maybe in its variations, are *his* words. So my interest has been, how does Jesus take these words that he's hearing, maybe that he's reading, and incorporate them in his own sense of mission, his own sense of prayer? How does he find words to describe his own desires, his own hopes, his own fears, using the words that he inherits from the Hebrew Bible?

So that's where I am with this. So I've done most of the primary text research so far, and I've done some secondary research that I'll share with you, and I think I'm starting to get a picture. I think I'm starting to get a picture. The first verse of the prayer, as we know, is Our Father. I think I needed to take a moment with myself at one point and decide, where does this language come from?

As we might know, Matthew has a different version than Luke does of this prayer. Joachim Jeremias did a study of this prayer, I think it was back in the sixties, and his conclusion, which I think is still fairly supported today, is that Matthew's version is longer and probably expanded. Luke's version is a little shorter, but maybe closer to the words that Jesus most commonly said. I'll again point out, Jesus might've never said this prayer exactly the same way twice, so Matthew's expansions might be an authentic tradition. They just might not have been the more common way of expressing it. Matthew however, according to Jeremias, might be using words that are more at home in an Aramaic-speaking environment. Luke might have actually been changing some of the words so that they made more sense to his Greek-speaking audience. So both of the ancient versions I think we need to look at in order to get a sense of perhaps what was going through Jesus's mind.

You'll read, perhaps, I've certainly read in commentaries that calling God "Father" was an unusual thing among Jews of Jesus's day. I'm going to quibble with that a bit. Might not have been the normal way, in prayer, to discuss the relationship of the human to God, but it was certainly a known trope in multiple traditions of the Hebrew Bible. Hosea 11:1, especially; that's the famous quote, "out of Egypt I have called my son," speaks of Israel as God's child. God is the father of the nation of Israel. Deuteronomy 32:18 says the same thing. Exodus 4:22 gives us that same language. And Isaiah 63:16 gives us that same language. This is definitely language that is common in prayer and especially common in prayers where God is trying to express his mercy for Israel, why he keeps forgiving Israel over and over again. This is where, in the Hebrew Bible, the theological mind went to describe that mercy. The image for it was the image of a parent forgiving a child.

It's a striking departure from the covenantal language, which is political language, which is the language of a sovereign having to deal with the crimes of an underling. It's a striking departure from that. But the prophets had this model, and they employed it again and again and again.

The other place we see it in the Psalms is where God makes himself, God makes the divine self, the father of orphans and widows. I use this particular line from Psalm 68: "Father of orphans, protector of widows, is God in his holy habitation." This is not an uncommon way for the Psalms to describe God's fatherhood, specifically of orphans and widows. Jesus certainly loves the image of God as Father, and I think he's probably after the mercy that's being expressed there. But if that's the case, he could not have been blind to the fact that the fatherhood of God is so often expressed in the context of orphans and widows. This would have been a very natural union of ideas.

God is also described as mother in a number of cases, and I wonder if this isn't, also, somewhere behind Jesus's mind. Comforting mother in Isaiah 63:16, nursing mother in Hosea 11:3-4, and, my favorite, Deuteronomy, a phrasing that could only be feminine, "the God who gave you birth." Not the

God who begat you, "the God who gave you birth." The Exodus event, in the mind of the writer of Deuteronomy 32, was a birth process which, (having never given birth, but my mother described it to me every year on my birthday), when I read the Book of Exodus I see the kind of pain she likes to describe; so there it is.

The other thing that I think is significant, but I suspect more significant for the Evangelist than for Jesus himself, is this line, which becomes hugely important in the early theological tradition of the Church, might not be informing Jesus in his choice of this word. That "God is the father of the Son of David," which I'm fond of pointing out to my students, is a very odd thing to say. God is making this promise to David, and he's talking specifically about Solomon, but the way it's employed in Second Samuel, it's also talking about Hezekiah and Josiah. The way that messianic prophecy incorporates this is, this is going to be the fatherhood of God to the Messiah to come. So this is the beauty of biblical theology as it opens up over the course of 3,000 years, is that this could be Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah, Jesus, or unnamed other messianic figures. But God will be a father to the Son of David.

Now, like I said, I think the Evangelists get very excited about this language. I wonder though—I'll show you in a minute—Jesus seems to be very inspired by Ezekiel 34 which also talks about the son of David, a reborn David leading Israel. One wonders if those ideas didn't come together in a prayer, in his meditation. Again, impossible to say, and yet as I read the Hebrew Bible and try to see what Jesus might have seen, or hear what Jesus might have heard, it's something that jumps out. This is, like I said, I'm still at the stage of primary source work here.

My students who are here, and I see a number of my students here, they know that I can't talk about God and not talk about the images of God that I love, which are not really images of fatherhood or mercy. I'm fond of storm God images. I wrote a whole dissertation on divine fire. You can't do that and not talk about lightning. Now, Jesus could have known these texts, and he wasn't interested in them at all, which is probably good for all of us. "Smoke went up from his nostrils and devouring fire from his mouth, glowing coals flamed forth from him. He bowed the heavens and came down. Thick darkness was under his feet. He rode upon a cherub and flew. He came swiftly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his covering around him, his canopy thick clouds dark with water." This is a storm god. This is Haddad, this is Zeus, and this is also Yahweh in Psalm 18:8-10. It's paralleled in Second Samuel 22.

I won't deny, if I were to come up with a god, a god who could spit lightning out of his nose probably would be part of it. Jesus is not interested in these images of God, which are extremely common, especially in theophoric literature in the Hebrew Bible. It's important for me, as one of Jesus's disciples, to recognize that no, there's not really much here that I can take. Now, I grant you, my grandmother worships this God. My Sicilian grandmothers both, I think, would be perfectly comfortable with this God. He's also not a war God. This is less attested in the Hebrew Bible, but it's there. So Joshua 10:11: "As the Amorites fled before Israel, while they were going down the slope of Beth-horon, the Lord threw down huge stones from heaven as far as Azekah, and they died. And there were more who died because of the hailstones than the Israelites killed with a sword." This is our God as a war God. It's there. The Gideons put a copy of this narrative in every hotel room in America. Think about that. These are things that trouble me.

