

**“Lost in Translation:
Did It Matter if Christians ‘Thanked’ God or ‘Give God Glory’?”**

1.0 Problems, Solutions

1.1 The Problem. The meaning of words resides in the cultural use of them, not in lexica.

Moreover, the greater the chronological distance between the culture of the New Testament and ours, the more likely the meanings of words will be “lost in translation.” The word $\epsilon\upsilon\chi\alpha\rho\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ is a case in point. This verb is universally understood now as “to give thanks,” a meaning not common in antiquity. Much is lost in translation if we do not examine this word in its cultural setting, comparing and contrasting it with formal expressions of “praise.” Moreover, by “giving thanks” are mortals reciprocating for favors received from the Immortal one? Is a debt being resolved? “Thanks-giving,” finally, is by no means found in all cultures.¹

The Greek verb which was eventually interpreted as “to give thanks” became current only in the late Hellenistic period, and then basically in Asia Minor.² Originally it served as a synonym of “praise.”³ As we shall see, recipients of favors in the ancient world understood that the required return was “praise,” not “thanks.”⁴ Even in liturgical prayers in the early church, $\epsilon\upsilon\chi\alpha\rho\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ only slowly metamorphosed into “to express gratitude.” But the ancients knew that “praise” was quite a different phenomenon from “giving thanks” or “expressing gratitude.”

Something gets lost in translation because modern notions of “giving thanks” lack appreciation of “praise,” “honor” and “glory,” which are the proper cultural context for interpreting even $\epsilon\upsilon\chi\alpha\rho\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$. In modern usage, subjective “thanksgiving” tends to swallow expressions of public respect and “praise,” and it can even assume the importance of being the preferred way of responding to God. This in part likely results from the dominance that the term

eucharist assumed as a metaphor for worship and liturgy. But just the opposite is true in Greek where “praise” was the genus whose species include honor, glorify, extol, magnify, etc. Consider the following doxology:

Αμήν, ἡ εὐλογία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ σοφία καὶ ἡ εὐχαριστία καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ ἰσχὺς τῷ θεῷ (Rev 7:12).

"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen" (Rev 7:12)⁵

Εὐχαριστία is but one of many hues of praise on this pallet, and by no means the most significant one. It functions as another item in the sematic word field of “praise,” along with to “bless,” “glorify,” “honor,” and “praise.” This tends to be lost in modern translations.

Since “to give thanks” is often an infelicitous translation of Εὐχαριστεῖν in the New Testament, our task is to learn how to interpret it in terms of its appropriate cultural scenario in the ancient world, which consists of three items. First, we must interpret Εὐχαριστεῖν in terms of “praise” and “honor,” the basic cultural values in antiquity, which are expressed in the epideictic rhetoric of praise and blame. Honor and praise were the typical ways of acknowledging a person’s worth, not so Εὐχαριστεῖν. Because of the dominance of honor and praise, we recognize that the pallet of praise contains many synonyms such as “to honor,” “to glorify,” “to bless,” “to extol,” “to acknowledge,” but only occasionally is Εὐχαριστεῖν found with them. For example, Robert J. Ledogar demonstrated this in his survey of “praise-verbs” in the early Greek anaphora. He constantly used the term “language of praise” to show how interchangeable are the verbs just noted.⁶ Second, we must examine the phenomenon of benefaction and praise, and so consider

patron-client relationships between the Immortal One and mortals. Third, is any reciprocity expected when benefaction is received? Is there an obligation to give anything back to God? These constitute the essential elements of an adequate native scenario for interpreting εὐχαριστέιν in its culture, rather than in ours.

1.2 Is There a Problem Needing to be Solved?

Lost in Translation: Luke 17:11-19. The story of the ten lepers healed by Jesus illustrates the translation problem. Although Jesus sent all of them to the priests for certification of cleanness, only one returned to Jesus “giving glory to God (δοξάζων τὸν θεόν) with a loud voice” (Luke 17:15). Then he fell at Jesus’ feet, εὐχαριστῶν αὐτῷ. Jesus commented, “Was no one found to return and give thanks to God (δοῦναι δόξαν τῷ θεῷ) except this foreigner? (17:18).” We find a problem in the RSV translation of this because something significant is lost. Most translations render δοῦναι δόξαν as “praise”; rarely is it translated as “glorifying” God, with “a loud voice,” no less. But because we operate out of an ancient cultural notion of praise and honor, “praise” is an admissible synonym; so little is lost in translation. Similarly in 17:18, translators prefer “praise” to the original “give glory” – again acceptable. But the RSV renders “give glory” in 17:18 by “give thanks,” which is an infelicitous rendering of “glory” (or “praise”).⁷ The entire native scenario of “praise” and “honor” is absent. Here and elsewhere, Luke regularly indicates that the proper reaction to divine benefaction is to “give glory to God” (δοξάζων τὸν θεόν). For example, “He received his sight and followed him, glorifying (δοξάζων) God; and all the people when they saw it, gave praise (αἰνῶν) to God” (18:43; see 5:25-26; 13:13). In none of these instances do those cured “thank” God, but rather publicly “praise” and “glorify” God as

Benefactor.

But what of the leper's response to Jesus: εὐχαριστων αὐτῷ? It is sandwiched between two references to "give glory" to God, which inclines us to render it as a praise synonym here. Moreover, since nowhere else in Luke is God or Jesus "thanked," this fact further inclines us to render it as "praise."

Lost in Translation: Tobit 12:6. The problem complexifies when translators replace words clearly from the semantic field of "praise" with "thanks." Something is surely being lost in translation when, for example, we read the RSV rendering of the angel's instructions to Tobit and son on how to pray.

<p><u>Praise</u> God and <u>give thanks</u> to him; <u>exalt</u> him and <u>give thanks</u> to him. . . It is good to <u>praise</u> God and to <u>exalt</u> his name, <u>worthily</u> <u>declaring</u> the works of God. Do not be slow to <u>give him thanks</u> (Tobit 12:6, RSV).</p>	<p>Εὐλογεῖτε τὸν θεὸν καὶ αὐτῷ ἐξομολογεῖσθε, μεγαλωσύνην δίδοτε αὐτῷ καὶ ἐξομολογεῖσθε ἐνωπιον πάντων τῶν ζωντων περὶ ὧν ἐποίησεν μεθ' ὑμῶν· ἀγαθὸν τὸ εὐλογεῖν τὸν θεὸν καὶ ὑψοῦν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, τοὺς λόγους τῶν ἔργων τοῦ θεοῦ ἐντίμως ὑποδεικνύοντες, καὶ μὴ ὀκνεῖτε ἐξομολογεῖσθαι αὐτῷ.</p>
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Without the Greek text, one would think that this is a "thanksgiving prayer," because of the triple repetition of "give thanks." But the translator thrice mistranslates the language of "praise" into "thanks": "give thanks to him (ἐξομολογεῖσθε). . .give thanks to him (ἐξομολογεῖσθε). . .give him thanks" (ἐξομολογεῖσθε). But there are no words here for "giving thanks," none at all.⁸ Something is being lost in this translation.

