

# Conspectus

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# Washing One Another's Feet as Jesus Did: Revelatory Activities and the Progressive Sanctification of Believers

Annang Asumang<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

While John 13:1–11 soteriologically interprets the foot-washing as symbolising participation and purification in Jesus, the subsequent John 13:12–20 ethically interprets the act as a humble self-sacrificing service emanating from love. Scholarly attempts at relating these two tiers of interpretations have sometimes tended to view them as conflicting. The first tier, taken to be christological, is said to be diametrically opposite to the second discipleship-oriented tier. This article draws on recent conceptualisations of Johannine symbolism to argue against this trend. Instead, it proposes that through the foot-washing, Jesus was instructing his disciples to participate in revelatory activities centred on his death. Humble participation in such revelatory activities maintains the cohesion of the fellowship while also triggering their purification in Jesus. This interpretation is supported by 1 John 1:7–10, a passage thought to be a commentary on the foot-washing.

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

## Introduction

### 1.1. The Problem

The account of Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet in John 13 has generated several questions of historical, textual, literary, and theological significance (e.g. Haring 1951:355–380; Thomas 2004). Research into its discipleship elements has, however, mostly focused on elucidating what exactly Jesus wanted his disciples to do when he instructed them to wash one another's feet as he had done (13:14–15). There is no doubt that the chapter portrays discipleship as an imitative christology. The debated question is how far this imitation of Jesus by his disciples should go. In other words, to what extent can the disciples wash one another's feet the way Jesus did it?

It is well known that there appears to be a two-tier interpretation of the foot-washing in John 13, namely, (a) there is a soteriological tier in John 13:6–11 which interprets the act along the lines of participation and purification in Jesus, followed by (b) a moral/ethical interpretation in John 13:12–20 which construes it as an example of humble self-sacrificing service of love. The challenge is to explain how these two tiers are related to each other, and so, work out the degree to which the disciples could emulate Jesus. The second interpretation is of course more straightforward for the disciple to emulate (cf. Luke 22:26–27). But what can be said of the first tier of interpretation? To put the problem more sharply, if disciples, in Jesus words, 'should do as I have done to you' (John 13:15b), then, in what ways can they fulfil the purification and participation tier of the interpretation of the foot-washing?



## 1.2. A review of proposed solutions to the problem

Several proposals have been put forward aimed at addressing this problem, with varying degrees of success. A few of these will now be reviewed as a way of providing a context to the present investigation. These proposals are, namely, (a) redaction of two different sources, (b) purely moral/ethical approach, (c) purely sacramental and quasi-sacramental approaches, and (d) polysemous approaches.

### 1.2.1. *Johannine redaction of two different sources*

Starting with Bultmann (1971:466–472), a few scholars have argued that the problem emanates from the Johannine redactors' unsuccessful conflation of two different sources, one with polemical intentions against Jewish purificatory rites, and the other derived from the Johannine community's sacramental practices (Brown 1966–70:560–562; Segovia 1991). Thus, this approach views the problem as a literary-historical one, regards the two tiers of interpretation as fulfilling different functions, and so, does not attempt to address directly the difficulties the tiers pose.

It is perhaps right that this theory has fallen on hard times in current Johannine scholarship. The lack of solid evidence to back the proposal, and the contrary evidence elsewhere in the gospel that purification is not viewed in a completely negatively manner as the theory supposes (Attridge 2006:52–55), have together seriously undermined the viability of the approach. Besides, postulating different sources to solve an exegetical quandary hardly provides adequate guidance as to how the passage must be interpreted and applied. Barrett (1978:437) is surely correct therefore when he cautions that appealing to different sources as solution merely postpones the problem, and in any case 'does not exhaust the expositor's task'.

### *1.2.2. Purely moral/ethical interpretation*

Approaches that diminish one of the two tiers of interpretations in favour of the other are also inevitably inadequate. For example, several reasons may be advanced for rejecting the purely moral/ethical interpretation as adopted by Michl (1959:697–708), Belsterling (2006:77–92), and Köstenberger (1999:148). Firstly, the introduction to the chapter in 13:1–3 places the act of foot-washing in the context of the approaching death of Jesus. This introductory emphasis at least implies that a soteriological slant must be applied to the interpretation of the foot-washing.

Secondly, the dramatic tone of the account parallels it with other similarly parabolic prophetic acts performed by Jesus in the gospel, acts whose interpretations are often related to the death of Jesus (Barrett 1978:436; Koester 2003:11; Schneider 1981:81). Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume a religious understanding of the foot-washing which goes beyond the moral/ethical interpretation.

Thirdly, Jesus gravely warns Peter that he would forfeit his 'share with me' (John 13:8) if he refused to be washed. This portentous warning gives the act of foot-washing a more profound experiential meaning that goes beyond that which the ethical interpretation of humble self-sacrificing service of love would seem to highlight. Fourthly, Jesus' rhetorically forceful command that the disciples 'ὅμῖν καὶ ὑμεῖς ποιῆτε', meaning, they 'should do as I have done' (John 13:15), the doubly affirming ἀμὴν ἀμὴν (Amen, Amen) emphasis in John 13:16a, and his solemn injunction with a conditional beatitude that 'εἰ ταῦτα οἴδατε, μακάριοί ἐστε ἐὰν ποιῆτε αὐτά', meaning, 'If you *know* these things, you are blessed if you *do* them' (13:17; emphases added), rhetorically places the emulation of the meaning of the foot-washing by disciples above moral/ethical categories.

Finally, the canonical placement of the foot-washing account at the beginning of the passion narratives, together with its literary relationship with the anointing of Jesus' feet by Mary (John 12:1–8), and the absence of the Lord's Supper in the fourth gospel, all establish a firm link between the foot-washing and Jesus' death (cf. Keener 2003:901–902). In that case, the purely moral/ethical interpretation would seem not to exhaust the interpretation of the foot-washing.

### *1.2.3. Purely sacramental or quasi-sacramental approaches*

The sacramental approach, be it baptismal (e.g. Craig 1939:36–37; Lightfoot 1960:261–263; Schnackenburg 1968–82: 3:21–22; Moloney 1998:378), Eucharistic (e.g. MacGregor 1963:112–114; Suggit 1985:64–70) or as an extra sacrament (e.g. Bacon 1931–32; Correll 1958:72; Neyrey 1995:198–213) continues to appeal to a sub-section of interpreters. These interpretations, in varying ways, argue that the participation and purification alluded to in 13:6–11 regard the foot-washing as a symbolic ritual to be performed by disciples on each other.

In all fairness, there are good reasons not to reject these interpretations out of hand. Certainly, in the historical Mediterranean culture of the time, literal foot-washing by believers could well have been seen as 'reinforcing [the] social commitment' which Jesus enjoined on the disciples (Keener 2003:902). At least, there is evidence that a number of patristic authors interpreted the foot-washing along these sacramental lines (cf. Lincoln 2005:372; Thomas 2004:42–44).

However, despite its attractions, the sacramental approach, especially if taken in isolation on its own, is ultimately problematic. To start with, a convincing explanation of the mechanism(s) by which a foot-washing sacrament, even if judged to be efficacious, may invoke participation and purification in Jesus, as well as serving as an act of humble service of love is still awaited (Macchia 1997:239–249).

Besides, mimicking Jesus' physical act of washing feet would seem, on its own, to underrate the central point of the idea of emulating his example. Surely, it is the meaning of the foot-washing which is reflected from Jesus on the disciples and not the physical act of washing. As Witherington III rightly points out, John consistently encourages his readers 'to read the story at the level beyond the material one and to look for the spiritual significance behind or within them' (1995:237). It must certainly not be forgotten that though Judas' feet were presumably washed, he was shortly declared as 'not clean' (John 13:10–11). So, the best that can be said about the sacramental approaches is that they do not exhaust all the possible applications of the meaning of the foot-washing.

Similar arguments may be made against the quasi-sacramental approaches. The 'cleansing from post-baptismal sin' theory as proposed by Dunn (1970:247–252), for example, has a lot in its merit, especially if, as will later be argued, there are links between the foot-washing in John 13 and the exhortation of 1 John 1:7–10. The problem, however, is that Dunn's specific proposal does not exactly fit in with the actual historical situation portrayed by the narrative.

Likewise, the 'divine hospitality' interpretation that construes the foot-washing as symbolising welcome reception into God's household (e.g. Coloe 2004:400–415) or as an act of 'eschatological hospitality' (e.g. Hultgren 1982:541) suffers from their failure to underscore the purification idea from the first tier of interpretation. Equally, the suggestion that the foot-washing stood for 'preparation for martyrdom' in the Johannine community, as advanced by Weiss (1979:298–325), suffers from similar weaknesses. It is plausible that later post-biblical Christians adopted the rite in the context of approaching martyrdom, and in declaration of their readiness to die for one another (cf. John

13:14–17). Even so, the passage itself does not indicate that by washing his disciples' feet, Jesus was preparing them for their martyrdoms.

#### *1.2.4. Polysemous approaches to the foot-washing*

Recently, a number of mediating approaches have attempted to bridge the gap between the two tiers with some interesting results. Very promising among these is the approach which regards the foot-washing in John 13 as a polysemous act by Jesus (Carson 1991:458; Keener 2003:899; Koester 2003:133; Lincoln 2005:369; Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998:219–220; Schneider 1981:81). In this approach, it is argued that the two tiers represent a typical Johannine literary-theological style in which metaphors, images, and symbolic acts are made to span two levels. There is usually a christological level which, in our case, is the soteriological interpretation, and a discipleship level, which is the moral/ethical interpretation. The first tier is taken as applying only to the historical disciples whose physical feet were washed by Jesus, while the second tier is taken to apply to other Christians.

As will shortly be shown, this two-level christology-discipleship dimension of Johannine imagery is indeed common in the gospel, and this makes the polysemous approach quite attractive as a solution to the problem. This is especially so, since the polysemous approach enables a broader understanding and application of the lessons of the foot-washing. Indeed, the present proposal may be broadly categorised as polysemous.

Before laying out that proposal, however, a number of deficiencies with the current state of scholarship on the polysemous approaches to the foot-washing need addressing. To begin with, I summarise these deficiencies, before examining them more fully. Firstly, in those references in the gospel where the two-level presentation of Johannine imagery occurs, John does not create as sharp a dichotomy between the

christological and the discipleship applications of the imageries as is proposed by current polysemous interpretations of the foot-washing. Secondly, John 13 specifically underlines Johannine discipleship as an imitative Johannine christology, thus undermining the current dichotomous approaches to the polysemous interpretation. Thirdly, the current polysemous approaches wrongly disconnect the revelatory motifs which are predominant in John 13 from the purificatory symbolism of the foot-washing. I shall now provide further elaborations on these deficiencies.

#### 1.2.4.1. Johannine discipleship as an imitative christology

The evidence from the gospel is that, contrary to the current polysemous approaches, where images span both the christological and discipleship tiers, the interpretations are not as sharply dichotomised. Typically, the image that is reflected from Jesus on to the disciples maintains some common features between the two tiers. Even images that are related to Jesus' divine origins, such as sonship (e.g. 1:12–14), holiness (e.g. 17:19), and light (e.g. 12:36) are transferred to the disciples in such a manner as to underline Johannine discipleship as an imitative Johannine christology (Zimmermann 2006:40–41). In fact, in John 7:37–39, there is an ambiguous fusion of christology with discipleship, so that both Jesus and the disciple are said to be the source from whom 'shall flow rivers of living water'. This fusion of christology with discipleship is not at all out of place, given John's theology of the union of the disciple with Jesus (e.g. John 15).

The manner in which the theology of revelation is applied in the gospel's christology and discipleship may be helpful for illustrating this point, that images transferred from Jesus to his disciples maintain

several common imitative features. So, just as John's christology<sup>2</sup> is largely expressed in revelatory terms, significant aspects of Johannine discipleship are also expressed with revelatory motifs. Just as Jesus 'sees' from his Father and testifies to humanity of what he has seen (John 3:31–32); the disciples are likewise witnesses of Jesus, and specifically, eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry, passion and resurrection (e.g. John 15:27; 20:1–29).

Indeed, if it is correct, as some Johannine scholars suggest, that the Beloved Disciple is portrayed as an 'ideal disciple',<sup>3</sup> then being a witness of Jesus, which is the main function of this particular disciple (John 19:25–26, 35; 20:8; 21:24–25), is equally the epitome of Johannine discipleship. The Johannine disciples are called to 'see' the Son of Man (e.g. John 1:35–51), behold his glory as the Father's only Son (1:14), testify (e.g. John 4:29; 6:14), and culminate their journey of faith in beholding the glory of Jesus (John 17:24).

In John, Jesus is *the* Light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5); but John the Baptist is also a 'burning and shining lamp' (John 5:35), and the

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<sup>2</sup> With regard to Johannine christology, the dominant images through which the prologue depicts Jesus, namely, the Logos, Wisdom, and Torah, are all revelatory in nature. In the rest of the gospel, Jesus' incarnation, earthly ministry, and passion are also portrayed as God's revelation to humankind (Ashton 1991:62–66; Bultmann 1971:46–83; Käsemann 1968:12–24; O'Day 1986:657–668). In particular, the death and resurrection of Jesus, which John underscores as a single continuous event, is emphasised as the revelation of the glory of God (Beasley-Murray 1987:219; Wong 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Scholars continue to debate the exact role that the Beloved Disciple plays in that gospel. Martin Hengel (1989:78), along with many others, such as Quast (1989) and Lincoln (2002:11) believe he is portrayed as an ideal disciple in Johannine sense. Richard Bauckham (1993:21–44) disagrees and suggests rather that he is portrayed as an 'ideal author'. The word 'ideal' is itself subject to some ambiguity: while some scholars use it to describe a non-historical construct; others understand it as a historical person who exemplified the best depictions of discipleship to Jesus.

disciples are 'children of light' (John 12:36).<sup>4</sup> Just as Jesus' death is expressed in revelatory terms, as the glorification of the Father and of the Son of Man whom he sent (John 12), so also are specific activities performed by the disciples, especially when they are focused on the death of Jesus, deemed as revelatory.

The term 'revelatory activities' in this article, therefore, refers to specific activities, including speeches, which John underlines as having the revelation of God in Christ at their core, and which is often focused on Jesus' death and/or God's glory.<sup>5</sup> Examples of Johannine revelatory activities include witnessing (e.g. John 4:39), giving testimonies (e.g. John 1:29–36), interpreting Jesus' words, symbols and signs (e.g. John 16:13), loving and serving one another (e.g. John 13:35; 15:15–17), performing miraculous works (e.g. John 9:3; 14:12; 15:24), and martyrdom (e.g. John 11:16; 21:19).

Revelatory activities performed both by Jesus and the disciples glorify God. But, as we shall shortly suggest, in John 13, they also purify and maintain the cohesion of the fellowship of disciples. Given this consistent transfer of the revelatory images from Jesus to his disciples, it is a mistake to completely dichotomise the interpretation of foot-washing imageries applied to Jesus and his disciples in the manner that current polysemous approaches do.

#### 1.2.4.2. Johannine discipleship as imitative christology in John 13

With reference to John 13, the same phenomenon of discipleship as an imitative christology occurs. The beginning of the chapter depicts Jesus

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<sup>4</sup> It was common for agents of God in Second Temple Judaism to be regarded as 'lights' or 'lamps' (e.g. Moses in 2 Bar 18:1–2; *Memar Marqah* 1:2, 5:3–4, 6:2; Aaron in Sir 45:17; Samuel in *Biblical Ant.* 51:6; Ezra in 4 Ezra 12:42; and Priests and Sages in *Biblical Ant.* 23:7, Sir 24:32; 1QSb IV 27; 1QH IV 27).

<sup>5</sup> For an in-depth anthropological discussion of revelatory activities performed by agents of deities see Buss (1981:9–30).



as knowing, loving, and acting (13:1–5), and the rest of the chapter amplifies this triple theme. Jesus, it is emphasised, knows the arrival of ‘the hour’ (13:1), knows his inheritance, as well as his destiny (13:3), knows his betrayer (13:11), and those he had chosen (13:18), and knows the exact timing of the Son of Man’s glorification (13:31–32). Jesus expresses his love in action, not only in his self-giving sacrificial act of washing the disciples’ feet, but also in the friendly act of offering the dipped morsel to Judas, his would-be betrayer. So the chapter underlines Jesus as knowing, loving, and acting.

In a similarly imitative manner, the disciples in John 13 are enjoined by Jesus to know (13:12, 17), to love (13:34), and to act (13:15–17). In John 13:34–35, ‘loving’ and ‘knowing’ are put together and reflected from Jesus’ loving and revelation on to the disciples. ‘I give you a new commandment’, Jesus says, ‘that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another’.

Since several aspects of the christology of the chapter are reflected in its discipleship, it is reasonable to assume that certain dimensions of the participatory and purificatory elements of the foot-washing interpretation are also reflected from Jesus on to the disciples. Certainly, given that Jesus insisted that the meaning of the foot-washing should be done by the disciple ‘as I have done to you’ (13:15), the current polysemous approaches, which sharply separate the participation and purification tier of the interpretation from the moral/ethical interpretation, appear inadequate.

#### 1.2.4.3. Interactions between the foot-washing and revelatory motifs in John 13

The third deficiency of the current polysemous approaches is their failure to connect the purificatory element of the foot-washing with the

extensive revelatory motif of the chapter. Several interpreters (e.g. Barrett 1978:442; Culpepper 1991:133–152; Lincoln 2005:370–371) have identified that the whole chapter<sup>6</sup> is dominated by revelatory vocabulary. This revelatory motif is evident in the repeated stress on Jesus' knowledge (13:1, 3, 11, 18, 21, 26, 36), Jesus' double emphases on being 'your' teacher (13:13–14), the foot washing itself being a prophetic revelatory act, the pivotal statement on the glorification of the Son of Man (13:31), together with the promise of future understanding of the disciples (13:7), the giving of the dipped morsel to Judas (13:26), and the vacation of Judas from his post into (or with) the 'darkness' (13:30). It appears, therefore, that the relationship between the foot-washing and the dominant revelatory motifs of the chapter may provide the cue for resolving some of the interpretive difficulties.

While scholars have explored the function of the revelatory motifs that dominate John 13, they have generally hesitated to link it with the purificatory imagery of the foot-washing. Barrett, for example, refrains from closely linking the two, and instead, draws attention to the fact that in the rest of the gospel, 'the true cleansing agent is the Word that Jesus speaks' (1978:442). Lincoln similarly urges in the direction of purification by Jesus' word, and not in the symbolism of the foot-washing. He argues, 'the main point of the foot washing is not cleansing, whether of sins in general or post-baptismal sins, but lies in the juxtaposition of the identity and status of the one who performs the act and the slave-like nature of the act' (2005:371; cf. Culpepper 1991:147).

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<sup>6</sup> The actual limits of the pericope are debated; some commentators opting for 13:1–20 (e.g. Lincoln 2005), most for 13:1–30 (e.g. Barrett 1978; Brown 1970; Howard-Brook 2003; Keener 2003), and yet others for 13:1–38 (e.g. Coloe 2004:403; Moloney 1998:371). The argument for 13:1–38 appears to be the most persuasive.

Koester (2003:133) comes closest to linking the two, but only to move the stress from revelation as a cleansing agent on to the love shown through the act: ‘People are cleansed from sin through the revelation of divine love that restores people to a right relationship with God by evoking faith, for faith is the opposite of sin. Jesus expressed love in a provisional way through the washing of His disciples’ feet and in a complete way by laying down His life in crucifixion’. Koester further underlines his point that purification is not enjoined on the disciples by stating, ‘the washing they were to perform was a reciprocal action; love and self-sacrifice were reciprocal actions’ (2003:134). Thus, he is disinclined to underline the purificatory element of the disciples’ emulation of Jesus’ revelatory act.

This reluctance is understandable within the context of the wish to avoid the problems associated with the purely sacramental interpretation of the foot-washing. However, the repeated use of terminologies of purification in emphatic manner throughout the chapter<sup>7</sup> undermines any interpretation which does not include that element. The prominence of that theme surely demands a closer examination of the chapter as to the manner in which purification is related to the revelatory motifs.

Moreover, and as will shortly be shown, there is enough evidence to show that contrary to these hesitations, there is a consistent interaction between purification and revelatory symbolism throughout the gospel. In that context, it is possible to demonstrate that in John 13, the

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<sup>7</sup> The purification related words include *νιπῆρα* (John 13:5, ‘wash bowl’), *νίπτειν* (John 13:5b, ‘to wash’), *ἐκμάσσειν* (John 13:5c, ‘wiped clean’), *νίψης* (John 13:8a, ‘wash’), *νίψω* (John 13:8c, ‘wash’), *λελουμένος* (John 13:10a, ‘bathed’), *νίψασθαι* (John 13:10b, ‘washed’), *καθαρός* (John 13:10c, ‘clean and made pure’), *καθαροί* (John 13:10d, ‘clean and made pure’), *αθαροί* (John 13:11, ‘clean and made pure’), *ἔνιψεν* (John 13:12, ‘washed’), *ἔνιψα* (John 13:14a, ‘washed’) and *νίπτειν* (John 13:14b, ‘wash’).

symbolism of purification by water evoked by the foot-washing interacts with the symbolism of revelation in a non-dichotomous manner. The polysemous approaches to the foot-washing hence require further modifications.

### **1.3. The present proposal**

I propose that the foot-washing must be seen primarily as a revelatory act by Jesus centred on his death, and it is in its form as a revelatory act that Jesus enjoins his disciples to imitate. In this act of foot-washing, the three central Johannine symbols of water, light, and the cross are superimposed on each other, so that purification from sin, which is a recurring concern in the first part of the gospel, is subsumed under a revelatory purification triggered by the cross. In instructing his disciples to wash one another's feet, Jesus was enjoining them to mutually share in revelatory activities centred on the cross, and in that way trigger their progressive purification and cohesion in him.

The thesis will be developed in the following four steps. After a brief summary of some of the relevant recent conceptualisations of Johannine symbolism, the interactions between the purificatory and revelatory images in John 1–12 will be demonstrated. It will then be shown that John 13 focuses on the purificatory effects of revelatory activities centred on the cross. The foot-washing thus belongs to a cluster of purifying revelatory acts in John 13 which Jesus commands his disciples to emulate in the same manner in which he does. Further support for this interpretation will then be sought from 1 John 1:7–10, a passage that is thought to contain a subsequent Johannine commentary on the foot-washing. I shall conclude by enumerating some advantages of the proposal.

## 2. Survey of Recent Conceptualisations of Johannine Symbolism

Scholarship on Johannine symbolism since the second century has had a chequered history, especially in the West. According to Zimmermann (2006:2–3), until recently the tendency among scholars in the West was towards a consistently negative aversion, disregard and even ‘contempt’ for Johannine symbolic language, an attitude that he summarily calls, ‘pejorative’. Perhaps, therefore, one of the positive benefits bequeathed by postmodernism to biblical scholarship has been the re-appreciation of the pivotal role of metaphorical and symbolic language in the Bible as a whole. This, no doubt, has been reflected in an improved attitude to Johannine symbolism by scholars (cf. Coloe 2009:368–381; Hutchinson 2011:63–80; Ng 2001; Reinhartz 1999:1–10; van der Watt 2000; Vanhoozer 1995:366–387; Zimmerman 2004).

The beginning of this revival, at least in the English language literature, may be traced to the advances made by Koester’s *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (2003; 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1995). Just over a decade earlier, Alan Culpepper’s influential *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (1983) had made some very useful inroads into the subject by delineating the literary-theological contours of the gospel, including some of its complex metaphorical language. Koester’s contribution may, however, be taken as the beginning of the laying of the solid foundation for the recent conceptualisations of Johannine symbolism.

Koester classified Johannine symbols into three categories, namely, representative figures, symbolic actions, and the three central symbols of water, light, and the cross. He traces the pervasiveness of these central symbols throughout the gospel and demonstrates that as the narrative progresses, there appears to be a confluent development of themes built around these symbols. He also observes that most of these

Johannine symbols occur in motifs in which a cluster of related supporting imageries interact with each other though focused on a core symbol (2003:9). These clusters tend to be more marked in the narratives as compared to the discourses, thus, requiring a careful delineation of how they relate to each other (2003:10–11).

Koester proposes that this complex characteristic of Johannine symbolism invariably makes them polysemous, multi-layered, and multifaceted. The symbols certainly allow for multiple meanings, even though there are a limited number of valid interpretations of a single symbol in each context. He further notes that among the plausible meanings of a symbol, there is a 'bright focused centre of meaning together with a penumbra of vagueness that is intrinsically ineradicable' from the centre (2003:26 cf. Wheelwright 1968:220). This 'penumbra of vagueness' commonly derives from the symbol's networked associations with other symbols, making splitting of interpretations of Johannine symbols into discrete entities fraught with significant problems.

Regarding the foot-washing, Koester (2003:11) stresses that it 'anticipates [Jesus'] final act of self-giving in death by crucifixion'. This was at the same time a revelation of Jesus' love and self-sacrifice (2003:133). Further, Koester argues for the two tier interpretation of the foot-washing, the soteriological interpretation applying to the christological element, whereas the moral/ethical interpretation applies to the discipleship element (2003:14). Thus, Koester stops short of underlining how the purificatory element of the foot washing applies to the disciples.

Koester's eminent work has been endorsed and further advanced by the International Conference on *Imagery in the Gospel of John*.<sup>8</sup> In his examination of the relationship between Johannine symbols and their referents, Zimmermann describes the phenomenon whereby, within a single pericope, several different symbols are strung together to focus on a single referent (2006:30–36). Here, 'multiple interpretations' is turned on its head, so that a single referent has several different symbols pointing in its direction.

Zimmermann isolates two types of arrangements in this phenomenon. In the first, what he calls 'polyptychon or patchwork technique', several successive images are laid side by side but all focusing on the single referent. So, for example, in the prologue, images of the Logos, light, life, only begotten, and flesh, all referring to Jesus, are laid side by side. Similarly, in John 4, images of water, groom, and prophet, places of worship, Christ, and Saviour are set side by side in such a manner as to exhibit the multidimensional nature of the referent, Jesus.

In the second type of arrangement, the images are not laid side by side; but clustered, superimposed, and, in his words, 'pushed up' against each other so as to make it virtually impossible to separate them from each other. This second arrangement, which Zimmermann labels as 'cluster technique', is most illustrated by John's consistent linkage of the sending motif with the family imagery, so that 'the Father who sent me' formula superimposes two groups of symbols that become inseparable, namely, the family and the emissary metaphors. What happens in this superimposition is that 'it is not only [the] transferral of meaning from the image giver ... to the image receiver, but rather the two sets of images interact with each other leading to a multifaceted Christological interweaving of meanings' (2006:31–32). This networked interaction

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<sup>8</sup> Initially held at Eisenach, Germany in July/August 2005, with papers published in Frey, Van der Watt, Zimmermann, and Kern (2006).

leads to the creation of 'something new—something that is more than the sum of all the individual parts' (2006:37).

Harold Attridge (2006:47–52) has also argued along similar lines of the complex interactions of symbols in John's gospel. He identifies that instead of a simplistic straight-line relationship between symbol and referent, John rather views the same image from different angles in such a manner as to increase the complexity of the referent, and so achieve the penetration of its very 'essence'. He cites as examples of this phenomenon, the shifting nature of the imageries of the Good Shepherd discourse in John 10, the multidimensional nature of the Son of Man title as John employs it, and the variations in the water, light, and the cross symbols throughout the gospel.

Attridge calls this literary phenomenon a 'Cubist principle' and suggests that this was a literary technique that was prevalent in certain religious discourses in the late Hellenistic and early imperial periods. So, in the first part of the gospel, for example, Jesus is simultaneously depicted as replacing the cultic feasts of the Sabbath (John 5:9), Passover (John 6:4), Booths (John 7:2), and Hanukkah (John 10:2). These festivals have water and light as integral constituents of the cultic imageries and continue their presence in the rest of the gospel through the symbolic uses of water, light, and the cross (2006:51).

Johannine symbolism, Attridge concludes, may be regarded as a cluster of 'disorienting complexification deployed in the interest of ultimate focus' on Jesus (2006:51). It is suggested that the foot-washing appears to be a prime example of this 'disorienting complexification' of interactions between the key symbols of water, light, and the cross. I shall now demonstrate how these interactions occur in John 1–12, prior to the foot-washing in John 13.



### 3. Interactions between the Revelatory and Purificatory Images in John 1–12

Recent political incidents in the British Parliament have given added meaning to the proverb that, ‘sunshine is the best disinfectant’.<sup>9</sup> The correctness of this saying may well be disputed by microbiologists; but, as I now suggest, there are good reasons to believe that the writer of John’s gospel knew its theological equivalent, that ultimately, revelation triggers purification from sin.

As is well known, the revelatory motif in John is represented by dualistic symbols of light/darkness, day/night, and blind/sight; as well as key expressions for knowledge, misunderstanding, glory/infamy, truth/falsehood, testimony, sign, and witness (cf. Koester 2003:141–171). This revelatory motif is intimately woven into the narrative and discourses of John’s gospel repeatedly, blurring the distinction between the material and the metaphorical elements.

In several passages, for example, what is said to be ‘seen’ is completely metaphorical or spiritual; so that, for example, only those born from above will ‘see’ the kingdom (John 3:3). Believing in Jesus is similarly said to be equivalent to ‘seeing’ him (John 12:44–45). It is also stressed that only those with the necessary faith and humility will ‘see’ beyond the physical (John 5:44; 9:39–41). Revelation, in this regard, divides humanity into those of the light who believe and see, and those of the darkness who refuse to believe and hence, do not see (e.g. John 3:19–21; 5:27; 8:12; 11:9). Just as physical light may result in better vision or

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<sup>9</sup> This pithy saying is commonly attributed to a former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis in 1914 to reflect the fact that transparency in public affairs reduces fraudulent practices. The saying was repeatedly cited in the British Press during the scandal involving fraudulent expenses claims by some Members of the British Parliament in 2008/2009. For details of the scandal, see [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/mps-expenses/5335266/MPs-expenses-the-timeline.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/mps-expenses/5335266/MPs-expenses-the-timeline.html).

blindness depending on how it is viewed, so also may revelation bring salvation or judgment, depending on the human response (John 6:40; 7:17; 8:43; 9:39–41; 12:31–33).

Alongside this revelatory motif are clusters of purification symbolism, largely represented by the symbol of water. In fact, both water and light symbols independently possess purificatory properties. The water symbolism in John has soteriological (e.g. John 3:5; 4:14; 19:34), pneumatological (e.g. John 7:37–38), and eschatological overtones (e.g. John 2:1–11; cf. Ng 2001; Attridge 2006:52–55). In several passages, however, the water symbolism is also used to denote cleansing or purification, as in references to baptism and its associations with purification (John 1:26, 31, 33; 2:22–27) and in the foot-washing in John 13. Similarly, light is also depicted as cleansing or driving out the darkness (e.g. John 1:5–8; 3:19–21; 8:12; 11:9–10; 12:35–36; 12:46).

This idea of the purifying effect of light is not surprising, since, in Johannine parlance, darkness, and blindness are equated to sin and unbelief (cf. Bruce 1983:34). Believing in Jesus purges away the darkness of sin and unbelief (John 12:46). Additionally, the word of Jesus, which in John's gospel is an agent of divine revelation, also performs purification or sanctification of the disciples (John 17:15–19). It is evident, therefore, that the symbols of water and light in John 1–12 have independent purificatory connotations.

In a number of passages, the water and light related symbols are superimposed on each other. When this happens, the element of purification assumes a complex multi-dimensional nature related to the mission of Jesus (Culpepper 2006:369–402; Zimmermann and Zimmermann 1998:40–51; cf. Koester 2003:176; Zimmermann 2004). This superimposition is best illustrated by two of the Johannine miraculous signs, namely, the wedding at Cana and the healing of the man born blind.

In the wedding miracle, revelation, and purification combine when the transformation of water in purification jars into wine that is drunk to perfect satisfaction is said to be for the purpose of revealing Jesus' glory. And this revelation, it is stated, leads to the disciples putting their faith in Jesus (John 2:11). Koester's (2003:182) summary of the key points of this first sign is therefore apposite: 'The transformation of the water at Cana suggested that purification would now be accomplished through revelation ... Through that revelation, God "cleanses" by transforming sin into faith, and in so doing fulfils and replaces the system of Jewish ritual purification'.

The healing of the man born blind in John 9 is even more interesting. Its focus on revelation is in no doubt. These revelatory motifs include the actual healing of the congenital blindness of the central figure, Jesus' explanation, that the healing was aimed at revealing God's works (John 9:3), the exhortatory emphasis on working day and night (John 9:4), Jesus' self-identification as the 'Light of the world' (John 9:5), the pervasive witness motif of the whole chapter, the extensive stress on knowledge and ignorance, (i.e. epistemology), in the exchanges between the Pharisees on the one hand, and the blind man and his parents on the other hand in the middle section of the chapter (John 9:14–34), and Jesus' concluding commentary to the narrative pointing to the Pharisees' blindness (John 9:40–41). So, there is abundant indication that the chapter focuses on the theme of revelation (cf. Asiedu-Peprah 2001; Asumang 2010:296–333; Keener 2003:775; Lincoln 2000).

However, what needs to be highlighted is the interaction between the water and the light symbols to point to Jesus' redemptive work on the cross. So, though Jesus frowned on the notion that the man's blindness was due to his parent's sin (John 9:3), he nevertheless made the question of cleansing from sin central to the narrative when he

concludes it by telling the Pharisees, 'If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, "We see", your sin remains' (John 9:41). Sin is here defined as the proud rejection of God's revelation; so that whereas the humble acceptance of that revelation triggers purification from the blindness of sin; proud rejection of the same revelation conversely leaves one condemned in darkness.

Indeed, Jesus superimposes the theme of revelation by light upon purification by water when, as part of the healing, he applies a paste of mud to the blind man's eyes and sends him to wash in the pool of Siloam (John 9:6–7). The man receives his sight only by purification upon Jesus' command. This superimposition of the light and water symbols is extremely important to John as indicated by the threefold repetition of the purificatory manner of the miracle (John 9:6–7, 11, 15).

The role of the pool of Siloam in the narrative is therefore not as peripheral as is sometimes assumed.<sup>10</sup> The passage specifically notes the meaning of Siloam as *Sent* (John 9:7), which ties in very well with the earlier reminder that Jesus was 'sent' to do the Father's works (John 9:4). Yet, it is a mistake to restrict Siloam's role in this passage to just a polemic against Jewish purification. Since it was Jesus who instructed the man to wash in the pool, this is hardly a negative polemic against purification *per se* (Jones 1997:178–198; Keener 2003:781–782). On the contrary, washing in Siloam to receive sight illustrates the superimposition of the water and light symbolisms, so that purification is absorbed but not obliterated into the new dispensation of Jesus.

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<sup>10</sup> The multiple symbolism of Siloam includes the rabbinic application of Isaiah 8:6 to the pool as the place of ritual purification par excellence (e.g. *Pesiqta Rabbati* 16:6), as the source of 'living water' especially during the feast of Booths (*m. Sukk* 4:9–10), as 'water of expiation' (*M. Par* 3), as a 'sign' that a prophet was indeed 'sent' by God (e.g. *Tg Hag SSol* 4:15; *Lam Ra* 19) and eschatological Messianic connotations.

Purification in this case is performed by light, specifically, by the 'Light of the World' (John 9:5).

Purification in Siloam was thus the first element of progressive revelation in the blind man's journey of discipleship, a journey that culminated in his worship of Jesus as Lord (John 9:38). As the narrative progresses, the blind man's physical blindness gives way to sight, and gradually, to better light as he confesses Jesus as firstly, 'the man' (John 9:11), then 'a prophet' (John 9:15), followed by as a man 'from God' (John 9:33), and the Son of Man (John 9:35) and finally, as 'Lord' (John 9:38). During the process, the blind man engages in 'revelatory activities', as he testifies about Jesus to his acquaintances and to the Pharisees, with extraordinary boldness.

On the other hand, and in a reversed and equally progressive manner, having rejected the blind man's witness, the Pharisees end up blind and condemned in sin (John 9:41). The blind man is progressively purified as he 'sees' Jesus in better light, while the Pharisees become progressively mired in sin because they refuse to see and believe in Jesus. Thus the narrative clearly illustrates how revelation progressively purifies from the sin of unbelief.

Even though it is not immediately obvious, the symbol of the cross also features in the miracle of the healing of the blind man. The contrast created in juxtaposing the man's physical blindness with spiritual blindness that will only be cleansed in a pool called *Sent* invites the conclusion that only by washing in the pool derived from Jesus, the Sent One, will spiritual blindness be cured. Siloam therefore lays a proleptic anticipatory foundation for the cleansing water that will later flow from the side of Jesus on the cross (John 19:34; cf. Brown 1966:381; Grigsby 1985:234). Hence, in John 9, there is an interactional superimposition of the three central symbols that cannot be

separated from each other. It is this interaction which is also underlined in John 13, and to which attention now turns.

