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When Entropy Reigns: Why Jesus Still Cleansed the Temple: Rethinking Practical Theology Through the Temple Event

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Abstract

This article seeks to use "entropy" not as a scientific principle but as a structured metaphor for assessing spiritual and institutional decline. This practical-theological approach integrates a meticulous examination of the Temple-disruption narratives with constructive theological reflection and interdisciplinary discourse, recontextualising Jesus' purification of the Temple as a prophetic reaction to systemic decline, characterised by the distortion of worship through exploitation, market logic, and the erosion of sacred purpose. The Jerusalem Temple serves as a historically contextual example of institutional disintegration, highlighting the progressive erosion of integrity, relational trust, and moral clarity within religious organisations and individual spirituality. Jesus' actions are considered as a disruptive judgement and restorative measure: a condemnation of injustice and a recovery of holy space for the divine and the marginalised. The paper provides a practical-theological analysis of "anti-entropic" renewal that opposes complacency and normalised injustice. It advocates for specific ecclesiastical practices—systematic diagnostic self-assessment ("entropy audits"), transparent accountability, collective repentance, and dignity-focused diaconal involvement—enabling churches to foster resilience, regain credibility, and exemplify revitalised public testimony.

"In all chaos there is a cosmos, in all disorder a secret order."— Carl Jung

Keyword: Entropy (metaphor), Temple cleansing, Ecclesial renewal, Institutional integrity

1. INTRODUCTION: THE NEED FOR PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AND THE UNSTOPPABLE MARCH OF ENTROPY

Entropy describes system disorder, unpredictability, and uncertainty. The second rule of thermodynamics states that an isolated system's entropy never decreases: energy disperses, structures degrade, and processes irrevocably approach equilibrium.[1] This one-way movement, nicknamed the "arrow of time," implies systems do not automatically restore order after disruption. Beyond physics, the notion has become a strong metaphor for social, psychological, and spiritual decline, reminding us that institutions and societies perish without regeneration. As Gary Patterson reminds us, thermodynamics is a precise scientific account, and theological writing should borrow its language carefully, without collapsing a scientific concept into loose talk of "chaos." Used with these boundaries, however, entropy can still serve

[1] Stanley I. Sandler, *Chemical, Biochemical, and Engineering Thermodynamics*, 4th edition (John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 91.

as a disciplined metaphor in practical theology: it can name the slow drift by which institutions—and spiritual lives within them—lose coherence, integrity, and purpose when renewal is not intentionally pursued.[2]

In what follows, then, "entropy" is not treated as a scientific principle explaining religious life but as a regulated metaphor for spiritual and institutional drift. The aim is interpretive and constructive rather than quantitative. Two boundaries are important. First, following Patterson's caution, physical entropy is not equated with moral decline; the metaphor is used only to illuminate how worship and institutional habits can erode integrity and sacred purpose over time. Second, "entropy" can also describe uncertainty in information theory; here Fisher's account of religion as a complex adaptive meaning-system is helpful, because it shows how religious communities can either stabilise shared horizons of meaning or intensify fragmentation. With these controls in place, the Temple disruption narratives can be read as a concrete instance of distortion—commodification, exclusion, and legitimised misuse—and of prophetic interruption. Practical theology, on this view, becomes a practice of diagnosis and renewal: identifying drift, naming injustice, and cultivating disciplines of repair.[3]

"Entropy" refers to an observable imbalance in human and ecclesial systems: degeneration may occur gradually and imperceptibly. At the same-time, regeneration requires continuous, deliberate actions and moral development. The metaphor's limitations, particularly about resurrection and new creation, lead the argument to a theological approach, seeing entropy as illustrative rather than explanatory.[4] This article presents a conceptual, practical-theological study that employs a controlled metaphor ("entropy") to interpret patterns of institutional and moral decline. It combines (1) conceptual analysis (clarifying "entropy" as an interpretive heuristic rather than a physical law), (2) theological–hermeneutical reading of the Temple disruption narratives as a paradigmatic case of institutional critique, and (3) practical-theological translation into diagnostic criteria and constructive practices for contemporary ecclesial and faith-based institutions. The aim is interpretive and normative—not quantitative—grounded in textual reasoning and conceptual argumentation.

1.1 Research questions:

1. What does "entropy" illuminate—*and what does it not*—when used as a controlled metaphor for institutional and spiritual decline?
2. How do the Temple disruption narratives portray institutional distortion (commodification, exclusion, loss of telos), and what theological logic structures Jesus' action?
3. How can an "anti-entropic" practical theology be operationalised as institutional practices (accountability, repair, formation, justice) without importing thermodynamic necessity into theology?