If "giving thanks" is totally absent, then what is the prayer's purpose? Tobit and son are instructed to "praise" God in the traditional way of piling up synonyms of it.⁹ The first term,

“bless” (εὐλογεῖτε τὸν θεὸν) is properly rendered as “praise”. “Acknowledge” (ἐξομολογεῖσθε) is another alternate for “praise.” Ordinarily one might accept “exalt” as a synonym, except that here it waters down “give God majesty” (μεγαλωσύνην δίδοτε), a more dramatic expression of praise. “Acknowledgment” (ἐξομολογεῖσθε) appears again, meaning “praise.” The statement “it is good to praise God and exalt his name” is correct on “praise” (εὐλογεῖν τὸν θεὸν), but weak on “exalt his name,” for it hides the public character of praise: “to sing a song in cultic setting” (ὑψοῦν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ). “‘Worthily’ declaring the works of God” accurately renders the adverb “honorably” (ἐντίμως), and the verb “to call attention to” (ὑποδεικνύοντες) expresses “praise.” When all of the verbs are correctly understood in terms of “praise,” nothing is lost in translation, because all of the verbs in this prayer belong to the semantic word field of praise and honor. The triple substitution of “giving thanks” for “praise” is infelicitous because it does not recognize the native value scenario of praise and honor, and promotes another word, “give thanks,” to prominence. Much indeed is lost in such a translation.

1.3 Found in Translation: Understanding Language. In a series of studies Bruce J. Malina provides the theory for our reading.¹⁰ Drawing on studies from sociolinguistics and reading theory, Malina brought to the task of interpreting the New Testament certain tested insights from reading theory. He made two significant points: 1) meaning derives from a social system, not lexica and 2) reading, to be accurate, must employ culturally appropriate scenarios from that system.

First, the meanings people share are rooted in and derive from a social system. By this is meant, 1) knowing the culture, that is, “the accepted ways of interpreting the world and everything in it” and 2) understanding their social structures: “the accepted ways of marrying, having

children, working, governing, worshiping and understanding God, and of being a person.”¹¹ To be sure, the New Testament’s way of interpreting the world and the accepted ways of behaving is utterly different from that of modern readers. Malina proposes that New Testament readers adopt “the scenario model,” which presupposes that readers have a full and verifiable grasp of how the ancient world works, which they bring to the task of reading. Considerate authors attempt to accommodate their readers by beginning with what readers know and joining it to new, unknown features to be imparted. Considerate readers, on the other hand, share already or attempt to share the author’s social system and hence his scenarios. The problem for modern readers is that not only do they not know the social system of the New Testament world but they do not know that they don’t know it. Hence they tend to bring to their reading ethnocentric scenarios to interpret that ancient world, and think that they are correctly interpreting ancient texts and documents. Considerate readers, then, will approach both the English term “to give thanks” and the Greek one εὐχαριστέιν with suspicion that they have equivalent meaning. The social dynamic in antiquity which expressed human responses to the favors of the deity is utterly different from our custom of prayers of thanksgiving.

2.0 Considerate Reading: Learning Their Social System

Because we take seriously the remarks of linguists on language and reading, what was the social system like in Luke and Tobit? What mental pictures of the way their world worked do we need to know to be considerate readers? Ideally we would consider three foundational concepts for an adequate scenario: 1) patron - client relations between God and mortals; 2) types of reciprocity, to learn if gifts come with strings attached; and 3) appreciation of the paramount value of praise/honor. Appreciation of the cultural value of honor/praise is far and away the most important

of these three, so we will focus on it and treat the other two briefly in passing, since they are so well known in modern scholarship.¹²

Since Marshall Sahlins, scholars distinguish three types of reciprocity: generalized, balanced and negative.¹³ It is best to consider them as a continuum of reciprocity. One extreme, the solidarity extreme, is generalized reciprocity (*give, do not get*), while the other end, the unsocial extreme, is negative reciprocity (*get, do not give*). In the center is balanced reciprocity (*give and get*). In patron-client relations between gods and mortals, only generalized and balanced reciprocity concern us. Sahlin's model of reciprocity, moreover, has been successfully used in the analysis of Greek materials,¹⁴ of the Hebrew bible¹⁵ and of early Christianity.¹⁶

GENERALIZED reciprocity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>characteristic</i>: give without expectation of return 2. <i>forms</i>: child rearing, care of elders 3. <i>recipients</i>: parents, children, kin 4. <i>biblical examples</i>: Matt 7:11; Luke 10:33-35
BALANCED reciprocity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>characteristic</i>: tit-for-tat, quid-pro-quo 2. <i>forms</i>: barter, assistance agreements, marriage arrangements.¹⁷ 3. <i>recipients</i>: neighbors 4. <i>biblical examples</i>: 1 Cor 9:3-12; Matt 10:10; Luke 10:7

Our interest in reciprocity theory will guide us when we consider what kind of transactions are occurring when mortals petition or praise god, and what debt mortals might incur when they become recipients of divine benefaction. Hardly an abstract question!

Was the ancient world even concerned with reciprocity? Is this an inconsiderate reading of them? Indeed, they understood it and discussed it often. Most discourse on return or recognition of benefaction utilized the term ἀμοιβή, which could simply mean the wage which is the proper recompense for labor (Philo, Spec. 4.195). Philo also used this term to describe the machinations of a man who gives for the sole purpose of receiving a return of praise: “The givers are seeking the

honour and praise as their exchange and look for the repayment of the benefit ἄμοιβήν)” (Cher 122), unlike God who seeks no return (Cher. 123). But note that “honour and praise” are typical responses to benefaction. Philo himself is clear that humankind cannot and should not make a return to God for the benefaction of creation:

“The work most appropriate to God is conferring benefaction (εὐεργετεῖν), that most fitting to creation is giving praise, seeing that it has no power to render in return (ἄμοιβήν) anything beyond this ” (Plant 130-31).

Philo regularly uses ἄμοιβή to describe the response of people to someone who has benefitted them (Mos. 1.58 and Joseph 267). But this return (ἄμοιβή) is no “thing,” but “honor.” Although Philo is but one of many persons discussing exchange/return between God and mortals, his remarks on ἄμοιβή indicate that this was a formal topic, a genuine part of his scenario, and representative of other conversations about it. Indeed God acts with generalized reciprocity to mortals. But the response to God is mostly praise and sometimes a balanced return.

2.1 “Praise”/“Honor”: Pivotal Values in Antiquity. We take it as proven that “honor/praise” are pivotal values in the ancient world. To the Greeks, pursuit of honor was the unparalleled motive for action: “Athenians excel all others not so much in singing or in stature or in strength, as in love of honour (φιλοτιμία), which is the strongest incentive to deeds of honour and renown” (Xenophon, Mem. 3.3.13).¹⁸ Centuries later, Augustine commented on the Roman obsession for praise and renown: “He [God] granted supremacy to men who for the sake of honour, praise and glory served the country in which they were seeking their own glory.” (City of God, 5.13). Authors from classical Greece to the late Roman empire agree on the desirability and

centrality of “honor.” In fact, Paul celebrates the person whose life is dedicated to the pursuit of “honor and glory”: “To those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. . .but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good” (Rom 2:7-10). The pursuit of it is rewarded with it.

_____ When we examine the semantic word field of “praise,” we see clearly how different it is from that of “thanks.” The work of Nida and Louw interprets words in terms of their semantic domains, thus making their insights particularly valuable here. “To praise,” which means to publicize the excellence of someone, may be expressed just as well by “to bless,” to glorify,” “to magnify,” and “to acknowledge,” and by nouns like “a report” spreading about Jesus (Luke 4:14) or a “word” circulating about him (Luke 5:15; 7:17).¹⁹ “To thank,” on the other hand, refers to an interior feeling which may be expressed as gratitude for something done for someone.²⁰

Curiously, unlike “praise” and its synonyms, according to Nida and Louw “to thank” has no cognates or synonyms.

