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ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE BIBLE AND ITS RECEPTION

5

Charisma – Czaczkes

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character Tantalus desires to reach beyond his capabilities and eat the fruit, specifically apples, of the garden. "Coveting" is presented within the context of a garden that boasts forbidden fruit.

The word is practically nonexistent in modern works of literature. In most cases, "coveting" is replaced by references to "desiring," and its connection to biblical law is all but lost.

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Melissa Siik

VII. Visual Arts

As one of humankind's most defining and treacherous characteristics, coveting (covetousness, greed, desire, avarice) has often driven men and women in the HB/OT and NT in the wrong direction. In fact, so obvious was the danger that covetousness in various forms was outlawed by the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:13–17), and more than once the declaration comes forth that "the law has told us not to covet" (4 Macc 2:6; Rom 7:7), for "just so it is that emotions hinder one from justice" (4 Macc 2:6).

Biblical narratives on covetousness abound, and so do illustrations. Jacob's mother, Rebekah, wanted the best for her youngest son so much that together they misled the blind Isaac (Gen 27–28), while Joseph's ten brothers were so angry with their father, Jacob, for loving him more dearly than any them that they sold Joseph into slavery (Gen 37:3). Delilah preferred 1,100 silver coins from each Philistine lord above the life and love of Samson (Judg 16:5), and King David desired the wife of the soldier Uriah so much that he arranged for his death on the battlefield (2 Sam 11–12). The devil even tried to lead Jesus into temptation by offering him the kingdoms of the world (Matt 4:8–9). Not wanting the temple to be "a den of thieves," Jesus threw the money changers out of it (Matt 21:13). And last, according to Matthew, it was greed that brought Judas to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Matt 26:15); for this reason, after the destruction of Jerusalem and the capture of its inhabitants, the Romans supposedly sold thirty Jews for a penny (Smith 1997–98: 193, n. 45; 198–200).

Next to illustrating the biblical narratives concerned, covetousness or *avaritia* came to play an important role in the Christian concept of the Seven Deadly Sins, i.e., the Capital Vices or Cardinal Sins (*superbia, avaritia, luxuria, invidia, gula, ira, and acedia*). In Dante's purgatory, those guilty of usury sit burning in the painful flames, their faces unrecognizable but their purses loosely hung around their necks on which they keep their eyes fixed (*Inferno* 17.52–57). Indeed, in visualizing the Last Judgment on the west side of Romanesque and Gothic

churches, greedy men are led to the devil with their moneybags tied around their necks (tympanum of Autun cathedral, ca. 1130; see also the capital, formerly in the choir; Reims cathedral, north entrance, ca. 1230). Money-grubbers have been hung by their bags in the large Last Judgment fresco by Giotto in the Capella Scrovegni, Padua (ca. 1305), next to Judas Iscariot. Giotto also painted the personification of *Avaritia* along the lower wall. In 1589, the theologian Peter Binsfield (ca. 1545/6–1598) published a list in which each of the deadly sins is associated with one particular demon. According to him, the demon Mammon could be paired with *Avaritia*. Ebenezer Scrooge is the 19th-century personification of greed (Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, 1843) and thus a popular subject for many an illustration. In modern society, it is less sinful to be greedy.

The positive side of coveting, namely, desire, also receives attention in the visual arts, albeit with less enthusiastic imagination. Mary Magdalene is the image of the penitent harlot, desirous to prove her love to Jesus, hoping he will forgive her sins. In many aspects, she serves as the perfect model for medieval female spirituality (Baert 2007). In their *Noli me tangere* images, Giotto (see → plate 13) Albrecht Dürer (no. 31 in the *Small Passion*, 1511) and Hans Holbein the Younger (1524, Hampton Court) "provide us images of the holy in humanity, and the human in the holy, in all their dimensions" (Katsanis 2007: 402). Mary Magdalene remains the NT figure who shows her emotions more than any other follower of Jesus: she weeps while anointing and kissing his feet during supper with Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36–50); she mourns at the foot of the cross when Jesus has died; and she ardently desires to touch the resurrected Jesus when meeting him in the garden. Contrary to the mother of Jesus who knows her fate, Mary Magdalene personifies the human implications of love.

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VIII. Music

A number of biblical narratives dealing with human desires, of a sexual nature or concerning power or material wishes, have been set to music. These nar-



Giotto, "The Resurrection" (ca. 1303/5)