Jesus is completely uninterested, as far as I can tell, in this image of the Father, this image of God. He doesn't draw from this in his preaching. It doesn't seem like the Evangelists draw from this. Now, the writer of Revelation is going to depict God in many of these terms. So the New Testament, the wider canon, will probably have some kind of inspiration drawn from these images. But at least when

we're looking specifically at the Our Father, it's the image of mercy, it's the image of fatherhood. It's the image of tender love that Jesus seems to be inspired by and is drawing from the Hebrew Bible.

Let's go on to, "who art in heaven." This is not in the Lucan prayer. Luke's version of the prayer doesn't have this, so this is one of Matthew's expansions, that God is in heaven. But it addresses the question, this verse and the next verse addresses the question, *where is God?* Where exactly is God located? So I think we take it for granted that God lives in heaven. Well, maybe we don't take it for granted. This is what I learned and this is probably what's still kicking around in my subconscious, is that God lives in heaven.

But in the ancient world, the locus of divine presence was more complex. Deities in heaven, certainly, but they also had places on Earth that were powerfully associated with them. I suspect . . . well, I'm not going to go on that tangent. So heaven and somewhere else. Now, much of this is described, I think, very well in this book by one of my own professors, P. Kyle McCarter, in his "Aspects of the Religion of Israel," talks about the complexity of divine location and how God lives in heaven, certainly, but how that heavenly being could be available on earth to worshippers is something that's worked out in a whole variety of forms in both the Hebrew Bible and in the religion of other peoples of the ancient Near East.

We have some answers in the Hebrew Bible to the question of heaven and what? One of them is heaven and the Temple. If you were to ask, in the popular mind of eighth-century Jerusalem, seventh-century Jerusalem, *where is God*, I suspect half of the people you asked would tell you he lives in the Temple. The Temple was known as the house of God. It was Beit Yahweh. That was not entirely a metaphor. There was a dining table placed out before God, every night, with bread on it, and with other utensils and cups, and presumably libations. God was fed a meal every night. If you come to understand the sacrificial theology that's described in Leviticus, much of the meat that's being sacrificed there is for God to consume in various ways. It was also for the worshipper to consume. Most of the sacrifice was eaten by the worshipper and the worshipper's family.

What Jesus doesn't say, though, is Our Father who lives in Zion. Now arguing from negative evidence is never a good way to establish something, but it's noteworthy to me that Matthew's version of this prayer puts God in heaven. That God is only there. So you have this great image of Isaiah, who answers the question, well, how could God be both in heaven and on earth? "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lofty," presumably heavenly, "the hem of his robe filled the Temple." There's some piece of God that dangles down into the Temple. Ezekiel describes it a little differently when he's having his Temple vision. He sees the bottom of God's throne mystically above the Temple or within the Temple. It's not entirely clear how he does that. So people who wanted to place God in the Temple had these theologically well-developed ways of describing that. This is not something that Jesus is particularly interested in, and I'll get to that in a second as to why.

The other possibility which we see in First Kings 19:8 is Sinai. I meant to make a slide, I clearly didn't. When Elijah needs to go visit God in 1 Kings 19, he goes back to Sinai, he goes to Horeb, but that's another word for Sinai. Now, the word Sinai and the word Horeb are not exactly good geographical words. Sinai just means shrub, so *Har Sinai* means shrub hill. Think of that next time you go past Mt. Sinai hospital, the Hebrew there is "shrub hill." Horeb isn't much more helpful. Horeb just means dry place, or empty place or devastated place. So we don't really know where these places are, but you get a sense of what it looked like. It also is not something that seems to motivate Jesus, at least in the words of the Our Father. He's not locating God anywhere on earth.

So this plays into something that my professor, Ted Lewis, calls exilic irony. In Ezekiel 11:23, God departs Jerusalem. Ezekiel has all of these absolutely Technicolor visions in the first 11, 12 chapters of his prophecy, and they are visions of the Presence, the divine Presence leaving the Temple. It's

leaving the Temple because the sins of Israel have made it impossible for God to remain. The divine Presence is also leaving the Temple because Nebuchadnezzar is on his way down destroy the Temple, and the divine Presence has to get out. So it's a catastrophe that the Presence is leaving the temple, but you look at Ezekiel 11:23, the divine Presence takes up a position on a hill on the east side of Jerusalem, which today we know of as the Mount of Olives, and stays there. I think this is the exilic irony, as Ted Lewis calls it.

The people who are in exile would have been cut off from the Temple and not have had access to God's presence. But now the Presence that was in the Temple is hovering there. If they turn toward Jerusalem the way that Daniel does in Daniel 6, a much later text albeit, they have access to the same Presence that they would have had if they had visited the Temple. It makes God available to the exiles in the Diaspora, that God has left the Temple. So it's a catastrophe, but it's also a way to stay in touch with the communities, even though they're scattered.

Now, Dan Harrington is the one who points out, in Daniel 6 we have this image of people, Jews, in the Second Temple period, especially ones in the Diaspora, turning toward Jerusalem to pray. Dan, as we all know, is a lion of the field. I've never actually seen that written anywhere else, though. So until I find a better footnote for it, I don't know that I can present it as great evidence. But it's something that's noteworthy, this notion that God hovered there over Jerusalem, waiting for the Temple to be rebuilt, waiting for his people to come back.