#### 4. Purification through Revelatory Activities in John 13

John 13 acts as a hinge to the whole gospel (cf. Smith 1995:38) in which the symbols of water, light, and the cross in John 1–12 are superimposed on each other in the foot-washing, to set the agenda for the discourses to follow. With regard to the cross element of the symbolism, the introductory statements preceding the foot-washing proper allude to Jesus' impending death. The account of the drama of Jesus' actions, in rising from the table, taking off his robes, girding his waist with the towel, and washing the disciples' feet, has been noted by several commentators as a deliberate dramatization of his descent and ascent (e.g. Barrett 1978:436; Keener 2003:914–916; Lincoln 2005:367; Schneider 1981:76–81). Jesus rises and disrobes because, as John puts it, he knew 'He had come from God and was going to God' (13:3; cf. Phil 2:6–11). Then, also, Jesus' clarification to Peter in 13:8, namely, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me', underlines the foot-washing as related to his death by which the disciples would be brought to share in his inheritance.

The light symbolism of the foot-washing is present through the revelatory nature of the act itself. After the act, Jesus explains to his disciples, 'Do you *know* what I have done to you?' (John 13:12, emphasis added), thus defining the act as a dramatic parable aimed at revealing central truths. John indeed stresses that the act is performed by Jesus from the point of view of *knowing* his origins and destination (John 13:3). Like the cleansing of the temple (John 2:22) and the entry into Jerusalem (John 12:23), Jesus invested the foot-washing with revelatory mystery, interpretation of which was to be unlocked by his death.

The water symbolism is also evident in the purificatory aspects of the act (John 13:5–11). Jesus tells the disciples, ‘you are clean, though not all of you’ (John 13:10), inviting the conclusion that purification was an important component of the act. Accordingly, the three central Johannine symbols of the cross, light, and water are inseparably superimposed on each other in the foot-washing, with the cross playing the primary role.

In line with this, three further narrative-theological arguments may be advanced to show that by enjoining his disciples to emulate the lessons of the foot-washing, Jesus was instructing them to participate in revelatory activities centred on the cross, which will trigger their progressive purification and participation in him. To summarise before proceeding, these arguments are, namely, (a) the foot-washing is underlined as a revelatory act that purifies, so its emulation by disciples must be along similar lines, (b) the foot-washing explicates both the christology and discipleship of John 13, underlining the imitative nature of discipleship, and (c) John 13 contrasts the progressive purification of Peter with the progressive ‘blindness’ of Judas, demonstrating how participation in revelatory activities purifies.

#### **4.1. The foot-washing as a revelatory act in John 13**

Leaving aside the foot-washing itself for the time being, all the other activities that Jesus performs in the chapter, and those that he instructs his disciples to also perform in response to his example are underlined as revelatory. For example, Jesus predicts that one of his disciples will betray him (John 13:21). When pressed further to identify the betrayer, Jesus offered a dipped morsel to Judas (John 13:26) as a revelatory act in fulfilment of scripture (John 13:18; cf. Ps 41:9). The instruction that the disciples should love one another is also couched as a revelatory act:

'By this everyone will *know* that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (John 13:35).

Furthermore, the fourfold 'Amen, Amen' sayings in the chapter (John 13:16, 20, 21, 38) also emphasise the focus on Jesus' revelatory activities in the chapter. Other revelatory activities by Jesus in the chapter are the prophetic predictions of the glorification of the Son of Man (John 13:31–32), of Jesus' departure in a little while (John 13:33) to a place where they will also follow (John 13:36), and of Peter's impending denial of Jesus (John 13:38). Furthermore, though the disciples are bemused about some of the revelatory acts of Jesus, it is noted that they would eventually understand and transmit the revelation as messengers of Jesus (John 13:16). The disciples are, therefore, agents who propagate the revelation that Jesus brings. As all the other activities performed by Jesus and instructed to be performed by the disciples are underlined as revelatory, it is likely that it is in its form as a revelatory act that Jesus enjoined his disciples to emulate.

#### **4.2. The revelatory christology of John 13 and the foot-washing**

The christological titles that are explicitly underlined by the chapter, namely, Lord, Teacher, and Son of Man, are all interpreted by the foot-washing. These are then reflected on to and applied to the disciples. It is reasonable, therefore, to understand the act of foot-washing as a purificatory revelatory act by Jesus that he enjoins his disciples to emulate in the manner in which he also does.

So, although Jesus is Lord, he stoops down as a servant to wash his disciples' feet; thus, revealing his Lordship as that of the Suffering Servant (Keener 2003:899; Nicol 1979:20). This interpretation is then reflected on to the disciples when Jesus subsequently reminds the disciples that they also were *servants* (John 13:16). Similarly, as teacher, Jesus uses the foot-washing to set his disciples a revelatory



υποδειγμα—‘that you also should do as I have done’ (John 13:15; cf. Culpepper 1991:142–143). Likewise, as the Johannine Son of Man, Jesus willingly offers himself unto death as means of glorifying the Father and is, in turn, glorified in his imminent ascent onto the cross (John 13:32). This christology is again reflected on to the disciples as, at the end of the chapter, Peter declares his willingness to be martyred (John 13:37). Thus, the foot-washing served as a revelatory act explicating the christology.

Given that the foot-washing interprets the christology of the passage, and this christology is reflected on to the disciples, the purification and participation element of the foot-washing should not be separated from the moral/ethical interpretation. Just as Jesus’ revelatory activities purify, so also will revelatory activities performed by his disciples, if done in the manner he instructs, namely, centred on the cross, trigger purification and participation in Jesus.

### **4.3. The purification of Peter and the purging of Judas from the fellowship**

The theme of purification through revelation centred on the cross is highlighted by focusing on the juxtaposition of the two main discipleship characters in the chapter, namely, Peter and Judas. Peter’s declaration that he would lay down his life *for* Jesus (John 13:37), even if interpreted to be typically over-enthusiastic and naïve, nevertheless indicates a significant progression in his understanding. By the end of the chapter, and through the several revelatory acts of Jesus, Peter had progressively moved from his ignorance and misunderstanding when he protested purification and participation in Jesus, to the point of understanding the implications of the foot-washing as not just participation and friendship, but also being willing to die *for* Jesus.

Later in the gospel, John will label the martyrdom of Peter as glorifying God (John 21:19; cf. Lincoln 2005:388).

In contrast to Peter, the departure of Judas from the fellowship meal is depicted as the cleansing of the whole group from the gloom of darkness and Satan (John 13:30). Even though Judas' feet were presumably washed, he remained unclean (John 13:11), underlining the fact that purification was efficacious only in a proleptic manner in relation to the cross (cf. Bultmann 1971:473). This becomes obvious when Judas is linked with darkness in John 13:30, indicating that the impurity alluded to in John 13:11 is the darkness of Judas. His darkness represented the stain on the fellowship of disciples, as well as his own. Jesus' revelatory activities in the chapter therefore triggered the purging of the community of disciples from the darkness of sin that Judas represented. Whereas Peter received this revelation and was purified, Judas did not.

Thus, revelation purifies those who accept it by faith, but condemns those who reject it. Indeed, this contrast between the judgment of Judas and the purification of Peter and the other disciples parallels the opposing salvation/judgement effects of revelation in the blind man in contrast to the Pharisees of John 9. Like the blind man, Peter and the other disciples are progressively purified by Jesus' revelation. On the other hand, like the Pharisees, Judas is condemned by the revelation, is possessed by Satan, and leaves the fellowship, into the night (John 13:30).

Since the discipleship elements of the foot-washing are emulated from the christology, it should be concluded from the foregoing analysis that revelatory acts that are performed by disciples, so long as they are centred on the cross, trigger purification and participation in Jesus. Put another way, activities by disciples that serve to reveal Jesus' person and mission, done and received in the spirit of humility, as all

revelatory activities require, will trigger the purification of believers from the darkness of sin and unbelief and maintain their cohesion in the community of disciples.

It must be clarified that a revelatory act performed by a disciple does not, on its own and in a direct manner, redeem another disciple. As Lincoln (2005:372) aptly cautions, the disciple's emulation of Jesus 'will always be a non-identical repetition, which cannot have precisely the same significance for them as it had for Him'. The disciple is, after all, an agent through whom Jesus' revelation was to be propagated (John 13:16). Purification through participation in revelatory activities cannot therefore occur independent of Jesus' work in and through the disciple. All the same, in enjoining his disciples to wash one another's feet 'as I have done to you', Jesus is underlying that a revelatory act performed in the manner in which he instructs serves as a trigger for the purification and participation of other disciples in him.

The moral/ethical interpretation of the foot-washing as a 'humble self-sacrificing service of love' is therefore valid; but it is only valid with a caveat. It is valid, so long as such acts of humble service are revelatory activities that are centred on Jesus' death. Certainly, in the Johannine theological idiom, not all humble self-sacrificing service would qualify as emulating Jesus' *υποδειγμα*. Only those acts of self-sacrificing service that are centred on Jesus' death on the cross, and which therefore serve as revelatory activities, would qualify as emulating Jesus' *υποδειγμα*.

## **5. Revelatory Activities and the Foot-washing in 1 John**

Even though many in contemporary Johannine scholarship continue to reject the traditional view of a common authorship between the Johannine epistles and the gospel (cf. Painter 2010:365–366), there are

enough reasons to question the foundations of this scholarly consensus (cf. Yarbrough 2008:5–15). Furthermore, there are good grounds for supporting the view that significant portions of the first Johannine Epistle served as the Evangelist's commentary on the fourth gospel (e.g. Lieu 2008; van der Watt 2007:22; Witherington 2006). At least the considerable number of linguistic, theological, and idiomatic overlaps between 1 John and the second half of the gospel according to John make such a suggestion a likely possibility. If this is so, it is reasonable to investigate whether the Johannine epistles validate the present proposal suggesting that revelatory activities performed by disciples trigger purification.

With regard to the foot-washing in particular, Thomas (2004:155–158) has identified 1 John 1:7–10, 2:1–2 and 5:16–18 as providing further proof in support of his theory that the foot-washing was subsequently interpreted as a sacrament for post-baptismal sin in the Johannine community. Brown (1982:239) has similarly linked 1 John 2:1 to John 13, urging that the author of 1 John found in the symbolism support for his theology of communion with one another as the context for cleansing in the foot-washing.

Even though not all scholars would agree with these theories, the numerous cross-references between the Farewell discourse and 1 John suffice to support an attempt to seek validation of our proposal from 1 John. For our purposes, 1 John 2:1–2 and 5:16–18 may be set aside, since they deal more directly with the post-baptismal sin theory and confound the link with the foot-washing.

In 1 John 1:7–10, however, the cross, revelation, and purification are superimposed on each other to indicate that revelatory activities among disciples trigger and maintain participation and purification in Jesus. 'If we walk in the light as He himself is in the light', 1 John 1:7 goes, 'we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son

cleanses us from all sin'. No doubt, according to this passage, the purifying agent is the blood that flows from the cross. However, it is stated that the trigger for the progressive cleansing of the community of disciples is 'walking in the light'.

If it is true that, as suggested by both Thomas and Brown, the foot-washing forms the background of 1 John 1:7–10, then John here re-labels the foot-washing as a revelatory activity, as 'walking in the light'. In that context also, it is more than a mere coincidence that both 'washing of feet' and 'walking in the light' involve the feet and lead to purification. The only difference is that, in typical Johannine style, the symbol of water in the former has now been replaced by that of light in the latter. In our current conceptualisation, 'walking in the light' means performing revelatory activities which are centred on the cross.

## 6. Conclusion

It has been argued that in enjoining his disciples to wash one another's feet, Jesus was instructing them to mutually perform revelatory activities centred on the cross and in the manner that he did. Done this way, revelatory activities trigger purification and maintain the participation of disciples in Jesus. This interpretation, if correct, offers a number of advantages.

Firstly, it limits the skewing effects of the textual problems associated with John 13:10. There are two manuscript traditions on John 13:10, the longer readings introduce the phrase, εἰ μὴ τοὺς πόδας ('except the feet') to qualify Jesus' statement, a qualification which is lacking in the shorter readings. Theologically, the longer reading appears to suit the discipleship aspect of the foot-washing, stressing the point that, even after initial bathing, disciples still needed regular foot-washing. On the other hand, there are wholly valid reasons also for preferring the shorter

readings.<sup>11</sup> Whichever view is correct, however, if the foot-washing is understood to be a revelatory act centred on the cross that purifies, the problems created by the two traditions are eased. The longer reading in this context, even though preferable, cannot vitiate the shorter reading's point that purification is firmly triggered by revelation from the cross.

Secondly, it may be said that this interpretation is eclectic, and so, functional in its operation. It satisfactorily fits in with both sacramental and non-sacramental approaches alike; as well as the hospitality, martyrdom, post-baptismal sin, and moral/ethical interpretations. In all cases, the present proposal privileges the mechanism of the emulation of the foot-washing as a purifying revelatory activity centred on the cross.

Finally, this interpretation has some pastoral implications. Believers today may, in several different ways, mutually wash one another's feet, and in the way Jesus did it, so long as what they do is a revelatory activity centred on the cross of Jesus.

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<sup>11</sup>See Beasley-Murray (1987:229) and Thomas (1987:46–52) for discussion on the options.

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# A Systemic Approach to God's Attributes

Andrew Aucamp<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

There is nothing more important than a correct understanding of God. This essay reviews the very common, historic practice of describing God according to his individual attributes. While acknowledging the value of this practice, the limitations are also noted. A complementary approach of describing God according to the broader, relational attributes found in scripture provides a biblical context for the individual attributes, and adds a devotional quality to beholding our glorious God that the historic formulations often neglected.

## 1. Introduction

Many systematic theologies approach the topic of the doctrine of God using a number of individual attributes, commonly classified as communicable and incommunicable (e.g. Berkhof 1958:57–76; Grudem 1994:156–225; Reymond 1998:161–200). Some of these authors caution that the distinction between communicable and incommunicable attributes is not very helpful, and also that the whole approach can be scholastic in nature (MacLeod 1990:20–21; see also

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

Grudem 1994:156). Their point is that scripture nowhere attempts to classify God's attributes.

In whatever way these attributes are classified, they are nevertheless usually treated in an isolated fashion in the systematic theologies. A few authors do caution that God's attributes can never be considered as parts of him, but rather, 'perspectives on his whole being' (Frame 2002:388). Frame (2002:388–389) also points out that each attribute is inseparable from the other, as each attribute contains or encapsulates all the attributes of God. For example, God's love is an eternal, holy, wise, and just love. God's anger is righteous, infinite, holy, and just. According to Frame (2002:388), while this does not mean that all God's attributes are identical (as they do give different perspectives of God's essence); it does mean they ultimately coalesce. Frame (2002:21–35), therefore, prefers to treat the attributes of God within the overarching theme of God's lordship.

The isolated fashion in which the attributes are often treated can also lead to an imbalanced view of God. Either the order of the attributes is seen as incorrectly significant or some attributes are over-emphasised at the expense of others (Grudem 1994:156). MacLeod (1990:8) also notes that treating attributes in an isolated fashion renders them more liable to philosophical bias, which can distort one's view of God. This is primarily due to the fact that the attributes, when examined in an isolated way, are divorced from their biblical context and proportions. For example, MacLeod (1990:14) notes that God's righteousness, power, and omniscience are often discussed without reference to their main context in scripture, namely, their role in redemption.

Another possible objection to studying God's attributes in an isolated fashion is that they can be presented in a dry, academic way that robs God of his majesty and wonder. This point will be elaborated on later.

However, that is not to say that the historic treatment of God's attributes has been without value. On the contrary, the reformed and evangelical treatment of God's attributes has contributed greatly to our understanding of God. There is also biblical warrant to consider the being of God according to his individual attributes. For example, in 1 Timothy 1:17, Paul reflects on God's being in terms of his individual attributes of eternity, immortality, and invisibility.

Scripture, however, often describes God and his characteristics in relational attributes. An attribute is simply a property, quality, or feature belonging to a person or thing (Collins 1982:67). This means that any of the qualities or features found in scripture concerning God could be used or systematised into a list of attributes. A relational attribute is a description or characteristic of God that shows how he relates to his creation. The historical, individual attributes could even be discussed under the relational attributes found in scripture. The role of the systematic theologian is to present God's attributes in a way that best conveys their biblical meaning to the current generation.

## **2. Some Insights from Systemic Thinking**

The world of organisations, process re-engineering, and business practice has been revolutionised in the last few decades with the advent of systemic thinking (thinking in terms of systems as opposed to individual parts).

The following is a brief description of the insights of RL Ackoff. Ackoff (1994:1–3) makes the point that modern societal ideas of organisations, production, and business processes have been based on a particular mind-set (originating in medieval Europe and percolating

through the industrial revolution) and assumptions which can be described as the process of analysis.

The basic idea of analysis is that we can understand an object when it is broken down into its individual parts (Ackoff 1994:11). As the individual parts are understood, the whole can be understood. For example, in order to understand a car, it must first be broken down into all its individual parts, such as wheels, cylinders, valves, nuts and bolts. As each part is understood, an accurate idea of what a car is can be determined.

However, Ackoff (1994:10–11) notes the limitations of this approach. A process of analysis in itself will never reach the conclusion that a car actually moves (as it needs a person to drive it), nor that it can be used to drive a family around and give them enjoyment! It happens rather that as the object of a whole car is observed in its environment (or in its system) that the purpose and function of the car can be determined. This process of systemic thinking is based on synthesis (putting the 'pieces' of a system together to understand their relations with other pieces and therefore the whole) and the direct opposite of analysis (breaking the objects down into their individual parts).

'Systems thinking' emphasises the interdependence of the parts and how they interact to create the whole in its environment. It stresses the fact that, when a system is taken apart (analysis), it loses its defining characteristics. For example, when a car is dismantled, it loses its ability to move, which is its defining characteristic. Many popular authors, such as Senge (1990), have taken the basic premise of systemic thinking and applied it to modern business practices.

A few comments regarding systems thinking are necessary. Firstly, while admitting the validity of Ackoff's basic premise and the value of



systems thinking, it does not mean that analysis is useless. On the contrary, breaking down a car into its individual parts does help understand how a car works. Both analysis and synthesis have value, a point admitted by Ackoff (1994:12).

Secondly, therefore, analysis in itself must not be seen as the only way to understand an object or ‘thing’. There are other approaches that may render equally valuable, if not superior, the understanding of objects and ‘things’.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the above discussion is a reminder that one’s thinking and approaches to understanding ‘things’ are in fact framed by assumptions and presuppositions of which one may not necessarily even be aware.

The point of this section is not to motivate making systemic thinking a ‘new’ and ‘dynamic’ approach to revolutionise our understanding of God. Biblical Christianity is, after all, a *divinely-revealed* religion (Grudem 1994:149), not a *man-discovered* religion. Many of the systemic thinkers also have assumptions and presuppositions that are alien to scripture. The point is rather that the process of taking our study of God and breaking it down into isolated attributes, while being of value, is not necessarily the only way to understand who or what God is. It is also as God is seen in relation to his creation (environment) that we discover the wonder of his being<sup>2</sup> (which is essentially a systems approach). For this reason, scripture itself often describes God in terms of relational attributes as he interacts with his creation.

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<sup>2</sup> God is therefore finally and most fully revealed to man in his incarnate Son (John 1:18; 14:9). However, this does not mean that God’s revelation of himself in the Old Testament was so inferior that he was unknowable. A correct study of God and his attributes from the Old Testament enabled the Old Testament saints to truly, although not fully, know and understand God (Jer 9:23–24).

This article, therefore, approaches the topic of the doctrine of God using some of these relational attributes. Five relational 'attributes' of God are selected to demonstrate the approach and value of the exercise. In essence, as will be shown, these relational 'attributes' assume many of the historic attributes and present them in their *relation* to created beings and things. These individual attributes are clarified and contextualised in the process. This is useful, as Frame reminds us that 'meaning' is drawn out and clarified as truths or concepts are 'applied' to situations (987:83–84). In other words, selecting some of the relational attributes in scripture to begin this study of God, and then, noting the individual attributes in the process may be a better way of approaching the subject. The relational attributes of God provide a contextual framework to enable the individual attributes to take on their biblical meanings in their biblical proportions. It will also minimise (but not entirely eliminate) the risk of distorting an individual attribute through academic speculation.

A few clarifications may be required before moving on to describe God in some of his relational attributes. Firstly, the list of attributes below is by no means comprehensive. There are, no doubt, many other 'relational attributes' that we can find in, deduce, or derive from scripture. These five attributes should function as examples to show the benefit of describing God in these ways.

Secondly, as these attributes are described, it is hoped that they will immediately commend themselves to God's people with a freshness that compensates for the all-too-common dryness and scholasticism that can beset a theological discussion of the historic attributes of God.

Thirdly, and most importantly, this article should not be seen to detract from the value of studying the historically-formulated attributes of God. As noted earlier, the approach of studying the individual attributes has

biblical warrant (1 Tim 1:17). These have been of immense value and benefit to God's people over the years. In this regard, it is equally true that the relational attributes do not provide a complete description of God. After all, God was God (with his essential attributes) before he created the universe and started 'relating' to people or things.

### 3. Examples of Relational Attributes

There is nothing more important for theology and devotional life than having a clear and correct view of God (Frame 2002:1). Errors (both theological and practical) can often be traced back to incorrect views about God.

Five relational attributes are given below by way of example to demonstrate a systemic approach to God's attributes.

#### 3.1. The friendliness of God

Friendliness can be defined as someone expressing liking and goodwill towards another. It is also suggestive of a kind disposition to draw alongside someone with help or support (Collins 1982:446).

One of the most striking features of God expressed in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ was his kind disposition and goodwill toward others. It is noteworthy that even his enemies described him as a *friend* of sinners (Matt 11:19). In other words, this was a dominant characteristic of his relationships with others. He himself designated his relationship with his disciples as that of friendship (Matt 9:15; Luke 12:4; John 15:14–15). This characteristic is not only confined to the life of Christ. In Eden, one finds God walking in the garden, presumably to have interaction with his creation and Adam and Eve in particular (Gen 3:8). In other words, it is part of God's disposition to be friendly towards his

creatures. Even after the fall, we find that God's servants are often designated as his friends, which implies a two-sided relationship (e.g. Jas 2:23).

Friendliness assumes a number of individual divine attributes such as personality, kindness, love, benevolence, 'emotivity', grace, and goodwill. In other words, God's personality, kindness, love, benevolence, 'emotivity', grace, and goodwill come together and present themselves to us in a broader, relational attribute or quality of divine friendliness.

This means that the current enmity between God and man is a direct result of the fall of man into sin. It is not as a result of any anti-social tendency or a capricious nature within God. The fault for the disruption in friendship lies at the feet of man and his sin, not God.

This attribute of God has immediate devotional implications in the life of the unbeliever and believer. For the unbeliever, it speaks of grace and goodwill toward him, and an encouragement to be restored into a genuine friendship through Christ with the living God. There is willingness within God to forgive the sinner through the provisions of sacrifice and atonement in Christ, and to enter into a relationship with the creature which can be described as friendship.

For the believer, there is every encouragement to enjoy fellowship with this God whose disposition is towards friendship with his creation. It speaks of a restored intimacy that can and ought to be the experience of every believer.

The advantage of this approach hardly needs to be pointed out. By delineating 'friendliness' as a basic attribute of God, it provides a context for understanding the grace, kindness, love, personality, and

emotivity of God. It is not merely an academic consideration of individual attributes, but a devotional consideration of these individual attributes as God relates to his creation. Obviously, each of these individual attributes could be expanded on within this context. For example, the attribute of ‘friendliness’ immediately settles the question about the ‘knowability’ of God (see Grudem 1994:151–152). Friendship is impossible without some degree of mutual knowing and being known, and yet, does not require comprehensive knowledge. Friendship implies that God can be truly known, though not necessarily comprehensively.

### **3.2. The vengeance of God**

Another striking, consistently biblical theme in scripture is God’s indignation against sin and sinners (Gen 6:5–6; Rom 1:18). God’s wrath is always portrayed in relationship to sin and sinners, never in isolation, as if God has a naturally angry, irritable, or grumpy nature. This indignation against sin and the sinner is then expressed as vengeance (Rom 12:19).

God’s indignation and vengeance assume and contextualise a number of individual attributes, such as emotivity, personality, anger, righteousness, and holiness in relation to sin and sinners. Indignation also gives some insight into the nature of sin. Firstly, it indicates that sin, primarily, is against God (Ps 51:4). God takes sin personally, even when the actual sin is seemingly only against another creature (2 Sam 11; Ps 51:4). Secondly, it speaks of the strong emotional response in God towards sin. Sin is not a light issue with God, but a violation of his very person. His reaction to sin is indignation culminating in vengeance against those who have not been redeemed and drawn into a relationship with himself.

This attribute of vengeance decisively deals with the erroneous expression found today that 'God loves the sinner but hates the sin.' While there is a sense in which this expression is true, the Bible is equally emphatic that God hates sinners (Ps 5:5). Vengeance, by definition, is against a person, not just an abstract principle. Sin is the acting of a sinful person, and makes that person an enemy of God (Jer 46:10).

The attribute of vengeance also has immediate devotional and emotional content. It shatters any notion that God's anger is either mild or only directed against some abstract principle. It is directed against sinners who have become God's enemy and stresses the urgency of reconciliation with a vengeful God before the day of vengeance (Luke 21:22). Vengeance implies an active, personal pursuit of an enemy, not a mere abstract principle of sinners receiving the natural consequences of their actions. It therefore ought to stir unbelievers to pursue reconciliation with God.

### **3.3. The artistry of God**

Any casual observer of creation cannot miss the diverse beauty of creation. God could easily have created a single type of bird, plant, fish, and animal. These could have been bland in appearance and functional in design. Yet, in creation, we find an astounding variety of design, colour, sound, and taste. This points to God's intrinsic artistry, where he delights to give vent to his creativity and power. The artistry of God, therefore, draws together individual attributes such as power, personality, ingenuity, and omniscience. All the wonders of human creativity are a faint reflection of the creator's artistry and creativity, and aid our understanding of man being created in God's image.

There is neither a blandness nor lack of variety in God's creativity. Therefore, there should be a corresponding enjoyment in all the aspects of God's creative beauty and variety that our senses can perceive. This attribute comments directly on asceticism. It means that religions that emphasise ascetic lifestyles for the mere sake of it are contrary to God's nature and will (e.g. 1 Tim 4:1–4; Col 2:20–23). God has created variety and beauty of all shapes, sizes, colours, and tastes to delight the senses of the creature and resound to the creator's glory. The biblical forms of temporal self-deprivation, such as fasting and self-denial are due to the 'fallenness' of creation and to aid our striving within that context (Matt 9:14–15).

The devotional quality of this attribute is manifold. For example, it must heighten the desire of believers to experience God's new heavens and new earth, where the results of his artistic creativity will not be marred by the fall. Randy Acorn has highlighted the continuity between the old earth and new earth (2004:49–51). If this earth displays the magnificence of God's creativity, the new heavens and new earth are sure to be beyond description.

### **3.4. The ego of God**

Greg Nichols (Lecture 21:1994) has an almost unique treatment of the ego of God in his lectures on the doctrine of God. An ego can be described as the 'self' of a person (Collins 1982:356), and is closely related to one's image of oneself.

Isaiah 46:5–11 gives us an insight into God's estimate of himself. God says that when he considers himself, and then looks over all creation, there is no one as great as he is. Nothing can even remotely be compared to him. It is important to notice that Isaiah 46:5 expresses God's estimate of himself. There is no 'third-party' doing an evaluation

and comparing God to the universe. This is God himself, reflecting on his own being, and then declaring to people that he is so great and glorious that nothing at all can ever be compared to him. In this text we see God's ego on full display (see also Jer 9:24–25; Isa 48:9–11). Conversely, there is no verse in scripture where God ever indicates to his creation that they are over-esteeming him. Fallen creation invariably under-esteems him. There is therefore no false humility or coyness on God's part regarding his glory and majesty. God's ego or self-esteem, therefore, draws together individual attributes such as personality, self-awareness, power, wisdom, and majesty.

One of the basic truths in scripture is that God does all things for his glory (Eph 1:5–6). This includes making sure that his person and works are displayed before his creation.

Such egocentricity is the height of sin in the creature, and utterly repulsive (e.g. Prov 27:2; Matt 23:5–7). This attribute, therefore, may seem to create some problems. Firstly, God judges and humbles his creatures when they seek to glorify themselves (Isa 5:15; Matt 23:12). Secondly, scripture indicates that pride and self-glorification are sinful (Prov 16:18; Hos 5:5). Is God thus not guilty of sin, and unjust in judging his creatures for attempting to do what he does?

This problem vanishes when we consider the greatness of God. His divine attributes of infinity, omniscience, omnipotence, self-sufficiency, majesty, and wisdom mean that he is worthy of praise and admiration, and that it is in fact altogether righteous and just that he should esteem himself to be worthy of such praise. There are many attitudes or actions that, while being sinful for the creature to perform, are entirely legitimate for God to perform. For example, while it is wrong for man to take revenge, God can legitimately take revenge on his enemies, as noted earlier (Lev 19:18; Rom 12:19). It is the same with God's self-



glorification. It is sinful for man to parade himself and seek his own glory, since he is a limited creature entirely dependent on his creator. This is even truer after the fall. Man has in fact nothing to boast of within himself (Eph 2:8–9). This is not true of God, however. He alone is self-sufficient.

As an aside, a closer look at Isaiah 46:5–11 provides some valuable insights into the basis of God’s estimation of himself. In verse 9, God contemplates his own being and declares himself to be utterly glorious and the unique God. Verse 10 gives the immediate attribute that God is contemplating, namely, his sovereign rule over all creation. In other words, in this passage, God’s ego or self-esteem is based on his contemplation of his sovereignty. His sense of his own deity is tied closely to his awareness of his supreme sovereignty. A denial of God’s sovereignty must therefore substantively detract from God’s glory and rob him of an essential aspect of his glorious deity. Scripture reveals that the will of the creature (human or otherwise) never thwarts God’s decree, predetermination, and ruling providence over all events, including the salvation of man. He controls and determines random events (Prov 16:33). He controls all aspects of nature (Ps 104:14, 17, 21, 27–30). He raises and brings down rulers and empires (Dan 2:20–21; 4:35). He has complete control over evil (Acts 4:27–28), and even chooses who will be saved out of a depraved humanity (Acts 13:48; Eph 1:3–6, 11). The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith (and the Westminster Confession of Faith) ably expounds the biblical testimony to God’s sovereignty (e.g. Waldron 1989:60–73).

The man-centredness of much modern Christianity and prevalence of Arminianism (which is closely aligned with the prevailing world view centred on man’s autonomy) seriously undermine God’s glory and

essential deity. God certainly has no doubt about his sovereign rule and authority.

### **3.5. The abundance of God**

The scriptures often depict God as the provider (Ps 104:27–28) and sustainer of all things (Ps 104:19–23). His provision extends to all of creation, and it consists of a vast variety, from physical needs (Ps 104:21) to spiritual salvation (Deut 32:43). The scope of God's sustaining influence is no less varied. The quality of this provision and sustenance leads us to conclude that there is an infinite abundance in God. It is not meagre, but bountiful (2 Cor 9:8). God's provision for sinners in Christ speaks of unimaginable lavishness on the undeserving (Rom 8:32). There is grace upon grace. Numerous biblical images of God's abundance are given. For example, God is described as a fountain, indicating his consistent and abundant provision (Ps 36:9; Jer 2:13).

This attribute draws together individual attributes of God's infinity, grace, kindness, wisdom, and power. Some qualifications need to be noted. Firstly, this does not mean that, at times, God does not let people experience need. He often sends famine or deprivation. But these are invariably to warn people of sin and to turn them back to himself, the fountain of living water (Jer 2:13, 30). Also, those material and earthly deprivations that he does send are to accomplish spiritual good in his people (Jas 1:2–5) and earn for them immeasurably greater rewards in heaven (Matt 5:11).

Secondly, hell is a place of total deprivation. In hell, unbelievers receive no good thing from God. Nevertheless, for his children, God has an overabundant abundance. Having lavished his grace on them through the gift of his Son, how will he not give them all things (Rom 8:32)?

The pictures of heaven depict immense abundance for redeemed sinners. Even the streets are made of gold (Rev 21:21)! While hell is the total removal of all abundance and provision, heaven is the removal of any want or influence that can diminish joy and gladness.

There are times when believers reflect on their lives and experience the state of blessedness and contentment (Ps 23:1). God's spiritual and temporal blessings satisfy their souls. However, there is still no need to be shy or feel guilty for asking God for more blessings. It is not as if God is depleted in any way in blessing and providing for his people. This again does not mean that we must expect that God will provide every material need we ask for. After all, God's purpose is to make us holy and Christ-like. This is often accomplished through trials, difficulties, and deprivation (Jas 1:2–4; 1 Pet 1:6–8).

#### **4. The Abuse of God's Attributes**

All statements of scripture can be twisted and misrepresented (2 Pet 3:16). As with the individual attributes of God, the above relational attributes of God can also be misunderstood or misrepresented. In other words, a systemic approach to God's attributes does not entirely remove the potential deficiencies from which the historic approach often suffered. For example, an isolated, narrow emphasis on God's friendliness can lead to loss of fear of God and flippant, superficial Christianity. An isolated emphasis on God's indignation and vengeance can diminish the enjoyment of intimacy with God through Christ. An unbiblical understanding of God's abundance can lead to the destructive 'health and wealth' teachings which are prominent in some Christian circles today. However, this paper argues for the fact that when God is considered according to his relational attributes, the potential deficiencies of the historic approach are lessened, as the individual

attributes are given a broader context within which they can be correctly interpreted.

Any consideration of God's attributes must always take into account all that God reveals himself to be. For this reason, our view of God must be based on all the revelation of who he is and what he does to have a complete picture of our glorious God.

## 5. Conclusion

There is nothing more important than having a correct view of God. This paper argues that, while the historic approach to the doctrine of God by defining and examining God according to isolated attributes does have value and biblical warrant, there are other relational attributes that provide equally valuable insights into who and what God is. These broader, relational attributes assume and often contextualise these individual attributes and, therefore, diminish the risk of the individual attributes being distorted through scholasticism and philosophical speculation outside the intent of scripture.

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# John 19:38–20:31: Discipleship after the Death of Jesus

Ken Chan<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Most commentaries see John 19:42 as the end of the description of Jesus' death and burial, and 20:1 as the beginning of his resurrection account. While this is true of the chronology in the life of Jesus, how does the narrative account of Jesus contribute to John's aim in 20:30–31? This article suggests that the narrative after the death of Jesus in 19:38–20:31 presents two patterns of discipleship: (a) those whose faith is based on seeing the resurrected Jesus, and (b) those who follow him even without having seen his resurrected body. A detailed investigation in the Johannine text of the responses of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, Peter, the beloved disciple, Mary Magdalene, and Thomas to the death of Jesus shows that the passage in question is structured chiasmatically. John 19:38–42 is tied to John 20 and balances 20:30–31. The intent of this chiasm is to emphasise the fact that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus are disciples *par excellence*. Their willingness to follow Jesus after his death, even when they did not have the chance to see him resurrected, is exactly the kind of faith called for by John

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

in 20:30–31. The beloved disciple fits this mould to a lesser extent, whereas Thomas and Mary Magdalene do not.

## 1. The Problem

John 19–20 is normally understood to be about the chronology of Jesus. This can be seen in the division labels of UBS<sup>3</sup>, where Jesus' crucifixion begins in 19:16, the 'death of Jesus' in 19:28, the 'piercing of Jesus' side' in 19:31, the 'burial of Jesus' in 19:38, the 'resurrection of Jesus' in 20:1, and what happened after the resurrection of Jesus thereafter. This view is widely supported across confessional divides in the literature, as shown in table 1 below.