Moreover, one might ask what are the specific nuances of the synonyms of “praise,” what shades of meaning does each have?

(Επ)αινεῖν (Danker 357; TDNT 1.177)²¹ to express one’s admiration for or approval of a person, *praise, approval, recognition*: “for the glory and praise of God” (Phil 1:11).

δοξαζεῖν (Danker 257; TDNT 2.237-53) to influence opinion about another so as to enhance another’s reputation; *praise, honor, and extol*: “give glory to God” (Luke 17:15).

ἔξομολογέσθαι (Danker 708) to acknowledge something in public; acknowledge, profess, praise: “. . .every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:11)

εὐλογεῖν (Danker 407-8; TDNT 2.753) to say something commendatory; to speak well of; *praise, extol*: “He began to speak, praising God” (Luke 1:64).

τιμᾶν (Danker 1004-05; TDNT) to set a price on, estimate values of; to show high regard for; *honor, revere*: “. . .all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father” (John 5:23)

ὑμνεῖν (Danker 1027) to sing a song in a cultic setting; to sing the praise of: “When they had sung the hymn, they went out” (Mark 14:26).

All of these words belong to the semantic domain of “praise,” sharing in common a sense of acknowledging worth or awarding public praise and honor for excellence. Each, of course, has its own nuance: αἰνεῖν expresses admiration and approval; δοξάζειν attempts to enhance reputation, i.e., to bring others to hold the same good idea about someone (2 Cor 4:15; Eph 1:6, 12, 14; 1 Peter 1:7); ἐξομολογέσθαι means publicly to acknowledge someone’s worthiness; εὐλογεῖν expresses verbal efforts to speak in praise of someone or about them; τιμᾶν attests to another’s worth, excellence or importance; and ὑμνεῖν expresses praise, especially in a public setting. What, then, of εὐχαριστεῖν? What nuance does it have?

εὐχαριστεῖν (Danker 415-16; TDNT 2.762): to show that one is under obligation to be thankful, to feel obligated to thanks; to express appreciation for benefits or blessings; *give, render, express thanks*.

When εὐχαριστεῖν appears in a string of words of “praise,” it takes on the coloring of its mates. But, on its own as an independent term, it does not mean the expression of public worth, honor or value. Rather, as an interior feeling, it focuses on the debt of gratitude for a benefaction given. At

the risk of exaggerating the differences between “praise” and “thanks,” we cite the comparison made by Claus Westermann:

1. The one praised is elevated, his glory increases by causing others to recognize his qualities.	1. The one thanked remains in place.
2. Praise is directed entirely toward the one who is praised.	2. In thanking I express <u>my</u> thanks.
3. Spontaneous exuberance is the core of praise; it is joyful	3. Giving thanks fulfils a duty or obligation; it is something required.
4. Praise is exclusively public; it is intended to lead others to praise.	4. Giving thanks is first private, of no concern to anyone else except those giving thanks and the one being thanked.
5. Praise can never be commanded.	5. Thanks is often a debt or obligation to be fulfilled ²²

Public vs private; extolling virtues and accomplishments vs feeling gratitude; propaganda for the one praised vs gratitude to a donor – they are intrinsically different.

To sharpen this distinction, we examine the following situations where εὐχαριστεῖν would be a culturally unsatisfactory response. Speaking of Philip of Macedonia, Demosthenes said: "Glory is his sole object and ambition; in action and in danger he has elected to suffer whatever may befall him, putting before a life of safety the distinction of achieving what no other king of Macedonia ever achieved" (Second Olynthiac. 2.15). “Almost everywhere in Greece it is deemed a high honour to be proclaimed victor at Olympia” (Cornelius Nepos, Preface Great Generals of Foreign Nations 7). Finally, those criticized in Matthew seek honor, not gratitude: "And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others” (Matt 6:5; see 23:5-7).

Because translators of the biblical texts seen above are not sufficiently appreciative of the importance of praise and honor in antiquity, their scenario is deficient on this point. They seem

ignorant, not only about “praise” (and “honor”), but about Aristotle’s third type of rhetoric, epideictic. Rhetoricians for centuries provided elaborate rules on how to praise and where to find grounds for praise. To “praise” someone means to honor him, exalt his name, glorify him, tell aloud his ἀρετή, increase his fame, acknowledge his worth, and make much of him. So says Aristotle:

Honor is a sign of a reputation for doing good, and benefactors, above all, are justly honored. . . The components of honor are sacrifices [made to the benefactor after death], memorial inscriptions, receipt of special awards, grant of land, front seats at festivals, burial at public expense, statues, free food in the state dining room and rites of precedence (Rhet. 1.5.8).

We are concerned here to establish the importance of “praise” and “honor” as essential elements of the cultural scenario of Luke.²³ Honor and praise are the typical ways of acknowledging a person’s worth, not εὐχαριστεῖν.

When we compare the reactions cited by Luke in regard to God’s benefaction, we never find “give thanks.” “Honor” befits both God and Jesus.

To God	To Jesus
<p>1:46 "My soul magnifies [Μεγαλύνει] the Lord"; 1:68 "Blessed [Εύλογητός] be the Lord God of Israel"; 2:13 "praising [αἰνούντων] God and saying, 2:14 "Glory [Δόξα] to God in the highest heaven" ; 5:25 "He went to his home, glorifying God [δοξάζων τὸν θεόν]. 5:26 Amazement seized them, and they glorified God [εδόξαζον τὸν θεόν]"; " 7:16 Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God" [εδόξαζον τὸν θεόν]. 8:39 ". . .declare how much God has done for you [διηγοῦ ὅσα σοι ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός] " 9:43 All were astounded at the greatness of God" [ἐξεπλήσσαντο δὲ πάντες ἐπὶ τῇ μεγαλειότητι τοῦ θεοῦ]; 17:15 Then one of them turned back, praising God with a loud voice" [δοξάζων τὸν θεόν]; 17:18 "None of them found to give praise to God" [δοῦναι δόξαν τῷ θεῷ]?" 18:43 "He followed him, glorifying God [δοξάζων τὸν θεόν]; and all the people praised God" [ἔδωκεν αἶνον τῷ θεῷ].</p>	<p>5:15 But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad [διήρχετο δὲ μᾶλλον ὁ λόγος περὶ αὐτοῦ]; 7:16 "A great prophet has risen" [Προφήτης μέγας ἠγέρθη]; 7:17 This word about him spread [ἐξῆλθεν ὁ λόγος]; 13:17 His opponents were put to shame [κατησχύνοντο] ; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things [ἔχαιρεν ἐπὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐνδόξοις] that he was doing"; 17:16 He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him" [εὐχαριστῶν αὐτῷ] .</p>

What conclusions might we draw from this? No one in Luke ever “thanks” God, but rather extends public “glory,” “praise” and acknowledgment of worth, which is the appropriate cultural response to benefaction. Jesus likewise operates in the world of honor and praise, inasmuch as his reputation (i.e., honor) keeps spreading abroad (Luke 5:15; 7:17). In 13:17, even as his opponents are “shamed,” he is correspondingly “honored,” because the crowds acknowledge his status as a “Prophet.” But in none of these instances does anyone “thank” him or God, except perhaps in 17:16. These data suggest that only “glory,” “praise” and acknowledgment of honor are the appropriate responses both to God and Jesus. Because the complete response to God and Jesus is “praise” and “honor,” we are persuaded to understand εὐχαριστῶν in 17:16 in terms of public praise, not as private gratitude. All here is “praise.”