1.2 Defining Theological Entropy Through Scripture

Davis claims that the conceptual robustness of entropy offers a solid foundation for understanding chaos and disorder. Descriptive capacity makes this idea useful for evaluating decline processes. This research employs the concept of "theological entropy," inspired by Davis's observation that the application of entropy to social systems is both challenging and beneficial, to illustrate patterns of spiritual disarray, institutional deterioration, and moral collapse. Adam's disobedience introduced theological entropy into creation, which caused humanity's moral deterioration. In the Great Flood (Gen 6–9), corruption became

[2] Gary Patterson, 'Theology and Thermodynamics: In Praise of Entropy.' *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 64, no. 4 (2012): 242–49.
[3] Matthew Zaro Fisher, 'Entropy and the Idea of God(s): A Philosophical Approach to Religion as a Complex Adaptive System', *Religions* 15, no. 8 (2024): 925, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15080925.
[4] Ian G. Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues* (SCM Press, 1998), 119–22.

so pervasive that God had to flood and restore creation. In Babel (Gen 11:1–9), pride caused division and animosity. These examples show how human sin creates chaos.[5]

Chaos, complexity, and second-order cybernetics study instability and change, although their scope and theological resonance differ. Chaos theory[6] emphasises unpredictability in deterministic systems, whereas complexity theory[7] examines non-linear interactions that create order. Both have significance, but self-organisation trumps moral and spiritual decline. Second-order cybernetics[8] promotes feedback and self-reference but may reduce human and divine action to system mechanics. Entropy suggests continual deterioration and the need for sustained inputs of attention, resources, accountability, and formative practices, which fit biblical sin, corruption, and divine restoration. Entropy shows chaos's intensity and need for divine intervention, making it a stronger theological parallel. Its metaphorical clarity showed moral and institutional decay while allowing "counter-entropic" grace, resurrection, and regeneration (Rom 8:20–21; 1 Cor 15:42–44).

1.3 The Need for Renewal: Energy and Divine Intervention

Entropy emphasises the necessity for constant "work" or energy to maintain order. Entropy reduces productive energy because life needs continual energy to maintain complexity and avoid deterioration.[9] This principle reflects theology: order is maintained not independently but through God's renewing action. The Second Law of Thermodynamics serves as a description rather than an evaluation; it recognises the goodness of creation (Gen 1:31).[10] For Moltmann, entropy represents creation's receptiveness to rejuvenation rather than an intrinsic inadequacy.[11] As Polkinghorne rightly pointed out, decay, death, and entropy are not deficiencies but rather circumstances that facilitate the emergence of fresh life and creativity.[12] Creation is "subjected to futility" with the anticipation of liberation rather than in condemnation (Romans 8:20–21). Within this article, entropy does not explain resurrection. Rather, it clarifies why created and institutional life cannot renew itself automatically. Resurrection belongs to a different register: not the reversal of a natural process, but the confession of God's new act beyond the explanatory scope of the metaphor. (1 Cor 15:42–44). So, entropy is not the end but a setting for God's transformation. Resurrection shows that divine energy prevents decay and builds a new creation. Practical theology engages in this counter-entropic activity, reminding communities that acts of faith, justice, and compassion are tangible means of participating in God's work of restoration.

1.4 Methodological Framework

This article employs a conceptual, practical-theological research framework: it formulates "entropy" as a controlled metaphor (a diagnostic heuristic, rather than a physical law) to analyse patterns of institutional drift, moral distortion, and loss of purpose, subsequently translating that diagnosis into constructive practical-theological recommendations.[13] The principal "case materials" consist of the canonical narratives of the Temple disruption (Mark 11:15–19; Matt 21:12–17; Luke 19:45–48; John 2:13–22),

[5] Philip Davis, 'Entropy and Society: Can the Physical/Mathematical Notions of Entropy Be Usefully Imported into the Social Sphere?' *Journal of Humanistic Mathematics* 1, no. 1 (2011): 119–36, https://doi.org/10.5642/jhummath.201101.09.
[6] Ilya Prigogine et al., *Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature* (Verso Books, 2017).
[7] Stuart Kauffman, *At Home in the Universe: The Search for the Laws of Self-Organization and Complexity: The Search for Laws of Self-Organization and Complexity* (Oxford University Press, U.S.A., 1996).
[8] Heinz von Foerster, *Understanding Understanding: Essays on Cybernetics and Cognition* (Springer, 2003).
[9] Sandler, *Chemical, Biochemical, and Engineering Thermodynamics*, 91.
[10] Herbert B. Callen, *Thermodynamics and an Introduction to Thermostatistics*, 2 Editions (John Wiley & Sons, 1985), 27–29.
[11] Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (SCM Press, 2005).
[12] John C. Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence: God's Interaction with the World* (Templeton Press, 2011).
[13] Richard Robert Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (William B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2008).