<b>Author</b>	<b>Jesus' death</b>	<b>Jesus' resurrection</b>
Hoskyns (1947:14)	'The Narrative of the Passion' (18:1–19:42)	'The Resurrection Appearances' (20:1–21:25)
Tenney (1948:270–72)	'The Burial' (19:38–42)	'The Resurrection' (20:1–29)
Lightfoot (1956:318–334)	'The Crucifixion of the Lord' (18:1–19:42)	'The Lord's Resurrection' (20:1–31)
Brown (1970:ix–x)	'The Passion Narrative' (18:1–19:42)	'The Risen Jesus' (20:1–29)
Bultmann (1971:xi–xii)	'The Passion' (18:1–19:41[ <i>sic</i> ])	'Easter' (20:1–29)



Lindars (1972:583–94)	‘The Deposition and Burial’ (19:31–42)	‘The Resurrection’ (20:1–31)
Bligh (1974:5)	‘The death of Jesus’ (19:28–30), ‘The piercing of the side of Jesus’ (19:31–37), ‘The burial of Jesus’ (19:38–42)	‘The Empty Tomb’ (20:1–13)
Barrett (1978:vi)	‘The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus’ (19:17–30), ‘The Burial of Jesus’ (19:31–42)	‘The Empty Tomb and the First Resurrection Appearance’ (20:1–18), ‘Jesus appears to the Eleven: Conclusion’ (20:19–31)
Schnackenburg (1982:viii)	‘The Passion: Journey to the Cross, Crucifixion and Lying in the Tomb’ (19:16b–42)	‘Easter: Open Tomb and Appearances, Conclusion of Jesus’ Revelation before the Disciples’ (20:1–31)
Bruce (1983:26–27)	‘The Passion Narrative’ (18:1–19:42)	‘The Resurrection Narrative’ (20:1–29)

Beasley-Murray (1987:viii)	'The Passion Narrative: The Arrest, Trial, Crucifixion, and Burial of Jesus' (18:1–19:42)	'The Resurrection of Jesus' (20:1–31)
Carson (1991:622–63)	'The Piercing of Jesus' Side' (19:31–37), 'The Burial of Jesus' (19:38–42)	'The Resurrection of Jesus' (20:1–31)
Ridderbos (1997:x)	'Jesus' Suffering and Death' (18:1–19:42)	'The Empty Tomb and the Appearances of the Risen One' (20:1–31)
Moloney (1998a:vii)	'The Passion' (18:1–19:42)	'The Resurrection' (20:1–29)
Smith (1999)	'The Passion Narrative' (18:1–19:42)	'The First Resurrection Narratives' (20:1–31)
Köstenberger (2004:vii)	'The Passion Narrative' (18:1–19:42)	'Jesus' Resurrection and Appearances and the Commissioning of His Disciples' (20:1–29)

*Table 1: Understanding John 19–20 as Jesus' death and Jesus'*

There is no problem with the fact that Jesus came to die for man and then rose from the dead. But John did not record these historical facts

here as archive. The exhortation in 20:30–31, that ‘these things have been written so that the readers “should believe” (πιστεύσητε), or “may continue to believe” (πιστεύητε)’, shows that John is primarily interested in helping the readers receive spiritual life (or to remain in it) as they get to know the life of Jesus, and what that reveals about his heavenly status.<sup>2</sup> This observation, that John wants to point people to Jesus, leads to the corollary question of what effect the life, death, and the resurrection of Jesus actually had on the biblical characters that experienced this sequence of events.

Stibbe (1993:203) asks: ‘the key question has always been, “will characters *recognise* who Jesus really is?”’ Howard-Brook (1994:x) also made this shift in thinking when he interpreted 20:1–18 as (the disciples) ‘encountering the empty tomb for the first time’. He turned the research focus of this passage from what Jesus was doing to how the disciples were reacting to the life of Jesus. Similarly, Heil (1995:vii) labels 20:1–32 as a section where ‘the disciples see and believe in the risen Jesus’, rather than one where Jesus appeared to the disciples.<sup>3</sup>

How did the faith of the various characters differ after Jesus’ death? Is there a kind of faith that can serve as a prototype for believers in the biblical age? Researchers who tried to answer these questions are not in agreement, nor are they able to explain the responses of the biblical characters to the death and resurrection of Jesus in 19:38–20:31 as a unity.

This article will show that the passage in question can be explained as exhibiting two types of discipleship in response to the death of Jesus:

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author and are based on the USB<sup>3</sup> text. For a fuller discussion on the difference between πιστεύσητε and πιστεύητε in this context, see Carson (1987:2005) and Fee (1992).

<sup>3</sup> Also see Moloney (1998b:154).

(a) Discipleship based on seeing the resurrected Jesus (pattern #1), and  
(b) discipleship not based on seeing the resurrected Jesus (pattern #2).  
John 19:38–20:31 is a rhetorical unit, and its purpose is to encourage  
the readers to follow Jesus even though they do not see him physically  
present.

## 2. John 19:38–20:31 as a Literary Unit

Time indicators, locative indicators, and change in the cast of characters  
are three major ways of signalling the beginning of a literary unit. In  
19:38–20:29, there are four places where the temporal indicators and  
the cast of characters change.<sup>4</sup>

- (a) The section on Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus begins with  
'after these' (μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα) in 19:38.
- (b) The scene shifts to Mary Magdalene in 20:1 with 'on the first of  
the Sabbaths' (τῇ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων). The responses of Peter  
to the empty tomb and that of the beloved disciple (20:3–10) are  
embedded in this section (20:1–18).
- (c) The appearance of Jesus to the fearful disciples in 20:19 opens  
with another temporal phrase, 'when it was evening, on that day,  
on the first of the Sabbaths' (οὔσης οὖν ὀψίας τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ  
τῇ μιᾷ σαββάτων). The doubt of Thomas as he interacted with  
the disciples is found in this same section (20:19–25).
- (d) The appearance of Jesus to Thomas in 20:26 again begins with a  
temporal phrase, 'and after eight days' (καὶ μεθ' ἡμέρας ὀκτῶ).

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<sup>4</sup> For an alternate view that the passage is primarily divided by movement between  
locations, see Moloney (1998b:156–57), who labels 20:1–18 as 'Scenes at the Tomb',  
and 20:19–29 as 'Scenes in the House'.

John 19:38–20:31 is similar to a chiasm, where 20:1–18, 20:19–25, and 20:26–29 deal with the first pattern of discipleship, and 19:38–42 together with 20:30–31 pertain to the second pattern of discipleship (table 2).

Verses	Themes	Discipleship Pattern
19:38–42	Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus	pattern #2
20:1–18	Mary Magdalene	pattern #1
20:19–25	The disciples	pattern #1
20:26–29	Thomas	pattern #1
20:30–31	A call for discipleship	pattern #2

Table 2: *The structure of 19:38–20:31*

La Potterie (1984) regards the theme of seeing and believing in John 20 as forming a chiasm in itself.<sup>5</sup> This theory is not entirely satisfactory. It is true that the appearance of Jesus to the disciples is followed by their belief in Jesus in 20:19–25, and this finds a thematic parallel with the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene and her recognition of Jesus in 20:11–18; but Jesus’ appearance to Thomas in 20:26–29 is not parallel to 20:1–10, since Jesus has not yet physically revealed himself to Peter, the beloved disciple, or Mary Magdalene, prior to 20:10.

The other difficulty with the proposal by La Potterie is with the definition of ‘seeing’. The different verbs used to express ‘seeing’ in

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<sup>5</sup>For the significance of seeing and believing, see Dodd (1953:186).

John 20 overlap with one other semantically, and therefore, do not correlate to different levels of faith.<sup>6</sup> The physical act of seeing is expressed by βλέπει in 20:1 (Mary 'sees' the stone taken from the tomb) and in 20:5 (the beloved disciple 'sees' the linen cloths lying in the tomb); but a different verb θεωρεῖ is used in 20:6 to indicate that Peter 'sees' the linen cloths. Furthermore, θεωρεῖ is used in 20:14 to indicate that Mary Magdalene physically 'sees' Jesus.

At the beginning of John 20, it first appears that the verb εἶδεν in 20:8 is linked to a deeper kind of faith in Jesus (by the beloved disciple). Similarly, ἰδόντες in 20:20 (which is from the same root εἶδον), and ἑώρακα in 20:18 and 20:24 (from another root ὁράω) are used in the context of apprehending the risen Jesus as Lord. But this assumption is overturned by Jesus' use of these terms in 20:29. 'Not seeing and believe' (μὴ ἰδόντες καὶ πιστεύσαντες) in the latter part of 20:29 shows that 'seeing' (ἰδόντες) does not necessarily equate with believing (πιστεύσαντες) or the deepening of one's conversion. Hence, the use of ἰδόντες could mean the same thing as βλέπει or θεωρεῖ. This result illumines the intended meaning of ἑώρακάς in the first part of 20:29 (ἑώρακάς με πεπίστευκας). Since it and the second part of 20:29 (μὴ ἰδόντες καὶ πιστεύσαντες) are in parallel (the presence of seeing or the absence of seeing, followed by believing), it can be inferred that the semantic range of ἑώρακάς in the first part of 20:29 should be the same as that of ἰδόντες in the second part of 20:29. Hence, ἑώρακάς, like ἰδόντες, also does not automatically imply faith.

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<sup>6</sup> Also see Schnackenburg (1982:312).

### 3. Discipleship Based on Seeing the Resurrected Jesus (pattern #1)

In 19:38–20:31, the first pattern of discipleship is characterised by renewed hope after Jesus takes the initiative to show himself physically.<sup>7</sup> This is illustrated by three examples: Mary Magdalene, the disciples, and Thomas.

The narrative about Mary Magdalene in 20:1–18 is divided into four parts:<sup>8</sup> (a) Mary Magdalene tells the disciples about the empty tomb in 20:1–2 and this is contrasted by (b) her announcement of the resurrected Jesus to the disciples in 20:17–18. Sandwiched in between are: (c) the reaction of Peter and the beloved disciple to the empty tomb in 20:3–10, which is paralleled by (d) Mary Magdalene’s reaction to the empty tomb in 20:11–16.<sup>9</sup>

The suggestion by Crotty (1999:163) that the focus on Mary Magdalene extends into 20:18–28 is more difficult to see, since there is no indication in the text that Mary Magdalene was even there in 20:18–28.

Mary Magdalene’s initial response to the glorified Jesus was positive.<sup>10</sup> She went to the tomb of Jesus ‘just before dawn’, which presumably refers to the first chance that she had to visit the tomb (20:1). The darkness of the hour when Mary Magdalene went to the tomb (σκοτία ἔτι οὐσῆς) is not a sign of her desolation; rather, the timing of her visit

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<sup>7</sup> Also see Senior (1991:137).

<sup>8</sup> Schnackenburg (1982:301–2) and Talbert (1994:248) also regard Mary Magdalene as the main character in 20:1–18. For the view that 20:1–18 is not mainly about Mary Magdalene, but is equally about Peter, the beloved disciple and Mary Magdalene, see Stibbe (1993).

<sup>9</sup> For another scheme of 20:1–18, see Howard-Brook (1994–437).

<sup>10</sup> Also see Jasper (1993).

to the tomb signifies the imminent breakthrough of physical and spiritual light.<sup>11</sup> At the least, she was not afraid of what would happen to her if she were caught on the way and questioned by the religious authorities. She had also referred to Jesus as 'Lord' in 20:2 even though Jesus had died.

However, she was shaken at the sight of the empty tomb. Her focus shifted to who took Jesus' body (implied by the third person plural of the verbs ἦραν and ἔθηκαν), and *where* they had placed it. As she ran to Peter and the beloved disciple in 20:2, she was uncertain about the status of Jesus' body (οὐκ οἶδαμεν).<sup>12</sup>

When Mary Magdalene comes back to the scene again in 20:11, she 'was crying'. Her love for Jesus is unquestionable, but she was unable to resolve her plight, and she did not know what to do about it.<sup>13</sup> It is at this point that the two angels appeared to her (20:12).

Although she should be commended for not showing any fear at the sight of the angels, all she could do in response to their question (λέγουσιν αὐτῇ) in 20:13 was to rephrase what she had said to Peter and the beloved disciple earlier in 20:2: 'they took my Lord, and I do not know where they put him'. The change of the inflection of οἶδα from the plural in 20:2 to the singular here in 20:13 may be John's way of focusing the reader's attention on her intra-psychic state of uncertainty and even anxiety. Up to this point, her faith, therefore, is less than desirable. Her inability to see Jesus comes to the fore in 20:14 when she

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<sup>11</sup> See Howard-Brook (1994, 441), *contra* Stanley (1986:279).

<sup>12</sup> The identity of the rest of the people indicated by the first person plural of οἶδαμεν is not certain.

<sup>13</sup> Also see Keener (2003:1185).



turns around and ‘sees Jesus’, and yet, ‘does not know that he is Jesus’.<sup>14</sup> Instead, ‘she thinks that he is the gardener’ in 20:15.

But all this changed in 20:16 when Jesus called her by name, ‘Mary’.<sup>15</sup> It helps to state the obvious—that Mary Magdalene’s encounter with the risen Jesus came as a result of Jesus’ initiative to show himself to her. Her heart was enlightened and she was enabled to recognise Jesus as risen and glorified. Since Mary Magdalene had already ‘physically turned around’ (ἐστράφη) to face Jesus in 20:14, στραφεῖσα in 20:16 cannot mean that she physically turns again to situate herself away from Jesus.<sup>16</sup> This opens up the interpretative possibility that στραφεῖσα in 20:16 indicates a spiritual turning of her mind to the full reality and presence of Jesus in her life.<sup>17</sup> This reading is supported by the usage of this verb in 12:40, ‘so that they should not see with (their) eyes nor understand with (their) hearts and turn’ (νοήσωσιν τῇ καρδίᾳ καὶ στραφῶσιν). Since στραφῶσιν is collocated with νοήσωσιν τῇ καρδίᾳ in 12:40, it is possible that στραφεῖσα in 20:16 refers to a spiritual turning rather than a turning of the body.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The end of the appearance of angels in 20:14 does not necessarily mean that the scene involving the angels was ‘artificially’ inserted, *contra* Schnackenburg (1982:316). The appearance of the angels is only a precursor to the entrance of Jesus into this scene. When the main character (Jesus) arrives, there is no reason for the narrator to refer back to the angels.

<sup>15</sup> For an alternate view that the divine initiative in John 20 does not begin until 20:19, see Brodie (1993:557).

<sup>16</sup> For a different perspective, see Morris (1971:839).

<sup>17</sup> Also see Brodie (1993:570); Howard-Brook (1994:450); Lee (1998); Kim (2004:209).

<sup>18</sup> Schnackenburg (1982:317) also shares this view. But curiously, he uses the wrong evidence, since his evaluation of ‘στρέφεισθαι’ as meaning ‘to turn to’ (Luke 7:44; 10:23; 22:61; 23:28) is in fact the same as turning one’s body.

Her renewed faith, hope, and joy in the risen Jesus are put into action when she followed Jesus' instruction in 20:17 to tell the disciples about this good news.<sup>19</sup>

The disciples (20:19–25), like Mary Magdalene, were transformed by the appearance of Jesus to them. In 20:19, the disciples were initially afraid of the Jews. The 'doors that were shut, where the disciples were' is a graphic portrayal of their fear.<sup>20</sup> But after Jesus came 'in their midst', declared peace to them, and showed them the wounds of his 'hands' and his 'side', the fear of the disciples changed to joy because they finally recognised that this was the risen Jesus (20:19–20).

Like Mary Magdalene and the disciples, Thomas only recognised the risen Jesus after he saw Jesus' self-revelation to him (20:26–29). Initially, Thomas doubted the testimony of the disciples, and insisted that he 'will not believe' unless he could verify the resurrection of Jesus by putting his hands into the wounds of the body of the risen Jesus (20:25). In 20:26, Jesus came to Thomas, who was behind 'closed doors' at the time. This was similar to the situation of the disciples before they saw the risen Jesus. Jesus proclaimed the same blessing of 'peace to you' in 20:26 to Thomas (and others), as he did to the disciples in 20:19. Although Jesus offered in 20:27 (φέρε τὸν δάκτυλόν σου ὧδε καὶ ἴδε) to meet the conditions of belief set out by Thomas in 20:25 (ἐὰν μὴ ἴδω), there is no textual evidence that Thomas actually carried out the verification. His doubt had changed to confidence and

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<sup>19</sup> Also see Stanley (1986:280); Skamp (2000).

<sup>20</sup> Segovia (1985) agrees with this assessment. He writes: 'Despite the arrival and identification of "the hour," the disciples still fail to see and understand the nature and meaning of Jesus' glorification' (p. 92).

belief,<sup>21</sup> for the very next verse (20:28) records his declaration: ‘my Lord and my God’.<sup>22</sup>

Thomas underwent a ‘growth in faith’, but that growth was in response to the initiative of Jesus.<sup>23</sup> In spite of the certainty of Thomas’s confession in 20:28, the author does not praise him as having ‘reached the high peak of belief’.<sup>24</sup> It is also difficult to see how the insistence of Thomas to ‘see and touch’ Jesus is a positive action, for his desire for evidence stems from doubt rather than faith.<sup>25</sup> Jesus’ statement in 20:29 is a soft rebuke designed to highlight the inadequacy of Thomas’s faith. By itself, the statement of Jesus in 20:29, that ‘blessed are those who do not see and believe’, may be interpreted as a neutral pronouncement, but this is immediately preceded by Jesus’ comment about the conditional nature of Thomas’s faith, ‘because you have seen me, you have believed’. These two clauses are juxtaposed to show the contrast between the conditionality of Thomas’s faith and the unconditional faith that alone is blessed. So Thomas is a reminder that believers should not insist on seeing signs as a necessary condition for belief.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Although Thomas is the only character who explicitly confessed faith in the deity of Jesus after his resurrection (Bauckham 2008:129), his faith is not worthy of emulation because it is by sight and not by faith.

<sup>22</sup> Also see Bernard (1985:683); Beasley-Murray (1987:390).

<sup>23</sup> Byrne (1985:84).

<sup>24</sup> Tenney (1948:284).

<sup>25</sup> For a different perspective, see Lee (1998:43): ‘Thomas’s stress on the incarnate presence of the Lord and his conviction that the wounds are intrinsic to that reality, are signs of awareness and insight.’

<sup>26</sup> O’Brien’s (2005:295) positive evaluation of Jesus’ statement to Thomas is based on equating the linguistic form of 20:29 (‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe’) with Jesus’ statement to Nathanael in 1:50 (‘Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these’). But there is an important difference between the two. Whereas the statement after the question in 1:50 is stated positively, the statement after the question in 20:29 is stated negatively. The result

## 4. Discipleship Not Based on Seeing the Resurrected Jesus (pattern #2)

In contrast to the first pattern of discipleship, which is faith in response to seeing the risen Jesus, the second pattern of discipleship is based on one's ability to discern his presence and one's courage to follow Jesus even when one has not seen him physically-risen.<sup>27</sup> This discipleship pattern is illustrated by the faith of the beloved disciple, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus in the period after Jesus was crucified and before his resurrection appearances.<sup>28</sup>

The section on Peter and the beloved disciple (20:3–10), which is sandwiched in between 20:1–2 and 20:11–18, is an excursus. It appears in the section on Mary Magdalene in order to provide a contrast between the faiths of Mary Magdalene with that of the beloved disciple.

But first, Peter is placed next to the beloved disciple to act as his foil. After Peter (and the beloved disciple) hears from Mary Magdalene about the news of the disappearance of Jesus' body, he (and the beloved disciple) ran to the tomb (20:3–4). Although Peter lagged behind the beloved disciple in getting there (ὁ ἄλλος μαθητῆς προέδραμεν τάχιον τοῦ Πέτρου), he 'entered into the tomb' ahead of the beloved disciple in 20:6. But the text only reads that 'he saw the linen cloths lying' there. In contrast to the beloved disciple, there is no indication at all in the text that Peter grasped the significance of what he saw.

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actually is to contrast Jesus' approval of Nathanael in 1:50 and his disapproval of Thomas in 20:29.

<sup>27</sup> Also see Hoskyns (1947:639).

<sup>28</sup> *Contra* Bultmann's (1971:696) view that 'all the other disciples as well ... indeed, like Mary Magdalene, believed only when they saw.'

As for the beloved disciple, his initial description, like that of Mary Magdalene, is one of excitement and expectancy. He ran with Peter to the tomb and even outran him (20:3–4).<sup>29</sup> The beloved disciple was able to discern the glorified Jesus in 20:8.<sup>30</sup> He ‘saw and believed’.<sup>31</sup> His ability to believe in Jesus even without seeing his resurrection body is in stark contrast to Mary Magdalene’s initial inability to recognize Jesus even when the risen Jesus stood right in front of her (20:14). And he is a foil to her, in that she only recognised Jesus after Jesus revealed himself to her in 20:16.<sup>32</sup>

Although the beloved disciple’s faith belongs to the second pattern of discipleship, he is by no means perfect, nor is his faith ‘the climax of the narrative’.<sup>33</sup> And Moloney (2009:364) is only partially right when he says that ‘for the Fourth Evangelist the beloved disciple is the model of all disciples.’

Firstly, after his initial excitement, the beloved disciple displayed hesitancy in entering the tomb.<sup>34</sup> Though he reached the tomb before

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<sup>29</sup> It is unlikely that the beloved disciple got there first by taking a shortcut that Peter did not know about, since 20:3 says that ‘they were running together’. The imperfect tense reflects an imperfective aspect of the action, meaning that they were running together for the entire time.

<sup>30</sup> Also see Talbert (1994:250).

<sup>31</sup> John 20:8 only says that ‘he saw’ something, and does not say what he actually saw. The clue is in the preceding clause (καὶ τὸ σουδάριον ... οὐ μετὰ τῶν ὀθνίων κείμενον ἀλλὰ χωρὶς ἐντετυλιγμένον εἰς ἓνα τόπον). This stative clause (20:7) functions to introduce the ‘facecloth’ (σουδάριον) in the text, and this is the object that the beloved disciple finally saw when he entered the tomb.

<sup>32</sup> Minear (1976:127–28) offers an alternate theory that the beloved disciple’s statement was his agreement with Mary Magdalene that Jesus’ body had been taken away by somebody.

<sup>33</sup> Hoskyns (1947:540). Also see Lenski (1942:1344); O’Brien (2005). For another perspective, see Lightfoot (1956:332); Gloer (1993:269–302); Keener (2003:1184).

<sup>34</sup> Lightfoot (1956:332) explains the hesitancy of the beloved disciple as ‘natural reverence and reserve’. For another perspective, see Countryman (1994:133).

Peter, 'he did not actually enter' it in 20:5. The description in 20:5, that he peers in and 'sees the linen cloths lying' there and yet does not see the 'facecloth' of 20:7, makes one wonder what could possibly have prevented him from exploring the tomb further at this point.

Secondly, in 20:9, 'for they did not yet know the scripture that it was necessary for him to rise from the dead', gives the context for his faith (καὶ ἐπίστευσεν) in 20:8. The particle γάρ is used here to signal that 20:9 provides the background information for interpreting the preceding verses. John 20:9 is teaching that although scripture has foretold that Jesus would rise from the dead, the beloved disciple did not know (the Old Testament) scripture sufficiently well in order to understand this or to believe in it through scripture alone.<sup>35</sup>

Lastly, silence in the text suggests that the beloved disciple kept his faith to himself and that he did not relay the good news to the disciples.

These three points suggest that (even though the faith of the beloved disciple is categorically different from that of Mary Magdalene) he is not the best example of the second pattern of discipleship. For that, we need to turn to Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.<sup>36</sup> Unlike the beloved disciple, they believed in Jesus even when they had not seen the slightest evidence of his resurrection after his death.<sup>37</sup>

Joseph of Arimathea needed a lot of courage to ask Pilate for the body of Jesus for burial (ἄρη τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ) in 19:38.<sup>38</sup> The boldness of

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<sup>35</sup> Psalms 15:10 (LXX) (ὅτι οὐκ ἐγκαταλείψεις τὴν ψυχὴν μου εἰς ἄδην οὐδὲ δώσεις τὸν ὄσιόν σου ἰδεῖν διαφθοράν) might be the referent here.

<sup>36</sup> This point is sometimes neglected, even in a major monograph on discipleship (Chennattu 2006).

<sup>37</sup> Also see Lenski (1942:1324); Lawton (1967:96); Brown (1970:940, 959; 1979:72); Schnackenburg (1982:13–21); Brodie (1993:559).

<sup>38</sup> Also see Morris (1971:826); Keener (2003:1157, 1160).

his action, which is coded in the main clause, is more salient in light of the preceding qualifying participial clause (κεκρυμμένος δὲ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων). Whereas he was a disciple of Jesus only in secret (due to his fear of the Jews), the glorification of Jesus at the cross has somehow transformed his heart and has now given him the inner strength to follow Jesus, regardless of the consequences.<sup>39</sup>

He was not the only person who followed Jesus courageously after the glorification of Jesus. Nicodemus also came to Jesus (19:39). The affinity of the courage of Nicodemus and that of Joseph of Arimathea is coded by the similarity of the clausal structures of 19:38 and 19:39. Whereas, the participial clause describing Joseph of Arimathea (κεκρυμμένος δὲ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων) is inserted within the rest of the clause in 19:38, the participial clause describing Nicodemus's 'coming to Jesus at night in the past' (ὁ ἐλθὼν πρὸς αὐτὸν νυκτὸς τὸ πρῶτον) is placed within the rest of 19:39.

Nicodemus came to Jesus 'at night' (νυκτὸς) back in 3:2 because he was afraid. Νυκτὸς symbolised his fear then; but now, like Joseph of Arimathea, his heart is enlightened by the glorification of Jesus.<sup>40</sup>

Bassler (1989:641) reads the coming of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus to Jesus at night in 19:38–42 as a sign of their 'fear of the Jews', in the same way that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night in 3:2 because he did not want his Jewish peers to know about it.

Bassler asks, if 'fear of the Jews' compromises the faith of Joseph and Nicodemus, how are they to be distinguished from the rest of the

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<sup>39</sup> The synoptic accounts of the burial of Jesus by Joseph of Arimathea in Matthew 27:57–60, Mark 15:42–46, and Luke 23:50–54 appear to make the same point.

<sup>40</sup> Carson (1991:629) likewise sees a profound change of attitude on the part of Nicodemus towards following Jesus.

disciples, who, after the crucifixion, hid behind closed doors 'for fear of the Jews' (20:19)?

This argument presumes that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were fearful of the Jews. Their faith was hence compromised, and they were no different from the rest of the disciples. But 19:38–42 shows the opposite.<sup>41</sup> The perfect tense of the participle *κεκρυμμένος* (19:38), which qualifies the main noun, Joseph of Arimathea, refers to his emotional state prior to 19:38, just as the adverbial phrase *τὸ πρῶτον* in 19:39 refers to Nicodemus's visit to Jesus prior to 19:39.<sup>42</sup> And Joseph of Arimathea's former 'fear of the Jews' in 19:38 is in stark contrast to his lack of fear in approaching Pilate for Jesus' body 'now'.<sup>43</sup> As for the timing of the burial, it is highly probable that it did take place as the day grew dark. But since the crucifixion of Jesus took place in late afternoon, what other time could Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus have used to prepare the body of Jesus for burial if not in the few hours of dusk before the Sabbath arrived?

The actions of these two go beyond their fine sentiment of Jesus as merely a teacher (or a friend).<sup>44</sup> If Nicodemus did not have the courage to ally himself to Jesus in 3:2 (even though he regarded Jesus as a

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<sup>41</sup> Köstenberger (2004:120 n. 15, 554–55) seems to agree with Goulder (1991) in seeing the portrayal of Nicodemus in John as negative. But whatever was Nicodemus's reaction to Jesus in 3:2 can only be counted against him if his characterization remains the same in 19:38–42, which is not the case.

<sup>42</sup> While the Greek perfect tense does not automatically correlate with any particular temporal tense, the perfect tense does indicate past temporal in certain contexts (see the discussion of the perfect tense by Porter (1989:252–65)).

<sup>43</sup> This reading separates the qualifying clause into two parts, where (a) *ὄν μαθητῆς τοῦ Ἰησοῦ* is translated as 'being (now) a disciple of Jesus', and (b) *κεκρυμμένος δὲ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων* as 'but who was in secret because of the fear of the Jews'.

<sup>44</sup> For a contrary view, see Talbert (1994:242); Koester (1995:240–43); Collins (1995:363).



teacher), then Nicodemus is certainly not risking his life now (at a time when being associated with Jesus was especially dangerous) to give Jesus a proper burial. It is not just a positive regard for Jesus that prompted the two of them to bury Jesus. There must have been a qualitative change in their hearts, which gave them the courage to act on behalf of Jesus. This change came about when they discerned the glorification of Jesus in his death and the continued presence of Jesus before he rose from the dead. For them, Jesus was not just a man, a religious teacher with superior insight, or a prophet; Jesus was the Son of God who was sent into the world to reveal God's love on the cross.

It is hard to see how Nicodemus's generous contribution of burial spices or the fact that he and Joseph of Arimathea bound Jesus in linen cloths can be interpreted as their inability to see beyond the death of Jesus.<sup>45</sup>

The point of 19:38–42 is to demonstrate the extent of their courage to follow Jesus as Jews. Nicodemus brought spices because the burial that they sought to give Jesus in 19:40 was a Jewish one (καθὼς ἔθος ἐστὶν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ἐνταφιάζειν), and the large quantity showed that he had the utmost respect for Jesus.<sup>46</sup> The fact that they were concerned to avoid prolonging the burial beyond the day of preparation (διὰ τὴν παρασκευὴν τῶν Ἰουδαίων) in 19:42 was also John's way of emphasising their concern for their Jewish tradition. The text is highlighting the costliness of their discipleship, since they could have

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<sup>45</sup> Also see Osiek (1989). For a contrary perspective, see Meeks (1972); Jonge (1977); Howard-Brook (1994:435); Heil (1995:115). Newbiggin (1982:260) says: 'Reverence for a dead prophet is part of the old creation. Joseph, Nicodemus, and the costly materials of their devotion still belong to the world which is passing away.'

<sup>46</sup> The use of spices (cf. the burial of Herod the Great [Josephus, *Ant.* 17.8.3]) and binding the dead (cf. Lazarus in John 11:44) were Jewish practices.

been expelled from the community whose customs and traditions they cherished.

## 5. Conclusion

Summarising the responses of the various characters to the death of Jesus, we see two patterns of discipleship (table 3).

	<b>Pattern One: Discipleship Based on Seeing the Physically-risen Jesus</b>			<b>Pattern Two: Discipleship not Based on Seeing the Physically-risen Jesus</b>	
	<i>Mary Magdalene</i>	<i>The Disciples</i>	<i>Thomas</i>	<i>Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus</i>	<i>The beloved disciple</i>
Attitude or action before encountering the physically- risen Jesus	Fearful of not finding the body of Jesus	Fearful	Doubt	Courageous; took the risk to bury the body of Jesus	Believed
Encountered the physically- risen Jesus	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

Attitude or action after encountering the physically-risen Jesus	Joyful; declared the good news to the disciples	Joyful; declared the good news to Thomas	Confessed Jesus as Lord	n/a	n/a
Fits the call to believe without seeing the physically-risen Jesus	No	No	No	Yes	Yes

Table 3: Two patterns of discipleship

Making a contrast between these two patterns of discipleship does not demean the faith of Mary or Thomas (or the disciples) as worthless. Mary’s recognition of Jesus after his resurrection, and Thomas’s final declaration of faith in Jesus is admirable. In spite of their initial hesitancy, they did end up believing in Jesus’ triumph over death.<sup>47</sup> In this regard, their faith is commendable, especially when contrasted with the Pharisees’ blatant refusal to believe regardless of how many signs and miracles were demonstrated before them (cf. 9:16). But, lest one believes that all characters in the gospel of John are equal in their quality of discipleship after the death of Jesus, one must ask why John did not use the narrative strategy of ‘misunderstanding’ for Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus in 19:38–42, *contra* O’Brien (2005:288).

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<sup>47</sup> Moloney (1998b:162, 166) sees a progression of faith in the life of Mary Magdalene and the beloved disciple. Also see Byrne (1985).

Although Mary Magdalene, the disciples, and Thomas all came to full faith in Jesus after seeing the physically-risen Jesus, the point of this passage is elsewhere. In 20:30–31, the readers are called to learn from Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and the beloved disciple and to believe even when it is impossible now (since the time of his ascension) to see the physically-risen Jesus.

The first pattern of discipleship seems to suggest that the followers of Jesus are able to see the glorified Jesus only when Jesus takes the initiative to show himself to them. But Jesus' closing response to Thomas's confession in 20:29, 'blessed are those who do not see and believe', is a reminder to people that it is possible to have faith in Jesus as revealed in both the Old and the New Testaments, even though they have not actually seen the physically-resurrected body of Jesus.<sup>48</sup>

Is it not possible that 'these things' (ταῦτα) in 20:31 not only refers (a) to the individual signs (changing water to wine in 2:1–11, the healing of the official's son in 4:43–54, the feeding of the five thousand in 6:1–14, the healing of the blind man [cf. 9:16], the rising of Lazarus [cf. 11:47; 12:18]), or (b) to the whole gospel of John (more generically), but also (c) to 19:38–20:29? 'These things stand written so that you may believe', even though you have never seen the physically-risen Jesus. It is possible and normative for us in this day to follow the second pattern of discipleship and to believe in Jesus in the manner of Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and the beloved disciple once we lay aside our predisposition to fear and chronic doubt. Then, we shall see the risen Jesus in our hearts.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Also see Lightfoot (1956:334).

<sup>49</sup> This article is a revision of a paper that was read by the author at the Johannine section of the 2011 SBL International Conference at King's College London. Thanks to Dr. Stephen H. Levinsohn for his critiques.

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# A Biblical Model of Mentoring with a Knowledge Management Perspective

Alton Chua and Pelham Lessing<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The primary purpose of this paper is to develop a biblical model of mentoring with a knowledge management perspective. To this end, four research questions are submitted: (a) what are the components of a biblical model of mentoring with a knowledge management perspective? (b) What are the nature and types of knowledge imparted in a mentoring relationship? (c) What are the impediments to knowledge impartation in a mentoring relationship? (d) What knowledge management strategies can be used to overcome the impediments to knowledge impartation in a mentoring relationship? To address these problems, the Wesleyan quadrilateral approach of doing theology was used.

First, five major components of a biblical model of mentoring with a knowledge perspective can be identified. They are the mentor, the protégé, the knowledge to be imparted, the mentor-protégé relationship, and the Holy Spirit. Next, the nature of knowledge imparted can be conceptualised as explicit-tacit-implicit, declarative-procedural-causal, as well as human-social-structured. The types of knowledge imparted cover instruction, encouragement, and inspiration. Third, four

main impediments to knowledge impartation are the negative attributes of the mentor, the negative attributes of the protégé, the characteristics of the knowledge, and the arduous mentor-protégé relationship. Finally, knowledge management strategies to overcome the impediments to knowledge impartation in a mentoring relationship include mentor motivation, selection and training, a clear developmental path, and constant prayer for the protégé, and an organically-nurtured mentor-protégé relationship to promote trust between them.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

The term *mentor* has its root in the world of Greek mythology. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Mentor was a character entrusted with the task to tutor and guide Odysseus' son, the young Telemachus (Daloz 1999:20). The concept of mentoring has since been extended to various fields including management and education. In the context of Christianity, mentoring has been defined as 'a triadic relationship between mentor, mentoree and the Holy Spirit, where the mentoree can discover the already present action of God, intimacy with God, ultimate identity as a child of God and a unique voice for kingdom responsibility' (Anderson and Reese 1999:12).

Even though the term *mentor* cannot be found in the scriptures, the notion of mentoring permeates them. Mentor-protégé pairs described in

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

the Old Testament include Moses and Joshua (Deut 31:7–8), Naomi and Ruth (Ruth 1:7–18; 2:17–3:16), as well as Elijah and Elisha (2 Kgs 2:1–6). In the New Testament, Jesus mentored the Twelve. One of them, Peter, forged some form of mentoring relationship with Barnabas (Gal 2:11–13), who went on to mentor Paul and Mark (Acts 12:25–13:5). Paul in turn mentored Timothy, Titus, and several others (2 Tim 2:2).

In the contemporary church, it is not uncommon to find mentoring activities in a variety of formats, ranging from formalised mentoring programmes lasting from a few months to those that are intended to be informal and perpetual (Davies 2001:234). Yet, the theological underpinnings of the mentoring process have rarely been afforded substantial attention. In fact, mentoring activities are either developed on the basis of expedient considerations (MacPherson and Rice 2000) or vaguely guided by Christian virtues of love and accountability (Daman 2008:140).

In terms of research, two existing gaps can be identified (Doolittle 2010; Gilbreath *et al.* 2008; Wilson 2001). First, little attention has been paid to an important aspect of mentoring: its knowledge-intensive nature. Productive mentoring relationships entail the processes of imparting knowledge from the mentor to the protégé. This is not merely confined to the cognitive domain, but also encompasses attitude and mindset. Thus, the body of literature on knowledge management and knowledge impartation in particular, affords a vantage perspective to examine the extent to which mentoring has been efficacious. Second, the number of mentoring research articles that are situated in the Christian context pales in comparison to the volume of popular articles that dispense advice on Christian mentoring (Raab and Clinton 1985; Stanley and Clinton 1992). There exists much scope to bring

theological formulations and reflections to bear on the topic of mentoring.