3.0 Greek Prayer: Praise, not Thanks

3.1 J. H. Quincey. After studying phrases in Greek drama thought to convey “thanks,” Quincey remarked: “If we ask,” he said, “the lexicon the question what was the Greek for ‘Thank you,’ it will supply us with one verb αἰνεῖν [to praise].”²⁴ He talks also about the obligation created by receiving a gift and how this is requited. “Greeks saw an obligation created by a favor received and sought to discharge it. Since praise was a commodity of which all men had an infinite supply and which all men valued, the obligation could always be discharged immediately . . .with ἔπαινος [praise].”²⁵ Quincey concludes that “The Greeks’ habit in accepting an offer, service, etc. was to confer praise and not thanks.”²⁶ But why? He contrasts English and Greek responses to benefaction. “The Englishman,” he notes, “is content to express his feelings²⁷. . .the Greeks saw an obligation and sought to discharge it,” thus recognizing our translation problem: “The difference between their usage and ours is not just a verbal one but reflects a fundamental difference of outlook.”²⁸

3.2 H. S. Versnel. In his study of Greek prayer, Versnel notes the surprising scarcity of prayers of gratitude. “True words of thanks are seldom or never to be met with in these inscriptions . . .for the Greek archaic period we do not have a single example of an unequivocal word of thanks.”²⁹ He focuses then on inscriptions in which he notes the relationship of εὐχαριστῶ and εὐχαριστοῦμεν with ancient votive offerings, observing that they appear only in the late Hellenistic period and primarily in Asia Minor. Alternately, Versnel examines the way in which Greeks closer to the world of Jesus and Paul made a response for favors received. As he focuses on χάρις, he takes seriously the suggestion of Theophrastus that sacrifice is offered the gods to

honor them (διὰ τιμὰν), to show appreciation (διὰ χάριν), and to petition them διὰ χρεῖαν). He argues, moreover, that “there is no compelling reason to read the element of ‘thanks’ into the term χάρις . . . for the return service.”³⁰

Versnel concludes that the ancients expressed praise, not thanks. “The term with which the Greek of the classical period expressed his gratitude is not so much a word of the family of χάρις, as above all (ἔπ) αἰνος, ἐπαινεῖν.³¹ Praise meant the acknowledgment and honoring of someone. Theophrastus, then, was correct that sacrifice and prayer are offered first for the sake of honor (praise).

3.3 Jan Maarten Bremer. Bremer begins his study of giving and thanksgiving by citing Euthydemus, a conversation partner of Socrates: “I am discouraged by the thought that no mortal can ever requite the benefits (εὐεργεσίας) of the gods with adequate thanksgiving (ἀξίαις χάρισιν ἀμείβεσθαι).”³² But “apart from the general expression χάριν ἀποδοῦναι – the Greek texts of the archaic and classical periods contain no technical terms for acts, tokens, rites, or gifts of thanksgiving to the gods.”³³ When they eventually appear, εὐχαριστία and εὐχαριστεῖν appear to be technical terms for public manifestations of praise in honorary decrees.³⁴ Many Greeks felt some obligation to make a response (ἀμοιβή) to the gods for benefits received, which was generally praise and honor, not thanksgiving.

3.4 Robert Parker A group of classicists collaborated on a volume on the topic of Reciprocity in Ancient Greece,³⁵ The book includes one chapter on the anthropology of reciprocity³⁶ and two on Greek prayer.³⁷ Robert Parker’s study provides a nuanced consideration the term kharis (χάρις).

Mortals, he notes, try to bring offerings which are kharienta to the gods, and request a return which is itself khariessa, with the consequence that the relation is one in which kharites are explicitly exchanged. Since the primary meaning of kharis is “charm, delight,” mortals try to bring the gods things in which they take delight, and in turn urge the gods to “rejoice in” the offerings.³⁸ “A strong social sense,” he says, “existed that ‘it is always kharis that begets kharis’ or, as the English say, ‘one good turn deserves another.’”³⁹ Kharis is given to the gods, who are expected to return a kharis for which mortals in turn return a kharis, and so on. Reciprocity and repayment, then, are associated with kharis words, one gift endowed with kharis will call forth another. “But a kharis even when given in return for a kharis is not in meaning a recompense.”⁴⁰ Kharis, moreover, does not mean “thanks” here, so much as honor and an effort to please another. He concludes that the basic scenario of exchange was that of an unceasing interchange of delightful gifts, a kind of charm war. It would appear that gods are obligated to benefaction, both now and in the future, just as mortals receiving these benefits must make some response to the gods.

3.5 Fishing for More. Often the ancients made a return to god with the expectation that as a result god’s benefaction should continue.⁴¹ Thus, Josephus says: “Let all acknowledge before God the bounties which he has bestowed. . . thanksgiving is a natural duty and is rendered alike in gratitude for past mercies and to incline the giver to others yet to come” (Ant 4.212, emphasis added).⁴² In benefaction inscriptions a benefactor is praised, but with the proviso that praise will continue only as long as the benefaction does. Josephus reports how Athens honored Hyrcanus:

Inasmuch as Hyrcanus continued to show goodwill to our people and to manifest the

greatest zeal on their behalf, it has been decreed to honor this man with a golden crown, to set up his bronze statue in the precinct of the temple of Demos, and to announce the award of the crown in the theatres at the festivals; the magistrates shall take care that so long as he continues to maintain his good will toward us everything we can devise shall be done to show honour and gratitude to this man (Ant. 14.152-54, emphasis added).

What conclusions may we draw from the survey of Greek mentality and prayer? 1. “Praise” was the appropriate response to benefaction; equally, “thanks” was not. 2. Obligation was incurred by receipt of a favor; response to which was praise. 3. We find evidence of the existence of a cycle of gift-response-gift etc., indicating notions of balanced reciprocity, a “charm war.” 4. There was no technical term for “thanks” yet.

4.0 Philo, A Considerate Author

Philo helps us recover the appropriate scenario for interpreting our topics. He understands God according to the same philosophical revisionism of his time, namely, that God has “no need” of anything and that God acts altruistically to mortals. Philo identifies God by many titles and roles which describe him as Benefactor (εὐεργέτης), thus invoking a scenario which he is confident his readers will understand.⁴³ Why does God bestow benefits? For Philo, God acts altruistically; it belongs to God to give and not get.⁴⁴ Philo agrees with the ancient legends “That it is the most appropriate work of God to confer benefits (εὐεργετεῖν)” (Plant. 130), and not to act in terms of balanced reciprocity. God is not, he insists, bargaining like some merchant.

You will find that all men sell rather than give and that they, who are receiving favors, are purchasing the benefits. For they who give, hoping to receive a requital, such as praise or

honour, and seeking for a return of the favor they are conferring under the specious name of a gift, are, in reality, making a bargain. It is usual for those who sell to receive a price in return for what they part with. But God distributes his good things, not like a seller vending his wares at a high price, but he is inclined to make presents of everything and never desire any return. (Cher.122-23 emphasis added).

Note the appropriate response to benefaction: “praise or honour.” Is this a return gift? Philo insists that from God’s side mortals have nothing whatsoever to return to God: “It is impossible to show gratitude to God in a genuine manner, by those means which people in general think the only ones, namely offerings and sacrifices.” (Mut. 126).