analysed through a textual-theological close reading that considers literary context and intertextual resonances, informed by recognised hermeneutical reflections on the relationship between text and interpreter.[14] The argument unfolds in five distinct steps. (1) Elucidate the metaphor and its constraints through model/analogy theory; (2) conduct a close reading of the Temple texts; (3) identify the institutional "mechanisms" depicted (commodification, exclusion, legitimisation of misuse); (4) analogously correlate these mechanisms to contemporary institutions where appropriate; and (5) suggest "anti-entropic" practices (accountability, repair, formation, safeguarding).[15,16] Rigour is assessed by conceptual coherence, textual accountability, metaphorical discipline, and practical appropriateness; in contexts where "entropy" is referenced in psychology or information theory, it serves only to bolster heuristic plausibility rather than reductionism.[17]

2. UNDERSTANDING ENTROPY: FROM PHYSICS TO PRAXIS

Rudolf Clausius introduced the word entropy (from Greek transformation) in 1865 to characterise systems' inherent propensity towards disorder and irreversibility, the "arrow of time."[18] In physics, the "arrow of time" denotes the irreversibility of certain processes. I use this phrase analogously to underscore a practical-theological insight: once trust, holiness, and institutional integrity are compromised, restoration seldom transpires spontaneously. Renewal requires intentional restoration, acknowledgement of wrongdoing, reparation, and ongoing actions that restore community existence. In this article, "entropy" serves as a deliberate metaphor and diagnostic tool, rather than a transferable physical rule. The objective is interpretative and practical-theological (diagnostic → remedial actions) rather than explanatory in a thermodynamic context.

Though thermodynamic, its symbolic force extends to social, organisational, and spiritual life. Entropy has emerged as a significant metaphor in systems theory and organisational studies, illustrating the progressive degeneration of complex processes into inefficiency and catastrophe.[19] Beyond physics, it represents organisational decline: without ongoing renewal, institutions and societies go towards stagnation and disintegration. I argue that systemic collapse is not only coincidental but often associated with human choices and psychological decline. Individuals are not just passive victims of collapse; they may also contribute to or accelerate it by virtue of ignorance, arrogance, or corruption (Isa 1:4–5; Matt 23; Gen 6:5; Rom 1:21–32; Deut 30:19; Jas 4:17).

Organisations operate as complex adaptive systems (CAS), characterised by autonomy, cooperation, and formation, whereby structures influence behaviour while people simultaneously modify the system.[20] The Jerusalem Temple, functioning as both a religious and socio-political entity, illustrated the inherent fragility of such institutions during the time of Jesus (Matt 21:12–13). Organisational entropy results from

[14] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980).
[15] Mary B. Hesse, *Models and Analogies in Science*, New edition (University of Notre Dame Press, 1970).
[16] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, ed. With a new Afterword (University of Chicago Press, 2003), https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/M/bo3637992.html.
[17] Jacob B. Hirsh et al., 'Psychological Entropy: A Framework for Understanding Uncertainty-Related Anxiety,' *Psychological Review* 119, no. 2 (2012): 119, https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026767.
[18] Sandler, *Chemical, Biochemical, and Engineering Thermodynamics*, 91.
[19] Neill Q. Hamilton, 'Temple Cleansing and Temple Bank,' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83, no. 4 (1964): 365–72, https://doi.org/10.2307/3264170.
[20] John H. Miller and Scott Page, *Complex Adaptive Systems: An Introduction to Computational Models of Social Life* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 9–11.

procedural rigidity that hinders adaptability, communication failures that produce silos and mistakes, and a weaker common vision that shifts attention from organisational goals to individual aspirations, weakening creativity, motivation, and decision-making.[21,22] Therefore, Jesus' purification exposed how human failure causes organisational entropy, psychological, moral, and spiritual degradation. Institutional degradation reflects individual psychological and spiritual entropy, revealing how systemic instability starts with broken emotions and weakened wills.