Did the Presence come back into the rebuilt Temple? The Temple was rebuilt, did the Presence return? It seems to be an open question in the Second Temple period. Many say yes. The Temple picks up where it left off, it's not as well built, clearly, but many say yes. It seems like there were a substantial number of people in Jesus's day who said no. So the covenanters, who we also know as the Qumran Community, or the Essenes, they seemed to say no. I think Jesus says no. Again, we're reliant on the Evangelists to tell us what Jesus said. But none of them portrayed Jesus as really hyped up about the presence of God in the Temple. In fact, if anything, his words against the Temple are often held up as the reason why he was executed.

I think the early Christians said what Jesus said, probably remembered his not being too interested in the Temple, that Jesus still thought of God as residing in the heavens, primarily. There's something universalist to that. I don't want to overstate the case because I've always pointed out Jesus called my ancestors dogs, but, but he's available anywhere. This is certainly something Christianity has picked up. This is never a question for us. God isn't located in Rome or Salt Lake City or any of the other places where certain Christians have gathered and established their churches. God is everywhere. I think we see this in this Matthean line, "Our Father who art in heaven," and not elsewhere. I think that informs the line. Am I overworking this? Possibly. Probably. But it's where my mind is with it right now.

Let's get on to the next thing, "hallowed be thy name." This gets us into divine eminence. So this God who is in heaven, how does this God make the divine Presence available on earth? It seems like Jesus is drawing on a type of name theology that answers that question, and that is, name bears the divine Presence. The speaking of God's name makes God's presence, the actions taken in God's name make God present, that somehow that God has given us his name is something that overcomes whatever distance there might be between earth and heaven.

Now, there were a lot of other options in the ancient world, and the most common one was the making of idols or images. How else do you make a god present? You make a deity present by making an image. The Greeks, of course, were masters at this. I think it was Praxiteles, his statue of Athena was, in the ancient world, thought to be the most beautiful thing on earth. This is not available to Jews. If you want to know Israelites' solution to this presence, Tryggve Mettinger's book,

No Graven Image is where you go for this. He lays out a whole series of possibilities, all of which have evidence, archeological and textual, in the ancient world.

The options that the biblical authors seemed to turn to were things that manifested the living presence of God, or things that maybe fractionally bore God's being to earth; so the things that manifested the living presence of God. The most common, and this is from the priestly texts, are God's glory. When we say "God's Glory," it's not entirely clear what that word means. But I think you get a good impression of it from the last verses of the Book of Exodus. The cloud covered the tented meeting and glory of the Lord, whatever the glory is, filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able enter the tented meeting because the cloud had settled up on it. The Glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Whenever the cloud was taken up, the Israelites would set out on each stage of their journey, but if the cloud was not taken up, they did not set out. Until the day that it was taken up. The cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and the fire was in the cloud by night before the eyes of all the House of Israel at each stage of their journey.

This is the answer to the question, *how does the God who resides in heaven make the divine Presence felt on earth, through the glory*? Whatever this is, this tissue of phenomena that surrounded the place of worship, that was probably drawn from storm imagery originally, but also describes the site of a burning altar and a cloud of incense. All of that there, whatever the phenomena was around the Temple, that was the Presence. And the people I mentioned before, who would have believed in the Temple, would have pointed to this phenomena as evidence for that.

The other possibility, and one that's interesting, given how important it was to the early Church, but one that Jesus does not turn to here, is the Spirit, which is related to this. The Spirit is wind, which can be another storm image. We translate the word only as Spirit today, but it also encompasses the idea of wind, especially great wind. Jesus doesn't mention the Spirit in the Our Father, which again, arguing from negative evidence, is not always helpful, but it's a noteworthy omission to me. I look at that and I think, well, that's something, that he turns to the name, specifically, as evidence for the Presence.

So I want to specifically talk about the name. The two people who've done the most work on this are S. Dean McBride. He points to these and other texts, but Deuteronomy, specifically, 12:5,14-23. "Jerusalem is the place where Yahweh will cause his name to dwell." Whatever it is about that name, it makes the divine present in Jerusalem. Now, I think it was Father Clifford who talks about the Temple in Jerusalem as kind of like a phone booth, that in the Deuteronomistic tradition, you could go to the Temple, and it was like you had access to a conduit that allows for . . . You're totally denying it. I've heard you say this. The name somehow connected you to God. Sandra Richter, who is another scholar who's written a little more recently points out, she encourages us to be a little more circumspect about the use of this language. The placing of the name is a legal idea. It means that you possess something, your name is on it.

Still, you have to explain Isaiah: "See, the name of the Lord is coming from afar, burning with anger, heavy with dread. His lips are filled with fury, his tongue like consuming fire." This is not legal ownership language. This is an understanding in Isaiah, but the name of God bears the divine presence. When the name shows up, the presence is there. Now this is clearly Isaiah working with something like a storm God image, and not one that Jesus would use. But the underlying theology is perhaps more what we're interested in: the name makes the divine present.

So one of the problems, one of our realities, is that by Jesus's time, the divine name was not often used. So it was a blasphemy, it was a capital offense to use the divine name. So what was Jesus doing with all this name theology? I think really what he's saying is that speaking of God with reverence makes God a presence. I turn to this, to Matthew's memory, in 18:20, "Where two or more

are gathered in my name," Jesus's name, "I am there with them." I think Matthew's understanding of this about Jesus is probably coming from a wider understanding of how the divine name works. When actions are taken in God's name, even if you don't mention the divine name, that makes God present. When prayers are offered to the divine name, that makes God present. This answers the question of how a God who resides in heaven can also be simultaneously present on earth.

I think Jesus's mind needed to answer these questions, I think. Or at least maybe he didn't answer them himself, but he was drawing on the answers that were available in his time. The name makes the divine presence. So when the divine shows up, what does the divine do?