## 1.2. Research questions

In view of the fact that mentoring practices in the church, which are essentially knowledge-intensive, are often ad-hoc, organic, and generally uninformed by the scriptures, the primary purpose of this paper is to develop a biblical model of mentoring with a knowledge management perspective. To this end, four research questions are submitted:

- (a) What are the components of a biblical model of mentoring with a knowledge management perspective?
- (b) What is the nature of and types of knowledge imparted in a mentoring relationship?
- (c) What are the impediments to knowledge impartation in a mentoring relationship?
- (d) What knowledge management strategies can be used to overcome the impediments to knowledge impartation in a mentoring relationship?

Theological truths gleaned from the scriptures, in particular 1 and 2 Timothy, form the overarching framework of the biblical model of mentoring developed in this paper. Auxiliary to the scriptures is literature from the domains of mentoring and knowledge management. Mentoring has been recognised as one of the effective mechanisms by which knowledge is imparted from one person to another (Fleig-Palmer and Schoorman 2011:336). Research on mentoring is reviewed with the objective to identify its major themes. In parallel, dynamics of the mentoring relationship are uncovered from a knowledge management perspective. Using the Wesleyan quadrilateral approach, this paper

relies on four components, namely, the scriptures, in particular 1 and 2 Timothy, mentoring and knowledge management literature, as well as tradition and experience to address the research objectives.

This paper is significant on two counts. First, mentoring activities which have been ongoing in the church for a long time are largely a function of the subjective conceptions of mentors and protégés involved (Franke and Dahlgren 1996), and generally lack robust theological underpinnings to inform practice. Thus, this paper gives emphasis to the praxis side of theology.

Next, insofar as mentoring is concerned, Christian literature tends to focus on areas such as the process of mentoring (Anderson and Reese 1999:13), the roles of mentoring (Stanley and Clinton 1999:47–130) and the qualities of the mentor (Davies 2001:234). Nonetheless, the knowledge-intensive nature of mentoring has hitherto been largely ignored. By examining mentoring in the Christian context with a knowledge management perspective, this paper hopes to add to the fields of practical theology and knowledge management, both of which have implications for mentoring.

## **2. Mentoring Practices: Past and Present**

### **2.1. A survey of mentoring in the Bible**

In the Old Testament, central to the spiritual formation and religious education of any Hebrew child was the Torah. However, ‘rather than a set of rules legislated by a cosmic lawgiver, this covenant-law is a way of life to follow that had to be learned through the close association with a teacher’ (Williams 2005:182). Moses trained young Joshua to succeed him as the leader (Exod 24:13; Num 27:18). Eli raised Samuel

since he was a child to be a priest and judge (1 Sam 3:1). When Samuel grew up, he in turn anointed and advised the future King David (1 Sam 19:18). Elijah mentored Elisha (1 Kgs 19:19–21) while Jehoida took responsibility for seven-year-old Joash and taught him how to be a godly king like his predecessor David (2 Kgs 12:2).

There is equally no lack of mentoring examples in the New Testament. Elizabeth encouraged young Mary, believed in her pregnancy, and blessed her (Luke 2:39–56). Jesus also considered mentoring an important part of his earthly ministry. Apart from carrying out a teaching ministry to the Galilean crowds, he was engaged in developing a personal relationship with his disciples (Matt 13:10–23). Paul mentored several men during his lifetime, including Sosthenes (1 Cor 1:1), Tychicus (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7), Silvanus (1 Thess 1:1), Titus (Tit 1:1) and Timothy (1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:2) to whom he wrote two epistles.

## **2.2. Mentoring in the church**

Throughout the history of the church, mentoring relationships played a crucial role in developing and passing the faith from one generation to the next. Mentors not only help clarify the call of God in the protégés' lives, but develop the inner character and spiritual depth of their protégés. The people of God have always continued in this tradition by engaging in some form of mentoring to prepare godly servant-leaders for the communities of their generation. They include 'Augustine in the fourth and fifth-century Africa, Catherine of Siena in the twelfth-century Italy, John Newton in the eighteenth-century England, Dietrich Bonhoeffer in twentieth-century Germany' (Williams 2005:189). As a result of the mentoring efforts of these men and women, each generation lived out 'the biblical truth that healthy, obedient



congregations can reproduce in chain reactions of daughter, grand-daughter, great grand-daughter churches' (O'Connor 2006:317).

Mentoring continues to be relevant today in the preservation and spreading of the gospel message. Para-churches, such as the Navigators and Campus Crusade for Christ, advocate one-on-one mentoring and a disciplined programme for Bible study, scripture memorisation, and training in witnessing (Hull 2009:18). Their focus, method, and the ability to process large numbers of people through a curriculum have made significant inroads into the churches. Churches, too, commonly run mentoring programmes (sometimes known as discipleship programmes) which allow for both mentors and protégés experiencing the blessings of participating, encouraging, and supporting spiritual friendships.

### **3. Mentoring Insights from 1 and 2 Timothy**

#### **3.1. Overview of 1 and 2 Timothy**

Commonly called the Pastoral Epistles since the eighteenth century, 1 and 2 Timothy (together with Titus) were letters written by the apostle Paul to his protégé, Timothy, whom he had left in charge of the church in Ephesus. Originally from Lystra, Timothy was of mixed lineage. His mother was Jewish (2 Tim 1:5) while his father was a Greek (Acts 16:1–3). Paul probably met him for the first time during his first missionary trip (Acts 13:49–14:25). When Paul visited that area a second time, he heard the local believers 'speak with such glowing praise of the young man that the apostle felt compelled to meet him' (Swindoll 2010:15). Paul desired for the young disciple to travel with him and had him circumcised to accommodate the expectations of the Jews whom they would seek to evangelise. This began a long mentoring

relationship and mutual affection in the work of the Lord (Phil 2:19–24).

Paul's purposes in writing 1 Timothy were three-fold, namely, (a) to stress the importance of teaching sound doctrine and firmly opposing unsound doctrine, (b) to give ecclesiastical instructions over how the church ought to be organised, and (c) to dispense personal advice to Timothy in the areas of health and conduct (Fee 2011). The purposes for 2 Timothy stemmed from a combination of official and personal reasons (Picirilli 1990:298). In an official sense, Paul wrote to strengthen Timothy and encourage him to remain faithful to the ministry (2 Tim 1:6–12). Paul also intended to continue warning Timothy against the danger of false teachers and unsound doctrines. On a personal note, Paul wrote to request Timothy's presence in Rome. It was clear Paul longed for Timothy's companionship during the last days of his life. Besides calling Timothy to his side, Paul sought to appeal to Timothy's loyalty, given the incidents of deflections (Fee 2011).

### **3.2. Paul's mentoring approach**

The mentoring flavour of 1 and 2 Timothy is unmistakable. A two-pronged approach to mentoring can be observed, namely, empowerment and deployment (Hoehl 2011:36–41). Empowerment is defined as a 'cognitive state characterised by a sense of perceived control, competence, and goal internalization' (Menon 1999:162). Paul deliberately emphasised these components by assuring Timothy that his calling was from God (1 Tim 1:18), setting an example for Timothy to follow (2 Tim 1:13), and reminding Timothy of his ministerial goals (1 Tim 4:13–16).

Next, as Paul gained confidence in Timothy's competence as a minister, he deployed Timothy into one of the most demanding ministerial environments: the church in Ephesus. Paul had previously spent time developing the church at Ephesus, but now was concerned about the spread of false doctrine and heresy among its members. By offering Timothy the challenging position of dealing with the issues at Ephesus, Paul gave Timothy the opportunity to exercise his ministerial competencies. Besides issuing explicit instructions on matters such as worship and prayer (1 Tim 2:1–15) and to combating false teachings (2 Tim 2:18), Paul encouraged Timothy in his personal spirituality (1 Tim 6:11–12) and pointed him to the eschatological reality of Christ's reward and return (1 Tim 6:14–16; 2 Tim 4:7–8).

### **3.3. Mentoring insights**

Three mentoring insights are salient from 1 and 2 Timothy. First is the tightly-knit relationship between Paul and Timothy. Paul referred to Timothy as his 'true son in the faith' (1 Tim 1:1). From the outset, Timothy was an ideal protégé for Paul. Swindoll (2010:16) notes that Timothy was in fact an individual very much like the apostle who straddled the Jewish and Gentile worlds. Paul found in Timothy a kindred spirit; resolute (1 Tim 1:18), emotional (2 Tim 1:4) and studious (2 Tim 3:14–15). In return, Timothy found in Paul an exemplary model, a man

gifted in many ways, but called to fulfill a mission ill-suited for his natural inclinations. Paul had not been trained to speak publicly, his appearance and demeanor apparently lacked polish, and his poor health made traveling a burden. Both men would have to carry out their ministries through a shared dependence on God to equip and direct them (Swindoll 2010:16).

Next, Paul's patterns of mentoring comprised a mix of instructions, encouragements, and inspiration. Paul sought to impart knowledge through instruction on a slew of practical issues, ranging from worship and prayer (1 Tim 2:1–10) and the selection criteria for leaders in the church (1 Tim 3:1–13) on how to become 'a good minister of Christ Jesus' (1 Tim 4:6).

In addition, Paul infused encouragement into his message to Timothy. For example, Paul exhorted him to 'fight the battle well' by reminding him of the affirmative prophecies made about him (1 Tim 1:18). Paul continued with words of encouragement in 2 Timothy. In particular, he commended Timothy's 'sincere faith' and reminded him to 'fan into flame the gift of God' because 'God did not give us a spirit of timidity' (1:5–7).

Furthermore, Paul sought to inspire Timothy to look beyond the current situation at Ephesus and to focus on the grander scheme of God's plan. He used his own background as a 'blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man' to illustrate the immensity of the grace of God (1 Tim 1:13). Paul highlighted his own desperate situation and testified of the deliverance he experienced from God (2 Tim 3:10–11), and inspired Timothy with the eschatological reality that the 'crown of righteousness' will be awarded not only to him, but 'all those who longed for his appearing' (2 Tim 4:7–8).

Third, in Paul's mentoring efforts to Timothy through the two epistles, he had made several references to the Holy Spirit. These references could be structured around three themes. First, he linked the Holy Spirit to the person and work of Jesus (1 Tim 3:16), as well as to the scriptures (2 Tim 3:16). Specifically, Paul taught Timothy to recognise the Holy Spirit's witness to the divine sonship of Jesus, as well as in the ministry of the apostles and the work of the church.

Next, Paul affirmed the prophetic role of the Holy Spirit in warning about apostasy by writing that ‘The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith’ (1 Tim 4:1). Paul assured Timothy that the current era of evil did not emerge without the Holy Spirit’s knowledge.

Finally, Paul emphasised the empowering role of the Holy Spirit in Timothy’s ministry amid the dire current situation. Specifically, Paul urged Timothy to ‘stir up the gift of God’, which included preaching, teaching, and evangelising, and contrasted Timothy’s current sense of timidity with the power, love, and sound mind the Holy Spirit gives (2 Tim 1:6–7, 13–14).

## **4. Mentoring Insights from Knowledge Management**

### **4.1. Dynamics and roles in mentoring**

In mentoring, there are at least four dynamics involved (Clinton 1995:6). The first is attraction. The mentor must see the potential value in working with the protégé, while the protégé must look up to the mentor as a model.

The second is relationship, which can be defined as the ‘nurturing hospitable space of trust and intimacy’ (Anderson and Reese 1999:13). Without doubt, a strong relationship is necessary for mentoring to be impactful.

The third is responsiveness. For spiritual growth and maturity to take place, the protégé needs to be teachable, submissive, and responsive to the direction of the mentor (Anderson and Reece 1999:12). However, to build commitment toward the plan for growth, the mentor has to be engaged with the protégé’s thoughts, feelings, and aspirations, so that

both the mentor and protégé have a hand in charting the mentoring journey together.

The fourth is accountability. The mentor is responsible for evaluating how the protégé progresses, and hold the protégé accountable along a path for growth.

Depending on the level of involvement with their protégés, mentors can be placed along a continuum. At the most extreme end is intensive mentoring where mentoring activities are deliberate (Stanley and Clinton 1992:41). A mentor can play the roles of a discipler, spiritual guide and coach. In the middle of the continuum, mentoring is occasional. Here, a mentor can play the roles of a counsellor, teacher, and sponsor. At the other extreme end, where mentoring activities are not deliberate, mentoring takes a passive form. A mentor can either be a contemporary person who can be respected and imitated, or a historical figure whose words and deeds are gleaned, usually from books.

#### **4.2. Knowledge impartation: nature and types**

In mentoring, the transference of knowledge from the mentor to the protégé takes a distinct significance and is referred to as knowledge impartation. In fact, knowledge impartation calls for the 'whole corpus of consciousness ... it involves the whole person, as mind and body; emotion, cognition and physicality together create what is known' (McInerney 2002:1012).

Despite the amorphous nature of knowledge, scholars generally agree that it can be classified as explicit, tacit, and implicit (Leonardi and Bailey 2008:414). Explicit and tacit knowledge differ in that the former can be easily articulated while the latter cannot. Explicit knowledge includes procedures and instructions, while tacit knowledge covers

intuition and judgment. Implicit knowledge lies somewhere between explicit and tacit—it is not articulated but could be made so.

Another classification divides knowledge into declarative (know what), procedural (know how) and causal (know why) (Zack 1999:46), all of which can be deemed either as explicit knowledge when articulated or implicit when kept to oneself. Declarative knowledge refers to the description of concepts and theories that are timeless. Procedural knowledge refers to the steps needed to perform a task. Causal knowledge is an explanation of how or why something occurs.

A third classification differentiates between human, social, and structured knowledge (De Long and Fahey 2000). Human knowledge is akin to tacit knowledge which includes cognition and skills that individuals possess. Social knowledge refers largely to tacit knowledge created and shared by a group. Structured knowledge is detached from humans but embedded in artefacts, systems, processes, and routines.

Three types of knowledge can be imparted in mentoring. The first is instruction which is given as an act of furnishing with authoritative directions. Given that it is usually laden with cognitive content, the protégé who receives an instruction from the mentor is able to expand his or her own reservoir of knowledge.

The second type of knowledge is encouragement, which is a process or an action that conveys the mentor's respect for and trusts in the protégé (Pepper and Henry 1985:266).

The third type of knowledge is inspiration. The mentor inspires the protégé to reach goals that may have previously seemed unreachable by raising the protégé's expectations, and communicating confidence that the protégé can achieve those goals (Antonakis and House 2002:9–10).

Examples of imparting knowledge through inspiration include communicating attributes of a role model for the protégé to follow and using persuasion to build morale (Wu *et al.* 2010:92).

### **4.3. Knowledge impartation: impediments and strategies**

Even though knowledge impartation is integral to mentoring, it does not always happen efficaciously. Using the idea of knowledge 'stickiness' (Szulanski 2003:9–13), four sources of impediments to knowledge impartation can be identified. The first is the mentor. As a gatekeeper of knowledge, the mentor's motivation to supply or facilitate knowledge access to the protégé is likely to influence the extent to which the protégé is able to receive knowledge. Another factor relating to the mentor is the issue of credibility (Szulanski 2003:28). The mentor's credibility affects the extent to which the protégé is willing to receive knowledge.

The second source of impediment to knowledge is the knowledge itself. Two characteristics of knowledge that impede knowledge impartation are causal ambiguity and an unproven state of knowledge. Causally ambiguous knowledge lacks the certainty of cause-and-effect relationship, while knowledge, which is unproven, does not elicit a positive expectation of its efficacy. As a result, the protégé is unlikely to accept such knowledge from the mentor.

The third source of impediment to knowledge is the protégé. Specifically, the mentor's lack of motivation to receive knowledge represents a significant barrier to knowledge impartation. Another factor is the protégé's lack of absorptive capacity. Without a prior stock of requisite knowledge, the protégé is unable to recognise the value of new knowledge from the mentor.



The fourth source is the relationship between the mentor and the protégé. If the mentoring relationship is arduous, then trust and openness are likely to be missing. This hampers mentor-protégé communication, which, in turn, impedes knowledge impartation.

In view of the impediments to knowledge impartation, a four-pronged strategy is proposed. The first prong focuses on the mentor. Empirical evidence has shown intrinsic motivations, such as knowledge self-efficacy and altruism, are more significant predictors of knowledge impartation intention than extrinsic motivations, such as expected formal rewards (Lin 2007:145). Thus, rather than incentivising the mentor through overt means, an approach could be to appeal to a higher-order sense of purpose in mentoring. As for credibility, the selection of mentor needs to be based on a number of criteria, such as those listed in 1 Timothy.

The second prong focuses on the knowledge to be imparted. This strategy involves training and educating the mentor to be cognisant of the knowledge to be imparted. As far as possible, causally ambiguous and unproven knowledge which cannot stand under the scrutiny of scripture must be avoided (Acts 17:11).

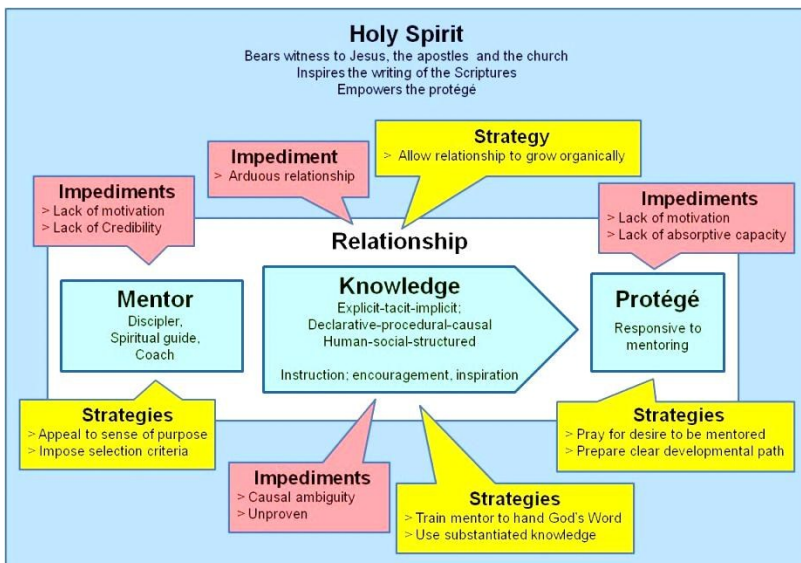
The third prong concerns the protégé. Overcoming the lack of motivation to be mentored is in part within the purview of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convicts the protégé of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). On improving the protégé's absorptive capacity, one strategy could be to stage a progressive plan for the protégé's development.

The fourth prong is related to the relationship between the mentor and protégé. In addition to the initial attraction and ensuing relationship (Clinton 1995:6), trust needs to be established.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1. Research objectives addressed

Using the Wesleyan quadrilateral approach, which relies on tradition and experience, scripture, and knowledge management literature, figure 1 seeks to aggregate the findings from this paper. It illustrates the five components of a biblical model of mentoring with a knowledge management perspective, the nature and types of knowledge imparted, the impediments to knowledge impartation, and the strategies to overcome those impediments.



*Figure 1: A biblical model of mentoring with a knowledge management perspective*

First, a biblical model of mentoring comprises five components, namely, the mentor, the protégé, knowledge to be imparted, the mentor-protégé relationship, and the Holy Spirit. Within the scriptural context

of 1 and 2 Timothy, Paul played the role of the mentor, while Timothy played the role of the protégé. Knowledge was imparted from Paul to Timothy through writing and spending time together. Paul was a loving mentor to Timothy, while Timothy lovingly submitted himself to Paul. The role of the Holy Spirit in mentoring includes bearing witness to the sonship of Jesus, clarifying the truth (1 Tim 4:1), and empowering the protégé's ministry (2 Tim 1:6–7, 13–14).

Next, the nature of knowledge imparted in a mentoring relationship can be conceptualised as explicit-tacit-implicit knowledge, declarative-procedural-causal knowledge, or human-social-structured knowledge. In particular, Paul's writings in 1 and 2 Timothy represent explicit knowledge.

In his counsel to Timothy, Paul used declarative knowledge (e.g. about the salvic act of Jesus [1 Tim 1:15]), procedural knowledge (e.g. on how to handle different demographics in the church [1 Tim 5:3–6]), as well as causal knowledge (e.g. to show that the outcome of persevering in the right doctrine would save himself and the audience [1 Tim 4:16]).

As the mentor, Paul represents human knowledge. Social knowledge is common knowledge shared between Paul and Timothy as a mentor-protégé pair, for example, the details of how Onesiphorus helped Paul (2 Tim 1:16). Structured knowledge lies outside the mentoring relationship, but could be a resource the mentor points out to the protégé. For example, Paul pointed to the scriptures and reminded Timothy of its role in building his faith (2 Tim 3:15).

The three types of knowledge imparted in a mentoring relationship are instruction, encouragement, and inspiration. The instructions Paul gave to Timothy were intended to help him cope with the demands of the ministry (2 Tim 2:14–26), and grow as a minister of the gospel (1 Tim

4:6). Paul continued to encourage Timothy through the second epistle, even though the problems of false teachers were unresolved after the first epistle was sent. Furthermore, Paul inspired Timothy by setting the example of not being ashamed of the gospel (2 Tim 1:8) and pointing to the appearing of Jesus so as to build Timothy's morale (2 Tim 4:1).

Next, four main impediments to knowledge impartation can be found in a mentoring relationship. They include negative attributes of the mentor (e.g. low motivation and poor credibility), the negative attributes of the protégé (e.g. low motivation and low absorptive capacity), the characteristics of the knowledge to be imparted (causal ambiguity and unproven state), and the arduous relationship between the mentor and the protégé.

Finally, appropriate knowledge management strategies to overcome the impediments to knowledge impartation in a mentoring relationship include mentor motivation, selection and training, a clear developmental path and constant prayer for the protégé, and an organically-nurtured mentor-protégé relationship to promote trust between them.

## **5.2. Theological implications**

Through this paper, theological researchers become more aware of the notion of knowledge management in mentoring and could further push the frontier in this topic. A possible area of research is to examine the theological underpinnings of mentoring in a group context. This could shed light on the dynamics of the multi-way knowledge flow between multiple mentor-protégé pairs, as well as the web of interactions amongst the protégés.

Another area is to study intertextuality in the scriptures as a form of knowledge reuse for mentoring. This involves investigating how biblical writers, who were mentors, relied on established scriptural texts to convey a message to their protégés in the prevailing context.

A third area could be the theology of mentor-protégé relationship in the knowledge creation process. Here, the focus is on the joint-development of new knowledge by both the mentor and the protégé as they mutually influence each other.

Beyond mentoring, pastoral staff could apply the model development process illustrated in this paper to a range of ecclesiastical matters. For example, the same approach could be applied to help devise strategies for missions, carry out community penetration efforts, and establish a Christian education programme. The outcome is a model for ministry which is not only rooted firmly on the scriptures, but it is also feasible and pragmatic.

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# Towards a Theology of Authority and Submission in Marriage

Neville Curle<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The twentieth and twenty first-centuries have seen a major debate develop over the role of women in society. For the hierarchicalists represented by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood', male leadership, as raised in Ephesians 5:24, is critical and overrides all other considerations. To the egalitarian 'Christians for Biblical Equality', mutual submission—as required by Galatians 3:28 and Ephesians 5:21—constitutes the point of departure.

This article explores the possibility of a bridge between the two moderate positions. To do this, the research focuses on four key areas, namely, (1) what is authority and how should it be applied; (2) how does submission relate to that authority; (3) how does authority work within the Trinity where all are equals; and (4) do Paul and Peter's eschatological beliefs assist us in building a bridge between the seemingly irreconcilable passages.

The research concluded that via the application of Paul and Peter's eschatological 'already' but 'not yet' beliefs operating

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

in the 'now', a bridge opens up to a third biblical alternative. This view operates across all cultures where 'authority and submission in marriage' is neither hierarchical nor merely mutually submissive, but mutually empowering.

## 1. The current impasse

Every so often, the Church is confronted by dissension within its ranks over one or other theology. This contestation is, in many ways, healthy for the Body of Christ, since in the process of dialogue, truth is advanced. During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the feministic attack caused the patriarchalistic paradigm to be subjected to greater and greater scrutiny (Cochrane 2005:22–25; Grudem and Piper 2006a:xiv; Pierce 2005:59) as variable understandings of authority in marriage were propagated. These included 'middle of the road' understandings that were advanced by two separate groupings, the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) (complementarian) and Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) (egalitarian), who were reacting to the position adopted by Christian feminists (Pierce 2005:61–67; Piper and Grudem 2006a:xiv). In Chapter 24 of the CBMW's foremost academic defence of a hierarchical interpretation of the Bible, *Recovering biblical manhood and womanhood*, Piper and Grudem (2006b:404) make the following observation:

We are sure that neither the CBMW nor CBE flatters itself by thinking that it speaks for evangelicalism, let alone for the church as a whole. We do not know whether history will attach any significance to our statements. But both groups are persuaded that something immense is at stake. It is not merely a minor intramural squabble. It has important implications for marriage, singleness, and ministry, and thus for all of life and mission. Yet we sense a

kinship far closer with the founders of CBE than with those who seem to put their feminist commitments above Scripture.

When the arguments of these ‘middle of the road’ positions are placed side by side, one is left with key elements that are seemingly irreconcilable. The points where the arguments are problematic are:

For those holding complementarian views (Curle 2012:182),

There is little wonder why Galatians 3:28 is considered to be ‘the fundamental Pauline theological basis for the inclusion of women and men as equal and mutual partners in all of the ministries of the church’ (Scholer 1998:20) and why hierarchicalist House believes it is ‘the only real passage in the New Testament letters that might appear to prove their view on women’ (1990:155). Secondly, the brushing aside by complementarians of Ephesians 5:21 cannot easily be adopted.

For those holding egalitarian views (Curle 2012:182),

On the other hand, (1) the perspective held by the egalitarians (other than Liefeld—where the difference is minimal) in respect to the translation of κεφαλή has significant problems that cannot be overlooked (Curle 2012:169–169); (2) Ephesians 5:24 demands that wives submit to their husbands ‘in everything’; (3) The ‘difficult passages’ such as I Timothy 2:13 also hold serious difficulties for the egalitarians. Otherwise why would Professor of Systematic Theology at Fuller University—Paul Jewett—question the Apostle Paul’s theology and effectively reject the inerrancy of Scripture? (Jewett 1975:119)

Theologians from either side of the debate have tried to circumvent these diametrically opposed texts through various explanations.

However, these have been shown to be weak at best. 'It can be said that no plausible argument (that maintains a "high value" of scripture) has thus far been submitted that adequately reconciles these two positions' (Curle 2012:183).

In considering the possibility of a bridge between the two positions, this article will focus on three key issues. Firstly, I will consider what is meant by authority and submission. Secondly, I will review what is known about the practical functioning of authority and submission within the Godhead. Thirdly, I will investigate whether Paul and Peter's eschatology perhaps holds a key to reconciling the existing paradigms.

## **2. Authority and Submission**

While it is correct that headship is a component of authority within a scriptural perspective, God appears to have placed limitations on how biblical authority should work in practice.

Firstly, the Bible emphasises God-consciousness as the undergirding principle through which he works. This principle is clearly demonstrated in Eden at the time of 'The Fall'. In Genesis 3:6, man focuses on his own wants, desires, and self-improvement, and in Genesis 3:7, on his own pathetically vulnerable state. Both verses indicate the self-centredness of Adam and Eve's sin as they turned from God and focused on issues related to self-esteem. The result of that sin was their removal from God's immediate presence (Gen 3:23). The gospels and the epistles record how both Jesus and Paul addressed the issue of self-centredness (Matt 16:24; 20:20–28; 1 Cor 13:4–5). More than that, they both stressed the need for humans to live in relationship with God and one another, rather than being concerned about their own desires (Matt 6:33; 22:37–40; Rom 15:2–3; 1 Cor 10:24; Phil 2:24).

Secondly, Genesis 3 appears to reflect a second principle that God has set in place—the voluntary nature of submission in contrast to an imposed hierarchical order. (Adam and Eve were free to choose to remain God-conscious or to become self-centred. This is the essence of ‘The Fall’). Jesus also appears to confirm this principle when he tells the rich young ruler to follow him. When the man refuses to follow him, there is no begging, nor coercion. Jesus’ only reaction is one of sadness (Matt 19:16–30).

Thirdly, the Bible appears to indicate that, within the Trinity, there is apparent ‘headship’ by the Father and ‘submission’ by the Son. While the subordination does not appear to be ontological but relational or administrative, this aspect of ‘headship’ will need to be addressed.

These ideas will require detailed analysis before their submission as a theological argument. It is therefore proposed to examine the biblical roles of authority and submission in the light of the above apparent principles. It is anticipated that this examination will reveal that the question to be answered in marriage is not ‘Who is in charge?’, but rather, ‘Who is in submission?’ While it is accepted that the latter question is a corollary of the first, there are issues raised by the second that the first cannot address.

## 2.1. Authority

Piper and Grudem define ‘authority in general as the *right* (Matt 8:9) and *power* (Mark 1:27; 1 Cor 7:37) and *responsibility* (2 Cor 10:8; 13:10) to give direction to another’ (2006c:78). They go on to posit that

(f)or Christians, *right* and *power* recede and *responsibility* predominates ... Authority becomes a burden to bear, not a right to assert. It is a sacred duty to discharge for the good of others. The transformation of authority (from right and power to responsibility) is most thorough in marriage. This is why complementarians prefer to speak of leadership and headship rather than authority' (2006:78).

The question that this position immediately raises is, 'where does that authority come from?' If one begins with the position in Matthew 28 that 'all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me [Jesus]', it has implications for the manner in which leaders should use authority. Firstly, it follows that all other authority is delegated. Secondly, when one considers the manner in which Jesus' authority operates—one of servanthood (Mark 10:42–44; Greenleaf and Spears 1998; Kelley 2011; Malphurs 2003:31–48)—our perception is instantly widened. Thirdly, if we 'touch (abuse) God's authority, we touch God himself' (Nee 1998:19). Taking points two and three together, any person in leadership does so under caution (Eph 6:9; Col 4:1). Fourthly, the writer to the Hebrews confirms that Jesus is the 'author and perfecter of our faith' (12:2) giving us a sense that the manner in which Jesus uses authority is by way of creation and creativity. This origination and creativity on the part of Jesus should not be misconstrued as power—which is the 'ability to act or produce an effect' (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2011) or 'the exercise of continuous control over someone or something' (Louw and Nida 1988:37.16). Hence, our understanding can no longer be that of a top-down, autocratic domination view of the position. It must be expanded to encompass far more than just the master-servant relationship of the Aristotelian Household Code, where the *paterfamilias* was 'in charge'.

## 2.2. Submission

Directing attention to the Edenic poem of creation, one encounters a situation where humankind is under the authority of God who created them. In this, God's authority is both authentic and legitimate. Examining the Edenic story, one is faced with a state of affairs where mankind has been placed in an idyllic situation with only one limitation—they may not eat of the fruit of the Tree of Good and Evil (Gen 2:17). This failure has been noted earlier. However, the empowering nature of God's use of his authority has not yet been considered.

Humans were tasked to use their creativity in exercising dominion over the earth. They were told to 'be fruitful and [to] increase in number' (Gen 1:28). Humankind, in the persons of Adam and Eve, chose not to live within the boundary of safety that God had set for them. Essentially, they refused to submit to God. The consequence of their action, according to Genesis 2:17, was death or separation.<sup>2</sup> God's reaction to their non-submission was not one of vengeance or retribution, but, while it included an aspect of punishment, that penalty would lead to their ultimate salvation. By expelling them from Eden, God removed them from the position where they would forever be without hope (having eaten from the tree of life). Instead, they were separated, for a time, to a spiritual place (*sheol* or *hades*) where they would be in a state of waiting (Lindars 1991:97)—waiting for the Christ who would be the 'author and perfecter of their faith' (Heb 12:2). From the Edenic primeval narrative, we note that, essentially, it was mankind who had the freedom to choose to submit or not to submit. In no way

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<sup>2</sup> One must understand 'death' within the figurative language of the Hebrew people. To them, life is found in community—death in separation.

did God forcefully subordinate the humans who were made in his image. The fact that they chose to ignore the boundary by refusing to submit brought about their own downfall. With more clarity on submission from God's perspective, attention now turns to what is legitimate authority.

### 2.3. Legitimate authority

Max Weber, the 20<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher, believed that there were three types of ideal (or legitimate) authority—traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal. This author would posit that it is only when this social contract is recognised from the 'bottom-up' in the form of active, participatory submission that 'legitimate authority'<sup>3</sup> occurs.

This understanding of a 'bottom-up' pre-requisite for authority has merit, for unless the person 'under authority' accepts that authority, no *de facto*<sup>4</sup> authority exists. *De jure* authority may exist, but in order for that authority to be exercised, force may be required. Once force is applied, it can be argued that no longer is the authority legitimate, for it is now coercive<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> This would not, of course, apply to God's authority, which he possesses through the fact that he is the Creator, and humans are the created.

<sup>4</sup> The principle of *de jure* (in law) and *de facto* (in fact) legitimacy in authority is well illustrated in the life of King David. In 1 Samuel 16:1a, God stripped Saul of his *de jure* authority of being king over Israel and appointed David (1 Sam 16:1b–13). Nevertheless, Saul remained *de facto* king.

<sup>5</sup> The question can then be raised about a government's coercive application of the law to bring about compliance. I would argue that in a democratic system, as long as the law being applied by that government was in terms of its democratic constitution and did not contravene God's law, then, the authority would be legitimate as it was being applied by the will of the majority. However, this does not imply that the law is legitimate in the eyes of the individual. An example could be given of many South African taxi drivers, who see the 'law of Rands and Cents' [South African currency] as superseding the law of the road.



In his doctoral dissertation, Curle reviewed some of the possibilities of coercive action by God to ensure submission by mankind (2012:187–188). While the brief survey of selected texts was not exhaustive, no example was found that validly reflects coercion. What was found is the creative use of circumstances that led mankind back to serving God. Accordingly, we can argue that God’s use of his authority, when interacting with mankind is not only legitimate, but it also creatively brings about mankind’s ultimate good. From this, we can posit that God’s legitimate authority is centred in grace (on his part) and voluntary submission (on ours)—not dominance.<sup>6</sup> As Baukham (2006:68) states, ‘Our response to grace is not the coerced submission of the slave, but the free obedience of love. Its paradigm is: ‘I love to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart’ (Ps 40:8)’. MacArthur comments that ‘the only right response to Christ’s Lordship is wholehearted submission, loving obedience and passionate worship’ (2010:91) that results in Christians being ‘slaved by grace’ (2010:139). This enslavement to Christ brings freedom to the Christian—‘not freedom to do what he or she wants but freedom to obey God—willingly, joyfully, naturally’ (Cranfield 1975:319).

One is thus left in the position that, while authority may be legitimate (*de jure*), it is not always effective (*de facto*). It is only when the person over whom the authority is to be exercised chooses (out of their own free will) to submit, that the authority becomes both legitimate and effective. Any attempt to induce authority ‘from the top’ effectively nullifies the legitimacy and heralds in a coercive display of power. This

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<sup>6</sup> It is recognised that this understanding has implications for one’s doctrine of final/eternal judgment. While this would be the subject of a different dissertation, suffice it to say that an active voluntary submission, as set out above, would fulfil the relationship required in Matthew 7:21–22. Whether or not humans choose to follow that path is their responsibility—in line with Arminian doctrine.

coercion can take many forms. Johnson, Mueller, and Taft have defined *coercion* as 'causing someone to choose one course of action over another by making the choice preferred by the coercer appear more attractive than the alternative, which the coercer wishes to avoid' (2002:7). Thus, coercion can be physical, emotional, or financial, as all three can be used to induce a person to follow a certain line of thinking.

Paul extends voluntary submission to ordinary human relationships in Ephesians 5. He instructs Christians to 'submit'<sup>7</sup> to one another out of reverence for Christ' (Eph 5:21). Snodgrass interprets ὑποτάσσω as 'arrange under' (1996:292) confirming the understanding of voluntary submission.

In his commentary on Ephesians, Hoehner concludes that the participle ὑποτάσσω is in the middle<sup>8</sup> voice 'expressing the idea of co-operation where the subject acts as a free agent', rendering a translation of voluntary submission (2002:717). Snodgrass adds a new dimension to submission when he comments that it 'is a crucial ingredient in Christian living ... because it [describes] the self-giving love, humility, and willingness to die that is demanded of all Christians' (1996:292). Thus, as the reader, one is left with the overall concept of a voluntary, sacrificial laying down of rights in favour of one's fellow believers, in mutual submission.

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<sup>7</sup> Greek, ὑποτάσσω. Louw and Nida's translation of ὑποτάσσω includes to need to obey, submit, comply and be subject to (1988:36.18), resulting in the meaning—'to submit to the orders or directives of someone'.

<sup>8</sup> Louw and Nida describe the sense as 'passive' rather than 'middle' (1988). It is true that ὑποτάσσω sometimes occurs in the active voice. However, when this occurs, 'the power to subject belongs to God himself. This is evidenced in Phil 3:21; Rom 8:20; Eph. 1:21–22' (Melick 1991:311).