Systemic instability results from organisational psychological entropy eroding cognitive, emotional, and moral consistency. Disoriented leaders make bad decisions, lack vision, and cause conflict, while weariness and uncertainty damage trust and collaboration, causing silos, inefficiency, and moral compromise. Scripture says sin and neglect damage societies (Isa 1:4–6; Matt 23), thus institutions prioritise survival above purpose, hasten disintegration. Restoration of psychospiritual integrity is essential to institutional healing and mitigation. Psychological entropy is caused by unresolved guilt, pride, jealousy, or alienation from God and others (Mark 7:21–23), not the "arrow of time."[23] Institutional decay develops slowly and unnoticeably. One way to see this phenomenon is as the "invisible hand psychological entropy" at play in institutional collapse. Organisational entropy is characterised by a "slow erosion, akin to a building succumbing to weathering and neglect," rather than a collapse.[24] Organisational resilience relies on effective mechanisms and the moral and spiritual vigour of its members. Such observations suggest that institutional resilience depends not only on formal structures but also on repeated practices of accountability, shared purpose, and moral formation.

3. THE TEMPLE IN CRISIS: A CASE STUDY IN SPIRITUAL ENTROPY

The Second Temple, fundamental to Jewish worship and identity, redefined Judaism politically. Jerusalem's economy was supported by sacrifices, offerings, and Passover travellers, while its wide Court of the Gentiles gradually combined worship with trade and commerce.[25] During Jesus' day, the Temple was in extreme "spiritual entropy." McGrath claims animal sales funded Temple sacrifices. He adds that the temple's money changers converted several currencies into the acceptable currency for Temple taxes.[26] According to Ehrman, Greek and Roman coins were changed into Jewish and Tyrian coins. This assertion is further supported by Sanders.[27,28] Some see Jesus' acts as a reaction to unscrupulous money changers; however, the Temple also served as a financial centre where the affluent benefited from lending to the peasants. Thus, Temple officials conspired with the nobility to exploit the impoverished.[29,30]

[21] Kim S. Cameron et al., 'Organisational Dysfunctions of Decline,' *Academy of Management Journal* 30, no. 1 (1987): 126–38, https://doi.org/10.5465/255899.
[22] Michael T. Hannan and John Freeman, 'Structural Inertia and Organisational Change,' *American Sociological Review* 49, no. 2 (1984): 149–64, https://doi.org/10.2307/2095567.
[23] James P. Sethna, *Statistical Mechanics: Entropy, Order Parameters and Complexity* (Oxford University Press, U.S.A., 2006), 78.
[24] Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Harvard University Press, 1990).
[25] Bala Lafa Turgong and Jacob T. Hundu, 'Understanding the Socio-Religious Significance of the Temple and Jesus' Action in Cleansing the Temple,' *The American Journal of Biblical Theology* 25, no. 52 (2024).
[26] Hamilton, 'Temple Cleansing and Temple Bank,' 365–72.
[27] Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible*, Reprint edition (Harper One, 2010).
[28] E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, Reprint edition (Penguin UK, 1995).
[29] E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE66 CE* (Fortress Press, U.S., 2016).
[30] Hamilton, 'Temple Cleansing and Temple Bank,' 365–72.

In Matthew 21:13, Mark 11:17, and Luke 19:46, Jesus condemns Temple authorities for turning the house of prayer into a "den of thieves," while in John 2:16, he condemns its conversion into a marketplace. This distinction is more than rhetorical; it shows a deep theological crisis in which covenantal fidelity was sacrificed to commercial reason. Worship is commodified when profit and transaction reign in holy sanctuaries instead of purity, justice, and divine presence. Sanders says the Temple relied on sacrificial commerce and money-changing.[31] Yet Jesus exposes how such conduct damaged morality and spiritual insight. He cites Jeremiah 7:11 by labelling it a "den of thieves," where the Temple is criticised for harbouring corruption. Within the argument developed here, Jesus' Temple action can be interpreted as a disruptive attempt to expose and interrupt patterns of institutional distortion that the entropy metaphor helps to name.[32]

Many scholars see Jesus' Temple cleansing as political, economic, or symbolic, not cosmic, or ontological. John Dominic Crossan[33] interprets it as a symbolic protest against a corrupt Temple economy, while Marcus Borg[34] sees it as a prophetic sign of Roman-occupied Judea's socio-political conflict. These interpretations suggest Jesus opposed priesthood power and exploitation. Entropic reading strengthens these thoughts. Theological entropy combines politics with religion to mean corruption, exploitation, and moral deterioration. The entropic lens helps historical-critical interpretations by illustrating that the Temple crisis was existential—a covenantal order breakdown requiring divine restructuring.