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." "Thy kingdom come" is the line that's in both Matthew and Luke. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," is only in Matthew. I'm pretty sure, well, I shouldn't say that. I'm pretty hopeful that these two verses come from Jesus's appropriation of Ezekiel 34. I think Ezekiel 34 was motivating Jesus, because I see reflexes of it in a lot of the later descriptions of Jesus's ministry. Again, we don't have much that's really authentically Jesus's himself. So I want to look at the whole text, although I might edit it a bit for time. "Thus says the Lord, look, I myself will search for my sheep and examine them." That's a very unfortunate translation, but I think it gets it. He wants to count the hairs on their heads. As a shepherd examines his flock while he, himself, is among his scattered sheep, so "I will examine my sheep. I will deliver them from every place where they were scattered on the day of dark clouds. I will lead them out from the peoples, gather them from the lands."

This is God restoring his nation, restoring his flock. If that doesn't describe Jesus's, well, if that doesn't describe Matthew's understanding of Jesus's image and Luke's understanding of Jesus's ministry, I don't know what does. "There they will lay down in good grazing land, in rich pastures. They will be pastured on the mountain of Israel. I, myself, will pasture my sheep. I will give them rest. The lost I will search out. The strays I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, and the sick I will heal. The sleek and the strong I will destroy," this is the Old Testament, after all, "the sleek and the strong I will destroy, I will shepherd them with judgment."

Now, Ezekiel seems to be pretty convinced that if you're sleek and strong during this period of utter national catastrophe, you're up to something bad. This is not Ezekiel writing during a period of peace and prosperity. This is Ezekiel writing during a period when everything was falling apart. You've taken what isn't yours, or you've compromised with the conquerors, you've become a traitor in some way. And Jesus has some of this bias, too, because his social circumstances were similar to Ezekiel's. "Go and sow what you have." "Come and follow me." "It is harder for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven." I think he's working with some of Ezekiel's same biases here. The sheep, the real sheep, the sheep that he needs to gather back together, are the scattered, lost, poor, suffering, the ones who need to be bound up and searched out and healed.

So now we get to this understanding of kingdom. "I will appoint one shepherd over them to pasture them, my servant David." So when I said before that it might actually be noteworthy that Yahweh is the father of the Son of David, I look to this, and I think, well, I wonder if Jesus wasn't inspired by this line. I wonder if Jesus didn't in some way appropriate this as a way of thinking of his own ministry. I don't know. Again, only working with primary sources so far. But to me it's a noteworthy connection that I want to continue to pursue.

This ends with, "They shall dwell securely with no one to frighten them," I think described the kind of kingdom Jesus was hoping for. I think his inspiration for what he talks about, when he talks about the Kingdom, and I think certainly the Evangelists. I always turn to Matthew because I'm assuming Matthew has a good knowledge of these texts, maybe better than Luke or Mark. Matthew certainly is

drawing on images like this, and images in the final chapters of Isaiah to describe the kingdom of peace that comes as a result of Jesus's ministry.

Jesus is longing for his Father's return – well, longing for the divine return. How Jesus understood his own relationship to the Father is something I'll leave to the systematic theologians, the patristic authors. He's longing for the divine return, but he sees himself as this David character, who is going to pasture them, who is going to be the Good Shepherd, to retrieve the lost. I think this also accounts for his healing ministry and the importance of his healing ministry in his own work.

I think it also gives us some insights into why writers, especially of apocalyptic literature in the New Testament, talk about the "new heavens and the new earth," and scenes of judgment. All of this is there in Ezekiel 34. This is a passage, I think, that strongly motivated writers of New Testament work. I think it's probably lying behind much of what Jesus is talking about when he talks about the Kingdom. I think he's describing the Kingdom as it's described here.

Moving on. "Give us this day our daily bread." This, I think, is fairly straightforward. I think this is the manna in the desert. The only other daily bread that I could think of in the Hebrew Bible is the bread that's placed out before Yahweh in the Temple every night. I don't think that that's what Jesus is drawing on here. I don't think that's where the early Christians were turning their attention. Those kind of liturgical images, the Temple, liturgical images don't seem to really motivate a lot of the, or maybe inspire a lot of theological ideals of the early Christians. But what we do have is manna in the desert. "The Israelites said to Moses and Aaron, 'If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread, if you have brought us out in this wilderness to kill us, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.' Then the Lord said to Moses, 'I am going to rain down bread from heaven for you,' (or maybe bread from the sky would probably be a better translation), 'and each day the people should go out and gather enough for that day. And that way I will test them to see whether they follow my instruction or not.'"

The tradition of bread from heaven, daily bread, starts with this idea of rebellion. I think that's important to note because as time goes on, the memory of manna, which comes up again and again and again in writings in the Hebrew Bible, it ceases to be tied to memories of rebellion and it more and more becomes a symbol, a very powerful symbol of unmerited divine grace. It's simply divine grace. We see this in Nehemiah 9:20: manna is an example of God's providence, along with the water from the rock, and divine instruction. By the time of Nehemiah, manna in the desert has already been coupled with divine instruction as the way God fed his people in the desert. Psalm 78, which recapitulates the entire Exodus story, talks about this as the "bread of angels." We don't get any of that from our first mention of it in Exodus, in fact, if anything, this is the response to a rebellion. But by the time we get to Psalm 78, it's the bread of angels. It's grain from heaven.

Wisdom 16, which is not written in Hebrew, and so cannot be called part of the Hebrew Bible, and might be written as late as the time of Christ, but gives us a window onto the tradition. Actually takes it, even, to the next level, that this was somehow some kind of mystic food, kind of like Greek ambrosia. It's provided to every pleasure and suited every need. There was some kind of almost magical property to it. Again, not part of the tradition. But by the time we get to Christ, it has become something different. It's a symbol purely of divine grace.