Philo, however, describes the duty of a person who has lived a life free of all hardships and trials: “[He] is, of necessity, bound to requite God. . .with hymns, and songs, and prayers – all which things taken together have received the one comprehensive name of ‘praise’” (Spec. 1.224). The only response, then, is the coin of the realm, “praise.” Here is another important piece of the scenario we are constructing: no “thing,” is given God, rather God’s graciousness is acknowledged. Mortals “ought” to praise and honor, not thank. One scholar of the meaning of Εὐχαριστία in the first-century writes: “The psychological pattern underlying the spontaneous ‘benediction’ is above all that of admiration and joy, not of gratitude, which remains subordinated, in fact, to the fundamental feeling of admiration, and is therefore secondary.”⁴⁵

“God Needs Nothing.” Philo’s notion of God has gone through the acid bath of anti-anthropomorphism thinking. Out go notions that God needs anything. In comes “negative theology,” which purified the way mortals think of the Immortal One.⁴⁶ Philo provides an

excellent example of how we should talk about God, itself a piece of the scenario we seek.

“God alone is the giver; we do not give. . . I know that God can be conceived of as ‘giving’ and ‘bestowing,’ but ‘being given’ – this I cannot even conceive of. . . it is absolutely necessary for the Truly Existing One to be active, not passive” (Det. 161-62).

Reciprocity is neither desired or possible.

Of interest here is the philosophers’ understanding of God as “having no needs” (ἀπροσδεής). “God,” Philo states, “has bestowed no gift of grace on Himself, for He does not need it, but He has given the world to the world” (Deus 107). Repeatedly he tells us that “God needs nothing” (Moses 1.157; see Cher. 123; Spec. 2.174).⁴⁷ Thus, when mortals respond to the deity, they honor God and praise God. Because God needs nothing, it behooves mortals not to act in terms of any type of reciprocity, but to glorify the greatness of the Benefactor. God is not receiving a return gift, but mortals are delighted with God’s gift and so praise God.

5.0 Seneca’s Native Reflections: de Beneficiis

Seneca discourses at length on patronage and reciprocity. His conscious attention to these topics can help greatly. In de Beneficiis, he provides us with a native’s formal exposition of benefactor-client relationships, appropriate reciprocity, and a reformed view of God. Seneca identifies the high god with names expressive of patronage and benefaction: “It will be right for you,” he said, “to call him Jupiter Best and Greatest, and the Stayer and Stabilizer” (Ben. 4.7.1), indicating benefactions of power and protection. With what kind of reciprocity do the gods give to mortals? Second, what kind of response is appropriate for mortals to give in return to the gods? Gods practice altruistic generosity in their benefaction. Speaking of gods’ gifts of sun, rain, and

crops, Seneca states: “They do all these things without reward, without attaining any advantage for themselves. . .the gods are ours for nothing!” (4.25.2-3; see 2.31.3). Moreover, he states, “The gods would not bestow the countless gifts that, day and night, they unceasingly pour forth. . .they will give to no man a benefit if their only motive in bestowing it is a regard for themselves and their own advantage” (4.3.2). The gods, then, practice generalized reciprocity. Benefaction, moreover, is not commerce: “When a man bestows a benefit, what does he aim at? To be of service and to give pleasure to the one to whom he gives!” (2.31.1). If he expects an exchange, “It would have been, not a benefaction, but a bargaining” (2.31.2). To calculate how one’s benefaction will derive the most gain, “is not to be a benefactor but a money-lender” (4.3.3).⁴⁸

Seneca declares that “God needs nothing!” For example, “God bestows upon us very many and very great benefits, with no thought of any return, since he has no need of having anything bestowed, nor are we capable of bestowing anything on him”(4.9.1). Truly, the gods need nothing: “Their own nature is sufficient to them for all their needs, and renders them fully provided and safe and inviolable” (4.3.2).

6.0 Considerate Readers of Εὐχαριστεῖν -Εὐχαριστία in Early Christianity⁴⁹

How, then, shall we interpret Εὐχαριστεῖν /Εὐχαριστία? Knowing that “praise” is the cultural monarch of responses to heavenly Benefactors, let us examine select usages where Εὐχαριστεῖν appears in combination with “praise.”

6.1 Εὐχαριστεῖν and Meals. Half of time this verb occur in meal contexts: 1) the multiplication of loaves (Mark 8:6; Matt 15:36); 2) the Last Supper (Mark 14:22; Matt 26:26; Luke 22:19; and 1 Cor 11:24), and 3) other meal scenes (Acts 27:35; Rom 14:6; 1 Cor 10:30-31; 1 Tim 4:4-5). In

regard to the Last Supper, it should be noted that two words are used: εὐλογήσας over the bread and εὐχαριστήσας over the cup. Synonyms? Εὐλογεῖν means “to praise” and is considered by many to be a morph of a berakah.⁵⁰ Jeremias noted that εὐλογεῖν reflects a Semitic way of praising, whereas εὐχαριστεῖν is a more Greek expression of the same social phenomenon.”⁵¹ In effect they do not mean different things. Moreover, scholars of liturgy in the Early Church still favor as an appropriate translation for εὐχαριστήσας, “admiration and joy; gratitude remains subordinated to the fundamental feeling of admiration and is, therefore, secondary.”⁵²

6.2 Epistolary Prayers. A second usage is found in the epistolary prayer which begins most Pauline letters.⁵³ Only by modern convention which favors “thanksgiving” over “praise,” do we label these “thanksgiving” prayers. There are almost as many epistolary prayers that begin with εὐλογήτος (2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3; 1 Peter 1:3), as there are which use εὐχαριστεῖν; and the meaning of εὐλογήτος is not in doubt. As with the words over the bread and wine, here too, when seen in parallel with εὐλογήτος, εὐχαριστεῖν expresses praise of God, rather than gratitude. Moreover, in a world where “praise” reigns, we consider it faithful to the Pauline scenario to understand these prayers as expressions of praise, not unlike the frequent doxologies found in his letters (Rom 16:25-27). As with the two words over the bread and wine, here too, when seen in parallel with εὐλογήτος, εὐχαριστεῖν expresses public praise of God, rather than personal gratitude.

<p>Πρῶτον μὲν εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ περὶ πάντων ὑμῶν ὅτι ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν καταγγέλλεται ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ (Rom 1:8)</p>	<p>Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ πατὴρ τῶν οἰκτιρῶν καὶ θεὸς πάσης παρακλήσεως, (2 Cor 1:3; see Eph 1:3; 1 Peter 1:3)</p>
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6.3 Εὐχαριστία and Other Prayers. Numerous instances of εὐχαριστεῖν occur in prayers

which praise God.⁵⁴ More significantly, εὐχαριστεῖν and εὐχαριστία appear alongside words of praise and honor, suggesting that they are synonyms or shades of the same color.⁵⁵ In a solemn throne tableau in heaven, the four living creatures give elaborate praise to the One Who Sits on the Throne by means of adjectives, titles and attributes of honor and respect:

Ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος. καὶ ὅταν δωσουσιν τὰ ζῶα δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν καὶ εὐχαριστίαν τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων (Rev 4:8-9).

"Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come." "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (Rev 4:8-9).

God is publicly acclaimed as supremely “holy” and “all powerful.” Unlike anything created, God is eternal. God’s excellence is such that he is “worthy” to receive the most precious things mortals can offer: glory, honor and “eucharistia.” Εὐχαριστία, found here in combination with δόξα καὶ τίμη, constitutes an hendiadys of three similar expressions of praise. Similarly in Rev 7:12, all the heavenly court – angels, four living things and the elders – prostrate in worship as they

sing:

Ἄμην, ἡ εὐλογία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ σοφία καὶ ἡ εὐχαριστία καὶ ἡ τιμὴ
καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ ἰσχὺς τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων·

Ἄμην (Rev 7:12).