3.1.Entropy's Self-defence Mechanism: Resistance to Reordering

According to Mark 11:18*, "The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, because they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching."* Following Jesus' purification of the Temple, the hierarchy opposed reform: his prophetic action revealed a morally corrupt but socially accepted structure. Similar to entropic systems, institutions often resist transformative change that jeopardises their intricate equilibrium.[35] Thus, when Jesus cleans the temple, teaches authoritatively, and exposes covert exploitation, the system eliminates rather than transforms. It keeps its disorganised structure rather than renewing itself. Theologically, this shows that disorganised institutions and hearts resist change.[36] Truth and prophets are silenced by chaos, resisting transformation. Entropy's corrosive impact is evident in Temple authorities' moral degradation and alienation from covenantal purpose, raising the question of how minds rationalise and perpetuate wrongdoing.

Humans are born with self-interest, which may be disciplined or misguided depending on the circumstances at hand. When God is no longer central to human imagination, the greatest social and psychosocial structures collapse. Scripture says, "Their thinking became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened." This implies that to completely understand psychological entropy, one must confront its theological roots—a disorder of the will, a distortion of love, and a darkness of the heart (Romans 1:21). Morality becomes more ambiguous when repeated ethical compromise dulls the conscience and the mind rationalises immorality and inconsistencies (Ephesians 4:18–19).

3.2.Why Did Temple Authorities Choose the Path of Corruption?

The temple's primary purpose was to serve as a place of prayer for all peoples, according to Isaiah 56:7.

[31] Sanders, *Judaism*.
[32] N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 5th, or later Edition (Fortress Press, 1997), 416–18.
[33] John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Harper One, 1993).
[34] Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Trinity Press International, 1994).
[35] Kenneth D. Bailey, *Sociology and the New Systems Theory: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis* (State University of New York Press, 1994), 9–11.
[36] Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 117.

But cooperating with imperial goals was frequently necessary to preserve power during the Roman period. However, it evolved into a system that was centred on religious performance, political power, and commercial trade. The Temple had become a "spiritual bunker" where dishonest religious and political leaders used religion to justify their crimes against the poor and disadvantaged, and Jesus was exposing a deeper, systemic corruption. Priestly elites and Temple authorities benefited from the Temple economy by collecting crushing "temple taxes" from peasant farmers. While the Zealots claimed divine backing for their violent nationalism, the poor suffered. Some purity practices and boundary-making logics could function to exclude the sick, disabled, and poor, whom Jesus embraced.[37,38] In 1 Samuel 2:13, Eli's sons used their priesthood for personal gain.

Temple establishment and aristocratic collaboration in exploiting the poor show how "organisational entropy" mirrored society's wider breakdown. Historical data suggests that extensive trade inside the Temple emerged at a very late stage, not divinely commanded, and only flourished during Herodian and Roman rule. Profit-over-purpose decisions accelerated the Temple's spiritual demise.[39] Keener believes that the commercialisation of sacred space, particularly in the Court of the Gentiles, was a theological and moral affront to Jesus' concept of covenantal fidelity.[40] Wright further said, the Temple had evolved into an actual agent of oppression, collaboration with Rome, and spiritual bankruptcy, rather than only a symbol.[41] Josephus documented the underlying reason: the high priests benefited from the Temple market and acquired political power by controlling sacrificial traditions.[42] This reading suggests that covenantal negligence and the replacement of divine purpose with political ambition and financial gain led to the Temple's entropic collapse. Jesus' act of cleaning should be seen not as a solitary protest but as a prophetic intervention against systemic decay—urging Israel to return to covenantal fidelity and exposing the perils of commodified religion. From a practical-theological perspective, the Temple episode can therefore be read as a warning against institutional arrangements in which economic interest, political accommodation, and religious legitimacy become mutually reinforcing. The contemporary significance of the text lies in its capacity to illuminate similar patterns of drift within faith-based institutions and to prompt critical examination of how integrity and vocation are preserved or compromised.

THE REORDERING ACT OF JESUS AGAINST ENTROPY

The prior analysis provides a textual-theological assessment of institutional distortion in the Temple disruption narratives; this section engages in practical-theological translation by transitioning from (a) the text's revelations and critiques to (b) the actions contemporary faith-based institutions ought to adopt differently. The "diagnosis response" paradigm adheres to a conventional rationale in practical theology: interpretation and normative discernment must lead to pragmatic advice for action, acknowledging the intricate relationship between theory and practice that cannot be simplified to mere application. Utilising this practice-oriented rationale (frequently expressed as a practice–theory–practice correlation), the translation advances by correlating each narrative "mechanism" (e.g., commodification, exclusion,