It's probably overworking the evidence, but you've been watching me do that now for 38 minutes, so I think I see Jesus committed to a certain kind of divine grace. It's noteworthy that in Joshua 5:12, manna ceased on the day when they first ate the produce of the land. So when the Israelites came in and took the land and became farmers, essentially, the manna ceased. Jesus, in his own day, would have understood the manna, I think, as just unmerited pure divine grace, not dependent on

something like the land, which by his time the Israelites would have known that they could lose because they had lost it by that point, and then regained it, but were about to lose it again.

There's something in Jesus's mind here. I think he wants to go back to that desert experience of simply the dependency on pure grace as a way of understanding the material goods that he receives in his ministry. I think that's there. It's, again, just a hunch, but I think it's there. So that's where my mind is with that particular verse.

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us." I think this is a lot about . . . I like that Matthew talks about debt here. We say trespasses, but the original word could also mean debt. Luke, by the way, changes the word trespasses, or debt, to sins. "Forgive us our sins as we, ourselves, forgive everyone indebted to us." That's how Luke rereads it.

I don't think it's about sins or crimes in Jesus's mouth. This is an injection of my own piety here, but I don't believe Jesus sinned. I think that's a necessary theological trope. So what exactly is he talking about? I think that the fear of debt is deeply ingrained into the mind of Israel. For this, I turn to Rainer Albertz's books, the *History of the Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*. He goes into great detail about what debt slavery did to the Israelite economy, what it did to Israelite society, and how it weakened Israel repeatedly, and allowed foreign invasion.

Amos 8:4 is probably a good description of this: "Hear this, you who trample the needy, and bring ruin to the poor of the land, saying 'when will the new moon be festival be over so that we may sell grain, or the Sabbath, that we may offer our wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat.'"

Unpaid debts became cause for bondage and servitude, was something that was very common all throughout the ancient Near East, but something that in Israel seemed to run very counter to the egalitarian notions with which Israel was first founded. For this, again, I'm very reliant on Rainer Albertz's description of early Israel as an egalitarian society, although archeology bears that out. There doesn't seem to be any hierarchization in Israelite society until a much later period.

The fear of debt and the fear of what debt does is something that's very deep, and I think Jesus is praying that it end. I think Jesus is praying that something like the Levitical Jubilee mark his own attitude toward his brothers and sisters, and something like the Levitical Jubilee be a common way of dealing with need and debt and lending and giving. I think, again, might be overworking the evidence. But there seems to be something of Leviticus 25 in this. So the Jubilee year, just to rehash what it is, all land that's been sold actually turns out just to have been leased for 49 years, and returns to its original owners. All debts are forgiven, and all debt slaves are set free. Now, that doesn't mean all slaves, but everyone who's in slavery because of a debt is set free. I think this is the deeper understanding of these verses. Now, we take them today to be about sin and forgiveness, and I think the way we understand forgiveness, in a personal forgiveness in our society, I think that's actually a useful way of looking at it. But keeping in mind that the deeper notion here was this kind of radical freedom from obligation to other, and radical freedom from others' obligation to us. I think this is what Jesus is getting at in his prayer. But about this I have less confidence than I do that Ezekiel 34 underlies a lot of what he says about kingdom.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Linguistic reality: in Aramaic, the line "lead us not into temptation" is probably a causative stem. Those of you know Semitic languages might understand this. It might, in Aramaic easily be translated, "Keep me away from temptation, keep us away from temptation. Do not cause me to enter into temptation. Cause me not to enter." That's nice, if we had the Aramaic text, which we don't. We have the Greek, and the Greek text is inspired,

so that's what we have to do business with. What we have is "Lead us not into *peirasmós*," which could mean testing, trial, temptation.

I don't think this is really that hard to understand. This used to bug me, as a kid, when I first learned this prayer, because why would God try to tempt me? That's the devil's job. But I think the biblical God, both Old and New Testaments, tests people to test the genuineness of their faith, the genuineness of their devotion. I don't think we can get around that. We can get around it in later tradition. We can say that this is not really the way that God has ever been, this is the way humans understood him. But when you just stick within the biblical text, you get a lot of images of God testing the faith of the people who claim to be his disciples.

So the test of Abraham, ***Aqedah,*** this is a good example of that. I think this is what Jesus is asking: *Please don't let this happen to me or anyone I love*. I think the testing of Job—actually, I think Job's testing is a little more significant to Matthew, I'll point that out in a minute—Jesus prays to be spared this, and the Evangelists, as they write the Gethsemane accounts, incorporate a lot of this language into Jesus's dialogue with his disciples. "Pray that you not be put to the test." Certainly, Jesus himself speaks of feeling tested in Gethsemane.

So this is probably a straightforward prayer: "Do not test me the way you tested Abraham, the way you tested Job, the way you tested your people in the desert." But there's a boldness to it, too, I think. "You can trust me," is what Jesus seems to be saying to his Father. Now these are my words, and this might be, again, an infusion of my piety. But I wonder if there isn't some of this new heart and new spirit from Ezekiel and Jeremiah behind this. "You can trust me, God, because you have put a new heart," this is God's promise, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I'll remove from you your heart of stone, give you a heart of flesh. I'll put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will be careful to observe my ordinances." It will come because it comes from your heart in the new creation, which Ezekiel probably thought was going to happen when he returned from Babylon, but by Jesus's time, clearly people believed it was delayed. I think there is this bit of boldness in this part of the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation," possibly, God, because you can trust us. Now on my best day I would never tell God that he could trust me. I don't want to project and say the same about anyone else in the room, but I'm pretty sure I can't, with great confidence, say that. I hope he can, but I think there is some of that.

As for the "deliver us from evil," this is Matthew's addition to this line. I think this is more Job-specific. I think Matthew is inheriting an understanding that this kind of temptation happens because Satan's job is to go around and test the faith of people who claim to love God. This is exactly what Satan is doing in the book of Job. I think Matthew inherits that. Luke, not interested in that kind of heavenly dualism, probably is of not much interest to his readers. Certainly, where the image of Satan goes in later Christian thought also takes us kind of far away from what Matthew is doing here. But Matthew's prayer is more Joban in this regard. "Don't let that happen to me, please God."