"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might
be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

The cornucopia of praise, “blessing,” “glory,” “wisdom,” “honor,” “power” and “strength,” all
acknowledge God’s excellence and worth. In this company, εὐχαριστία must be thought of as
in parallel with these other expressions of praise; it is bizarre to think that the angels and the
living things giving “thanks” to God. For what?

6.4 Doxologies. In doxologies mortals praise God with some form δόξα or τίμη, but
εὐχαριστία rarely. In regard to the language of traditional doxologies, Matthew Black
considers 1 Chron 29:10-11 as a prime example of a doxology which consisting of two ways of
giving God glory: 1) “Blessed” (Εὐλογητῆς) and 2) the celebration of God’s honorable traits
 (“the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty”).⁵⁶ “Blessed are you, O LORD,
the God of Israel. . . Yours are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty.” In
the New Testament, doxologies may be lean (“To Him be glory forever,” Rom 11:36) or fulsome
 (“To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.
Amen” (1 Tim 1:17) or expansive (“To the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power, and
authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen” (Jude 25). But doxologies are praise, pure
and simple, never thanks.

What conclusions may we draw from this? First and most importantly, when εὐχαριστεῖν is found in the company of expressions of praise and honor, the parallelism suggests that it shares a similar meaning with them, as a hendiadys (Rom 1:21). Second, should it occur in formal doxologies, it is always in company with words from the semantic domain of honor (Rev 4:8-9 and 7:12). Third, even in expressions such as “Thanks be to God who. . .” (Rom 7:25; 1 Cor 15:57; 2 Cor 2:14; 8:16; 9:15), there is no compelling reason to read this as anything other than public praise, such as “Blessed be God who. . .” (Luke 1:68; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3; 1 Peter 1:3). Fourth, clearly the pivotal value of “honor” and “praise” continues to dominate the discourse about God and enjoys its place as the dominant value in that culture.

7.0 Summary and Perhaps a Conclusion

1. As we become considerate readers, we recognize the basic cultural elements of the appropriate scenario of the ancient world which are needed to translate words such as ἔπαινεῖν and εὐχαριστεῖν : 1) the foundational nature of “praise” and “honor” in antiquity; 2) benefactor-client relations; and 3) types of reciprocity. The first is most frequently absent in translation.

2. The primary and unique response to the deity in the classical world was “praise,” “honor,” “glory” and their cousins. The experts emphatically state that “thanks” was not.

3. We pointed out earlier, using the template of Claus Westermann, how significantly different are “praise” and “thanks”: public extolling virtues and accomplishments vs interior feeling of gratitude; propaganda for the one praised vs gratitude to a donor.

4. Human response to the deity changes as understanding of the God/gods matures. Once,

the gods were thought to be susceptible to gifts of sacrifice and praise. In a genuine exchange, mortals gave to the gods who gave back in return – suggesting a type of balanced reciprocity; recall Lucian’s satire. Much later, however, a different theology emerged which took exception to anthropomorphic descriptions of the gods, which scholars label as “negative theology.” In this light, God or the gods “need nothing” – no sacrifices, no bribery, no flattery. They themselves “need nothing”; mortals cannot make any response save that of praise. No reciprocity enters the relationship.

5. As has been noted, εὐχαριστεῖν is absent from the LXX, and appears only in the late Hellenistic period. When it does appear, it generally is understood as a synonym of praise. When it finally takes on a public expression rooted in gratitude, it certainly does not supplant praise.

6. Returning to Luke, twice God is “given glory,” while Jesus is “thanked.” So is there a significant difference between these two terms? Understanding them as synonyms of the primary word “praise,” I think not. According to Luke, no one “thanked” God or Jesus, but rather praised or glorified them. But to translate, “give glory” with “thanks” – as the RSV did – loses much in translation.

7. In Tobit 12, the Greek verbs whereby mortals pray to God are uniformly from the semantic word field of “praise.” All of them publicly acknowledge God’s greatness, indicating that the premier response to God is “praise.” But the RSV’s triple substitution of “give thanks” for words of “praise” suggests that in the translator’s eyes it has a different or identical meaning, perhaps even a superior expression. This is simply wrong. In the few places in the New Testament where it appears alongside verbs of praise suggests that it be taken as a synonym of them.

8. God, who gives altruistically; needs nothing. So no type of reciprocity is possible for mortals. God “gives,” but does not “barter.” Balanced reciprocity is theoretically out of consideration. But we saw data that suggested that the deity gave benefaction with the expectation of return gifts, a “culture war.” Moreover, the heart of εὐχαριστεῖν lies in the sense of duty or obligation for the person blessed to repay the deity in some way. Here we find clear traces of balanced reciprocity.⁵⁷

9. Although it is not an absolute criterion, praise is public, whereas thanks is private. Praise is essentially vocal and spontaneous; it seeks to persuade others to acknowledge the deeds of God. Thanks, however, is a thought within a person; if expressed, it is of no concern to anyone else. The leper gave glory to God, as well as publicly praised Jesus.

 NOTES

1. Some cultures have no concept of or terms for giving thanks, while in other cultures it is a social faux pas to say “thanks.” So an Arab proverb states: “Do not thank me, you will repay me.” In India, there exists no expression for “thanks,” because beneficial social acts toward another are viewed as the fulfillment of an obligation. If someone gives a gift, the recipient believes the gift is the result of a previous obligation and therefore is deserved; balanced reciprocity operates. See John J. Pilch, “No Thank You!” TBT (2000) 49-53; H. S. Versnel, “Religious Mentality in Ancient Prayer,” in Faith, Hope and Worship. Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World (Leiden: Brill, 1981) 43-46; and Theodor Schermann, “Εὐχαριστία und εὐχαριστέω in ihrem Bedeutungswandel bis 200 n. Chr.,” Philologus 69 (1910) 376. Claus Westermann (The Praise of God in the Psalms, Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1965) said: “It is clear that the O.T. does not have our independent concept of thanks. The expression of thanks to God is included in praise” (p. 27).

2. Robert J. Ledogar (Acknowledgment. Praise-verbs in the Early Greek Anaphora [Rome: Casa Editrice Herder, 1968] 105) noted that “The words εὐχαριστέιν, εὐχαριστία, εὐχαριστός do not enter Biblical literature as praise words at all until the first century B.C.”

3. George Henry Boobyer (“Thanksgiving” and the “Glory of God” in Paul [Borna-Leipzig: Robert Noske, 1929] 1-6) is just one of many scholars who considers εὐχαριστέιν as a synonym of verbs such as ἐξομολογεῖσθε, αἰνεῖν, δοξαζεῖν, εὐλογεῖν, and ὑμνεῖν. See Ledogar, Acknowledgment, 57.

4. B. Jacob (“Beitrage zu einer Einleitung in die Psalmen,” ZAW 17 [1927] 276) noted: “It is very questionable whether tōdāh ever means thanks but rather it always means praise, recognition, confession.”

5. In the following references one can readily see how interchangeable are “praise,” “glory,” and “honor” and they frequently appear together: Rom 2:7, 10; Eph 1:12, 14; Phil 1:11; 1 Tim 1:17; 6:16; Heb 2:7; 1 Peter 1:7; 2 Peter 1:17; Rev 4:9, 11; 5:12-13; 7:12; 21:6). Not only are “honor” and “praise” sought after by mortals, but they are the unique response to God.