[37] Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Econ./Social Conditions During New Test. Period*, Illustrated edition (Fortress Press, 1979).
[38] Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and the 'Cave of Robbers': Toward a Jewish Context for the Temple Action*, n.d., accessed 7 January 2026, https://dx.doi.org/10.2307/26422181.
[39] Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*.
[40] Craig S. Keener, *Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Hendrickson Publishers Inc, 2004).
[41] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*.
[42] Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War: Revised Edition*, Reissue edition, trans. G. Williamson (Penguin Classics, 1981).

legitimation of misuse) with a current trend of institutional drift, subsequently linking it to a series of tangible practices that may effectively disrupt that drift (accountability, repair, formation, safeguarding, and justice-oriented governance).[43]

Jesus' purifying reinforces divine order and purpose, a typical example of anti-entropic intervention. This restored heavenly order over the temple's human-caused disorder and corruption. The action also focused on structural inequalities. In recognition of their roles in marginalising the poor and Gentiles in Temple courts, he targeted both buyers and sellers. Jesus' description as "the new Temple" in Matthew's Gospel has significance to the purifying act. This was a major theological shift: real worship and God's presence moved from buildings to Jesus. This advocate for restructuring worship to highlight a true connection with God rather than ritualistic activities. Jesus' "zeal for your house" may be the divine "energy" or "work needed to combat entropy" (Psalm 69:9, referenced in John 2:17). Jesus' "zeal for your house" emerges as a prophetic catalyst: a theologically rooted, embodied outcry that reveals disorder and restores the Temple's intended purpose. Referring to this as "anti-entropic" serves as a metaphor for the process of reordering, rather than an assertion about actual energy.

In Matthew 24, Jesus announces judgment on the physical Temple, revealing himself as the new Temple—God's genuine and unchanging residence. The old Temple was once a holy place, but now it was in a state of spiritual ruin, economic abuse, and political scheming. The collapse of divine purpose was caused by institutional and spiritual entropy. In contrast, Jesus, the new Temple, embodies divine order, holiness, and morality. He reverses the entropic slide by being faithful to the Father, aligned with justice and compassion, by being the lamb of God and purifying the holy from chaos and exploitation.[44] Jesus provides a new paradigm of sacred space that is not confined to structures or systems but rather dwells in him (cf. Matthew 12:6; John 2:19-21). He is where Creator and creation encounter, unaffected by deterioration or selfishness. As a result, Jesus does not contribute to the entropy of the previous system; rather, he takes on its disorder and provides a redemptive reordering, serving as the cornerstone of a new, orderly creation.[45]

Jesus declares, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days," in John 2:19. The Gospel makes it clear that Jesus was talking to his body, even if his audience mistook it for a reference to the architectural Temple (John 2:21). This declaration confirms that Jesus is the genuine Temple, the divine presence, and the worship focus. His flesh does not deteriorate like the Jerusalem Temple. God resurrected him from the dead after he was crucified and buried. In thermodynamics, entropy names the irreversibility of material processes. The resurrection is not a scientific counterexample but a theological claim: God brings a new creation where human systems reach their limits.[46] Paul says Christ's imperishable resurrection inaugurates a new creation (1 Cor 15:42–44).[47] In physics, entropy is often considered to be irreversibility in physical processes. The resurrection is articulated not as a scientific counterexample, but as a theological assertion: God initiates a new creation when human systems encounter their limitations. At this juncture, the entropy metaphor fails, and this fracture has theological importance, since resurrection signifies a supernatural act that cannot be defined in terms of natural processes.

[43] Richard R. Osmer, 'Practical Theology: A Current International Perspective,' *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 67, no. 2 (2011): 7.
[44] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*.
[45] Keener, *Gospel of John*.
[46] N. T. Wright, ed., *Resurrection of the Son of God*, First Edition (Augsburg Fortress, 2003).
[47] Paul, 'Bible,' in *1 Corinthians 15* (NRSV Bible, n.d.), 42–44, accessed 17 June 2025, https://www.bible.com/bible/2016/1CO.15.NRSV.

Jesus' resurrection should not be described as "conquering entropy" in a scientific or quasi-scientific sense. Rather, the resurrection discloses the limit of the entropy metaphor: where created and institutional life reach their end, Christian theology confesses God's irreducible act of new creation.[48] According to Bauckham, worship is now associated with the indestructible person of Jesus rather than with entropy-prone structures or organisations, since the sacred has been redefined from the temple building to the person of Christ.[49] The Gospel of John further highlights that genuine worship and divine access are no longer vulnerable to institutional deterioration or ritual corruption by moving the holy from a temple constructed by human hands to the person of Christ. The Johannine claim relocates divine presence from a vulnerable institution to the risen Christ, whose significance cannot be accounted for by the entropy metaphor, but only confessed theologically. His resurrection shows that the final theological word is not given by a metaphor of decline, but by God's act of life beyond the explanatory reach of that metaphor.