Again, I think the deeper prayer, here, Jesus is praying that God have a people that he can trust, and Jesus is praying that, God preserve us from the very test that he put his Son through on the cross, or the very test that he put his loved ones through in the Old Testament. Again, this is all primary source work. I'm sure that there are plenty of nuances there that I need to look at. But this is where my mind is with this.

Just looking at the conclusions, now, where does Jesus's attention turn? I think I've mentioned enough prophetic names that I realize, and you might realize, that the prophets—this seems to be where Jesus's mind goes when he's looking for words to describe his own hopes. Now, you could attribute this to observer bias on my part, except that the prophetic corpus is probably the part of the

Old Testament that I've studied the least, which is not to say I don't know it, but I'm much more at home in Pentateuch and Wisdom lit. I find, except for Job, very little Wisdom lit in this prayer. But the words that Jesus seems to be drawing on seem to come from prophetic texts. To a lesser extent, Jesus is drawing on images from the Pentateuch, from Deuteronomy and Leviticus. This doesn't surprise me. Those were the texts that might have been the best known in his day. But he's very inspired by prophecy.

We also see that God is Father. He's tender. He's concerned for the poor. He has a deep love for Israel. Again, Evangelists probably did more out of this than Jesus, a deep love for the Son of David. The relationship between God and Jesus has something to do with that promise that God will be a Father to David's Son.

The prayer also includes this idea that God is in heaven, he's universal, but he acts on earth wherever his name is involved, so actions done in his name, invocations of his name in prayer.

The Kingdom that Jesus imagines, it's not hard to read the eschatological images from Ezekiel into it. I'm convinced that that's probably what underlies a lot of what he was doing in his own ministry. He was praying to see that vision, be it done on earth as it is in heaven. The trust in providence implied in Jesus's evocation of the manna in the desert is probably what it will be like to live in that Kingdom. Yeah, speculation on my part, but I think more than just pious speculation. I think I'm seeing maybe where Jesus's mind is going with this, and I think living in the spirit of the Jubilee, not taking on the obligations of others and freeing others from obligations to you. I think later Christianity certainly runs wild with that. This is an essential part of the social justice tradition in every generation. But at the end, a very deep humility: "Save me from the test." We've seen a lot of religious people in every age kind of beg for the test and then fail. I'm not going to name names, but there have been a lot of great scandals. Jesus's prayer is the exact opposite of that. Jesus, who probably could have handled anything, and he did in the Crucifixion, "do not lead me into the test," for me at least, again, my piety is at work here, but it's an important gut-check, and I think that's where Jesus is drawing from, the tradition of the Hebrew Scriptures.

One thing also that I've notice, and this is something that I would want to play on is, how much is Jesus praying for himself, and how much is he praying on behalf of others? In other words, how much of this is private prayer, and how much of it, on his part, is priestly prayer, is mediation? Certainly when you have lines like, "Forgive us our sins, forgive us our debts," that seems to be a prayer that would be more at home as a mediatory prayer. Not only that, what was the other one? Oh, being freed from temptation. Again, he prays that his disciples, certainly, would be free from temptation. It might be more mediation that private prayer. That's a whole other element of this prayer that I probably hadn't considered, necessarily.

But I think all of this, especially the mediative aspects, bring us back around to the first word that we only see in Matthew, which is "Our Father." This is not just a prayer for ourselves, it's a prayer for the whole world. Every time we say it, it's a prayer for the whole world. I know how easy it is to rattle off this prayer because I've probably been doing it since first grade. But we pray on behalf of the world with this, and this is Jesus praying on behalf of the world. This is a prayer for that kind of freedom and hope in providence, and in a sense of being protected by God. But again, I think even more so, a sense to have this kind of heart and spirit to be God's trustworthy agents in the world. I think that's what Jesus was doing with this. I think that's what he inherited from his own Hebrew Bible tradition.

Thank you.

[applause]

Ms. Donovan: Thank you, very much, Father Simone. You certainly gave us an illuminated way to look at the Our Father, thank you.

Father Simone's willing to take questions now.

Participant: The phrase in the Our Father, "forgive us our debts as we forgive those [inaudible] strikes me as an interesting bargain. Do you have any comment about the source of that?

Fr. Simone: That our debts are only forgiven insofar as we forgive the debts of others. I don't. I've thought about that, and I have yet to find where that bargain might come from. It's probably as easy as looking at something in Deuteronomy, maybe, I don't know. That's certainly part of the piety of the prayer today, and I use piety in the thick sense, like what we understand that we're saying. But I don't know where in the tradition of the Hebrew Bible Jesus might have drawn that from. So alas, I don't have an answer for you. But that is something that is on my mind. Yes.

Participant: Wouldn't he, as a Jewish boy, have known how to read at that time? And then there's that scene of him talking with the rabbis in the Temple, and he probably couldn't have spoken with them if he didn't have certain knowledge of the rabbinic tradition.

Fr. Simone: Again, that's an image from Luke, who definitely imagines a very literate Jesus. None of the other Gospels really have much to say about Jesus's literacy. The type of literacy that a Jewish boy would have learned back then would be similar to the type of literacy many Jewish boys would have today, which is they learned a text for their Bar Mitzvah, and they could probably recite it, but they might not have much more beyond that. Jesus probably could have read his name. He might have even been able to write his name, and he probably could have read words that were necessary for his own job. But to sit and engage the Hebrew Bible, which would have been a foreign language to him, no, I don't think that there is evidence that ability would have been widespread.

Participant: All this tradition, the Ezekiel, the Jeremiah, you think that came to him through oral transmission?