### **3. Practical Functioning of Authority within the Godhead**

In 1 Corinthians 15:24–28, one finds key verses relating to understanding authority and submission within the Godhead. Paul states that, at the end of time, everything will be under Christ’s authority, which will then make everything, including himself, subject to the Father. At first glance, this appears to reflect subordination within the Godhead.

#### **3.1. The hierarchical or gradationist position**

Perhaps the single greatest difficulty in discussing leadership within the Trinity is finding the correct terminology to describe a concept that is beyond one’s grasp. Complementarians and egalitarians alike, struggle to define what they believe to be true.

For example, Grudem’s (1994:454–470) position that, the ‘Son is eternally subordinated to the Father in role or function’ portrays an image that has disturbing connotations. While Grudem probably does not wish it, this use of the term ‘subordination’ certainly implies a top-down imposition of authority rather than a bottom-up submission. Synonyms of the term are ‘inferior, junior, less, lower, minor, smaller, lesser’ (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2011).

Perhaps it is because of the semantics that the gradationist position does not reflect the very real tension that exists between the unity/diversity, the equality/unity, and Christ’s submission to the Father. To describe the position as ‘eternally subordinated’ implies subjugation of the Son by the Father, rather than Christ’s voluntary submission. In this, gradationists appear to misstate the truth of the relationship within the Trinity. When the two sides of the debate resolve the issue of

terminology, both sides would be closer to resolving much of the contestation. For the time being, one must 'see through a glass, darkly' (1 Cor 13:12—21<sup>st</sup>-century King James Version) as one approaches a subject that, by definition, is beyond us.

In his contribution to Pierce and Groothuis's *Discovering Biblical Equality*, egalitarian Kevin Giles posits that maintaining an orthodox view of the doctrine of the Trinity requires rejection of the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father (2005:335). Peter Schemm, a hierarchicalist, rejects Giles's position, distinguishing between 'subordination' and 'functional subordination'. Schemm holds that the latter is not a question of orthodoxy (2005:83), and comments that Giles is not successful in his argument that eternal functional subordination is heretical (2005:86). Within Giles's Chapter 19 and Schemm's book review, the essence of the debate is obvious: 'Is functional subordination theologically sound?'

### **3.2. Discussion of the hierarchical position**

Letham, in a major work on the Trinity, rejects the concepts of both subordination and hierarchy, preferring the concept of *taxis* or order that excludes gradation or rank (2004:480). Quoting Torrence, Letham expounds the position that the Trinity functions by way of 'position not status, by form and not being, by sequence and not power, for they are fully and perfectly equal' (Letham 2004:400; Torrence 1996:176). In discussing Christ's obedience to the Father, Letham maintains that there is neither subordination nor inferiority as both are uniquely equal in being and deity (2004:481). To understand Letham's position, one must follow the development of his thoughts:

Since God is Spirit (John 4:21–24), we must think of him in a spiritual manner, not in conformity with Earthly analogies ... God in his own being eludes our grasp... He is an eternal communion of the three *hypostases* in undivided union (461–462). Each person is wholly God and the whole God. The three are no greater than one ... The true order is not a rank, but an orderly disposition. In that order, with no diminution of deity or severance of unity or identity, the Father begets the Son and spirates the Spirit. In our salvation, the Father sends the Son. Never are these relations reversed ... The submission displayed by the Son while securing our redemption reflects eternal realities in God. This must be done in such a way as not to undermine the one being in God, in which all three persons completely inhere (2004:482–483).

In commenting on Grudem's position, that the Son is eternally subordinated to the Father, Letham comments that it is 'outside the boundaries of the tradition' (2004:490). He is equally harsh with Giles's understanding and lack of stress on the distinctions between the three persons (2004:492), even though Giles has 'a strong and emphatic grasp of the consubstantiality of the Son and Spirit with the Father' (2004:491). After attacking Giles's position on a number of theological fronts, Letham concludes:

In the end, Giles's argument collapses. It is self-defeating. He has to point to the submission of Christ on earth as a paradigm for the mutual submission that he calls (rightly) on us all to display ... Giles misses the point that if the Son submits to the Father in eternity, his submission could hardly have been imposed on him, for he is coequal with the Father, of the identical divine being. He submits willingly (p. 495).

Erickson, after lengthy debate of both positions, concludes that the best way of interpreting the relationship within the Godhead is in the understanding that not one action performed by any of the three *hypostases* ever excludes the participation of the other two—'the Father's will, which the Son obeys, is actually the will of all three members of the Trinity, administered on their behalf by the Father' (2009:248). Erickson's position that, even though 1 Corinthians 15 appears to favour a gradational relationship, the equivalence view better explains a relationship that is immensely difficult for humans to grasp ('God is one' [Rom 3:30; Gal 3:20] and also, God is a trinity) with fewer Biblical distortions (p. 248).

### **3.3. A Trinitarian understanding of marital authority**

In a manner similar to that of the equivalence Trinitarian position, husbands and wives are unified in marriage. The texts relating to this unity are equally mystifying. The fact that in marriage, they become 'one flesh' (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:5) does not refer only to the fact of their physical sexual relationship. Paul, writing in 1 Corinthians 6:16, states that when two people have sex, they become 'one flesh' (Gen 2:24). First Corinthians 7:14 indicates that, through the wife's union with both Christ and her husband (even though he is an unbeliever), 'he is sanctified by God' (and *vice versa*). Seemingly, the oneness between married couples goes beyond mere physical relations. This oneness in Christ can only be explained through an eschatological interpretation, which will be explored below. For the moment, it is important to focus on the unity within the Godhead and apply it to marriage.

Applying Letham's position to marriage, we find that true order is not about rank, but orderly disposition. Within that order, without diminishing the value of either man or woman, the husband gives direction to the marriage. The submission displayed by the wife in her

relationship with her husband reflects eternal realities in their marriage. This (leadership and submission) must be done in such a way as not to undermine their ‘one being’ (Matt 19:5; 1 Cor 6:16; 1 Cor 7:14) in Christ, in which (both) persons completely inhere. Thus, based on Letham’s understanding of the Trinity, while marital relationships are equal, there is still a measure of leadership by the husband.

Within the context of the Trinity (above), it was determined that, even though the actions of God are directed by the Father, all three persons jointly authorise the act. Applying this reality to marriage, even though direction may appear to be given by one spouse, the unity of the two brings about mutual authority. The long-term result of relational unity is spelt out by the Balswicks (2006:36): ‘As spouses mutually permeate one another they achieve interdependency (emotional connection) in which neither spouse loses distinctiveness’. However, the point is well taken that, while the Trinity will always act in a united manner because of the omniscient character of God, the same cannot always be said of humans.

## **4. A Possible Alternative to the View Held by Complementarians and Egalitarians**

### **4.1. A further biblical perspective**

In the evaluation of a biblical understanding of marital authority, the reader and exegete are ultimately faced by two seemingly irreconcilable truths. Firstly, a consistent translation of κεφαλή must include the precepts of honour and authority (Curle 2012:183). Added to this, wives are specifically required to ‘submit to their husbands in everything’ (Eph 5:24). Secondly, mutual submission by Christians to Christians

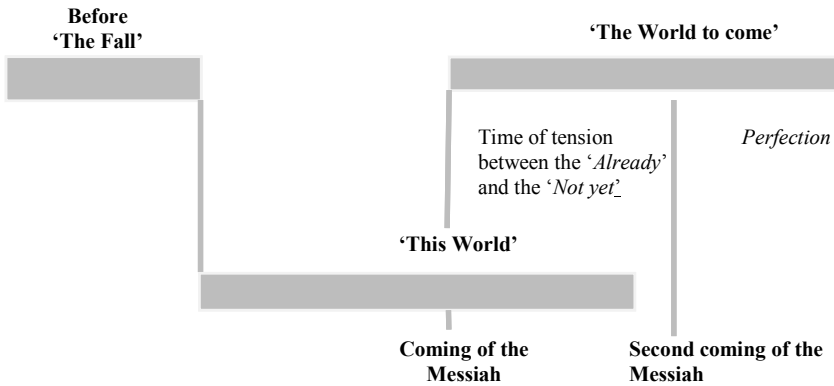
and, by extension, husbands to wives is required by Ephesians 5:21 and Galatians 3:28.

There is, however, a possible bridge between the opposing verses, one that has its roots in Galatians 3:26–29. Hove (1999:46) expresses the view that the believer's union with Christ is conveyed by Paul in four different ways, namely, (a) 'in Christ Jesus' (3:26, 28), (b) 'baptised into Christ' (3:27), (c) 'clothed ... with Christ' (3:27), and (d) '(belonging) to Christ' (3:29). This use of eschatological terms, in the midst of the particular pericope where egalitarianism of privilege is set down, opens the way for further investigation. Each of the polar opposites (or couplets) in Galatians 3 (Jews/Greeks, slaves/free, males/females), is designed to convey the idea of totality or universality. Whether one reads Galatians 3 from the typical egalitarian viewpoint or from the understanding proposed by complementarians such as Cottrell (1994:283), the result is the same; the couplets capture three fundamental ways of viewing the realities of human existence during New Testament times (Koranteng-Pipim 2001:52). What neither understanding highlights is the eschatological theology underpinning Paul's argument.

In Matthew 12:32, one finds the terms 'this world' and 'the world to come', differentiating between the period after 'The Fall' and before 'the coming of the Messiah' (this world), and after the coming of the Messiah (the world to come). In Hebrews 2:5–18, one finds that with the resurrection of Christ, the 'time to come' is already in place. In Hebrews 6:5, the writer speaks of those 'who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age' implying that Christians are already experiencing the benefits of the 'world to come'. Yet, Paul instructs us through his letter to Titus to 'live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus



Christ’ (Titus 2:12–13). Obviously, humans live in two overlapping ages—‘this world’ and ‘the world to come.’ Arnau van Wyngaard, in an unpublished Bible Study, diagrammatically sets out this understanding of time (2004:3).



For Paul, the cosmic Lordship of Christ encompassed both heaven and earth. To him, ‘they were not two realms set over against each other ... but rather one structure of created reality (the cosmos of heaven and earth) and human response to that structure involving two ethical directions’ (Horton 2002:126; Lincoln 1981:192). Dunn (1998:496) comments: ‘The believer’s whole life as a believer is lived in the overlap of the ages, within the eschatological tension between Adam and Christ, between death and life’. This time of tension between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’ expressively explains the duality of the situation faced by believers today.

Firstly, like Paul, Christians look forward to the fullness of the age to come (Col 3:4) while experiencing Christ’s presence in this present age (Rom 8:11, 26). Secondly, it can be argued that this life ‘in Christ’ brings with it a second tension—dealing with the reality of the ‘now’ (Rom 8:17, 35–39; Eph 6:10–20)—that all believers, through Christ, are

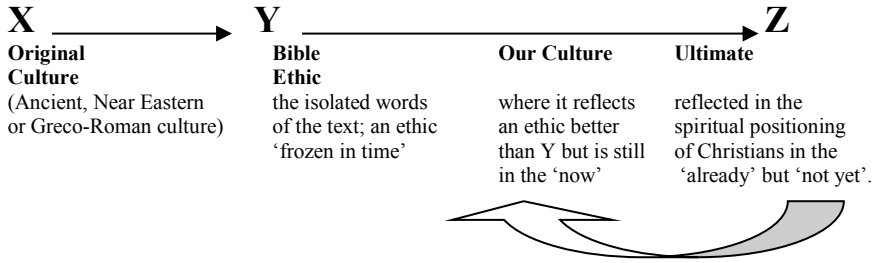
called to deal with (Rom 8:10–39). Lincoln (1981:193) sums up the two tensions in his observation that

(T)he force of Phil 3:20 is not, as has often been thought, that heaven as such is the homeland of Christians to which they, as perpetual foreigners on earth, must strive to return, but rather that since their Lord is in heaven their life is to be governed by the heavenly commonwealth and that this realm is to be determinative for all aspects of their life.

Therefore, if one begins with Webb's diagram (2001:32) and adjusts it to take into account the eschatological understandings of Paul,<sup>9</sup> one is confronted by the following diagrammatic situation of Christians in the early church. Paul refers to them as 'Christ's ambassadors' (2 Cor 5:20), while Peter calls them 'aliens and strangers in the world' (1 Pet 2:11).

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<sup>9</sup> Paul's eschatological views are widespread within his epistles—Christians are 'in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:26, 28); 'baptised into Christ' (Gal 3:27); 'clothed ... with Christ' (Gal 3:27); 'belonging to Christ' (Gal 3:29) 'joint heirs with Christ' (Rom 8:17); 'seated with him in the heavenly realms' (Eph 2:6); 'our citizenship is in heaven' (Phil 3:20); 'in Christ'; 'in the Lord'. Throughout the epistles, Christians are encouraged to adopt their spiritual position in the 'not yet' and apply it to their current situation in the 'now' (1 Cor 1: 28–31; 2 Cor 3:17–4:18; Col 1:10; Phil 3:7–14; 1 Tim 1:16; 1 Tim 6: 12–19; Phlm 1:9).



Christians as 'Ambassadors of Christ' are required to live out their lives in the circumstances and reality of 'the now' in the holiness and positioning of the 'already-not yet'.

Using the image of a 'mezzanine floor', humans can relate to their realities of the 'now' on the ground floor. At the same time, they can relate to Christ who is on the floor above. In this way, one can understand the saying that Christians 'are in this world but not of it'.<sup>10</sup>

If we apply this eschatological understanding to gender relationships, we are presented with scriptures that give the understanding of both Jesus and Paul. Firstly, Jesus said that in heaven people 'will neither marry nor be given in marriage' (Luke 20:34–36). Secondly, Paul had similar thoughts in 1 Corinthians 7:29 when he stated that those men 'who have wives should live as if they had none', because this world in its present form is passing away. Therefore, we are drawn to the conclusion that in heaven, the ontological equality of men and women will be the only relationship between the genders. Male headship will not be necessary since there will be no need for hierarchy.

Thus, it is both logical and reasonable to posit that relationships between men and women in the 'already' but 'not yet' are not subject to

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<sup>10</sup> The saying has biblical backing in John 15:19; 17:14; James 1:27; 4:4 and 1 John 2:15.

gender status. While this may be true, one also needs to take cognisance of the fact that living in the reality of the 'now' brings with it human needs and cultural realities. To facilitate the provision of these needs and dealing with such realities, individuals may be required to forgo their 'position' of equality in the 'already' but 'not yet' understanding for a greater good. This would be especially true of marriage. It must be stressed that this does not imply a laying down of human rights—only the meeting of Christian obligations. Within Christian marriages, husbands do not have the 'right' to order their wives to do anything; wives do not have the 'right' to demand equality in their relationships. Both have the obligation to submit to one another and to 'be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave (them)' (Eph 4:32). Paul's 'already' but 'not yet' voluntary mutual submission in Ephesians 5:21 bring with it an interesting possibility for the overall exegesis of the marital passages. As both husband and wife submit to each other's authority, one is reminded that such authority should be used to empower creatively. According to Paul, empowering one's wife involves laying down one's life for the benefit of the wife. For her part, the wife is called on to respect her husband. Thus, as the couple empower<sup>11</sup> each other, the biological and sociological needs of both would be met.

Thus, there is a possible alternative, whereby the biblical position of apparent hierarchy as required by a consistent translation of κεφαλή, together with the explicit command that 'wives should submit to their husbands in everything' (Eph 5:24) can be reconciled with the mutual submission required by Ephesians 5:21 and Galatians 3:28.

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<sup>11</sup> Jack and Judith Balswick (2006:69), Kathlyn Breazeale (2008:9–13) and Donna Bowman (2006) advocate mutual empowerment in marriage. The Balswicks use a similar rationale to that applied above citing John 1:12–13. However, Breazeale and Bowman appeal to the relational empowerment achieved through Whitehead's Process Theology (1941) that was further developed by Loomer (1976) and Brock (1991).

## 4.2. Practical application of the hypothesis

While egalitarians believe that Galatians is the ‘Magna Carta’ that demonstrates their view (Jewett 1975:142), it merely discloses the roots of a deeper truth. One must wait for the unfolding of the verities in Ephesians to witness the full-grown tree in all its magnificence. As Lincoln comments: ‘Ephesians is the letter in the Pauline corpus in which the concept of the heavenly dimension (the ‘already’ but ‘not yet’) is most pervasive’ (1981:135).

### *4.2.1. Review of the ‘already’ but ‘not yet’ eschatology within the letter to the Ephesians*

The letter itself is comparable to a ‘liturgical homily’ (Lincoln 1981:136) of the exalted Christ and the Church, written to encourage Christians throughout the Church to experience the life-giving unity of the Spirit. In chapter 1, the reader is introduced to the exalted Christ, whom God has placed ‘far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but in the age to come’ (Eph 1:21, NIV). The reader is then drawn in to understand the position that believers have ‘in Christ’—‘God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way’ (Eph 1:22–23, NIV). The position is concretised in the second chapter, where believers are said to be raised up with Christ and seated ‘with him in the heavenly realms’ (Eph 2:6). This ‘already’ positioning of believers *in Christ* in the ‘not yet’ sets the stage for the rest of the homily. Chapter 3 advances the heavenly understanding of the role of the Church that is called to make known ‘to the rulers and authorities in the Heavenly realms’ (Eph 3:10, NIV) the manifold wisdom of God that he accomplished in Christ.

In Ephesians 3:13, one is confronted by the 'now' reality of being a Christian. Paul, who has spent his missionary career in dangerous situations (2 Cor 11:23–33), encourages the Church not to be discouraged in any way because of his personal sufferings. The sufferings are part of the calling and not something to be dwelt on. He goes on to pray that the Holy Spirit might strengthen them so that they might come to realise, as he does, the unsurpassable position that Christians enjoy being rooted in Christ's love and indwelt by his Spirit—the benefits of living in the 'already' but 'not yet'.

Chapters 4 and 5 focus on what the values of a Christian in the 'already' but 'not yet' are. Paul begins his sermon by urging believers to live a life worthy of the calling they have received (Eph 4:1).

Immediately, he lays down the basis of their relationships: they must be 'completely humble and gentle ... patient, bearing with one another in love and (they are to) make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace' (4:2–3). Paul spells out that Christ 'ascended higher than all the heavens' (4:10) and from this position gave grace to each Christian (4:7). Some have been tasked 'to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ... in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ' (4:10b–13, NIV). This is the requirement for 'mezzanine living'. From 4:17 to 5:19, Paul contrasts the carnality of living according to the 'darkened understanding' (4:18) of the 'ways of this world' (2:2)—the 'now' reality, with the value system of the 'not yet'. In 5:18, he concludes the section by instructing believers not to 'get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery', but to 'be filled with the Spirit', which leads to worship (Eph 5:19–20).

Notwithstanding Talbert's argument, that verse 21 is tied to verse 18,<sup>12</sup> where the participle 'Υποτασσόμενοι' is dependent on the verb 'πληροῦσθε', it is clear that Paul's mutual submission of Christian to Christian, in verse 21, transitions life in the Spirit (in the 'already' but 'not yet') with the following verses (5:22–6:9) that deal with the 'now' Household Code (5:21–6:9).

In Ephesians 6:11b–12, Paul warns of the spiritual result of living in the 'already' but 'not yet'. He points out that other men and women are not the Christian's enemy (6:12). The Christian's enemy is the devil supported not only by the rulers, authorities, and powers of this dark world, but also the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Because of this, Christians need to arm themselves spiritually (6:11a, 13–18).

#### *4.2.2. Review of the 'already' but 'not yet' eschatology within the Household Code*

The eschatological views that Paul has built throughout the Ephesian passage are continued in 5:22–6:9. In verse 22, one is immediately confronted with Paul's eschatological understanding—'as to the Lord'. Later on in 6:1, we once again find the words 'in the Lord'—alerting the reader to a possible connection between his thoughts on eschatology and those on marriage.

Throughout the passage (5:21–5:32), Paul compares the marriage relationship to that between Christ and the Church. He is focussing primarily on the Church's position as a bride, with Christ as the

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<sup>12</sup> Talbert's argument is discussed under *Practical marital out-workings of the eschatology in the Household Code* below.

bridegroom. When one brings in Jesus' parables of the 'wise' and 'foolish' virgins (Matt 25:1–13) and the marriage feast (Matt 22:2–14), and then adds John's thoughts on the 'wedding of the Lamb' (Rev 19:7), the connection to the 'already' but 'not yet' is strengthened.

Consider the interplay within the Ephesians 5 passage between the current cultural position of marital relationships in the 'now' and the future reality of believers in the 'not yet', as Paul compares the marriage between man and woman, and that between Christ and the Church. Lincoln comments that 'throughout the passage the interplay between earthly and heavenly is marked out by the use of comparative particles—ὡς (vv. 23, 24), καθὼς (vv. 25, 29), and οὕτως (vv. 24, 28)' (1981:163). In Ephesians 5:23, the headship/honouring of Christ is compared to that of the husband. In 5:24, the submission of the Church is compared to that of the wife. In 5:25–27, Christ's sacrificial love for the Church is compared to the love for wives required of husbands. In 5:29, the provision of security by the Christ for his Church is compared to a husband's provision of security for his wife.

While it is important to note that the 'already' but 'not yet' position, represented by Christ's relationship with the Church, moves between the Christian's current 'already' spiritual positioning (the engagement) and the final 'not yet' consummation (v. 27), this does not affect the imagery, since in Jewish law, the act of engagement (betrothal) had the same legal effect as that of marriage. As Lincoln states, 'the emphasis on the present aspects of the relation between Christ and his bride well fits the stress on realised eschatology in Ephesians, while the future element in verse 27 indicates that the 'already' but 'not yet' tension is still in operation' (1981:164).

In Ephesians 6:1–4, Paul changes the focus of the 'already' but 'not yet' to relationships between parents and children. Fathers and mothers are



to be honoured by their children. Centring on the ‘now’ Household Code issues that would have arisen within the home, Paul instructs fathers not to exasperate their children, but instead (using ‘already’ but ‘not yet’ values), to ‘bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord’ (6:4). Here, the apostle appears to be contrasting the effect of fathers exercising their patriarchalistic rights under the Aristotelian Household Code with life in the ‘already’ but ‘not yet’, where equality of ontological being is the order. From 6:5–6:9, one once again witnesses Paul’s understanding of the ‘already’ but ‘not yet’ approach to living in the ‘now.’ Slaves are instructed to obey their earthly masters (the ‘now’ reality) just as they would Christ in the value system of the ‘already’ but ‘not yet’. Turning to the masters, Paul points out their ‘already’ but ‘not yet’ equality with the slaves, notwithstanding the fact that in the ‘now’ slaves are mere possessions. The practical display of Paul’s belief is displayed in his letter to Philemon, where he requests (‘I appeal to you’ [Phlm 1:9; 1:10; 1:21]) his ‘dear friend and fellow worker’ (Phlm. 1:1) to release Onesimus as a ‘runaway slave’ (Callahan 1997:38; Dunn and Rogerson 2003:1447), and welcome him as a ‘brother in the Lord’ (Phlm 1:16). Nowhere does one find the ‘top-down’ authority that would have been warranted by someone who owed Paul his ‘very self’ (Phlm 1:19). Instead, one finds Paul asking his friend (Phlm 1:14; 1:19) to empower Onesimus, in the only way that would be meaningful to his humanity; his release as a slave, even offering to settle any debt that Philemon believed that he might be owed (Phlm. 1:18). Paul asks Philemon to do this of his own free will, even though he ‘could be bold and order’ it (Phlm 1:18).

### *4.2.3. Practical marital out-workings of the eschatology in the Household Code*

The practicalities of working out this 'already' but 'not yet' value system in the 'now' cultural reality within the Aristotelian Household Code are demonstrated in Ephesians 5:18–6:9. In the passage Ephesians 5:18–21, Talbert maintains that the words in italics below (participles) are directly dependent on the verb 'be filled' (2007:131) Linguistically, this appears to be the most valid interpretation of the passage.

<sup>18</sup>Be filled with the Spirit,

<sup>19</sup>*speaking* to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit.

*singing* and *making* music from your heart to the Lord,

<sup>20</sup>*giving* thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>21</sup>*submitting* to one another out of reverence for Christ.

In adopting this method of translation, the critical verse (21) is effectively disassociated (to a degree) from the Household Code with its three subdivisions (wives [v. 22–33], children [6:1–4] and slaves [6:5–9]). However, the subjection of the participle in verse 21 to the term 'Be filled with the Spirit' brings to the fore Paul's eschatology. In it, one can see the 'already' but 'not yet' ontological requirement of all Christians to 'submit yourselves one to the other'. The mutual submission demanded by this verse (a) can only be read as a 'Trinitarian' voluntarily 'bottom-up' surrendering of the shared equality and not as a 'top-down' authority-driven demand, and (b) extends to the Christian relationships between husbands and wives, fathers and children, masters and slaves at the mezzanine level.

It follows that the so-called Household Code set out in 5:22–6:9 reflects Paul's recognition of the cultural realities present at the time. In these verses, Paul gives practical advice to Christians who find themselves in positions of authority or under authority. Focus now turns specifically on gender relationships, although the arguments are equally applicable to children and slaves.

If one views authority as the 'ability to empower' (as argued earlier), the question that confronts each of the genders (in applying the authority given to them through the submission of their partners) is: 'how best can I empower my spouse?' Paul anticipates the question and answers accordingly. He instructs women to voluntarily recognise the current patriarchalistic culture and lay down their equality, surrendering it as they would to Christ. With the words 'Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord' (Eph 5:22), Paul recognises that in order to empower their husbands (who need respect) wives need to honour their husbands as the 'head' (Eph 5:23, 33) (Liefeld 1986:139). Conversely, Christian husbands, spiritually acting out of their 'already' but 'not yet' location, need to lay down their current cultural patriarchalistic advantageous positioning (the 'now'), in a sacrificial manner (Eph 5:25–28) so as to provide their wives with the love and security (Eph 5:25, 29, 33) that they need. As Swartley (1983:204) comments,

So also, love—even in a patriarchal society – calls the male in his cultural prerogative of power to love as Jesus loved, to forgo his cultural prerogative of power and to recognise that women are equally God's image. Instead of prescribing rigid roles, love affirms unity, partnership and interdependence, with each person seeking to image God in the divine fullness of Jesus Christ, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Only as men and women fully affirm each other do they live as God's image.

In this practical application of the 'already' but 'not yet' and the 'now' hypothesis, it was observed that 'Trinitarian' mutual submission is a very real aspect of Christian living, notwithstanding the patriarchalistic household cultural realities.

## 5. Conclusion

In view of the arguments put forward above, there is merit in adopting the following position for biblical marriage between Christian couples:

All authority, in heaven and on earth belongs to Christ Jesus (Matt 28:18). Therefore, all other authority is delegated. It follows that any person who is in a position of leadership does so under caution. Authority can be divided between *de jure* (legal authority that has its ultimate source in God) and *de facto* (actual authority within a set of circumstances). Effective *de facto* authority is given by the one submitting and cannot be imposed from the top. In view of the fact that spouses are ontologically equal in heaven (where there is no need for hierarchy), men and women are in a position of equality in the 'already' but 'not yet'. Since both husbands and wives are commanded to submit to each other, as Christians (Eph 5:21), neither has unilateral control. In similar manner to the *koinonia* within the Trinity, submission voluntarily flows out of the intimacy of the 'in Christ', 'already' but 'not yet', 'mezzanine' lifestyle with one's spouse. In submitting to each other, both yield authority to the other. However, authority is not so much the ability to command, but the ability to empower.

Ephesians 5:21–33: teaches two key principles. Firstly, in order to empower his own wife, the husband should lay down his 'now' position of patriarchalistic privilege through sacrificial 'servant leadership'. As the husband ensures the security of his wife (and her children) in the

spheres of fidelity, finance, emotion, and sexuality—she experiences love towards him (Curle 2012:66).

Secondly, for her part, a wife is required to honour her husband in everything. This gives her husband what he needs most (other than sexual fulfilment); a feeling of respect and support that empowers him to face the world<sup>13</sup> (Curle 2012:66).

Because women (in general) are culturally conditioned to be responders as opposed to initiators (Curle 2012:25), men should be the first to actively empower their wives. As men and women actively empower each other, their emotional and physical needs will be met. It must be noted, however, that men and women, being human, will, from time to time, act out of their carnal ‘now’ position of self-centredness, instead of their position ‘in Christ’ (Rom 7:23; Gal 5:17). The required response to this is repentance by the offending party and unconditional forgiveness by the one offended (Matt 18:22–35).

Christianity is a radical belief system. Its ‘founder’ or ‘author’, to whom all authority in heaven and earth was given (Matt 28:18; John 17:2), washed his disciples’ feet. After washing their feet, he said to them: ‘You call me “Teacher” and “Lord” and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you should also wash one another’s feet’ (John 13:13–14, NIV).

Thus, within the Christian faith, there is no place for hierarchical positioning, religious domination, or acquired socio-economic

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<sup>13</sup> Groeschel notes that ‘In so many ways, a husband is in the process of becoming what his wife sees in him. Since she knows him better than anyone else, if she says he’s no good, he’s tempted to believe it. If he thinks he’s amazing, he’ll start to believe he can accomplish a lot’ (2011:114).

positioning. When the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1 Tim 6:15) commands that we love one another as he has loved us (John 13:34), there is no place for 'power plays'. All that is of consequence is the kingdom of God and its proclamation. This missiological standpoint was central to the position adopted by Paul throughout his epistles. When married Christian couples apply the above-mentioned principles, regardless of their culture, they will meet each other's biological and sociological needs. In so doing, women will live without abuse, and men will not experience emasculation; the two predominant gender issues currently being experienced within marriage. Simply put, 'authority and submission in marriage' is neither hierarchical nor merely mutually submissive. Rather, it is mutually empowering. As husbands and wives live together in the 'already' but 'not yet' and empower each other, the gospel of grace will be demonstrated through the Christo-centric example of their lives.

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# ‘Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth’—the Nature of the Suffering of the Wicked in Matthew

Zoltan L Erdey and Kevin G Smith<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Matthew records six instances in which Jesus expressed the idiom ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’ (8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:45; 25:30). The phrase refers to the eschatological fate of the wicked. This article investigates whether those who weep and gnash their teeth suffer physically, or merely spiritually and emotionally. A word study of the ‘weeping’ and ‘gnashing’ revealed that both these terms contain within their connotation the aspect of weeping and gnashing of teeth that is a direct result of physical pain. The use of the ‘furnace of fire’ and ‘cut him in pieces’ similarly seems to associate the idiom with suffering as a direct result of physical pain.

## 1. Introduction

Upon reading Matthew’s gospel, one is struck by the author’s periodic use of the idiom ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων (‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’). This phrase appears seven times in the synoptic gospels—six times in the gospel of Matthew (8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13;

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

24:451; 25:30) and once in Luke's gospel (13:28). Commentators in general recognise the unique character of the phrase, rightly affirming that it is a reference to the eschatological fate of the wicked. This article is an inquiry into the meaning and implication of the phrase, with particular consideration of the existential state of the heritors of this judgment. The problem that this article hoped to answer is, 'are those who weep and gnash their teeth in a state of emotional torment, physical pain, or both?'

Because the phrase *en bloc* was not used in the ancient literature, it has become evident from the surveyed commentaries that scholars seem to have diverse opinions on its range of semantic meaning, belonging to two opposed camps in terms of the six Matthean texts.

Some associate gnashing of teeth with emotional pain and suffering only. Rengstorf (1985:111) represents the view of this camp by arguing that the phrase 'weeping and *gnashing* of teeth' does not refer to despairing rage or even physical reaction, but rather to the remorse of those who are outside the kingdom. Although Keener (1999:268) believes that gnashing of teeth *might* indicate anger or strong emotion associated with anger, he acknowledges that it is *primarily* representative of anguish. Hagner (1993:206) is of the same opinion, adding the adjective, *self-reproach*. McComiskey (1976:421) similarly sees the word as representing extreme remorse.

Others associate the phrase with physical pain, suffering, anger, and resentment towards God. Hendriksen (2004:398), for example, believes that the word *gnashing* (of teeth) denotes physical pain as well: 'The tears of which Jesus speaks here in Matt. 8:12 are those of inconsolable, never-ending wretchedness, and utter, everlasting hopelessness. The accompanying grinding or gnashing of teeth denotes excruciating pain and frenzied anger. This grinding of teeth, too, will never come to an

end or cease.’ Nolland (2005:358) concurs, but adds an additional facet to the meaning; it is an ‘aggressive expression of hostility and anger’. Dixon (2003:169) similarly perceives the gnashing of teeth as an imagery of angry, hysterical resentment towards God. In other words, this outlook views the expression ‘gnashing of teeth’ not only as a consequence of pain and unimaginable suffering, but also eternal resentment, bitterness, and anger toward the Judge, with the resultant act of shaking the fist and gnashing the teeth.

Before any exegetical analysis, the logical starting point is to conduct a synchronic and diachronic study of the individual terms within the phrase ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων. The study will commence with a systematic diachronic analysis of the terms (a) κλαυθμὸς and (b) βρυγμὸς, in order to investigate firstly the meaning (connotation and denotation) of each term as employed in both extra-biblical and biblical literature (LXX and NT), and secondly, to observe the semantic range of meaning of these words within the gospel of Matthew. These two steps, together with a systematic analysis of each of the passages, will produce some tentative conclusions regarding the connotation and denotation of the complete expression so often uttered by Jesus.

## 2. Κλαυθμός

Perhaps, it is important to acknowledge the nature of the task ahead. Understanding both the connotation and denotation of single word units is extremely significant to New Testament interpretation and exegesis. Because words function within a particular context, individual words rarely embody the basic unit of meaning that a phrase represents or suggests. In light of this, Tate (1997:14) cautions the exegete to be

aware of the danger of overemphasising the importance of the single word. But, at the same time, he acknowledges that although the text communicates its message through the relationships of its phrases, sentences, and larger lexical units, single words must receive careful attention. In other words, although solitary words should not occupy the hermeneut's primary point of focus, ignoring the meaning of single words is nonetheless unwise. Fee (1993:100), for example, explains that the aim of a word study in exegesis is to try to understand, as precisely as possible, what the author was trying to convey by his use of the particular word in a particular context (also, Mickelsen 1972; Fee 1993; Kaiser and Silva 1994). Tate (1997) further explains that a plausible explication of a larger passage may hinge upon the meaning of a word which appears vague to us. When such a word is correctly understood in the way it would have been understood by the original author or audience, the entire larger unit may assume a sharper focus (p. 17).

So, the purpose of the next two segments is to attempt to determine the semantic range of meaning of each of the smaller units of speech within the phrase under scrutiny.

Κλαυθμός is the word translated *weeping* in the Matthean texts under study. It is significant to note that κλαυθμός shares its semantic range with its cognate verb κλαίω, as a result of which it is sensible to treat them together in this section.

### *2.1. Extra-biblical Literature*

Throughout the classical period, the meaning of the verb κλαίω (used by Philo, Josephus, Justin Martyr, and several pseudepigraphic authors) was to *cry aloud*, to *weep*, and to *bewail* (Haarbeck 1976:416). Κλαίω was associated with physical and/or mental pain that was outwardly visible (Verdbrugge 2000:687). Like κλαίω, the use of κλαυθμός dates

back to the time of Homer as a term for weeping; one of its uses was to describe lamentation for the dead (Rengstorf 1976:725). It is thus noticeable that not only does the word κλαυθμός connote a narrow semantic range, but also, there is nothing peculiar about the context(s) of use by ancient Greek authors. Whenever this word appeared, it served the purpose of describing the mournful outburst of an individual afflicted by physical or mental pain too intense to contain. Hence, weeping in this semantic context is ‘audible and involves more than tears ... it is outright bawling ... involving facial contortions, shortness of breath, feelings of angst’ (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 1998:939). It is an outward expression of grief (Bullinger 1999:862).

## 2.2. Old Testament (LXX)

In the Greek Old Testament, the word κλαίω occurs 165 times, mostly translating the Hebrew word בָּכָה (*bākā*), meaning *weep* (Bauer 2000:546) or ‘cry aloud’ (Haarbeck 1976:416). Κλαυθμός (noun), a cognate of the verb κλαίω, makes 40 appearances in the LXX, standing most frequently for the Hebrew word *bekī* (‘weeping’, the nominal form of *bākā*). Like *bākā*, בָּכָה (*bekī*) is a common Hebrew word for weeping (Haarbeck 1976:416). ‘It is thus combined with θρήνος, Ἱερ. 38:15φ. (cf. Jos. Ant., 20, 112), πένθος, Bar. 4:11, 23, κραυγή, Is. 65:19, κοπετός, ξύρησις and ζῶσις σάκκων, Is. 22:12’ (Rengstorf 1976, vol. 3:725). Additionally, κλαυθμός comes into view in an emphatic religious usage, discussed in a later paragraph. Together, the words κλαυθμός and κλαίω appear 205 times in the LXX, in six diverse contexts.