Jesus's saying in John 2:19 relocates the meaning of the Temple from a vulnerable institution to his own person as the locus of divine presence. In this sense, the Temple event moves from institutional critique toward Christological fulfilment. Yet this transition also marks the limit of the entropy metaphor. Entropy may help describe the deterioration of institutions, the erosion of sacred purpose, and the fragility of created systems. It cannot, however, explain resurrection. The resurrection is not a theological version of thermodynamic reversal, nor a counter-example to physical law, but the confession of God's irreducible act of new creation beyond the explanatory scope of the metaphor. For that reason, the metaphor remains useful at the level of diagnosis, but must give way when the argument turns to resurrection and divine agency.

Praxis and renewal provide the discipline with a practical-theological dimension. Practical theology employs religion to explain and transform life experience in a praxis–theory–praxis cycle, according to Don Browning.[50] Richard Osmer's descriptive-empirical, interpretative, normative, and pragmatic paradigm bridges theological reflection to authenticity. Theological entropy describes and interprets moral and institutional disintegration, whereas anti-entropic practice restores order and vitality.[51] Heitink[52] and Swinton, and Mowat[53] define practical theology as an empirical–hermeneutical discipline that involves communities in "entropy audits" and reconciles empirical regeneration. The entropy metaphor relies on the theological organisation's ethical, pastoral, and experiential dynamics.

Complementary dialogue with contemporary theological voices like Catherine Keller considers chaos divine creativity. When divine regeneration is necessary, entropy depletes that potential.[54] Gustavo Gutiérrez defines structural sin and injustice as social disintegration and institutional entropy when holy intention meets exploitation.[55] Miroslav Volf suggests theology is anti-entropic because it reconciles and resists corruption.[56] These strategies integrate ecology, liberation, and public ethics into religious discourse to demonstrate that opposing entropy is spiritual, socio-political, and ecological.

[48] Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 718–27.
[49] Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Eerdmans Pub Co, 2008), 394–96.
[50] Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Augsburg Fortress, 2010).
[51] Richard Robert Osmer, *Practical Theology*.
[52] Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology: History, Theory, Action Domains: Manual for Practical Theology* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999).
[53] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 2nd Edition (SCM Press, 2016).
[54] Catherine Keller, *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (Routledge, 2003).
[55] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Orbis Books, 1988).
[56] Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Brazos Press, Div of Baker Publishing Group, 2011).

4. RETHINKING PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: REFLECTIONS FROM THE CLEANING OF THE TEMPLE

The Temple disruption narratives (Mark 11:15–19; Matt 21:12–17; Luke 19:45–48; John 2:13–22) are chosen as a representative case due to their presence in the Gospel traditions and their focus on fundamental themes of institutional distortion (commodification, exclusion, contested authority) and theological critique—specifically the type of "drift" this article identifies through the entropy heuristic.[57] The analysis proceeds as a textual-theological close reading that compares the narrative logic of the Synoptics and John, attends to literary context and intertextual echoes, and then offers a canonical-theological construal that privileges the final form of the text for theological judgment and practical reasoning.[58] This is not a full historical reconstruction of "what happened" in the Temple; it is a disciplined reading of how the canonical texts portray institutional corruption and divine reordering, in dialogue with major scholarship.[59]

The Temple narratives suggest that practical theology requires a diagnostic and prophetic dimension. Jesus' actions were a "prophetic warning" and "prophetic protest." He was actively "diagnosing and speaking to contemporary issues" rather than merely observing, using timeless holy language. Longstanding biblical tradition includes Old Testament prophets who "spoke against moral and spiritual decay, calling the people to repentance." Practical theology is a dynamic, flexible discipline that addresses present and changing human experience rather than theory. Dynamic describes its reaction to the constantly evolving social, cultural, and existential circumstances in which theology is practised. Transformative because it seeks to transform people, institutions, and communities. On this reading, practical theology is positioned as a discipline of institutional discernment, concerned with how communities identify distortion and reorient practice, considering their normative commitments.