Fr. Simone: Yes. Yes. And I think good anthropological works on oral tradition indicate, first of all, that people who don't read actually have much better listening and memory abilities. Do you know that learning how to read actually inhibits our ability to learn languages? Non-literate peoples learn languages much easier than literate peoples because they associate just sound and meaning. So yes, I think he could have picked it up. I think there would've also been educational systems that would have helped him. I think that was probably what education was, was memorizing chanted text. The entire Hebrew Bible today is a sung work. We don't recognize that as Christians because we don't chant it, but the Hebrew Bible is chanted in Orthodox synagogues every Sunday, and every word of it is cantonated. I think the chanting was there to help people memorize the text, which I think Jesus would have done. But I don't think he could have read it, necessarily. Somebody could've, but not him. Yes.

Participant: Can you say a little bit more about the idea of Jesus praying with the image with renewed Son of David, his vision of himself as renewed Son of David? You don't have to, but I was curious.

Fr. Simone: No, I will, I will. So again, I'm stuck with what we have in the Our Father, which doesn't include that. That's my reading. I think he's looking at Ezekiel 34. There was this longing in the Second Temple period, and that's a very broad term, but there's this longing in the Second Temple period for a restoration of the kingdom that they remembered existed before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. So First Temple period runs from about 1000 to 587. The Babylonians roll

through in the 500s and waste everything, and then the Israelites come back about 500 and reestablish Jerusalem and a Temple, and this is the era that Jesus is living, 500 years later.

There is this consistent longing for a restoration of that earlier kingdom, which was imagined to be a kingdom of security and peace and abundance and equality. I think Jesus's understanding of his own ministry is that somehow he's tapping into that eschatological expectation.

What I'm about to say – raw speculation, so I'm just going to lay that out there. The shepherd image is important in ancient kingship. One of the shepherd's jobs, one of the king's jobs, was to buy back, to redeem, literally, people captured in border raids. This we see from non-Israelite sources, but I bet it could be predicated of Israelite kings, literally to restore the nation, to buy back people who had been captured and sold into slavery. I think the Evangelists' image of Jesus, the Good Shepherd going out and finding the lost sheep and bringing them back, I think is strongly motivated by that understanding of kingship, which David had, David was the shepherd, and David saved Israel from the Philistines, who were doing exactly that.

So that's probably all there, but I can't say that it's here. I think that's in the theological undercurrents that we see reflected in some writings in the New Testament. Does that get what you wanted? But again, raw speculation. In fact, I see Yonder over there, who is an actual New Testament scholar, who I'm dreading to hear from. And in fact, he's raising his hand.

Prof. Yonder Gillihan: I really appreciate what you had to say about the difference between debt and sin, and the evocation of the Jubilee tradition. In this era in which we live, in which empire is the ill and threatening, menacing everything, it's common to interpret things like relief from debts literally as a sort of oppression that's endemic to the society based on the acts, structures, and so on. So one way to read it, as I think people are wanting to do now is to think of it at debt relief, literal debt relief, which some people have argued is, as you know, one of the main causes for the revolt against Rome in 66. Not the relief of debts but lack thereof. Alternatively, I suppose, you could say that the debt relief, if you're associated with the Jubilee, could be like the big reset, everything goes back, debts are forgiven, land goes back to the owners, and that's associated with an eschatological renewal. Do you have a sense for which one is happening in Matthew, or whether maybe there's some ambiguity that's deliberate?

Fr. Simone: My hunch, well, no, I don't. I can speculate, and it is speculation. Matthew's community, as far as I understand it, doesn't seem to be too concerned about debt, but they are concerned about eschatological expectations, so my hunch is that it would be more the eschatology than the actual needing to be free from debt. Yeah, I think I'm going to leave it right there, because I could start spinning very elaborate theories based on no evidence, and I don't want to do that. But just based on what I know, they seem to be more interested in eschatological stuff than in actual, material debt relief. But like any of these things, much of it's happening at a subconscious level in the writers and in the thinkers and in the religious people of the time. It might both be there and being expressed in this way.

Participant: I really have two questions, they're both related. You spoke a couple of times about the Kingdom of God. I go back to Luke 17, I believe it is, and his followers were asking him, "where is the Kingdom of God," and he says, well, depending what translation you read, "A Kingdom of God is within you or it's amongst you." I don't know whether you were implying that he was referring to the Kingdom of God as someplace like heaven, or whether the Kingdom is within you, which leads to the second question. You made a distinction about praying for yourself as praying for others. Were you implying that praying for yourself, or Jesus praying for himself, would that speak to contemplative prayer?

Fr. Simone: I wouldn't say that it speaks to contemplative prayer, to answer the second question first. I think it's intercessory, in this case. Is there a contemplative prayer tradition that Jesus might have engaged in? Yes. But I think this prayer that we've inherited from him is primarily intercessory. I think he's praying for his own needs and for the needs of the people he loves.

To get back to your other question, "Thy kingdom come," the fact that it's something that Jesus imagines has to arrive indicates that at least in the context of this prayer, it's something that hasn't yet taken root. Now, is it something that is intuitively right, and if we just find the right words for it, the Gospel, we'll start to be able to unveil it and establish it on earth? That might be the case, in which case the Kingdom of God is among us and within us, well, among us and within us. But there is definitely a sense, at least in the language of the prayer, that it's something that's not here yet, and needs to arrive. At least that's my take on it. Does that get to what you're asking?

Participant: Yeah. I'm a little bit curious about the way you responded in terms of God, when he was praying for himself, he was praying for something to happen to him, one way or another, good, I assume, as opposed to trying to align himself, contemplatively, with the Father. And that's interesting.

Fr. Simone: It seems like any instance of intercessory prayer would probably have to have that contemplative vector to it. But the great contemplatives are the ones who could only pray with that, and not include it as part of another prayer. That would be like the pure contemplative prayer. I wouldn't say that that's what Jesus is doing with these words.