6. Ledogar (Acknowledgment, 63-88) begins his study of the language of praise in the Septuagint with a desire to learn what the diverse words of praise have in common; he discovers how interchangeable they are. The common denominator of all of them is “a public proclamatory character of the praise act” (74). For example, considering δοξάζειν, he concludes “‘Give honor to,’ ‘render public homage to’ remains by far the most frequent Septuagint meaning of δοξάζειν” (78).

7. This translation error is not exclusive to the RSV; the New Century Version and the Contemporary English Version among others translate the verb in Luke 17:18 as “thanks,” not “praise” or “give glory to.”

8. It has long been observed that in the canonical books of the Septuagint, εὐχαριστεῖν is not found: “The Hebrew language, like Aramaic, had no word that properly signified “to thank” (Ledogar, Acknowledgment, 100). Instead one finds verbs indicating praise in some form: (ἐπ)αινεῖν, ἐξομολογεῖσθε, εὐλογεῖν, δοξαζεῖν, ὕμνειν. It appears that when translating into Greek, the translators of the bible considered ἐξομολογεῖσθε as best suited to render hōdāh and αἰνεῖν for hillēl.

9. The Greeks even had a name for the amassing of titles and names of honor, πολυωνομία. Dio Chrysostom states: “The statue is in keeping with all the titles by which Zeus is known. For he alone of the gods is entitled ‘Father and King,’ ‘Protector of Cities,’ ‘God of Friendship,’ ‘God of Comradeship,’ and also ‘Protector of Suppliants,’ ‘God of Hospitality,’ ‘Giver of Increase’” (Or. 12.75). Little Artemis sat on her father’s lap and asked for a special gift, “Give me many-namedness (πολυωνυμίην),” cited by J. M. Bremer,” Greek Hymns,” Faith, Hope and Worship. Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World (H. S. Versnel, ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1981) 194-95.

10. Bruce J. Malina, “Reading Theory Perspective.” Pp. 3-24 in Jerome H. Neyrey, ed., The Social World of Luke Acts. Models for Interpretation (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991) and “Interpretation: Reading, Abduction, Metaphor.” Pp. 253-66 in David Jobling, Peggy Day, and Gerald Shepherd, eds. The Bible and Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on His Sixty-Fifth (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1991).

11. Malina, “Reading Theory Perspective,” Take, for example, familiar terms such as house, father, mother; the meaning of these in the New Testament is very distant from the nuclear, many-roomed, suburban house with lawn, garage and equity of \$250,000; gender roles in American families have changed such that men do women’s chores (cooking, child care) and women do men’s jobs (work outside the home).

12. On benefactor-client relations, see Jerome H. Neyrey, “God, Benefactor and Patron: The Major Cultural Model for Interpreting the Deity in the Greco-Roman World, JSNT 27 (2005) 465-492. On reciprocity, Hans van Wees, “Reciprocity in Anthropological Theory.” Pp. 13-50 in Christopher Gill, et al., eds., Reciprocity in Ancient Greece (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

13. M. D. Sahlins, Stone Age Economics (Chicago, IL: Aldine Atherton, 1972) 188-96.

14. Hans van Wees, “Reciprocity in Anthropological Theory,” Pp. 13-50 in Christopher Gill, et al., eds., Reciprocity in Ancient Greece (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Walter Dolan, “Reciprocities in Homer, CW 72 (1981) 137-75 and “The Unequal Exchange between Glaucus and Diomedes in Light of the Homeric Gift-Economy,” Phoenix 43 (1989) 1-15.

15. Gary Stansell, “The Gift in Ancient Israel,” Semeia 87 (2006) 65-90.

16. Bruce J. Malina, Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1986) 98-106.
17. See K. C. Hanson, "All in the Family. Kinship in Agrarian Roman Palestine." Pp. 37-46 in K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, eds. Palestine in the Time of Jesus. Social Structures and Social Conflicts (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998).
18. Love of honor, Xenophon said, distinguished humans from beasts: "In this man differs from other animals -- I mean, in this craving for honour. In meat and drink and sleep and sex all creatures alike seem to take pleasure; but love of honor (φιλοτιμία) is rooted neither in the brute beasts nor in every human being. But they in whom is implanted a passion for honour and praise, these are they who differ most from the beasts of the field, these are accounted men and not mere human beings" (Hiero 7.3).
19. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains. 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989) 33.354 - 33.364.
20. Louw and Nida, Greek-English Lexicon, 33.349 - 33.353; 25.99 - 25.101.
21. Frederick W. Danker, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. 3rd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000; Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965.
22. Westermann, The Praise of God in the Psalms, 27; Ledogar (Acknowledgment, 95) says: "We have seen how the verbs ἀίνειν, εὐλογεῖν, ἔξομολογέσθαι, etc. signify fundamentally a public act of making known the virtues or deeds of another. . .The verb εὐχαριστεῖν on the contrary is primarily an expression of an interior sentiment and only consequently a verb of praise."
23. Not all responses were "honor" and "praise." Versnel ("Religious Mentality in Ancient Prayer," 56-57) describes the commercium quality of benefaction and response: "Man gave and the god had to answer with another gift and vice versa. The commercial nature of the transaction was often prosaically expressed by calling the favour returned a 'debt' which had to be 'paid'." As he notes, Apollos demanded his *misthos* for his oracles, just as Asclepius for cures. See Cicero, de Officiis 1.15.47.
24. J. H. Quincey, "Greek Expressions of Thanks," JHS 86 (1966) 133.
25. Quincey, "Greek Expressions of Thanks," 157.
26. Quincey ("Greek Expressions of Thanks," 157) cites Plato on this point: Socrates is speaking: "In saying that I do not pay thanks you are mistaken. I pay as much as I am able. And I am able only to bestow praise. For money I lack. But that I praise right willingly those who appear to

speak well” (Rep. 1.338b).

27. The interior character of “thanks-giving” is evident in the choice of the word “thank” to translate the Greek term. According to the OED, the root meanings of “thanks-giving” are: 1) “thought” (from thanken, old German danken, and then denken), 2) favorable thought, and 3) kindly thought toward someone for favors received. Strictly a private affair.

28. Quincey, “Greek Expressions of Thanks,” 157.

29. Versnel, “Religious Mentality in Ancient Prayer,” 45.

30. Versnel, “Religious Mentality in Ancient Prayer,” 47.

31. Versnel, “Religious Mentality in Ancient Prayer,” 50.

32. Xenophon, Mem. 4.3.15. Philo expresses the same thing: “How must it not be impossible to recompense or to praise as He deserves Him who brought the universe out of non-existence” (Leg. 3.10).

33. Bremer, “Giving and Thanksgiving in Greek Religion,” 129.

34. Frederick W. Danker (Benefactor. Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field [St. Louis, MO, Clayton Publishing House, 1982]) demonstrates that “honor” is the reward for virtue and achievement. This typical benefactor citation describes the gestures and vocabulary of public praise: “Decree by Sestos in Honor of Menas son of Menes, Envoy, Gymnasiarch, and Supervisor of the Coinage. . .that he receive his award at the hands of the ephoboi and the neoi, and that he receive a golden crown from the people annually at the games held during the national festival, with the herald making proclamations such as follows, ‘The people crown Menas son of Menes for the arete and goodwill he has displayed toward the people especially in his two terms of exceptional and recognized service. . .to set up a bronze statue of him in the gymnasium. . .to invite him and his heirs to front seating at all the games sponsored by the people’” (Danker, 95).