Firstly, people weeping due to intense personal loss, associated with mourning the death of a loved one. In Genesis 50:1, Joseph mourned the death of his father Jacob, by weeping over him (NKJV). Abraham

wept over the death of Sarah (Gen 23:2). The children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days (Deut 34:8). David also wept after the Lord had taken his son because of his adulterous sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam 12).

Secondly, weeping is also associated with profound grief (Haarbeck 1976:416), shame, and remorse (Rengstorf 1976, vol. 3:723). This context is unmistakable in Lamentations, where 'it refers not merely to the events which occurred at the capture of the city, but to the sufferings of the citizens (the penalty of national sin) from the very beginning of the siege' (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown 1997). 'For these things I weep', reads Lamentations 1:16, depicting the plight of Israel in the face of God's judgment and exile by her enemies. In 1 Samuel 1:7, this intense anguish, sorrow, and heartache is again portrayed through Sarah, a barren woman who wept year after year in the house of the Lord for the removal of this curse.

A third category of weeping links with expressing a dependence upon God by addressing one's cries and complaints to him in prayer (Haarbeck 1976:416). David expressed this emotionally as he demonstrated dependence upon God to relieve him of his suffering. In Psalm 6, he showed reliance on God, acknowledging that unless God delivered him from his enemies, he would die. 2 Maccabes 13:12 describes the outlook of the people in their prayer to God for assistance and help. Samson makes obvious his reliance in his last cry for help, that the Lord would strengthen him one last time (Jdg 16:28). Isaiah 30 depicts God as a God of justice, giving blessing to those who depend on Him. 'O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help' (Isa 30:19)! Hezekiah too wept bitterly; expressing reliance upon God's righteousness (Isa 38:3). In the above instances, κλαυθμός represents an inclination to



surrender to God's will in the assertion that God does only that which is best for the salvation of his people.

Fourthly, an even more emotionally charged (uncommon) sub-category, is weeping out of anger. In Judges 9, upon escaping the killing spree of his brother Ambimelech, Jotham went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried (v. 7, KJV).

Fifthly, a rather common and interesting facet of κλαυθμός and κλαίω is their connection with the cultic lamentation of the whole people before Yahweh, usually accompanied by a general fast (Haarbeck 1976:416). In Judges 20, particularly verse 3, the Israelites wept before the Lord in an attempt to enquire of the Lord whether or not to fight the Benjamites. Three verses later, the people of Israel again sat weeping before the Lord ... they fasted that day until evening and presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to the Lord (v. 26). Rengstorf (1976, vol. 3:723) makes reference to this same context saying that 'the crying of Ps 126:5 may be mentioned in this connection, if it is correct that we are to see in weeping at sowing a widespread cultic rite.' Furthermore, the singular context is detectable. Leland (1998:940) recognises the weeping and the tears of a prophet over the sins of the people (Lam 1:16) as well as the tears triggered by a sense of spiritual loss or hunger (Ps 42:3).

Lastly, weeping for joy. Weeping connotes a context of joy, as in the case of Jacob reuniting with Esau: But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept (Gen 33:4). This, of course, is altogether dissimilar in undertone to the previous four groups, in that its implication is one of happiness and not one of sorrow. It is here that the semantic diversity of κλαυθμός and κλαίω are especially evident. The significance of this

connotation is not of interest to this study, as no New Testament passage uses 'weeping' to denote joy or happiness.

It is important to note that the biblical use of κλαυθμὸς has a different connotation in its context from its secular counterpart. Rengstorf (1976, vol. 3:724) elucidates:

This is ... the point where the biblical use necessarily diverges from that of the world outside the Bible. For the idea of manifested remorse which is occasionally present in *klaiein* is quiet alien to the Greek world, just as the whole idea of guilt before God is alien ... *Klaio* seems to be used more for outward grief than for grief in general. It thus seems to refer to manifest grief of a physical; rather than a spiritual kind.

Rengstorf continues to explain that the full dissimilarity between the biblical and extra-biblical use is evident especially when considering the metaphorical use in each case. On the one side, it is a powerful description of the need to endure a painful situation which we may well have brought on ourselves; on the other, it denotes the acceptance and affirmation of dependence on God. The basis of the distinction is that non-biblical *klaiontes*, in and with their grief, stand in no relation to a God who according to an eternal plan directs the destinies of men to their salvation (p. 724).

With this distinction in mind, the focus may now shift to the New Testament.

### *2.3. New Testament*

In the New Testament, κλαίω appears 40 times, meaning to weep, wail, or lament, implying not only the shedding of tears, but also, every external expression of grief and sorrow (Zodhiates 2000, s.v. κλαίω).

The word κλαίω, within the New Testament scriptures, is derived from the LXX and remains within the same semantic range. In fact, there is no new shade, tone, or semantic range of meaning. A brief analysis of the various nuances is, however, still necessary.

The appearances of the word κλαίω may be summarised as follows: the verb is used of strong sentiment and passion for mourning and wailing over a death (16 times), something that has been lost (6 times), or the ache of disconnection or separation (Acts 21:13) and for the expressive response to one's own lost state or the detachment of another (3 times).

Κλαίω appears as depicting or describing the enemies of Christ. This perspective has great theological significance, and deserves elaboration.

‘In the third Beatitude of Lk. hoi klaiontes nyn, “those that weep now” (6:21), are contrasted with those who are rich and full, who laugh now and of whom all men speak well (6:25 f.). The latter are self-righteous pharisaical persons, “who need no repentance” (15:7), who think highly of themselves, going through life full of self-assurance and with no sense of guilt. “Those that weep now”, on the other hand, live humbly in complete dependence upon God’ (Haarbeck 1976:416).

In both the Old and New Testament, laughter sometimes expresses an attitude which articulates human self-confidence in the face of God. When used in contrast to this kind of laughter, weeping expresses reliance, trust and confidence in God and his ways. Thus, in weeping, one acknowledges God, and his way is fundamentally accepted (Rengstorf 1976, vol. 3:723). Weeping occurs, moreover, as a result of realising one's weaknesses and sinfulness. For example, in Luke 7:38, the woman was crying profusely as she encountered Jesus. Luke tells

his readers that she wet Jesus' feet with her tears. Peter wept too when he realised that he had denied Jesus three times (Luke 22:62).

The term can also be used metaphorically of trepidation (John 16:20), remorse (5 times) or of generally unfulfilled and unhappy existence (6 times) (Balz and Schneider 1993:293). Rengstorf (1976, vol. 3:726) makes a further important observation. Κλαίειν is always accompanied by a softer word intended to communicate and express grief in the narrower sense. A few examples: πενθεῖν (Luke 6:25; Jas 4:9; Rev 18:11, 15, 19), θρηνεῖν (John 16:20), ταλαιπωρεῖν (Luke 4:9), ὀλολύζειν (Jas 5:1), κόπτεσθαι (Rev 18:9) and λυπεῖσθαι (John 16:20). In other words, 'only this combination yields the full severity of what is intimated in the sayings' (Rengstorf 1976, vol. 3:725).<sup>2</sup>

Κλαυθμός appears nine times in the Greek New Testament. Seven of the nine appearances occur in the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*. In Matthew 2:18, κλαυθμός denoted the literal meaning of the word, namely, to bewail the death of a loved one or loved ones. In this context, 'it is associated with odyrmos polys ('loud lamentation') in the quotation from Jeremiah 31:15, which is seen as being fulfilled in the slaughter of the innocent at Bethlehem' (Haarbeck 1976:417).

In Acts 20:37, κλαυθμός describes the weeping of the elders due to Paul's departure. Here, the context is that of weeping out of sadness or out of an intense, deep grief. Although it is not in the same context as that of the Old Testament (grief associated with death), it would not be overstretching the imagination to understand and possibly assign similar connotations to κλαυθμός, as the elders obviously did not know if they would ever see Paul again.

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<sup>2</sup> The only context that weeping never denotes in the New Testament is joy. Weeping due to joy is strictly an Old Testament connotation.

In summary, therefore, the word κλαυθμός demonstrates a fairly wide array of meanings, denoting crying for a variety of reasons; death, grief, anger, mournful dependence on God, lamentation, and even joy.

### 3. Βρυγμός

The words βρυγμός and βρύχω (also spelled βρύκω) are cognate words. They appear 15 times in the Old and New Testaments and are utilised by at least 8 pre-New Testament secular authors in classical literature. This also includes its various cognates and contexts.

At the commencement of word studies, finding the root meaning of a word is extremely important and lays the foundation for a successful result. However, Rengstorf (1976, vol. 1:641) cautions students: ‘the co-existence of several roots βρυχ- makes it extraordinarily difficult to review the development of the term.’ In other words, because of the several different spellings, it is difficult to discern whether one is dealing with the correct word. Suffice to commence this study understanding that the spelling of βρύχω often changes to βρύκω in the LXX and some classical passages.

#### 3.1. *Extra-biblical Literature*

In Classical Greek literature, βρύχω seems to have a denotation similar to its occurrences in the Old and New Testament Greek, but interestingly, it communicates a relatively different connotation. Homer (Il., 13, 393; 16, 486) used the perfect tense βέβρυχα, portraying the breaking out of sufferers into open lamentation (Rengstorf 1976, vol. 1:641). In Ps.-Oppian Cyn. (2, 273), it describes the cry of pain of a stag mortally wounded by a snake-bite. Thus, there are ostensibly two mainstream usages of the word βρύχω throughout the ancient world.

The first was metaphorical, 'in the sense of gnawing or eating away as in the case of a disease (Sophocles)' (McComiskey 1976:421). This usage was common, as other medical writings have made use of βρυκῶ in the sense of 'chattering of teeth in chills and fevers' (Bauer 2000:184).<sup>3</sup> The second was a descriptive noun, labelling the act of eating noisily or greedily (Verbrugge 2000:232). Therefore, within the corpus of classical Greek literature, the words βρύχω and βρυγμὸς appear in two different contexts, namely, (a) chattering of teeth as a direct result of a fever, and (b) chattering of teeth caused by noisy eating. The emotion associated with the word is, therefore, outwardly negative, connoting sentiments of sadness, misery, and even include *physical pain*.

### 3.2. Old Testament (LXX)

In the Greek Old Testament, there are five instances (Job 16:9; Pss 34:16; 36:12; 111:10; Lam 2:16)<sup>4</sup> where the biblical writers utilise the word βρύκῶ (always translating the Hebrew word *hāraq*). The context of the phrase is always *to gnash with the teeth*.

Job in particular extends the imagery and likens *hāraq* to the gnashing of teeth of wild beasts before eating their prey, conveying a strong imagery of inescapable death caused by uncontrollable rage. Clines (1989:382) elaborates:

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<sup>3</sup> This is affirmed by Rengstorf (1976, vol. 1:641): "'to gnash" first appears in the expression βρύχειν (τοὺς ὀδόντας) with which Hippocrates (Mul., 1,2, 120 [VIII, 16, 262]; Epid., 5, 86 [V, 252, Littré]) characterizes especially the ague [fever].' In this sense, the dynamic equivalence of the word is 'chattering of teeth'. Rengstorf observes that it has sometimes occurred without τῶν ὀδόντων (of teeth).

<sup>4</sup> These verse references are from the LXX. Their numbering is different to that of the English and Hebrew Bibles.

God's attack on him has been that of a wild beast. It is a conventionality of the psalmic lament to depict one's (human) opponents as animals, the point of comparison being their superhuman power and death-threatening assault. Not for the first time, Job borrows cultic language depicting enemies to apply to God. It is God's anger that motivates this assault upon him, tearing him as a lion or wolf tears its prey, making his attack incessant, grinding his teeth, a sure threat to the prey of its imminent devouring (the gnashing of teeth in rage, not elsewhere attributed to animals).

This illustration of gnashing of teeth is particularly important because it is unique and shows an uncommon usage, expanding its semantic range.

Lamentations 2:16 depicts Israel's enemies laughing antagonistically. Dyer (1985:1215) clarifies the context and meaning of this verse by explaining that the fourth sketch pictured the victorious enemy mocking the vanquished people. The once-majestic and secure city of Jerusalem was now the object of scoffing and derision. People taunted her, poking fun at her former beauty and joy, which were now gone, and her enemies scoffingly rejoiced in their victory (cf. 3:46).

Its usage, therefore, denotes contemptuous mocking (Verbrugge 2000:232), signifying 'an expression of rage that has burst out' (Keil 1996:503), having taken on a malicious, intense character.

The term βρῦκω appears three times in Psalms (35:16; 37:12; 112:10), all conveying strong antipathy, bitterness, and anger. However, Psalm 37:12 and 112:9 add yet another dimension to the semantic range, namely, jealousy. Pertaining to Psalm 37:12, VanGemeren (1991:301) observes that the 'futile are the activities of the wicked. They "plot" in an attempt to get the upper hand. Their godlessness finds expression in

an obsession with evil and hatred of good. They “gnash their teeth” in bitter jealousy.’

VanGemeren (1991:712) singles out jealousy and envy as related to ‘gnashing of teeth’. He continues to explain that the blessedness of the wise (due to his righteousness) leaves behind a legacy. In contrast, the wicked man sees God rewarding the righteous and will ‘melt away ... he is filled with anger, bitterness and jealousy.’

Its range of use seems rather regular and consistent, always symbolising the hatred of the unrighteous towards the righteous, a hatred that harbours a strong desire to destroy the godly.<sup>5</sup>

The noun βρυγμός makes only two appearances in the LXX. In Proverbs 19:12, translating the Hebrew word *naham*, denoting the wrath of a king (adopted figuratively) as he groans and growls as a lion (McComiskey 1976:421). In Sirach 51:3, the writer gives thanks for deliverance from the ‘gnashing of teeth’ which is about to devour him. In other words, the word is attributable to human enemies, depicted as wild beasts with the imagery of gnashing teeth prior to attack or prior to their biting (Job 16:9 also adopts this imagery).

In essence, then, the Old Testament equivalent of ‘gnashing of teeth’ is a set of colourful illustrations which convey extremely negative, depressing, and treacherous images of

- anger (Ps 35:16),
- hatred, bitterness, and a desire to destroy (Job 16:9),
- envy and jealousy (Ps 37:12; 112:9),

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<sup>5</sup> This undertone later surfaces in the New Testament, where the listeners are described as gnashing their teeth at Stephen’s speech (Acts 7:54).



- a malevolent joy at the hardship of others (Lam 2:16), and
- wrath (Prov 19:12) and imminent death (Sirach 51:3)

### 3.3. *New Testament*

The verb βρύχω appears only once (Acts 7:54) in the New Testament, and according to McComiskey (1976:421), it is recounting the ‘angry reaction of those who listened to Stephen’s speech’. In other words, βρύχω symbolises a reaction of rage, fury, and anger so intense that one consequently grinds one’s teeth, a seemingly uncontrollable, involuntary reaction. Bullinger (1999:324) puts it this way: ‘to roar or howl, especially the death cry of a wounded hero’. According to the above passage, it is possible to associate βρύχω with a *need*, or a strong desire for murder. Rengstorf (1976, vol. 1:641) correctly connects this passion of hatred with a desire to destroy. Moreover, according to the Old Testament customs and traditions, those who ‘βρύχω’ are sinners who are opposed to righteousness, whose removal is vital by any means necessary. This is clearly manifest in later passages, as the Sanhedrin’s desire to kill Stephen finally succeeded (Acts 7:50).

The noun βρυγμός is used seven times in the New Testament, once in the gospel of Luke 13:28, and six times in the gospel of Matthew (8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51 and 25:30), always in the phrase ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων (‘there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’, NIV), an expression describing ‘the condition of the wicked in their future existence’ (Verbrugge 2000:232). McComiskey (1976:421) explains that due to the rare appearance and usage of this phrase in secular Greek and Jewish literature, its precise meaning ‘can be derived only from its usage in each context’. This makes any meaning derived from context partially subjective. However, because of its regular appearance in Matthew’s gospel, it remains ‘the solid place

of formula' (Rengstorf 1976, vol. 1:641) for the actual phrase, not necessarily the individual words. Consequently, scholars have not disconnected βρυγμός and ὀδόντων, but treat them as a single unit, as in the first gospel.

Although the words κλαυθμός and βρυγμός have a particular scope of connotation and denotation, collectively they form a unique and particular phrase virtually unheard of in classical or Hebrew literature. The phrase ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμός καὶ ὁ βρυγμός τῶν ὀδόντων seems to be a strictly New Testament idiom.

What follows in the next segment is an overview the three concepts associated with the phrase 'weeping and gnashing of teeth', namely, 'outer darkness', 'fiery furnace', and 'dismemberment'. These three concepts may help to provide the essential context required for understanding such a unique Matthean passage, without verbal or conceptual precedent on which to rely for accurate interpretation.

#### 4. 'Outer darkness', 'fiery furnace', and dismemberment

The phrase 'there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth' appears six times in Mathew. A brief overview reveals that the phrase stands in direct relationship to three additional phrases or concepts:

Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30	'outer darkness'
Matthew 13:42; 13:50	'fiery furnace'
Matthew 24:51	'cut him to pieces'

A brief systematic analysis of these phrases will shed light on whether those who weep and gnash their teeth are remorseful, resentful, enraged, in physical pain, or all of the above.

The thematic commonality between Matthew 8:12, 22:13, and 25:30 is that the phrase ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’ is connected with the terms, τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον (‘outer darkness’, NIV; BDAG suggests ‘the darkness furthest out’ [s.v. ἐξώτερος]). In 8:12, the sons of the kingdom (false disciples) are thrown into the outer darkness. In 22:13, Jesus explained that the incorrectly clad guest at the wedding banquet was to be bound hand and foot and cast into the outer darkness. Similarly, the ‘worthless’ unfaithful servant was cast into the outer darkness (25:30). The phrase ‘outer darkness’ presents a contextual interpretive challenge, since it is a distinctly Matthean expression that seems to draw a powerful contrast between the brilliantly lit banquet hall blazing with light and the utter darkness outside. The concept of darkness is elsewhere also connected with judgment in general (2 Esdr 7:93; 1 Enoch 63:10; Pss Sol 14:4; 15:10). ‘Outermost’ is a superlative, an adjective that denotes the highest order, class, or degree, exceeding or superior to all others. This seamlessly links the concept of *the* weeping and *the* gnashing of teeth that takes place in *the* outermost darkness. In any case, it seems that the concept of ‘outermost darkness’ has relevance for the main question of this article, for it helps to underpin the theme—the severity of the judgment that takes place away from the blessings experienced by the righteous.

In two instances in Matthew chapter 13, Jesus is recorded connecting ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’ with the concept of a fiery furnace (the only two uses of this phrase in the New Testament). Surely, a fiery furnace would provide a definitive conceptual link between the

outwardly expressed physical agony of 'weeping and gnashing of teeth'.

Matthew most likely drew (almost verbatim) the imagery τὴν κάμνον τοῦ πυρός from Daniel 3:6; 11; 15; 20 and Malachi 4:1–2 (the same words are found in Matt 13:50). Hagner (1998) thinks that this is to be related to the fire of Gehenna mentioned in 5:22 and 18:8–9 (cf. esp. 2 Esdr 7:36). However, neither of these two passages provides information pertaining to the nature of Gehenna or the nature of those who suffer in this place.

Interestingly, two prominent commentators (Hill 1972; Strecker 1975) have promoted the thesis that verses 49 and 50 are Matthean insertions and cannot belong to the original parable, citing the imagery of fire as inappropriate for the disposal of worthless fish. This view, according to Mounce (1998), however, is merely the result of the failure to recognise that verses 49 and 50 are an eschatological interpretation of the parable itself. In support of the view that the parable and its interpretation are original to Christ as a dynamic whole, Carson (1983:330) cautions such commentators not to confuse the symbol with what it symbolises. He continues to explain that, if one objects to the disposal of fish in the fire, one must similarly object to the reaction of the tares, for tares do not weep or gnash their teeth.

According to Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown (1997), 'the furnace of fire' denotes the fierceness of the torment, but alludes to no direct connection between the fire in the furnace and physical pain.

MacArthur (1985), however, sees a clear connection between the 'furnace of fire', 'weeping and gnashing of teeth', and physical agony, explaining that 'fire causes the greatest pain known to man, and the furnace of fire into which the sinners are cast represents the

*excruciating* (emphasis added) torment of hell, which is the destiny of every unbeliever'. It is not a stretch of the imagination to equate the symbol (furnace of fire) with what it symbolises (destruction *and* physical pain). This heeds Carson's warning not to confuse the symbol with what it symbolises. Even if annihilationism is presupposed as the ultimate fate of the wicked, the process of annihilation or total destruction by fire (assuming that the wicked do not simply cease to exist, and that 'fire' is not merely metaphorical in each instance when it is connected with 'hell' and 'judgment') is in itself filled with physical torture and it is excruciating. This is an important clarification; it is difficult to imagine the original hearers in an oral culture perceiving the nature of suffering of those cast (or 'flinging' expressions of indignation, abhorrence, contempt [McArthur 1985:n.p.]) inside a furnace of fire, weeping and gnashing their teeth, as simply a psychological representation of judgment devoid of any association with physical pain and suffering. It is equally arbitrary to think that, upon hearing the Old Testament narrative of King Nebuchadnezzar casting Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan 3:8–30), the hearers would not be astonished by the excruciating pain that the three Israelites would feel burning inside the furnace of fire. It seems, therefore, that 'fire', 'judgment', and even 'the concept of 'destruction' are connotatively inseparable from physical suffering and torment (irrespective of the duration of the fire which torments).

The final connection worthy of mention is the connection between 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' and dismemberment in verse 51 of the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servant (Matt 24:45-51). This concept requires closer systematic analysis.

The parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants reaches its climax by means of a vivid and bizarre exposition of a two-part judgment of the

unrighteous slave. In the first portion of the verse, Jesus makes known that the master shall *cut in two* the unfaithful servant. What did Jesus mean by this, and is there an inherent 'agony-factor' that hearers and readers would recognise?

There is no scholarly consensus concerning the meaning or nature of the disloyal slave's initial doom as expressed by Matthew. Jeremias (1972:57, n. 31), for example, proposed that the expression *to cut in two* is simply a mistranslation of the underlying Aramaic ('he will apportion to him' was incorrectly translated as 'he will divide him').<sup>6</sup> Jones (2004:444) suggests that the expression *cut to pieces* is a separation from spiritual grace. In Matthew's case, it is expressing excommunication from the Christian community. Or, as suggested by Harrington (1991), it is merely a way of expressing excommunication from the community in general. As an advocate of a metaphorical interpretation, Harrington notes that a literal interpretation makes little sense, since a literal dissection would leave nothing to punish for eternity (p. 344). However, as Sim (2002:176) points out, the dichotomisation of the slave takes place after the return of the master (post Christ's *parousia*) and, therefore, this activity must have an eschatological referent. Others still, based upon the improbability that a severed body would receive additional punishment, have opted for a metaphorical interpretation of the servant's dissection. Betz (1964), for example, suggested that the meaning of διχοτομήσει has undergone evolution, and in light of such, he proposed that the underlying verb for correct translation is *to cut*, a verb which shifts the readers' attention to

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<sup>6</sup> Sim (2002:173–74) elaborates further, explaining that other scholars are prepared to let this odd motif stand, motivating their view on the grounds that Jesus was familiar with and influenced by the story of Ahiquar, a story which contains many parallels to the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants.

representing the dramatic punishment (death) that appropriately launches the wicked into eternity (cf. Gundry 1982).<sup>7</sup>

Commentators in general seem to advocate one of the interpretive schemes from above (literal or metaphorical), with varying differences (e.g. Blomberg 1990; Scott 1990). As observed by Sim (2002:177), the common thread of the abovementioned interpretations of this Matthean passage is the assumption,

...that the evangelist could not have intended the reference to the dissection of the servant to be taken literally. ... it seems that scholars have made decisions about the beliefs of the evangelist on the basis of their own standards and worldviews. Since the scenario presented in Mt 24:51 seems both impossible and bizarre to modern readers, it is immediately assumed that Matthew must have thought in similar fashion.

Standing in accord with the above sentiments, the cutting into pieces of the wicked is not connotative of excommunication, or an unfortunate mistranslation, but a *literal* dissection of the false disciple ('cut in two of the dismemberment of a condemned person,' BDAG),<sup>8</sup> a most awful and ghastly form of punishment often alluded to in other portions of scripture (1 Sam 15:32; 2 Sam 12:31; Dan 3:29; 1 Chr 20:3; Heb 11:37).<sup>9</sup> This position, however, raises two potential difficulties. Firstly, how can a dissected (presumably deceased) body be fit for further punishment? Secondly, if the returning master represents Jesus, will

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<sup>7</sup> For a more thorough historical survey of the history of interpretation, see Sim 2002:172–184.

<sup>8</sup> For a brief apologetic for a literal translation, see Friedrichsen 2001:258–264.

<sup>9</sup> Moreover, such forms of punishment are likewise recorded in non-canonical literature, e.g., the execution of Mettius in Livy, i. 28, Horace, Sat., I. i. 99, Herodotus 7.39, and Suetonius *Caligula* 27.

Jesus be the agent of the gruesome eschatological punishment, as the master in the parable proper? Sim's (2002:182) conclusions answer both difficulties and deserve full citation:

Matthew accepted the tradition, found in both Jewish and Christian apocalyptic circles, that avenging angels would play an integral part in the eschatological punishment of wicked Christians (cf. 18:34). In 24:51 the evangelist makes the point that Jesus would cause the angels to punish these disobedient Christians by slicing them in two. A similar story of angelic tormenters who dissect the wicked is found in the story of Susanna, one of the additions to the canonical book of Daniel and a text that was known to and revered by Matthew and his community. In light of this and other close parallels between the parable and in Mt 24:45-51 and the tale of Susanna, it can be deemed very probable that Matthew read the Q tradition he inherited in the light of the Susanna story. Just as the evil elders abused their positions of power and responsibility and were cleaved in two by avenging angels as a result, so too would those leaders in the Christian community who abused their positions be given the same eschatological punishment.

Hence, the cutting in two of the unfaithful is a literal punishment of the most severe kind. France (2007:945) elaborates, explaining that there is no verification for its use in other places as simply an allegory for ruthless chastisement. In all probability, then, it is to be taken literally as a particularly brutal execution (cf. 1 Sam 15:33; Jer 34:18; Dan 3:29; Heb 11:37), which goes far outside the parameters of the account and is intended (like the 'torturers' of 18:34) to shock the reader into a response. Physical pain is, in all likelihood, inseparable from the nature of the narrative. Dissection is agonising, and those who experience a painful transition from this life into the next, will likely experience that excruciating physical (and emotional) pain in the life to come.



## 5. A Brief Christocentric Consideration

The final step in this investigation into the nature of weeping and gnashing of teeth is to consider both the christocentric and missional context of the idiom.

Peppler's (2012:120) definition of the christocentric principle will be adopted here, namely, 'an approach to biblical interpretation that seeks to understand all parts of scripture from a Jesus-perspective. In other words, it is a way of *interpreting scripture primarily from the perspective of what Jesus taught and modelled, and from what he revealed concerning the nature, character, values, principles, and priorities of the Godhead.*'

Peppler (2012:121) further explains that the thrust of the christocentric principle 'is that we should interpret all of scripture from the perspective of what Jesus reveals of the nature of the Godhead. What we know of God's character, values, principles, and priorities must govern our understanding of what we believe the Bible is teaching in all its parts.'

A character portrait of Jesus speaking judgment of such sobering proportions seems counterintuitive to the gentle shepherd imagery that many believers have embraced. Throughout the four gospels, Jesus expressed the reality of judgment on numerous occasions, outside of the six Matthean passages that contain the expression 'weeping and gnashing of teeth'. In fact, in Matthew, Jesus spoke on the theme of avoiding judgment more frequently than he did on getting to heaven. It may be argued that it was not Jesus who fixated on judgment, but Matthew, as the writer, carefully considered which judgment pronouncements to include in his prudently constructed gospel. To

some degree, this is a valid observation. Notwithstanding the inspired nature of Matthew's gospel in terms of its thematic content, the fact that Matthew had plentiful judgment materials (oral and written) available to him in order to compile his gospel points towards a Saviour who often conversed with his listeners on the topic of judgment.

A descriptive survey of judgment passages within the structural context of the five teaching discourses reveals that Matthew's Gospel is 'loaded' with judgment narratives as shown in the table below (Erdey and Smith 2012:31).

<b>Discourse / Narrative</b>	<b>The theme of Judgment</b>
Matthew's Opening Chapters (1–4)	3:7-12
Discourse 1: The Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5–7)	5:19; 5:21–26; 5:29–30; 7:13–14; 7:19; 7:27.
Chapters 8–9	8:5–13
Discourse 2: Missionary Instructions (ch. 10)	10:15, 26–33, 34–39
Chapters 11–12	11:22, 24; 11:36–37; 12:31–32; 12:41–42
Discourse 3: The kingdom Parable collection (ch. 13)	<i>13:24–30, 36–43, 47–50</i>
Chapters 14–17	15:13; 16:26
Discourse 4: Community instructions (ch. 18)	18:8–9

Chapters 19–22	19:28–29; 20:16; 21:18–21; 21:40; 22:13
Discourse 5: Eschatological Sermon (chs 23–25)	Chs 23; 24; 25

*Table 1: Dispersion of the judgment theme in Matthew’s gospel*

Therefore, from a christocentric perspective, Jesus not only preached and taught about judgment, but he also alluded to the severity of the judgment itself in extremely sobering language. From this perspective, it seems clear that Matthew recorded Christ revealing not only the reality of judgment in general, but the nature of judgment in particular. Christ’s judgment disclosures may, therefore, unveil grace and compassion, rather than stand-alone conclusions about the severity of judgment as an end in its own. This facet of Christ’s love and compassion towards the lost becomes clearer in his final words of love and compassion to his disciples. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus seems to bring together and reinforce his entire earthly ministry with the words, ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations’. In other words, now that you understand all the things that I have shared with you (including the horrific nature of judgment), go out and spread the Good News of salvation. Moreover, John 3:16 is a pertinent passage: ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.’ In verse 17, a clarifying statement is added, explaining that ‘God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him’. That is, the harsh reality of judgment is the absolute last resort, for God has done everything within his providential power to offer salvation to all those who accept it. The very nature of God, as demonstrated though Jesus, is to have an eternal relationship with all

those who trust in him; he is a God who saves from judgment, not a God who is consumed by punishing those who reject him.

Possibly, there is a thematic connection here, for it seems that the most horrific pronouncements of judgment through the weeping and gnashing of teeth phrase as recorded by Matthew, Jesus made to the disciples in private, not to the crowds in general. For example, in the parables of the tares (Matt 13:24–30), Jesus tells the parable to the crowds, but provides the exegesis of the parable to his disciples only (36–43). The same applies to the parable of the dragnet (47–50); Jesus reveals the full extent of judgment, accompanied by the phrase 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' to the disciples, after the crowds have left. Why did Christ reveal the horrific fate of the wicked exclusively to his disciples, and not to the crowds? From a missional perspective, perhaps Jesus was 'soft' and compassionate on the lost, but hard and firm with those who considered themselves disciples. The standard has been set higher, so much so, that they should know and fully understand what will happen to those who reject salvation. Perhaps,

Jesus felt it unnecessary to emphasise this truth to the masses. Rather, Jesus emphasised the horrors of eternal judgment primarily to His disciples, probably with the goal of imparting to them a sense of urgency to reach the lost. No true disciple, upon hearing of the horrors of judgment, should remain unmoved and indifferent to the urgent need to evangelise the lost. No true disciple, upon reading Matthew's gospel, should be insensitive to the desperate plight of those who reject the Saviour of the world (Erdey and Smith 2012:37).

From a missional perspective, therefore, the message of Jesus demands from its readers an individual response to the question, 'What about those who are lost? Are you really going to do nothing, knowing the

horrific fate they will suffer?’ The Great Commission in Matthew 28 cements the demand for a response to this question. The sense of urgency is unmistakable. All believers are expected to contribute towards God’s mission to bring the gospel to the lost.

## 6. Conclusion

Matthew has employed the phrase ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’ on six occasions throughout his gospel. Commentators often comment that the Matthean phrase is a vivid reference to the nature of the wicked post final judgment. However, some conclude that, based on the Matthean idiom, the existential state of the wicked goes beyond mere anger frustration and rage at God (a psychological existential state); it embraces physical pain and agony. That is, the judged will weep and gnash their teeth because of emotional stimuli *and* physical agony, possibly as a result of the literal fires of hell. This enquiry was therefore a thematic analysis of the phrase, the meaning of the individual words that make up the phrase, as well as a basic thematic consideration of the concepts that are closely connected to each occurrence of the phrase.

A synchronic and diachronic study of the individual terms within the phrase ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’ has revealed that word κλαυθμός demonstrates a fairly extensive assortment of meanings, denoting crying for a variety of reasons; death, grief, anger, mournful dependence on God, lamentation, and even joy. The connotative range of meaning could not be wider.

In extra-biblical literature, the word βρυγμός always conveys the meaning to *gnash* (the teeth) because of (a) suffering associated with sickness and disease or (b) because one is eating noisily. The emotional

or expressive context of eating noisily is, of course, neutral. This changes fairly significantly when the word is used in the context of chattering (of teeth) due to a fever. The emotion associated with the word is therefore outwardly negative, connoting sentiments of melancholy, desolation, and even *physical pain*. Therefore, its range of meaning may and does include physical pain, and it is unwise to exclude this outwardly physical aspect of the word.

Although still denoting a chattering of teeth in the LXX, the source has clearly changed to a more negative, downbeat origin, namely, bitterness, jealousy and potent anger. A widening of scope/meaning is apparent, intensifying from implicating superficially negative emotions to far more harmful, defensive, and distrustful feelings of hostility. Therefore, the term βρυγμός may contain within it citations of existential truths from both ends of the spectrum; neutral noise as a result of eating noisily, of anger, hostility, and *physical pain*.

In the final segment of the article there was a systematic contextual analysis of each appearance of the idiom 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' *vis-a-vis* three circumstantial concepts, namely, outer darkness, furnace of fire, and dismemberment. For example, the notion of 'outer darkness' is a particularly Matthean expression that draws a powerful comparison between the intensely lit banquet hall blazing with light and the absolute darkness outside. The 'furnace of fire', another unique Matthean phrase, appears only twice in the New Testament, drawing an allusionary parallel between the suffering that fire can cause to the physical body, and the equivalent existential experience of those who weep and gnash their teeth. Lastly, the concept of dissection or dismemberment, the cutting in two of the unfaithful, is a literal punishment of the most severe kind that is inseparable from physical agony. It is difficult to accept that the hearers and readers of Matthew's gospel, in this instance, would not perceive the connotations of the

severity of judgment apropos the pain and suffering that dismemberment would cause.

Therefore, the three concepts are helpful in the sense that they re-confirm the force of judgment in general, and the severity of the full and complete suffering of those who weep and gnash their teeth, in the outermost darkness, having been cut into pieces, and thrown into the furnace of fire, where they experience total emotional and physical suffering in the inferno.

A final word of caution is necessary for interpreters. As with the phrase, ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’,<sup>10</sup> each of these expressions is unique to Matthew’s literary style and, therefore, defers (in some sense), rather than assists in answering conclusively the main question of this article. That is, it is difficult to discover categorically the meaning of one particularly unique idiom by merely appealing to other unique circumstantial concepts within the same verse or pericope. Thus, interpreters are left with an interpretive dilemma, required to return to a larger context of Matthew’s theology of judgment, as well as other informing scriptural passages. This article was merely a proposal to interpreters to consider more seriously Matthew’s theological communiqué that the idiom ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’, interpreted in the light of three concepts to which it is connected, as well as the synchronic and diachronic analysis of the individual words that make up the phrase, seems to indicate that indeed, the unrighteous will suffer in the total sense of the word; soul, spirit, and body.

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<sup>10</sup> For the unique nature and function of the phrase ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’ in the gospel of Matthew, see Erdey and Smith (2012).

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# **Destruction of the Human Embryo in Stem Cell Research and the Moral Status of the Unborn in the South African Regulatory Framework—A Christian Assessment**

Callie Joubert<sup>1</sup>

## **Abstract**

One of the most prominent controversies of the last decade has been human embryo research, as obtaining stem cells typically requires the destruction of the embryo. The South African Bill of Rights excludes the embryo from the right to life, yet, in legislation, it is acknowledged that the unborn can suffer harm. The aim of this paper is to help Christians make sense of this state of affairs. First, it highlights a few anomalies in the South African regulatory framework. It then turns to the scriptures, followed by a clarification of crucially important metaphysical concepts and distinctions without which no position on the moral status of the embryo can be adequately assessed and critiqued. The final section comprises a brief response to three objections to the view that the human embryo is in fact a human person.