5.1. Concept refinement: Entropic Resonance of Will as Inner Renewal Dynamics

I propose the notion of "Entropic Resonance of Will"[60] as a way of extending and refining the concept of theological entropy. Instead of seeing theological entropy as a passive decline from a divine ideal, I argue that collective free will amplifies and even, paradoxically, repurposes it, particularly in its resistive or unaligned phases. Imagine the universe as a massive, divinely orchestrated symphony that started in perfect harmony. Theological entropy is the gradual loss of harmony, as an instrument becomes out of tune or a tone fades. In the "Entropic Resonance of Will," discord is an active, expanding feedback loop. When people or organisations choose actions, beliefs, or priorities that oppose the divine will, they

[57] Francis J. Moloney, 'Reading John 2:13-22: The Purification of the Temple', *Revue Biblique (1946-)* 97, no. 3 (1990): 432–52.
[58] Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*.
[59] Moloney, 'Reading John 2'.
[60] Pinaki Burman, 'The Term "Entropic Resonance of Will" Holds That When Human Free Will Is Used in a Way That Is Inconsistent with Divine Order, It Does Not Merely Contribute to Theological Disorder Passively but Actively Amplifies It. According to This Premise, Every Misplaced Decision—Whether brought about by Pride, Indifference, Greed, or a Detachment from Reality—Creates a Unique Spiritual "Frequency" That Resonates with the Decaying Patterns That Are Already in Place. These Resonances Enhance Systemic Theological Entropy over Time by Creating Feedback Loops. The Phrase Conveys the Concept That Intentional or Inadvertent Human Behaviour May Exacerbate Spiritual and Moral Breakdown, Which Is Not Just the Consequence of Negligence or Mistakes. Similar to How Resonance in Physics May Intensify Vibrations, the Will Can Intensify Disturbance in Sacred Systems When It Is Not in Harmony with Divine Objectives. This Suggests the Potential for Counter-Resonance, Though, as Deeds of Justice, Humility, Love, and Faith May Create Harmonics of Order That Withstand and Even Reverse Theological Deterioration. This Suggests the Potential for Counter-Resonance, Though, as Deeds of Justice, Humility, Love, and Faith May Create Harmonics of Order That Withstand and Even Reverse Theological Deterioration. This Suggests the Potential for Counter-Resonance, Though, as Deeds of Justice, Humility, Love, and Faith May Create Harmonics of Order That Withstand and Even Reverse Theological Deterioration.' n.d.

resonate with it, causing a fresh, amplified wave of chaos and instability. This "resonance" is more than just good versus evil; it is also about alignment. Lack of alignment may cause entropic resonance, even if not malicious. Self-centred desires, a concentration on temporal rewards over eternal truths, or social apathy may all generate "entropic frequencies" that amplify theological dysfunction. This notion also implies counter-resonance. Discordant wills generate entropy, whereas harmonious wills create a "harmonious resonance," actively resisting and even altering religious terrain. Deeds of compassion, selflessness, forgiveness, and spiritual truth may create this counter-entropic resonance, restoring order and balance. Thus, the "Entropic Resonance of Will" interprets the theological entropy as a dynamic interplay between divine design and human effort rather than an inevitable fall. It warns of degradation and offers hope for restoration through coordinated effort by emphasising the importance of both the individual and the community in influencing the spiritual "thermodynamics" of the planet.

To actualise an anti-entropic vision, practical theology must advocate for methods that preserve institutional integrity and facilitate spiritual regeneration. Churches can adopt "entropy audits" to evaluate vitality, openness, and equality; foster reconciliation, true witness, and community discernment; and establish responsible governance informed by input, particularly from marginalised members. Interdisciplinary rejuvenation teams may combat stagnation and exclusion by practising humility and visionary courage, fighting complacency, and promoting creativity. Although entropy signifies patterns of decay, periods of instability may also provide opportunities for innovation and development. This Christian perspective encourages engagement with other traditions (e.g., restorative justice, community action), emphasising individual agency, ethical commitment, and ecumenical collaboration as effective countermeasures against institutional decline.

5. CONCLUSION

Limitations and Prospects for future research on "Entropy" serve only as a regulated metaphor for institutional drift, not a physical rule or causal claim; it is deliberately bounded and does not ground doctrine (e.g., resurrection). The Temple disruption narratives are analysed through textual-theological close reading, not comprehensive historical reconstruction. Future empirical practical-theology research can evaluate the proposed "anti-entropic" practices through comparative studies of congregations or faith-based organisations experiencing "drift" versus "repair," and by testing tools such as "entropy audits."

This article argues that Jesus' purification of the Temple functions as a theological exemplar for confronting institutional and spiritual decay. Using entropy as a disciplined heuristic, it shows how moral disorder threatens communal purpose and credibility, and how practical theology can respond through practices shaped by grace, truth, and justice. The concept of "Entropic Resonance of Will" highlights agency: human intentions can amplify dysfunction or cultivate counter-resonance through compassion, integrity, and spiritual attentiveness, aligning communities toward renewal.

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