35. Christopher Gill, Norman Postlethwaite and Richard Seaford, eds., Reciprocity in Ancient Greece (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

36. Hans van Wees, “The Law of Gratitude: Reciprocity in Anthropological Theory.” Pp 13-50 in Christopher Gill, Norman Postlethwaite and Richard Seaford, eds. Reciprocity in Ancient Greece (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

37. Robert Parker, “Pleasing Thighs: Reciprocity in Greek Religion.” Pp. 105-26 in Christopher Gill, et al., eds., Reciprocity in Ancient Greece (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); and Jan-Maarten Bremer, “The Reciprocity of Giving and Thanksgiving in Greek Worship.” Pp. 127-38 in Christopher Gill, et al., eds., Reciprocity in Ancient Greece (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

38. Parker, “Pleasing Thighs: Reciprocity in Greek Religion,” 108.

39. Parker, “Pleasing Thighs: Reciprocity in Greek Religion,” 109.

40. Parker, “Pleasing Thighs: Reciprocity in Greek Religion,” 109.

41. Simon Pulleyn (Prayer in Greek Religion [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997] 54-55) cites this inscription: “Oenobius the herald, in commemoration, set up here this statue to Hermes, returning a favor.” He interprets this in terms of reciprocity. “The ΧΑΡΙΣ [favor/gift] felt by Oenobius was reciprocated by an offering which would in turn render the god well disposed to help in the future.” Balanced reciprocity, it would seem.

42. Bremer (“Giving and Thanksgiving in Greek Religion,” 130-33) provides eight examples of gifts which make the gods indebted to the giver, the most charming one by the emperor Hadrian. He dedicated a portion of the bear he just killed to Cupid/Eros and tells the boy-archer what he should give Hadrian: “In return for this, breathe down to him [Hadrian], through your own temperance, a favor from heavenly Aphrodite.”

43. Philo states: “He is Benefactor_(εὐεργέτης), he wills only to bestow benefits (τὸ εὐεργετεῖν). . . “Without intermission God bestows benefits’(εὐεργετῶν)” (Plant. 86-89; see also (Opificio 169).

44. In one satire, Lucian presents the gods giving great favors in exchange for trivial gifts: “Nothing that they [the gods] do is done without compensation. They sell men their blessings, and one can buy from them health, it may be, for a calf, wealth for four oxen, a royal throne for a hundred, a safe return from Troy to Pylos for nine bulls, and a fair voyage from Aulis to Troy for a king’s daughter! Hecuba, you know, purchased temporary immunity for Troy from Athena for twelve oxen and a frock. One may imagine, too, that they have many things on sale for the price of a cock or a wreath or nothing more than incense” (On Sacrifices 2).

45. J. P. Audet, “Literary Forms and Contents of a Normal Εὐχαριστία in the First Century,” Studia Evangelica 1 (1959) 646.

46. On “negative theology,” see: H. A. Wolfson, “Albinus and Plotinus on Divine Attributes”, HThR 45 (1952) 115-130 and “Negative Attributes in the Church Fathers and the Gnostic Basilides”, HThR 50 (1957) 145-156; Frances M. Young, “The God of the Greeks and the Nature of Religious Language.” Pp 45-73 in R. Schroeder and R. L. Wilken, eds. Early Church Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition; (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979).

47. “God needs nothing” became a commonplace in the Greco-Roman world. See Plutarch, Stoic Self-Contradictions 1052E; and in Hellenistic Judaism, see “God does not want anything” (Ep. Aristeas 211); “O Lord of all, who has need of nothing” (2 Macc 14:35-36); and “Not by deeds is it possible for men to return thanks to God, for the Deity stands in need of nothing and is above all such recompense” (Josephus, Ant. 8.111). See Philo, Immut 107 and Moses 1.157. Of

particular richness is the remark of Irenaeus: “The prophets indicate that God stood in no need of their slavish obedience. . . God needed not their oblation, but [demanded it], on account of man himself who offers it. Because God stands in need of nothing. . . reject those things by which sinners imagined they could propitiate God, and show that He does Himself stand in need of nothing. (Adv Her. 4.17.1, emphasis added).

48. Seneca plays the role of an idealist here, for many would disagree with him. The majority would understand that all giving is giving for a return; see A. R. Hands, Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome: Aspects of Greek and Roman Life (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968) 26-48.

49. Scholars all depend on Schurmann’s article for their study of the origin and development of Εὐχαριτέω, a history repeated in Peter T. O’Brien, “Thanksgiving Within the Structure of Pauline Theology.” Pp 53-54 in Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris, eds., Pauline Studies. Essays Presented to Professor F. F. Bruce on His 70th Birthday (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980). The history goes as such: absent until the Hellenistic period, in 3rd century Asia Minor and Egypt it meant the opposite of what we understand today: “to do a good turn, to oblige,” a meaning also found in the papyri. Subsequently it takes on the meaning “to be grateful, to give thanks.” It is completely absent from the LXX. Shades of meaning appear, such as Josephus’ use of it to mean “congratulate”: “Archaelus congratulated (Εὐχαριστῶν) Herod on his son-in-law’s acquital” (Wars 1.456). But O’Brien concludes with the remark: “It is clear that Pauline thanksgiving approximates to what we normally understand by “praise” (p. 62).

50. John H. McKenna, “From ‘Berakah’ to ‘Eucharistia’ to Thomas Talley and Beyond,” Proceedings of the North American Academy of Liturgy (1995) 87-99.

51. See Joachim Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus (London: SCM, 1966) 174-78.

52. McKenna, “From ‘Berakah’ to ‘Eucharistia’ to Thomas Talley and Beyond,” 87. Audet’s article, mentioned above, supports this assertion.

53. For a survey of New Testament scholarship on Paul’s “thanksgiving” prayers, see Peter T. O’Brien, Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul (Leiden: Brill, 1977) 4-15; P. T. O’Brien (“Benediction, Blessing, Doxology, Thanksgiving,” Dictionary of Paul and His Letters; eds. Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph Martin and Daniel Reid [Downers Grove, IL; Intervarsity Press, 1993] 69) seems to admit that something is lost by translating these prayers as “thanksgiving”: “Pauline thanksgiving approximates what we understand by ‘praise,’ for it is broader than the expression of gratitude for personal benefits received.”

54. See Luke 18:11; John 11:41; Acts 28:15; 1 Cor 14:17; 2 Cor 1:11; Col 4:2.

55. Nouns and verbs are strung together in a rhetorical figure of speech called hendiadys: two (or three) words are connected by a conjunction used to express a single notion, such as grace and favor instead of gracious favor. "The kingdom and the power and the glory" (from the Lord's

Prayer) extends the principle, transforming the idea of a "glorious, powerful kingdom" into a sequence of three nouns joined by conjunctions.

56. Matthew Black called attention to the widespread occurrence of doxologies which begin with "Blessed are you. . ." ("The Doxology to the Pater Noster with a Note on Matthew 6:13B." Pp 327-38 in Philip R. Davies and Richard T. White, eds., A Tribute to Geza Vermes [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990]).

57. Bonnie MacLachlan (The Age of Grace. Charis in Early Greek Poetry [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993] 7-8) indicates the inherent ambiguity of $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ in terms of reciprocity: "The exchange of charis-favours was founded upon a very general psychological phenomenon, the disposition to return pleasure to someone who has given it. This pleasure exchange was accepted as a serious social convention. . .the charis convention amounted to a lex talionis, but of a positive sort. A benefaction called for a suitable return, and reprisals might be taken when the anticipated reciprocity did not occur." She leaves no doubt about her understanding of $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$: "Only balanced reciprocity interests us in a study of charis, for it is the only one that is strictly reciprocal."