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

## 1. Introduction

South Africa's history took a turn in 1996, when the new Constitution (no. 108 of 1996) and the Bill of Rights (henceforth 'the Bill') came into being. Just as momentous was the passing of the *Choice on the Termination of Pregnancy Act* (henceforth 'the Act') the same year. Government statistics reveal that 500,000 legal abortions have been recorded from 1997 to 2004 (McGill 2006:195–196, also fn. 1). For Christians, the proliferation and legal permissibility of these practices could easily lead to a view among their fellow citizens that human life has very little value, let alone that the 'good' of abortion counts towards the common good (Anderson 2002; De Freitas 2001, 2006; Meilaender 2005; McGill 2006; Vorster 2011).

South Africa is on the verge of entering another phase in its history. Researchers recognised the potential of stem cells<sup>2</sup> to treat a wide range of human illnesses and diseases which are currently difficult or 'impossible' to treat (Pepper 2010; Schuklenk and Lott 2002; Sommer 2011; Steinbock 2011). What makes human embryonic stem cells so special is that, on the one hand, they are thought to have greater potential for differentiation into a wide range of tissues, and, on the

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<sup>2</sup> It is embryonic stem cells that are in view in this paper, and not 'adult' stem cells. The former are both pluripotent and totipotent. 'Pluripotency' refers to the ability of the stem cells to produce all of the differentiated cell types of the mature organism; during the single-cell stage (of the so-called 'zygote' or fertilised egg), the cells are capable of becoming a whole new embryo, and are therefore 'totipotent'. Adult stem cells are typically 'multipotent'; they are capable of producing only cell types belonging to particular tissue. Whereas embryo stem cells can only be harvested from a pre-implanted human embryo, adult stem cells are extracted from a variety of tissues in the fetus, newborns, and adult human beings, such as bone marrow, body fat, the placenta, and umbilical cord (George and Landry 2012:62–63). Harvesting adult stem cells does not necessarily result in the destruction of a living organism.

other hand, procuring them requires the destruction of the human embryo.<sup>3</sup>

Destruction of the embryo is widely acknowledged and discussed as problematic for our understanding of the moral status of the unborn.<sup>4</sup> The South African Bill of Rights excludes the embryo from those considered to have a right to life and the embryo is not recognised as a human being or legal person in South African law. It follows that the destruction of the human embryo is not considered to be murder (the killing of an innocent person). Yet, in legislation, it is acknowledged that the unborn can suffer harm.

The aim of this paper is to help Christians make sense of this state of affairs. First, this paper will highlight a few anomalies in the South African regulatory framework. Focus then turns to a few passages from scripture that form the basis of the clarification of crucially-important metaphysical concepts and distinctions without which no position on the moral status of the human embryo can be adequately assessed and critiqued. The final section comprises a brief response to three objections to the view that the human embryo is a person.

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<sup>3</sup> The South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement, a business unit of the National Research Foundation (SASTA), has informed the public that embryos will be available from fertility clinics; multiple embryos will be produced in case the first embryo is unsuccessfully transplanted, and there will be many unwanted embryo 'leftovers' (SASTA 2010:2). Only some clinics will keep these 'unused' embryos, while other clinics will leave them to die if they are not implanted. It will also be possible to obtain embryonic stem cells from abortion clinics where they are extracted from embryos that have been produced by a method known as Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer (SCNT), the same procedure by which embryos are cloned (SASTA 2010:2–3). For an in-depth discussion of genetic engineering and reproductive technologies, cloning and stem cell research from a Christian perspective, see Dixon (1993) and Feinberg and Feinberg (1993:207–298).

<sup>4</sup> References to 'unborn' will henceforth include the zygote, embryo, and fetus.

## 2. The South African Regulatory Framework: Some Inconsistencies

Most countries have legislation controlling human embryonic stem cell research. In South Africa, the regulatory framework for the use of stem cells for therapeutic or research purposes includes the Constitution and legislation in the form of the *Human Tissue Act* (no. 61 of 2003 as amended) and the *National Health Act* (no. 65 of 1983 as amended). The national Health Bill, passed in 2003, makes allowance for human embryonic stem cell research on excess embryos from *in vitro* fertilisation and makes allowance for the production of embryos specifically for the purposes of research.

During January 2007, the Minister of Health published regulations for public comment regarding the use of stem cells and embryos for health research and therapeutics (labels such as 'research' and 'therapeutics' are highly misleading, for both involve the production and destruction of embryos). On 1 April 2011, further regulations relating to the general control of human bodies, tissue, blood, blood products, and gametes (sperm and egg cells) were published. Those regulations are still in draft, which means that South Africa is '*currently operating in a regulatory vacuum in which the rules and guidelines are fragmented*' (Sithole 2011:57).

### 2.1. The Bill and the Act

Sections 10 and 11 of the Bill stipulate respectively that 'Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected' and 'Everyone has the right to life'. Section 36 (1) stipulates that these rights 'may be limited only in terms of law of general application to the extent that the limitation is reasonable and justifiable in an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and



freedom, taking into account' several relevant factors. Regarding human embryo stem cell research, Sithole (2011:56) correctly observed, 'The concern regarding stem cell research of embryos relates to ethical issues'—issues, we must add, about good and evil, right and wrong, and the truth and falsehood of moral beliefs (Holmes 1984:15). However, before answering the question, 'how the unborn is to be treated?' it is important to first have clarity about what is meant by the term 'embryo'.

Section 12 (2) of the Bill stipulates, 'Everyone has the right to bodily and psychological integrity, which includes the right (a) to make decisions concerning reproduction and (b) to security in and control over their body'. This stipulation allows a pregnant woman to determine the destiny of her unborn, since 'an embryo or fetus is regarded as part of the mother and is not an independent bearer of rights' (Sithole 2011:56). In other words, the rights of the mother trump those of her unborn.

This registers a problem: it is not that the mother should not exercise her rights when her life is endangered by her pregnancy; rather, the Bill and the Act gave women the right to think of their unborn as either not a human being, or, as something less than human. The Bill also seems to say that unborn children only have the worth, value, or dignity that is conferred on them by their mothers. The right to life, in other words, has been reduced to a 'privilege'. However, if a mother is allowed to kill her unborn child because the child is intruding on her bodily autonomy, then, it is unreasonable to disallow her to harm the child using the same reasoning.

Although Section 28 (2) of the Bill stipulates that 'A child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child', it disappointingly stipulates in sub-section (3) that 'child' means

'a person under the age of 18 years'. It is clear that the Bill reflects knowledge of what a child is, but arbitrarily concluded that such a person's life is to be equated with age, which commences at birth.

There also appears to be a contradiction between the Bill and certain stipulations in the Act. Section 2 (b) (ii) and 2 (c) (iii) of the Act acknowledge explicitly that a foetus can suffer—physically and mentally—and can be injured. Thus, if the foetus can suffer and/or be injured, then the foetus is implicitly acknowledged to have the moral status of any child under 18. Suffering and injury, therefore, put the unborn in the position of being a patient. This is confirmed by prenatal genetic testing and surgery on the foetus in utero, which raises the question about the obligation of a pregnant woman toward her unborn child. These facts make it hard to believe that a foetus in the womb can be a legitimate patient and the subject of medical treatment and care, and at the same time, not entitled to the right to life. It is a straightforward interpretation of the biological facts (Condic 2008; George and Landry 2012:32, 42; Lugosi 2007:123–125). Without this kind of reasoning, reference to suffering and injury makes no sense. A hard and fast distinction between an unborn child and a new-born child, therefore, becomes, at best, a highly arbitrary affair. Both the unborn and the new-born are in a process of growth and development; both are in a process of realising their full potential; and both mature as members of the kind they already belong to, namely, human beings. Despite these anomalies, the High Court of South Africa ruled differently, and by so doing, highlighted these anomalies even more noticeably.

## **2.2. The High Court of South Africa**

That the moral status of the human embryo is a problem is evident from the South African High Court judgment in the case of *Christian*

*Lawyers Association of South Africa and others v Minister of Health and others* (1998 (4) SA 1113). The Christian Lawyers Association sought an order declaring the Act unconstitutional and invalid. The plaintiffs pleaded that the ‘life’ of a ‘human being’ commences at conception, and that the Act is in conflict with the ‘right to life’ clause of the *Constitution of South Africa* because it allows the termination of human life at any stage between conception and birth.<sup>5</sup> The Court rejected the challenge of the Christians and ruled, amongst other things, as follows: the word ‘everyone’ in Section 11 of the Bill excludes a ‘foetus’ and Section 28 (3) defines ‘child’ as ‘a person under the age of 18 years’. Thus, since the fetus is not a ‘child’ of any ‘age’, the fetus does not qualify for protection rights under the law (De Freitas 2001:122–124).

There are several disconcerting factors about the attitude and approach of the High Court. Three deserve mention. First, the Court stated that

whether the term ‘everyone’ or ‘every person’ as used in the Constitution ... applies to the unborn child from [the] moment of conception does not depend on medical or scientific evidence as to when the life of a human being commences ... Nor is it the function of this Court to decide the issue on religious or philosophical grounds (De Freitas 2006:182–183).

A little reflection on these statements of the Court reveals an underlying philosophical (metaphysical) position: life is not something that begins at conception. But the Court’s choice of words also reflects that the

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<sup>5</sup> Section (1) (a), (b) and (c) of the Act allow for the ‘termination of pregnancy’ (abortion) on request by a woman during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy; for medical or social reasons in the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy; and after the 20<sup>th</sup> week, to save the life of the woman or to prevent the fetus being born malformed or injured.

unborn is a child; otherwise why refer to 'the unborn child'? This makes the Court's decision an arbitrary matter. Perhaps it is more correct to say that the Court portrays a segregationist philosophy that allows the Court to discriminate between two human beings, namely, unborn and newborn children.

Second, it seems that the Court's approach is based on the assumption that questions pertaining to life and the moral status of the unborn can be discussed from a neutral ground or independent of any perspective, otherwise why would the Court have decided to exclude medical science, theology, and philosophy from its decision-making process? The fact of the matter is that no person can reason about anything without beliefs about what kinds of entities exist in the world, and how they can be known. It is only then that it is possible to make the decisions on how they are to be treated are formulated. In other words, there is no such thing as neutrality (Meilaender 2003; Nash 1999).

Third, the Court also seems to uphold the core decision-making principle of a democracy in South Africa. That is not to say, however, that when decisions are made according to the will of the majority, that they are necessarily right or ethical. Even if it is legislated that people may exercise the right to gratuitously torture babies, or fondle little children for self-gratification, it would still be wrong. This, therefore, has at least one implication for leaders, namely, the duty to undertake the hard work of making rigorous arguments to convince minds that it is wrong to torture babies (for example), and expressing those arguments in a way that moves hearts.

By way of summary, it would be useful to note Van Oosten's (1999:76) devastating conclusion of his assessment of the Act:

That the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act is hardly a model of legislative genius is abundantly clear. Behind its ideological façade, and political clichés, it consists of little more than the decriminalization of abortion, and that result could have been achieved in a fraction of the space occupied by the Act. For the rest, the Act bristles with lacunae, contradictions, inconsistencies and incomprehensibilities, and demonstrates a stunning ignorance of the basic principles of criminal law, an inexplicable ambivalence on the issue of abortion, and a surprising insensitivity of words on the legislator's part.

The foregoing assessments make the clarification of crucially-important concepts and metaphysical distinctions relating to the life and moral status of the unborn all the more urgent.

### **3. Conceptual Clarification**

This section will first focus on a number of passages of scripture that form the basis of the conceptual clarification and metaphysical distinctions.

#### **3.1. Scripture, life, and personhood**

The first verse of Genesis 1 states, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'. Genesis 1:11, 21 and 24 reveal that the Creator also created various kinds of things—vegetation, plants, trees, sea creatures, birds, cattle, creeping things and beasts—each with the capacity to yield seed, bear fruit, and multiply (reproduce) 'after their kind' (cf. Gen 6:19–20; Lev 11:14, 15, 16, 19, 22, 29, 30). These texts allow for the formulation of two reasonable principles: (a) if something cannot come from nothing, then life cannot come from non-life, and (b)

any first member in a series of subsequent members can only pass on to the members what it has in itself to pass on.

Taken together, they serve two purposes. On the one hand, they serve as an obstacle to those who believe that life progressed 'from nothing to something, from inorganic to organic, from animals to humans' (Berry 2007:3). On the other hand, they serve as an obstacle to those, as we shall later see, who believe that there is something like a human non-person, or, put differently, that a human being becomes a person. In short, both principles pertain to, especially, the origin of life and the beginning of human personhood.

The remarkable thing about the biblical record of creation is that, after God created the various non-human living things, he created the first human persons in his image and likeness.<sup>6</sup> The Bible states: 'Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" ... Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being' [lit. soul] (Gen 1:26 and 2:7).

By having created a conscious person (Adam) in mature form capable of action, reasoning, and the power of choice, the Creator manifested his own personhood. The two principles are again demonstrated in the text where it is stated that Adam 'became the father of a son in his own

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<sup>6</sup> 'Image' means an object similar to or representative of something else. This can be seen in statues, replicas, paintings of airplanes on a wall, and idols (Numb 33:42; 2 Kgs 11:8). 'Likeness' can mean one object similar to or as substitute for another object. Image is, therefore, not identical to, but like in substance (cf. Grudem 1994:442–450; Pfeiffer, Vos, and Rae 1975:832–833). Saucy (1993:20) says, 'For that which is by nature the "image" of something else can only be fully understood by knowing that which it images'. For a discussion of the meaning and implications of the concept of the 'image of God' in the context of bioethics, see Magnuson (2000:26–42) and Farish (2000:76–84).

likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth' (Gen 5:3). These texts allow us to make at least six reasonable inferences.

First, the created kinds can be called 'natural kinds',<sup>7</sup> for each was endowed by the Creator with the ability to naturally reproduce according to its own kind.

Second, in order to reproduce its own kind, they had to be endowed with a set of capacities befitting their natures, for example, for plants to absorb nutrients from the ground, and living creatures to move and obtain food in some way. The point can also be stated differently. Each of the natural kinds had been equipped with a nature which determines the kinds of activities appropriate to and natural for that entity to have (e.g. a dog to bark, and a fish to swim). From this follows that the capacities, properties, or tendencies of every particular kind of thing are grounded in the nature of that thing, and that the nature determines the function of abilities and parts, and not *vice versa*.

Third, the created natural kinds must have been endowed with inherent limits and boundaries beyond which kind variation could not go. It is natural to think that it is impossible for a fruit tree to reproduce an animal, and impossible for an animal to reproduce a human being. However, it is natural to think, for example, that members of the dog, sheep, or horse kind interbreed and reproduce varieties of themselves.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 'Created kinds' as natural kinds are succinctly captured by the concept of *baramin*, a concept derived from the Hebrew words *bara* ('create') and *min* ('kind') (Frair 1999:5).

<sup>8</sup> That natural kinds (*baramin*) reproduce only their own kind 'is clearly seen (or rather not seen) in our world today, as there are no reports of dats (dog and cat) or hows (horse and cow)' (Purdom and Hodge 2008:1). Even if two animals or fruits can

Fourth, if every created natural kind had a nature peculiar to itself, then it is the inherent or implanted nature that answers the question: what is it that makes something the kind of thing that it is?

Fifth, the nature (of something or someone) accounts for the continuity and identity of the entity through change over time. For example, a leaf and a chameleon can change colour, from green to brown, and yet, each remains the same 'thing' through the change. Continuity of personal identity through change over time is consistent with other texts from scripture. Psalm 139 suggests that King David is the same essential person from conception to mature adult. In verses 1 to 6, the King admitted that there is nothing in his life that could escape the awareness and knowledge of the Creator (cf. verses 7–12). In verse 16, he described himself as an 'unformed substance', translated by Kaiser (1983:172) as 'embryo'. David saw the person who gave thanks and praise to the living God as the same person who was skillfully woven together in the womb (v. 13), who was also the same person who was known by God inside and out (v. 16). In other words, the person who was being created in the womb was the same person who wrote the psalm. There is, therefore, continuity of personal identity from the earliest point of development to a mature adult.<sup>9</sup>

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produce a hybrid, the members will still be of the same kind (e.g. mules—from horse and donkey, and pluots—from a plum and apricot).

<sup>9</sup> Other passages of Scripture also suggest the continuity of personal identity: Job 3:3, 11; 10:8–11; Psalm 51:5; Luke 1:13, 41–44, 57–63. It is significant that 'man-child' or 'boy' in Job 3:3, which addresses Job's conception, is also used in other parts of the Old Testament to refer to a man and a husband, and thus, a person (Koukl 2010:1–4). There is one passage that appears to suggest a discontinuity between life in the womb and life as an adult: Exodus 21:22–25. Two observations suffice. First, in the words of Kaiser (1983:170), 'There is absolutely no linguistic justification for translating verse 22 to refer to miscarriage [instead of live birth] ... The text literally reads "so that her children go [or come] out"'. Second, the term 'child' makes it clear that a human



Finally, a human being as a person bears similarities to God as the supreme person. The implication for our understanding of the human person is this: there is no such thing as a non-human person. In order to see this, and in further support of this conclusion, it will be necessary to clarify a few concepts and distinctions.

### 3.2. Concepts and distinctions

Fundamental to any investigation of reality and the question about the kinds of things that exist, their natures, properties, and the relation between them, are categories; they indicate what something is, for example, a particular substance (a human being, a dog, an angel, a leaf), a quality (being strong, being wise), quantity, relation, place (it is always good to ask *where* something exists), time (it is always good to ask *when* something exists), action, event, state, posture, and so on. In short, categories help us to identify or classify things in the world and not to confuse them with things from which they differ. But, the ability to identify things presupposes a concept of what it is that is to be categorised. What does it mean?

For a person to perceive *this* dog *as* a dog or *this* chair *as* a chair, the perceiver has to have a concept of a dog and a chair. That is to say, when the perceiver has an adequate understanding of the dog or chair, then that person has a *proper* concept of the dog or chair. Also, if a person grasps a concept in the mind, the person grasps an object, which is not in the mind.

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being is in view here. For a comprehensive exegesis of this passage, see Kaiser (1983:101–105, 169–172). Kaiser concludes his assessment of various interpretations of the text as follows: ‘Most of the evidence is now being conceded by those who previously had adopted the case for miscarriage’ (1983:171, see also fn. 1; cf. Koukl 2010:1–4; Moreland and Rae 2000:235–236).

However, a concept also has a necessary condition, that of being *distinct*. For example, the concept of a dog—being an animal and mammal—entails that one has a positive and distinct understanding (comprehending, grasping, or apprehending) of the essential properties (characteristics, features, tendencies) unique to the dog. As such, a concept requires knowledge of differences between objects and allows us to pick out the unique properties of the things that exist. Finally, it is important to distinguish between a concept and the way one possesses it. A thing can possess a property in different ways or modes. For example, something can run quickly or slowly, and something red can appear clearly or 'fuzzily'. It is likewise with the possession of concepts; a person can have a partial or complete concept of something.

### 3.2.1. Substance

The most fundamental metaphysical concept to grasp is substance.<sup>10</sup> 'Substance' is a term that refers to all individual natural kinds—particular trees, butterflies, dogs, and human persons—as the standard, clearest examples of substances. Substances, therefore, fall into created kinds called natural kinds,<sup>11</sup> for example, a kind of tree, a kind of insect, a kind of dog, and a kind of person. This is explained by virtue of the fact that each member of a natural kind has the very same nature in it. So understood, this means that there is, strictly speaking, no such thing as a tree, insect, dog, or person; there are only *kinds* of trees, insects, dogs, and persons. Examples of the latter, as we have seen, are divine persons, angelic, and human persons.

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<sup>10</sup> I am deeply indebted to Moreland (1993: 55–78; 2001) for the insights reflected in what is to follow. See also Chisholm (1989) and Wiggins (2012).

<sup>11</sup> Wiggins (2012:8) agrees: 'The *phusis* of a thing is its mode of being. It is the principle of activity of a kind whose members share and possess in themselves a distinct source of development and change'.

A substance<sup>12</sup> is assumed to be the most fundamental category of reality for at least four reasons. First, it is that on which the reality of other things depends; it causes things to happen in the world. Second, a substance is the locus of reality and self-determination because it is itself a first member or principle of change and organised unity; a pile of wood cannot turn itself into a bed, and a human body cannot be arranged the way it is in the absence of an actual organising cause. Third, it expresses what an entity truly is. Lastly, if a substance is to change in its essential nature, it will cease to exist. If the dog Pugsley changes into a fish tomorrow, we will say it exists no more, and a fish came to be.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Here, I follow Hoffman and Rosenkrantz' (1997:5) depiction of the soul as a spiritual substance, which they state as follows: 'As we understand the concept of a soul, a soul is a nonphysical entity. More specifically, a soul is an unlocated substance which is capable of consciousness'. There are at least two ways we can understand the term 'unlocated'. First, the soul is everywhere present in the body, thus diffused throughout almost every part of the body. Second, although the soul cannot be captured in any one of the body's parts, it has direct and immediate causal influence on almost every part of the body. This understanding of the soul's unity with its body explains, amongst other things, why a person can remain the same entity even when the body loses some of its bodily parts. If this were not so, then a person who has lost two legs and both his eyes, has lost four parts of his soul, and that is not so. A person who has lost these bodily parts remains a person. See also Beckwith (2004) and Sullivan (2003). For a thorough treatment of a biblical anthropology, see Cooper (2000) and Saucy (1993:17–51).

<sup>13</sup> Wiggins (2012:5) argues that 'there is no such thing as something's or someone's getting a new identity ... in respect of being the changeable thing, the cow, horse, human being ... that it is'. 'Where identity is concerned, it seems impossible to make sense of "almost" or "nearly". Why? Well, x is neither almost x nor almost not x. So, if y is x, then y is not almost x or almost not x ... Given also the principle of permanence, one then arrives at the thought that y never was almost x or almost not x'. He concludes that it is only a 'substance that makes it possible to arrive at a ground of identity' (Wiggins 2012:10).

### *3.2.2. Property*

A property is an attribute, a quality, characteristic or feature of a substance, such as blackness, painfulness, rationality, and wisdom. These are examples of degreed properties. One person can be wiser than another, and a person can also experience pain of various degrees of intensity. In contrast, the natures or essences of natural kinds of things, such as the humanness of a human, the 'treeness' of a tree, and the 'dogness' of a dog, are nondegreed properties. Nondegreed properties are either exemplified or not, and either completely present or not. They are not like someone walking into a room with a first step, then a second, until the person finally enters the room. They are all or nothing affairs.

Some properties, such as degreed properties are non-essential properties, precisely because they are characteristics, features, qualities, or attributes of substances. In other words, they characterise their objects—the individual or particular thing that has them as their owner—in one way or another. Also, because they are non-essential, their owners (the substances) are what they are independent of whatever non-essential characteristics they possess. For example, a white painted pipe does not need to be white in order to be a pipe. So, if the pipe loses its colour, it would lose a non-essential property, but it would still remain the same pipe and it would continue to exist as one. In contrast, essential properties constitute the essential nature of a thing. If we then describe an object's essential properties, we will be able to say what kind of thing it is. James, for example, is a human kind of thing, and if James loses his humanness, he will cease to exist.

### ***3.2.3. Relations***

Relations (like properties) are universals; they can be in different places and objects at the same time. It requires one or more entities—properties or particulars—to stand in a certain relation to one another. It is important to draw a distinction between internal and external relations. The various parts of an aggregate thing—table or computer—stand in the form of external relations to each other, just as water in a glass. In such objects, neither the water nor the glass need each other. By contrast, an internal relation is in the natures of the entities it connects.

Internal relations are called internal, because they partly constitute the entity to which they are internal. For example, if the relation of the heart to the living human body is an internal relation, then, at least, part of what it means to be a heart is to stand in certain relations to the circulation system and, indeed, to the entire body as a whole. If the heart ceases to be related to the body as a whole, it can no longer be a heart, strictly speaking. In contrast, if parts of a computer stand in external relations to one other, then each part can cease to stand in that relation to one another and still exist.

So understood, it means we can contrast a substance with an aggregated or bundled thing. An aggregated thing derives its existence from something outside itself. It consists of parts that exist prior to the whole, and it loses sameness (identity) through change, for example, when it is dismantled and its parts stored somewhere in a room. Its parts retain their identity even when placed in a storeroom, which means that its unity is artificial. In short, an aggregated or bundled thing is not the bearer of its own existence, and the capacities it has are those imposed on it from the outside. In contrast to an assembled thing, a substance's

unity is ontologically prior to its parts, and parts are what they are in virtue of the substance's nature and their function in the substance as a whole.

### *3.2.4. Becoming and perishing*

Both these notions involve gaining and losing existence. When James, for example, comes to exist, there must be at least one property that belongs to him, i.e. he must be human—at that very moment of his coming to be. By contrast, something that perishes (ceases-to-be) no longer has this property. The problem is that this principle is often confused with *alteration*—an apple ripening, or a leaf turning from green to red are two examples.

Alterations are types of change, but before something can change it must first exist, and the thing that changes must exist at the beginning, during, and at the end of the change. In the case of the ripening apple, the apple exists and continues to exist while it is unripe, during the time it begins to ripen, and when it fully ripens. An alteration is, therefore, a case in which a thing changes in the properties it has; it is not the case in which something changes with respect to existence itself. Another way of making the same point is to say that alteration presupposes existence; it cannot be the same thing as a change in a thing's existence.

### *3.2.5. Capacities and functions*

Substances, like dogs, peanuts, or human souls have capacities or potentialities rooted in their inner essential natures. They also have the power to cause things in the real world. A baby has a number of capacities, even if some are not exemplified at any given moment. For example, a baby has the capacity to cry even though, at present, the

baby is silent. The baby may cry at 24:00 and cause someone to wake up, feed him/her, and by so doing, stop him/her from crying any further.

Although the soul has literally thousands of capacities, the various capacities within the soul fall into natural groupings called *faculties*. We express this insight, for example, by saying that the ability to see colours is part of the faculty of sight. The ability to think about created natural kinds and natures is a capacity within the thinking faculty (the mind). In other words, each faculty of the soul consists of a natural family of related capacities. Among other things, the soul contains five sensory faculties.

If we take the entire ordered structure together, it is evident that it is the substance's principle of activity and that which governs the precise ordered sequence of changes that the substance will go through in the process of growth and development. The essential nature will therefore set limits to the types of changes the substance can and should undergo as it exists. The nature, thus, has a purposeful or teleological structure, a principle of unity and an orderly sequence of activities whose unfolding forms body parts in order to realise bodily functions. From this follows the next truth: when the soul comes into existence, it begins to direct the development of a body. This means that, it is nature that determines function, and not *vice versa*.<sup>14</sup> Thus, if the soul is accepted as an individuated nature, then, every living organism is identical to its soul.

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<sup>14</sup> It will take us beyond the aim of this paper to argue in detail how the soul interacts with DNA. Suffice to say here that, according to the 'genocentric view' about DNA, genes are the fundamental units of life; nothing else or more is needed to produce an organism (an ordered aggregate, assembled piecemeal by the activity of the DNA). The 'organocentric view,' by contrast, holds that DNA is not the only thing passed on in reproduction. The genes that compose DNA are tools or instruments the soul uses to

We can deepen our understanding of a substance and its properties by applying our concepts of them to a seed such as a peanut. First, a peanut is the bearer of its own life and properties; it has its principle of growth in itself.<sup>15</sup> Second, it makes other things possible, for example, a growth of a root system, stem, branches, and leaves. Put in the reverse, other things depend on the peanut—the substance—for their existence. This leads to a third observation, namely, it has some definite inherent capacities or potentialities and tendencies. Some of these may be called absolute capacities; others, first-order and second-order capacities that have the first-order capacities, and so forth. The peanut has the ultimate capacity to bear fruit, and so the first-order capacity to draw nutrients from the ground. But if it does not grow a root system (develop a second-order capacity), it will be unable to do so. Fourthly, it remains the same thing during its development and change into a peanut tree, even if it loses some leaves and some green leaves turn brown. Finally, should it find itself in the right conditions and environment, it will do what it is naturally capable of doing—grow and bear fruit. In different words, it has an internal *telos* or purposiveness.

A question that is scarcely asked is this: how is it possible, or what makes it possible, for sperm to fertilise an egg? The biological evidence allows for at least five observations (Condic 2008:1–12). First, human life commences at the precise moment when the membranes of the sperm and egg cells fuse, and not 24-hours later as is often assumed. Second, gametes are equipped with capacities to do certain things—naturally—when the right conditions and environment are in place (e.g.

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accomplish its purposes as designed by the Creator. For an insightful discussion of DNA from the perspective of developmental biology see Wells (1998:51–70).

<sup>15</sup> This is naturally speaking, and does not imply that our Creator is not the sustainer of the life or existence of everything that exists (Col 1:17). It is just that he has created the natural order to function that particular way.



a sexual union between two people, a uterus, an umbilical cord, and so on). Third, the sperm and egg naturally need each other; in fact, the natural disposition or tendency of the sperm is to make for the egg, and the egg, as determined by the menstrual cycle, ‘waits’. It thus appears that the egg’s natural disposition is receptivity and its natural capacity is to be fertilised. Fourth, both the sperm and egg have an internal *telos*, an internal purposiveness, to unite with each other. Finally, as with the peanut, interference with the growth of the embryo could mean that no one will see the embryo come to maturity. The human embryo must therefore be protected. Thus, to answer the question, what it is that makes it possible for sperm to fertilise an egg?’ it is the ‘soulish’ potentialities (totipotency) of both the sperm and egg.

Lugosi (2007:123–124) provides the following description of ‘totipotency’. When an egg is fertilised by the sperm (called the ‘zygote’), the new genome—contained in the zygote—is

...internally activated by a biochemical process and assumes control of the whole morphogenetic process from the beginning of embryonic development. The cell divides from one cell into two, from two into four, and from four into eight. These cells are called totipotent, because they have a full range of development capacity to turn into any type of tissues or organs that are part of the adult human body. Totipotent cells are also able to differentiate differently in various environments, and are able to develop into a complete individual. Once the eight-cell stage is reached, the cells lose their totipotency.

The nature of totipotency is to execute a plan according to a given program. Undisturbed by external intervention, left alone totipotent cells will carry out the plan nature intended in an ordered, unique,

and coordinated process. Given the right conditions, an isolated totipotent cell can start its own life cycle.

Moreland and Rae (2000:304, 305) state that

This would be analogous to the way a starfish can build a new organism out of a part that has been disconnected from the original whole ... Each human cell could have the capacity for the development of a soul, actualized in the proper conditions. This would be consistent with our view of how the soul is intimately related to the body. The soul permeates the body and cannot be isolated from any particular part of it.

Feiberg and Feinberg (1993:53–55) provide a description of the physiology of human development. Amongst other things, between day five and nine, after the father's sperm penetrates the mother's egg cell, the baby's sex can be determined; by day 18 the heart is formed; by day twenty, the beginnings of the brain, spinal cord, and nervous system are laid; (at day 18, the baby's one-chamber heart begins beating – Lugosi 2007:125, fn. 27); by day thirty (one month) blood flows in the veins and is separate from the mother's blood supply; at 1½ months (day 45) spontaneous movements begin, and the teeth are developed; at the end of 8 weeks, every organ is present (and the baby demonstrates that he or she can experience pain—Lugosi 2007:126, fn. 29). The child is 3 cm in length when sitting up, and weighs a gram; 3 to 4 days later (at 8½ weeks) the fingerprints are engraved, and will not change for the rest of his or her life.

### *3.2.6. Metaphysical and material necessity*

The discussion thus far has revealed that metaphysical necessity is different from, and deeper than, material (biological) necessity. An object is materially necessary when it comes into existence everywhere

the same way and, if, and only if, the laws of nature and the same features of matter are present. But the laws and the kind of matter could have been different; matter is also contingent. God could have chosen to create human beings without material bodies. By contrast, something is metaphysically necessary when it must come to exist a certain way and not otherwise. For example, if James is a human being and exists, then, he is necessarily a human person.

By way of summary, properties do not appear in the world by themselves. Substances are the owners of their properties; properties are ‘in’ them, but not like water in a glass. A substance is a whole and is not an entity that ‘emerges’ from the interaction between externally related properties, parts, and capacities. A substance’s unity is ontologically prior to its parts, and parts are what they are in virtue of the substance’s nature and their function in the substance as a whole. Put differently, a substance’s capacities are possessed by it solely in virtue of the substance belonging to a natural kind; James’ capacities are his because he belongs to the natural kind ‘being human’. James, as a person or self, is thus prior to his parts; parts are gathered and formed by the direction of an immaterial soul and its nature taken as a whole.

#### **4. The Embryo as a Human Person—a Defence**

The purpose of this section is to defend briefly the view that the human embryo is a human person. The defence is directed at the arguments of leading and prominent advocate of abortion and embryo stem cell research, ethicist, and philosopher, Bonnie Steinbock (2011). Steinbock offers the world a theory of the moral status of embryos and fetuses which she calls ‘the interest view’, i.e. ‘all and only beings who have interests have moral status’. The view is ‘conceptually connected to

sentience (the ability to experience pain and pleasure) or conscious experience' (p. xiv). In support of her view, she offers several arguments of which the core ones are as follows: (a) the so-called twinning problem, (b) the embryo is worthy of grades of respect, and (c) an embryo is a potential human person.

#### 4.1. The twinning problem

Steinbock defines an organism 'as an integrated whole with the capacity for self-directed development' (p. 269). For her, the central question is, 'at what stage of development does the human organism begin to exist?' To think that the organism begins to exist at conception or fertilisation would be a mistake. Such a position is hard to accept in view of the fact that the embryo can divide into two or more during at least the first fourteen days after conception. The embryo, therefore, cannot be identified with one and only one human being. Thus, the embryo is just one stage in a 'life cycle of further stages' and the conception position is not true.

First, that the embryo is capable of dividing is just a brute fact. After all, every one of us who is not a twin was at one time (in our lives) capable of dividing into two or more embryos. So, the fact that we are not twins entails that we are single human beings, and her argument is therefore invalid. In other words, an embryo that splits is fully a person prior to 'twinning', just as the twin that comes into being as a result of the split is also fully a person.

Second, Steinbock's argument, that an embryo is just one stage among others, rests on a faulty assumption about temporal existence. In her scheme of things, temporal existence can be compared to a cricket match that consists of a number of innings (stages). Thus, an event like a cricket match is a whole with temporal parts and the whole is the sum

of its temporal parts (innings). The problem is that, despite the fact that a match is a temporally-extended entity that consists of temporal parts, the match does not move *through* time; the match as a whole has a first innings, then a second innings, and so on, but they are just temporal stages of the match. This illustration contrasts with human beings as substances in the sense that substances do not have temporal parts, but move *through* their histories.<sup>16</sup> For example, Roman, the tiger, is fully present at every moment of his life. He is not the sum of individual ‘cat stages’ like a cricket match is a sum of ‘match stages’ (innings/parts).

An event has temporal parts that are temporally located at different moments. Roman’s ontological identity is, therefore, also a continuant that remains the same through change. This implies that change presupposes sameness. If Roman, the tiger, changes colour from fawn to orange, then, the very same tiger must be present at the beginning, during, and at the end of the change. While his properties may be changing—he may regularly lose old parts and gain new ones—his soul, which underlies the change, remains the same through it.

## 4.2. Grades of respect and value

Although Steinbock stipulates that embryos are without consciousness, they are worthy of respect in just the same way that a country’s flag is. This means that both the embryo and flag do not have intrinsic value, but only what people are willing to confer on them. In her words, ‘Respect can be a matter of degree, depending on the kind of entity in

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<sup>16</sup> Lugosi (2007:127) argues that so-called ‘boundaries in the lifespan’ of the unborn are used by the courts and governments to decide when to confer personhood upon a human being. His argument is that there are no boundaries. The idea rests on philosophical distinctions that create illusions and serve political purposes. Boundaries ‘are all artificial and arbitrary concepts that purport to neatly and fairly divide the continuum of life that varies for each unique human being’ (Lugosi 2007:127–128).

Joubert, 'the Moral Status of the Unborn in the South African Regulatory Framework' question' (p. 271). For example, killing embryos for cosmetic research would be wrong, but killing them in research aimed at understanding and treating serious diseases, is not.

Firstly, killing an embryo for cosmetic purposes or stem cells research is still killing. Her distinction can therefore only make sense to one who holds that an embryo has no intrinsic value. Secondly, the fact that the embryo continues to exist from conception means that it is entitled to the protection of others, but chiefly the protection of the mother. That makes the embryo just as worthy of our respect as any other human being. Thirdly, since existence is an all-or-nothing affair and not a matter of more-or-less, the intrinsic value of the embryo cannot be a matter of degree. However, in order to see why she argues as she does, it requires that one pays careful attention to what her 'interest view' implies, namely, that consciousness requires a brain. And since the embryo does not yet have one, the embryo does not have any interests, and therefore, no intrinsic value.