Participant: OK. That's all I wanted to know.

Fr. Simone: Somebody over here had a hand up. Marcel.

Marcel: Thank you very much for your in-depth analysis. My question is very simple. As I was listening to you, whenever you're talking, you say [inaudible] this is stemming from my piety and anything else. So I'm wondering to what extent in this prayer with the analysis you've made going way back to the Old Testament, where do we draw the line between really an open dialogue with a prayer and [inaudible] the prayer. I don't know whether you'll get me because that seems to be downplaying piety, and there could also be popular theology of the People of God. So, why do you seem to be downplaying popular prayer?

Fr. Simone: What I'm getting to is how I'm making judgments about meaning. So I look at the words as they are in the prayer, and I've been praying it since first grade. My one grandmother would pray her rosary with me every night in Italian, so I'd be praying at least seven times on the rosary? Eight times? I forget how many Our Fathers there are to rosary. That's bad, and we have it on video. So there is a whole realm of meaning, for me, that comes out of this prayer that's based on those experiences, and that's what I say is my piety. I'm not downgrading it, but I also can't say it's the same thing as searching the Hebrew Scriptures and maybe even Cognate Literature in trying to find out what's going through Jesus's mind in the first century. Attributing my piety to Jesus would be a little breathtaking, so I'm making that distinction in meaning. Speaking as a person of faith, I will be the first to admit it's not easy to make that distinction. But I want to do it, I feel I have a responsibility, and to try to speak to both.

In the case of this particular research, I would like it to go more in the realm of Near Eastern studies and Cognate Literature and exegesis. But it might never get there. Like I said, this is kind of a back burner project that I work through in my spare time. It's not something that I'm getting ready to publish soon. But I'm at a point where I thought it would be interesting to talk about tonight. Does that get to your question? Good, thank you. In the back?

Participant: I notice that the book, *Jesus of Nazareth* is for sale here. How does that book fit into the spectrum of your project?

Fr. Simone: Thank you for that. I love that book. Dan Harrington actually said that this was the best book about Jesus ever written, and he had written a few himself. I think that's fairly significant. I love, love, love, books about Jesus that talk about Jesus the rabbi or Jesus the Jew. I think at our own peril we separate Jesus from that culture and that tradition. Lohfink's book firmly places Jesus in his own first-century culture, which, with all of its complexity, in fact Lohfink doesn't say this, but I've heard other scholars. . . It was E. P. Sanders who said that Judaism of the first century would be today as if all Christian denominations still tried to worship at St. Peter's in Rome. There were those kinds of divisions and disagreements, and yet this common worship space that almost all of them found to be sacred. Anyway, that's a very meandering answer to your question.

I requested that book because I think it also gets at many of the same questions that I've raised in my own work here. How does Jesus appropriate his own religious tradition? Where does he appropriate maybe uncritically and where is he appropriating it with great distinction from the other religious minds of his day? I think Lohfink answers many of those same questions.

Participant: [inaudible]

Fr. Simone: Well, I would put her in the same category. I think she's very good at situating Jesus in his own time, and working with the ideas that he's received. I'm more skeptical, no, I'm not going to name names. I would put her in the same category. I'm just going to leave it there. Yes. Wait until the microphone comes over, just so we can get it on the tape.

Participant: It seems to be quite remarkable that the most important book of the Old Testament, that is actually sung by the Church, is the Book of Psalms, and in every liturgy, the Church sings the Psalms, and reflects, and contemplates the words of Jesus by using these very words. If I am reading the Gospels, then it occurs to me that Jesus [inaudible] citing from the Psalms until to its very last verse. So my impression is the Book of Psalms is the key to think between the Old and the New. I would like to [inaudible] in the beginning that Jesus did not leave much behind him, out of the Church, and the Book of Psalms is the songbook of the Church. [overlapping conversation; inaudible].

Fr. Simone: Yes. The Psalms begin their life probably as individual prayers that are then collected and made over time, Temple songs, Temple liturgy. And then they go back and become the prayers of individual Jews in exile. This is how they continued the Temple liturgy in exile was they began to pray the Psalms individually wherever they found themselves. So by Jesus's day the regular recitation of Psalms, in some fashion, was probably an essential part of Jewish piety. It was almost certainly something he would have done or that people around him would have done. And then for the Roman Church, again, they become regular liturgy, the way they were in the Temple, in addition to individual prayers.

I would say they probably inform very much of his sense of prayer and his sense of spirituality. I pointed out the places where I think his mind was drawn to the Psalms in composing this prayer. But I think I find more of the prophetic work coming through, and more of his interest in prophetic expectation. With no means to dismiss the Psalms as important, I also think, though, that they're not Jesus's words. They're words he inherited and passed on to us, but it's not quite the same as if he took pen to paper and wrote out his own set of prayers. The way I think he gives us the Our Father, maybe not pen to paper, but these are his words in a way that, say, Psalm 23 isn't. Psalm 23 were the words of a composer many centuries before Christ, that Christ prayed and I pray, but they're not quite his words in the same way. At least that's how I've approached it. Does that get at what you were discussing? I teach a class on the Psalms which is how I got some of the information.

Anyone else? Right here, yes.

Participant: Speaking about books, where would you put *The Jewish Mary*? Have you read that particular . . .

Fr. Simone: I have not read that book.

Participant: It's by Mary Christine Athans.

Fr. Simone: I can't give you an answer because I haven't read.

Participant: Yeah. I just read it recently.

Fr. Simone: Looking at the way Mary is presented by Luke, primarily, she is very much in the tradition, at least, gee, maybe even more than any other New Testament character, speaks as somebody who knows the Psalms. The Magnificat is a Psalm prayer, in many cases, or is a Psalm. Beyond that, though, I would want to look at the argument of the book before weighing in on; that's how I would do that.