If she is correct in her assumption, then no person who is asleep or in a coma can be regarded as a human person.<sup>17</sup> But that is absurd; the person who is asleep is not aware if someone is stealing from him, and the person in a coma can experience injury without his awareness. The point remains, if we destroy the embryo, we destroy the life that sustains the embryo's being. In other words, we destroy the capacities already in place and terminate the growth and process of development already on the way. By destroying the embryo's life and nature, we are destroying the very things that make the embryo intrinsically valuable in the first instance.

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<sup>17</sup> Space constraints prevent an in-depth discussion of this particular argument. The reader is referred to Beckwith (2004), and Lee and George (2008).

### **4.3. The human embryo as a potential person**

Steinbock's moral theory of graded respect and value rests on the assumption that the embryo is a potential person; the embryo is not yet 'one of us' (p. 275). The problem is that Steinbock has a faulty view of existence. What does it mean to exist?

Moreland (2001:135) lists five features that a good theory of existence ought to have: (a) it needs to be consistent with and explain what actually exists and what not; (b) it needs to be consistent with and explain what could have existed but either does not exist or is not believed to exist by a person advocating a given view of existence; (c) a theory of existence must not be self-refuting; (d) a theory of existence must not violate the fundamental laws of logic: the law of identity (P is identical to P), non-contradiction (P cannot be both true and false at the same time in the same sense) and excluded middle (P must be either true or false). Contrary states of affairs do not exist; and (e) a theory of existence must allow for the existence of acts of knowing. How does Steinbock's view of potential persons square with these features of existence?

Let us remind ourselves that for something to be able to unfold its potential, it must first exist. Recall that it is not at all like someone walking into a room with the first step, followed by a second, until the person has finally entered the room. In any event, the walking presupposes the existence of a person who is doing the walking. A different way of making the same point is to say that the difference between actual and potential is not a normal property like the property of red. Red is exemplified either clearly or fuzzily. But existence is an all-or-nothing affair. It follows that the idea of potential persons violates a fundamental law of logic: P is not identical to P. Contrary to

Steinbock's logic, when a human being comes to be, then the property of being human must necessarily belong to that very particular individual at that very moment.

Furthermore, Steinbock's view of becoming a person confuses change with alteration. Before anything can change, two things must be true of it: (a) the thing changing must exist, and (b) must exist at the beginning, during the process of change, and at the end of the change. Gaining or losing properties is a matter of the coming and going of properties, thus of alteration, and not a matter of change in kind (nature) or existence. Finally, existing living things can only grow and develop according to what they already are. A zygote does not become more of its kind or change into something different from the kind the zygote already belongs to. The zygote matures as a member of its kind because of its human nature, which guides that maturity. Likewise, kittens are immature cats, not potential cats, and the same truth applies to human fetuses. They are immature persons and not potential persons.

Her arguments that there is no moral difference between creating embryos for reproductive purposes, donating 'excess' embryos to research, and producing embryos for research purposes (p. 282) can therefore not be sustained.

## 5. Conclusion

How can the law have respect for human life without an adequate concept of life, or without understanding the moment when a new life comes into being? The anomalies in the South African regulatory framework are causes for serious concern. Most important is that it creates and disseminates the message that the unborn is either not a human being or something less than human. The value of unborn



children also depends on what others are prepared to confer on them instead of being derived from their intrinsic natures. Biblical principles demonstrate that something cannot come from nothing, including life and personhood, and natural kinds can only reproduce according to their kind and remain the same things through change over time. Clarification of crucially important concepts and distinctions confirms that although not all persons are human, there is no such thing as a human non-person.

Stem cell research that necessarily requires the destruction of human embryos can therefore not be condoned. It follows, that it is immoral and legally wrong to deny unborn human persons the right to life and protection under the law.

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# From Dignity to Disgrace: A Comparative Analysis of Psalms 8 and 14

Dan T Lioy<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

This essay undertakes a comparative analysis of Psalms 8 and 14. Together, these hymns reveal that the Creator originally bestowed unparalleled dignity on human beings; yet, in their folly, the reprobates chose the path of indignity by rejecting God's existence and their ultimate accountability to their Creator. Moreover, an examination of both these poems discloses that in a future day, the Lord will judge the wicked and vindicate the upright. Put another way, while condemnation and doom are the fate of evildoers, eternal glory and honour are the destiny of the righteous.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Setting

#### *1.1.1. Key focus*

This essay undertakes a comparative analysis of Psalms 8 and 14. The study uses a text-centred, inner-canonical, and integrative hermeneutic to engage these two passages in their literary, historical, and theological contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

### *1.1.2. Background*

Each generation finds an abundance of discoveries in God's creation. In turn, these breakthroughs show how prolific are God's mighty acts; but each fresh insight brings additional challenges and responsibilities. For instance, as Psalm 8 reveals, the more material and spiritual blessings God gives human beings, the greater their obligation to exercise wise stewardship according to the Lord's commands recorded in the scriptures. Tragically, as Psalm 14 discloses, humankind's greatest failure seems to be a lack of gratitude.

### *1.1.3. Trends*

On the one hand, the research literature dealing individually with Psalms 8 and 14 is abundant, including exegetical and theological commentaries, specialised monographs, and peer-reviewed journal articles. On the other hand, a thorough search through various research databases (e.g. WorldCat, Dissertation Abstracts, EBSCOhost, ATLA Religion, JSTOR, and Google Scholar) does not surface any literature in which a comparative analysis of these two psalms is undertaken to explore what they jointly reveal about the nature of humankind's response toward the Creator.

### *1.1.4. Objectives*

As indicated in 1.1.3 and 1.2 (respectively), a gap exists in the scholarly literature involving a comparative analysis between Psalms 8 and 14. In the light of this gap, this study uses a text-centred, inner-canonical, and integrative hermeneutic to engage these two passages in their literary, historical, and theological contexts. The following is the core research problem to be explored: what do Psalms 8 and 14 reveal as the proper response of human beings toward their Creator? The central theoretical

argument is that it is most appropriate for human beings to express continuous thanks to God for all their Creator has done for them.

The specific research objectives this study will address are as follows: undertake a separate literary, historical, and theological overview of Psalms 8 and 14; embark on a section-by-section analysis of Psalms 8 and 14 using a text-centred, inner-canonical, and integrative hermeneutic; and provide a synthesis of the respective perspectives of Psalms 8 and 14 as they relate to the core research problem. The sections that follow correspond to the preceding objectives and provide an outline of what to expect in the remainder of the article.

#### *1.1.5. Contribution to the field*

This study fills a gap in the scholarly literature by undertaking a comparative analysis of Psalms 8 and 14. The essay's academic (theoretical) merit is in exploring what these two passages jointly reveal about humankind's response to the Creator. In terms of applied theology, the study concludes that it is most appropriate for human beings to express continuous thanks to God for what the Creator has done for them.

A comparative analysis of the preceding two songs indicates that people take the Creator's manifold gifts for granted. Frequently, they do not even acknowledge the Lord's daily provision for their needs. This ingratitude is inexcusable, for people could not survive without the air they breathe, the food they eat, or the water they drink, all of which come from the Creator. A biblically-based and theologically-informed examination of Psalms 8 and 14 reminds believers that God is supremely praiseworthy. Indeed, wherever they look, they find reasons to praise the Creator. Most of all, when the faith community considers what the Lord has done for them, they should submit to the great Ruler

of the universe. After all, God is the Author of life, whether physical or spiritual in nature.

## 1.2. Literature review

Aside from lexical terms treated in the following sections, there are no other key concepts requiring separate conceptual (theoretical) definitions to be supplied here. A critical review of the extant literature indicates that scholarly research on the topic of this study dealing with Psalms 8 and 14, has not been undertaken. This suggests a clear gap in the literature, which creates a sufficient warrant for the necessity of the present study. Due to the abundance of scholarly literature on Psalms 8 and 14 (including exegetical and theological commentaries, specialised monographs, and peer-reviewed journal articles), a selective, representative engagement of both psalms is conducted in the following sections to address the research objectives of the study.

## 2. The Prelude to Psalm 8

Of the 150 psalms, only 34 do not have titles. For the hymns that have them, these superscriptions indicate such things (in various combinations) as the author, type of psalm, musical notations, liturgical notations, and historical context. The psalms attributed to David contain many references to his life that seem to be taken from 2 Samuel. There are differing views as to the reliability of the headings. One option is that the titles were added later, and there is some evidence that these titles did change over time. In contrast, a second option maintains that the superscriptions were part of the psalms and should be regarded as an integral portion of the sacred text (cf. Broyles 1999:28–29; Bullock 1988:114, 117; Craigie 2004:33–34; Leupold 1969:6–7; McCann 1996:655–656; Smith 1996:190–191; Tate 2001:346–347).



According to the title of Psalm 8, David authored it. The psalms were penned over a long period and collected for worship as early as the reign of David. The titles at the beginning of most psalms identify several writers, though the Hebrew can also mean that the hymn belonged to the person or was about that person. David's ability as a musician, his interest in corporate worship, and the subject matter of numerous psalms make him a possible author of some of the hymns, including Psalm 8. The phrase 'for the director of music'<sup>2</sup> suggests that this song is from an early collection of hymns used in temple worship. It is also possible that when the psalm was used in the Hebrew liturgy, the leader of the Levitical choir spoke it before the assembly of worshipers (cf. Anderson 1983:48; Delitzsch 1982:148–149; Kidner 1973:40; Perowne 1989:84; Terrien 2003:30; Urassa 1998:34; VanGemeren 1991:34; Wilson 2002:150).

The Hebrew noun rendered 'gittith' (which is also found in the headings of Psalms 81 and 84) was probably a liturgical word and may have referred to a musical style or type of stringed instrument. One suggestion is that it was a harp or lyre associated with Gath in Philistia. Some manuscripts have the word translated as 'winepress'. This has led to the conjecture that Psalm 8 was associated in some way with the vintage festival at the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Goldingay 2006b:154; Koehler and Baumgartner 2001:206–207; O'Connell 1997:904; Tate 2001:344; Wolf 1980:361). The prologue (v. 1a) and epilogue (v. 2) of this song (which would be vv. 2a and 10, respectively, in Hebrew texts and the Tanakh translation) suggest that it was a hymn of praise. The interior of the psalm, however, focuses on God's sovereign ordering of the creation. It is for this reason that some classify this

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (2011 update).

hymn as a nature psalm (or song of creation; cf. Chisholm 1991:303; Craigie 2004:106; Glenn 1982:40; Jacob 1958:148; Kraus 1988:45).

### **3. The Declaration of What God Has Done (Ps 8:1–2)**

This hymn extols both God's glory and the God-given dignity of human beings. Unlike the anonymously-written Psalm 104, the author did not draw upon the six days of creation to form the literary structure for the song (cf. Gen 1:3–31); rather, the composer wrote out of personal experience concerning reality. Throughout the nine verses of Psalm 8, the songwriter praised God, all the while referring to the author's own sense of wonder over the Lord's powerful ordering of creation. One discerns that the psalmist composed this hymn while standing on a balcony and gazing into the sky at night—the same sky the author no doubt had studied and pondered while tending a herd of sheep or while on the run from an adversary. The occasion may have pushed to the back of the composer's mind the day-to-day affairs of administering the Israelite kingdom, while bringing to the forefront deeper thoughts such as the majesty of God and the origin of life.

In the Old Testament era, there was no pollution or bright lights from nearby cities to obstruct a person's view of the sky. Thus, while the author did not have the benefit of a powerful telescope, it was still possible to grasp something of the vastness of space. Even today, scientists speak of stars as being trillions of miles away from earth and describe the cosmos—by some estimates consisting of 300 billion stars and 50 billion planets in the Milky Way galaxy (out of an estimated 100 billion galaxies in the entire observable universe)—in terms that at times can seem hard to comprehend (cf. Lioy 2011:13; Mays 1994:513; Walker 2006:8, 27; Weiser 1962:142; Wilson 2002:203). Admittedly, no one really knows the original circumstances leading up to the

author's writing of this song, but it is not hard to imagine. Many people today can recall times when they gazed up into the sky on a clear night and saw countless stars extending from one end of the horizon to the other. If this was the case for the composer of Psalm 8, one can only infer how 'puny and insignificant' (Glenn 1982:41) this person must have felt against the immense expanse of the heavens above which God's glory appeared (v. 1).

Two different Hebrew words are rendered 'Lord' in the first verse, with the initial term being Yahweh. This is the personal name for God used by the Israelites to emphasise that God is the 'holy one, the majestic one ... who speaks and then acts' (Goldingay 2006a:22; cf. Exod 3:1–15; Lev 19:2; Isa 6:1–5). The second term is Adonai, and places emphasis on God's supreme and unchallenged authority (cf. Baker 2003:364; Block 2005:340–341; Oswalt 2008:247). It is no wonder that the author of Psalm 8 declared that the name of the all-glorious one was 'majestic ... in all the earth!' (v. 1) 'Majestic' renders a Hebrew adjective that can also be translated as 'glorious', 'powerful', or 'delightful' (cf. Brown, Driver and Briggs 1985:12; Coppes 1980:13; Koehler and Baumgartner 2001:13; McCann 1996:711). In the scriptures, the name of the Lord was considered a reflection of the divine reputation and character, as well as attesting to the Creator's manifold attributes (cf. Exod 3:13; Jdg 13:17; Ps 7:17; Anderson 1983:101; Craigie 2004:107; Delitzsch 1982:149; Leupold 1969:102). Furthermore, since in Old Testament thought, the name of the Lord is often equated with the divine presence, Psalm 8:1 could be loosely rendered, 'Yahweh, our Lord, how delightful is your Presence throughout the entire cosmos!' (cf. Caird 1980:77–78; Jacob 1958:84; Terrien 2003:128; Urassa 1998:35; VanGemeren 1991:110; Wilson 2002:200).

This psalm ends with the same words as it begins, giving the entire hymn a reverential tone. These words of praise to the name of God form a literary frame (or *inclusio*) for its central subject—praise from humankind, whom God has made to reflect the divine majesty (cf. Guthrie 2007:944; Kidner 1973:68; Kraut 2010:18; Waltke and Yu 2007:124). Here, it is revealed that people count for something in God's eyes. They are important and valuable—not just because the Lord created them, but also because the Father sent the Son to redeem them and give them eternal life. When believers visibly give thanks to God for being gracious to them, they declare to the unsaved that the Lord is their Creator and Sustainer. Believers bear witness to the truth that every person needs God for present life and future hope. The words of praise and gratitude the redeemed utter to the Creator might encourage the unsaved to consider the truths of the Messiah and turn to him in faith for new life and eternal joy.

The author of Psalm 8 recognised that whenever God is revealed, whether above the heavens or upon the earth, the majesty of the divine is unveiled. Praise to the Creator is chanted on high and echoed from cradle and nursery. This praise is a sufficient answer to God's opponents, among whom Weiser (1962:141) includes 'skeptics and atheists'. What is sweeter than the songs of children? The hearts of believers are uplifted when they hear young people singing praises to the Lord. The Creator is worthy of such adoration, and God sees to it that even helpless 'children and infants' (Ps 8:2) draw the world's attention to the Creator. Tate (2001:351) observes that the emphasis is not on the 'babbling, gurgling speech of infants' muting the 'enemy and the avenger'; instead, it is that the 'name of Yahweh' being uttered through 'human speech, even when inarticulate, manifests the presence and might of God'. Guthrie and Quinn (2006:236) add that the Lord of the cosmos is 'able to build up a people of weakness as a force to

oppose his enemies'. Accordingly, as Psalm 14 makes clear (to be considered at length below), while the unbelieving world rejects the rule of God, the forces of darkness cannot silence exuberant praise, regardless of how hard they try.

During the final week of Jesus' earthly ministry (AD 30), he quoted the Septuagint version of Psalm 8:2. He did so in response to the religious authorities, who complained that some children in the temple courts were singing praise to Jesus as the descendant of David (cf. France 2007: 789–790; Keener 1999:502–503; Nolland 2005:847–848; Turner 2008:500–501). The chief priests and scribes were enraged over what they perceived to be inappropriate conduct and asked the Messiah about the children's praises (Matt 21:15–16). The implication is that Jesus was wrong for not stopping them. Jesus, who admitted to hearing the praises, referred his critics to Psalm 8:2, and in this way, defended the children against the religious leaders. The boys and girls had spoken more wisely about the Lord than did the chief priests and scribes, and the youngsters were to be commended for doing this. Indeed, at times, God uses naturally weak instruments to manifest the eternal glory, make known his ineffable name, and conquer seemingly implacable enemies (cf. 1 Cor 1:27; Blomberg 2007:69–70; Guthrie 1981:158; Marshall 2004:108; Schreiner 2008:127–128; Thielman 2005:94, 98, 183).

#### **4. The Affirmation of Humanity's Unique Status and Role (Ps 8:3–9)**

As the author once more gazed into the heavens, it was appropriate to consider one's place in the grand scheme of creation. Did people matter to God? Was Israel's ruler important and valuable, especially when compared to the seemingly infinite array of heavenly bodies? The

composer recognised that what could be seen in the sky was the work of God's 'fingers' (Ps 8:3). Of course, the songwriter knew that God did not have literal fingers; but in lavish poetic style, the psalmist used a vivid figure of speech to describe God as the master craftsman and divine artisan of the cosmos (cf. 19:1–6; 33:6; 102:25; 104:19–23; 136:5). Goldingay (2006b:158) points out that at the dawn of creation, 'God did not merely utter orders and leave someone else to do the work'; instead, the Lord 'became personally involved in the most delicate and intricate way'.

Psalm 8:4 indicates that the heavens belonged to God, for the Creator had made them. Readers also learn that the Lord set all the solar bodies in exactly the right place for humanity's benefit. Ultimately, it takes faith to acknowledge that even the observable universe, with its ostensibly endless distances, is the work of God. As Hebrews 11:3 says, 'By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible'. Two specific thoughts especially impressed the composer of Psalm 8. One was the magnificent glory of God as it was reflected in the clear, starry night. The other thought was the utter amazement that the Lord, in all his glory, would even be mindful and considerate of the human aspect of creation—so much so as to crown people with distinction and eminence and to give them lord-like stewardship over the rest of creation. For the most part, the author admitted that these two thoughts were practically beyond human comprehension.

To respect God's majesty, people must compare themselves to his greatness. That is what the songwriter did when he asked, 'What is mankind that you are mindful of them?' (Ps. 8:4; cf. Job 7:17; 25:4–6; Ps 144:3–4). In Psalm 8:4, the singular form of the Hebrew noun translated 'mankind' collectively refers to all human beings regardless of gender (cf. Gen 1:26–27; Guthrie 1981:273; Hughes 1977:85; Morris

1981:23; Schreiner 2008:213). The composer's use of the phrase 'human beings' (Ps 8:4) could also be rendered 'son of man' and looks upon each and every person as a mere mortal who seems to be inconsequential and transitory (cf. Anderson 1983:103; Guthrie and Quinn 2006:236; McCann 1996:711; Urassa 1998:37, 51; VanGemeran 1991:112). If the entire universe appears microscopic in the sight of the Creator, how much less must be the importance of humanity? To feel small like this is a healthy way to get back to an objective sense of reality. Admittedly, God does not want people of faith to become transfixed on their smallness; rather, the Creator wants everyone to humbly turn their eyes of faith to him, for he alone is infinite and eternal.

The author seemed to turn his eyes to God in verse 5 when it is noted that God made human beings 'a little lower than the angels' (that is, supernatural beings occupying the heavenly realms; cf. Gen 1:26–27; 3:5, 22; Job 1:6; 38:7; Pss 29:1; 82:1, 6; 89:5–7; 98:7; 138:1). The phrase can also be rendered 'a little lower than God' (cf. Pss 3:7; 4:1; 5:2; 7:1, 2, 9, 11; Chisholm 1991:259; Glenn 1982:42; Kraut 2010:16, 23; Smith 1993:137, 238; Waltke and Yu 2007:219). This would ascribe even more dignity to people than being compared with angels. Furthermore, one rendition of Hebrews 2:7 (based on the Septuagint) understands the phrase translated 'a little' in Psalm 8:5 to mean 'for a little while' (cf. Goldingay 2006b:161; Kidner 1973:67; Perowne 1989:155). This connotation implies that believers, when glorified in heaven at the end of the age, will be higher in rank than the angels. In stepping back from these interpretative options, it is clear that God has crowned humankind with 'glory and honour'. This insight could not be obtained by looking at the sky or by any other part of nature. The psalmist wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The author knew that, despite humanity's apparent unimportance in the universe, people

are in fact highly valued by God. Their dignity stems from their being made in the image of God and designated as royal stewards and guardians over the entire creation (cf. Gen 1:26–27; Brueggemann 1997:452; Dyrness 1977:83; Guthrie 2007:945; Urassa 1998:54–55).

Tragically, humanity has not lived up to God's original mandate. People do not rule the world; instead, it appears at times as if the world has people under its firm control. While God intended people to live and govern the world as vice-regents under his authority, they have rejected that position, choosing instead to go the way of sin, following the plan of God's archenemy, the devil. As a result, people find themselves no longer truly free, but instead enslaved to the masters they have chosen, namely, sin and the devil (cf. Heb 2:14, 17). Also, tragically, those two entities brought humanity into further subjection to death itself (cf. vv. 14–15). Despite the transgressions of the first humans long ago (cf. Gen 3:1–19), all people bear vestiges of God's image (cf. Gen 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor 11:7; Jas 3:9). Moreover, followers of the Messiah are in the process of having the image of God fully restored in them (cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Col 3:10). Therefore, Psalm 8:5 not only applies to the earliest humans, whom God created, but also applies to all their physical descendants.

Furthermore, Hebrews 2 applies the psalmist's words to the incarnate Saviour (cf. John 1:14, 18, 49; Dyrness 1977:234; Jacob 1958:327, 342; Smith 1993:424–425; Waltke and Yu 2007:91, 133, 222). Jesus is portrayed as the last (or second) Adam and representative human being (cf. Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:20–28; Eph 1:22; Bruce 1985:35–36; Hughes 1977:84; Lane 1991:47; Leupold 1969:101; Perowne 1989:150; Westcott 1980:42). The writer of Hebrews 2 explained that when the earliest humans disobeyed the Creator, this impaired the ability of people to be the vice-regents God originally intended. On the one hand, believers recognise that not everything is subject to humanity. On the



other hand, through the eyes of faith, believers are able to ‘see Jesus’ (v. 9), who fulfilled the theological ideal the psalmist described. Specifically, all things are subject to the Messiah, including the world to come. To fulfill the ideal, Jesus had to become a real human being. Like other people, Jesus was ‘made lower than the angels for a little while’. Hence, though Jesus is fully divine, Jesus also became fully human. As the incarnate God, Jesus did not sin; rather, he obeyed the Creator even to the point of dying for the sins of humanity. For the Son’s obedience, the Father crowned him ‘with glory and honour’. The resurrected and exalted Son now sits on the throne in heaven at the right hand of the Father (cf. 1:3; Craddock 1998:38; Guthrie 2007:947; Ladd 1997:620, 624–627; Morris 1981:24).

Because humans are the only living beings made in God’s image, the Creator put them in charge of everything else (cf. Gen 1:26–30). As Psalm 8:6–8 reveals, the human race has dominion over ‘subhuman creatures and nature’ (Witherington and Hyatt 2004:234). The implication is that people have the right to use nature to meet their legitimate needs, while, at the same time fulfilling their God-given responsibility to take care of the planet. This truth is reinforced by the Hebrew verb translated ‘rulers’ in verse 6. The word conveys the idea of oversight, administration, and government, with the extent of the authority dependent on the context in which the term is used (cf. Gross 1998:68; Nel 1997:1137; Soggin 1997:689–690). As God’s chosen people, the Israelites were privileged to experience many wonderful provisions. For instance, God promised the nation’s ancestor, Abraham, that future descendants would be too numerous to count, even though he and his wife, Sarah, were well beyond their childbearing years. Then Abraham and Sarah experienced one of God’s great miracles, and a child named Isaac was born. Later, Isaac became the parent of Jacob. Together, these luminaries became the patriarchs of Israel, the founding

leaders of an entire nation bound up in intimate relationship to God (cf. Kistemaker 1995:64).

In permitting humanity to have dominion over creation, God intended for people to exercise control over the non-human realm and other natural forces upon the earth. This involves more than merely taming other living beings. Additionally, God created the animal kingdom (in a manner of speaking) and the resources of the earth to serve the genuine needs of humanity. While the sin of the first humans has marred the dominion somewhat, the role of humanity is still one of great dignity, and it far exceeds the other created entities existing on earth. When believers candidly consider these truths, they sense a great opportunity to honour and please God. After all, the Lord has given the redeemed everything to bless them and provide for all their needs. Of course, believers require great wisdom in being responsible stewards and guardians over God's creation. After all, it is the Lord's handiwork and the redeemed are not at liberty to despoil it for selfish ends (cf. Brueggemann 1997:461; Kaiser 2008:361; Mays 1994:515; McCann 1996:671; Tate 2001:356–357; Wilson 2002:208).

Militant atheists claim that humans are no more valuable than any other form of life; but Psalm 8 plainly contradicts that opinion. God has bestowed on humans more significance than any other part of the visible creation. Because of their sin, no member of the human race has perfectly achieved the dignity God wanted people to have. That is why the Father sent his Son to put things right and to restore creation to glory and honor. In fact, as Hebrews 2:6–8 reveals, Psalm 8:4–6 finds ultimate fulfillment in the Messiah. It is because of Jesus that regenerate humanity will be able to realise its appointed destiny over the creation. Indeed, as Lane (1991:48) avers, it is in the person of the Messiah that the 'primal glory and sovereignty are restored' (cf. Fanning 1994:378–379; Guthrie 1981:79, 226, 363, 629, 671, 840; Marshall 2004:607,

618, 623–624; Schreiner 2008:110–111, 216, 230, 382, 386; Thielman 2005:398, 592–593, 716).

The author of Psalm 8 concluded the ‘poetic commentary on the creation of man and woman’ (Hilber 2009:327) with another powerful affirmation of God’s glory. The composer’s prelude resulted in a proper frame of mind to consider God’s creation works; and the songwriter’s postlude was the basis for the exclamation of ‘how majestic’ (v. 9) God’s name (i.e. the divine reputation and character) was ‘in all the earth.’ Even though the bulk of Psalm 8 describes humanity and its dominion over the earth, the first verse as well as the last makes it clear that the author wrote this psalm as an act of worship and praise to God as the sovereign Creator.

## **5. The Prelude to Psalm 14**

Like Psalm 8, the superscription to Psalm 14 states that it is for the ‘director of music’. Accordingly, this song was intended for use in temple worship. Such worship could have included participants repeating the hymn in unison, as well as the leader of the Levitical choir declaring the words of the song as part of an extended liturgy (cf. 1 Chr 23:5, 30; 25:1, 6–8; Neh 11:17). In the superscription to Psalm 14, the Hebrew phrase rendered ‘of David’ could mean that the psalm was written by the monarch, penned by others on the ruler’s behalf, or contained information that pertained specifically to the head of state (cf. Goldingay 2006b:27; Kidner 1973:33; Kraus 1988:22–23; Perowne 1989:93; Smith 1996:187; Weiser 1962:96–97; Wilson 2002:20–21).

The song denounces the folly of those who ignore God. Verses 1–3 comment on the universality of evil in the world; verses 4–6 reveal that God would one day judge the wicked; and verse 7 records a petition for

God's deliverance of Israel. In this regard, the hymn is closely parallel in wording and perspective to Psalm 53. One key contrast is that in verses where Psalm 14 favours the covenant name, *Yahweh* (rendered 'the LORD'), Psalm 53 exclusively uses the more generic reference, *Elohim* (rendered 'God'; cf. Broyles 1999:5–6, 88, 235; Bullock 1988:115; Caird 1980:73; Smith 1993:116–117, 299; Tate 1990:41; Waltke and Yu 2007:883–884). Furthermore, Psalms 14:5–6 and 53:5, respectively, are considerably different in wording, even though they are comparable in theological emphasis.

The preceding literary distinctions notwithstanding, each hymn is referred to as a 'sapiential meditation' (Terrien 2003:164) or wisdom poem (cf. Anderson 1983:130; Irvine 1995:463; McCann 1996:729). For instance, each is characterised by a meditative, didactic quality in which the psalmist examines the tendency of the impious to live as if God did not exist. Moreover, the songwriter denounced the evil committed by the wicked. In this regard, Psalms 14 and 53 provide a stark contrast to Psalm 8, which spotlights the privileged status of humanity over creation. Though God originally intended human beings to serve as vice-regents, their individual and collective lives have been characterised by moral depravity.

## 6. The Universality of Evil (Ps 14:1–3)

Psalm 14 begins with a reference to the 'fool' (v. 1). The underlying Hebrew adjective refers, not to those who are cognitively impaired, but to a particular group of individuals who are senseless, godless, and perverse (cf. Deut 32:6; 1 Sam 25:25; 2 Sam 13:13; Ps 74:18, 22; Brueggemann 1997:699; Marböck 1998:163–164; Pan 1997:12; Sæbø 1997a:711–712). There are additional Old Testament passages that shed light on the spiritual and moral insensitivity of fools. These individuals

have nothing but contempt for the name and ways of God (cf. Ps 74:18). While fools might portray themselves as being intelligent and enlightened, in their ignorance, they continually scoff at the Lord (cf. v. 22). Their minds, being filled with nonsense, are inclined toward wickedness (cf. Isa 32:5–6). They are vulgar and surly in public (cf. Prov 30:22).

According to Psalm 14:1, the impious reason in their hearts (i.e. the source of their thoughts, emotions, aspirations, and endeavours; cf. Clifford 2002:89; Guthrie 1981:168; Lower 2009:71; Smith 1993:261, 264, 270; Tate 1990:43) that either God does not exist or the notion of the divine is irrelevant to their lives (cf. 10:4; 36:1). McCann (1996:729) clarifies that this ‘failure to acknowledge God’ eventually leads to ‘misplaced priorities and misguided behavior’. Because the irreligious spurn the knowledge of God and persist in their evil ways, they incur divine judgment. In effect, they choose God’s condemnation instead of God’s favour (cf. Prov 1:7, 20–27). Indeed, though they might prosper for a season from their ill-gotten gain (cf. Ps 10:6, 11, 13), they will lose it in the end (cf. Jer 17:11).

Grenz (2000:30) observes that the tendency for people to question the ‘reality of God is not new’. Nevertheless, the ‘intellectual atheism of modern Western philosophy’ (i.e. a strictly naturalistic and mechanistic interpretation of the world) did not exist in the ancient Near East. The Greek philosophers Epicurus (341–271 BC) and Democritus (c. 460–c. 370 BC), and the Roman poet Lucretius (c. 95–c. 55 BC), are often identified as the first atheist writers of antiquity (cf. Abrahams *et al.* 2007:670; Frame 2007:1–3; Kohler and Hirsch 2002; Mohler 2008; Ward 2006:76–77).

According to Grenz (2000:30), the ‘scepticism’ of ‘thinkers’ in the Old Testament era stiffened their resolve to live as if the notion of God was

a fabrication. Here one finds the 'moral or practical denial of God's existence'. In short, these are 'atheists unawares', that is, 'secularists in practice who live in a world without windows to the supernatural' (Guinness 2008:12). Craigie (2004:126) refers to the latter as 'functional atheists', namely, individuals who might 'admit the theoretical possibility' of God's existence, but who demonstrate by their 'speech and behavior' that any notion of the divine is vacuous. Regardless of whether one is considering the practical or intellectual forms of atheism, scripture remains unchanged. Anyone who wants to approach the Creator must affirm that God 'exists' (Heb 11:6) and 'rewards those who earnestly seek' him.

The songwriter was withering in describing the ungodly. For instance, they are said to be 'corrupt' (Ps 14:1), 'vile' in their 'deeds', and infamous for their reprehensible acts. The Hebrew verb rendered 'corrupt' refers to abhorrent, detestable endeavours (cf. Brown *et al.* 1985:1073; Gerstenberger 1997:1428; Grisanti 1997:314). 'Vile' translates a noun that denotes wanton practices (cf. Carpenter 1997:423; Roth 2001:142; Schultz 1980:670). Such rampant sinfulness traces its origins back to the earliest humans. When they sinned against God, the negative consequences of their transgression were passed on to all their biological progeny and affected them at the deepest level of their being (cf. Rom 5:12). Genesis 6:1 notes that, as the population of the human race began to increase, people's thoughts were consumed with sin. Verse 5 emphasises that the descendants of the earliest humans were single-minded, even eager, in their pursuit of evil, while verse 11 adds that earth's inhabitants were 'corrupt' and guilty of inhumane acts (cf. Delitzsch 1982:204–205; Kidner 1973:79; Perowne 1989:184; Smith 1996:229; VanGemeren 1991:144–145; Waltke and Yu 2007:277, 279).

Psalm 14 reveals that the impious of the songwriter's day were just as brutal in their mistreatment of others. Verse 2 depicts the sovereign

Creator of the universe peering down from the celestial abode as ‘witness and judge’ (VanGemeren 1991:144) on the human race to determine whether there were any individuals who ‘understand’ (cf. 33:13–14). The word ‘understand’ is a translation of a Hebrew verb that refers to those who are characterised by prudence, insight, and discernment (cf. Fretheim 1997:1243; Koenen 2004:115; Sæbø 1997b:1270). Specifically, these are individuals who have a reverent fear of the Lord (cf. Prov 1:7). This respect for Yahweh is what sets biblical wisdom apart from all its worldly counterparts. The preceding foundational truth is repeated throughout the sapiential literature of the Old Testament (cf. Job 28:28; Ps 111:10; Prov 9:10; 15:33; Eccl 12:13).

Since the dawn of humanity, there have been individuals who seek to be morally upright. Even so, scripture reveals that no one can claim to always be good, continuously do what is best, and never commit any sin (cf. 1 Kgs 8:46; Ps 143:2; Prov 20:9; Eccl 7:20). In fact, according to Psalm 14:3, everyone has rejected God by either consciously or subconsciously turning aside from the path of righteousness. Moreover, from the Lord’s morally perfect and holy perspective, all human beings are ‘corrupt’. The latter renders a Hebrew verb that points to deep-seated ethical perversion and filth (cf. Baker 1997:410; Brown *et al.* 1985:47; Koehler and Baumgartner 2001:54). God’s verdict is that, aside from the Messiah, not one person who has ever lived does what is right.

Cranfield (1975:192) notes that an ‘abridgement and adaptation’ of the Septuagint translation of Psalm 14:1–3 (cf. 53:1–3) appears in Romans 3:10–12, where it is declared that every member of the human race stood condemned before God. In verse 9, it is asked whether the religious were any better off than the impious. The direct response is, ‘Not at all!’ (or, ‘Not by any means!’). Everyone, regardless of race,

ethnicity, or gender, was under the hegemony of sin and deserved to be expelled from God's presence (cf. Moo 1996:198, 202; Murray 1984:102–103; Schreiner 1998:166; Wright 2002:457). This theological truth is validated by the inclusion in verses 10–18 of several quotes or paraphrases of Old Testament passages (cf. Pss 5:9; 10:7; 14:1–3; 36:1; 53:1–3; 140:3; Isa 59:7–8). As Morris (1988:166) explains, in ancient times, it was 'common rabbinical practice' to thread scripture verses together, like 'pearls' on a string, to make an argument.

The biblical text pointedly contends that: no one is righteous (Rom 3:10); no one understands or seeks God (v. 11); all have turned away (v. 12a); no one does good (v. 12b); they are deceitful (v. 13); their hearts are full of cursing and bitterness (v. 14); they are quick to shed blood (v. 15); ruin and misery mark their ways (v. 16); they do not know the way of peace (v. 17); and they have no fear of God (v. 18). These vices can be seen, in varying degrees, in every descendant of the first humans who has ever lived. In truth, before coming to faith in the Messiah, everyone is rightly categorised as God's enemy (cf. Rom 5:10; Col 1:21).

The biblical text reinforces its argument by mentioning specific parts of the human body. This is done to emphasise the totality of sin's devastating effect within people—including the throat, tongue, and lips (Rom 3:13), the mouth (v. 14), the feet (v. 15), and the eyes (v. 18). In brief, the whole person is metaphysically infected; that is, no part of human nature remains unsullied by sin. By using such imagery, these verses set forth the doctrine of total depravity. This does not mean that every human being is as bad as they can be; rather, it means that every aspect of the human existence has been corrupted by sin. The point in verse 18 is particularly important. The failure of both the religious and the impious to fear God was a grievous offence, since reverence for the Lord is the mark of a godly person. Tragically, the legacy of the human



race is one of arrogance and folly (cf. Thielman 2005:352–353, 476–477; Waltke and Yu 2007:278).

Verse 23 puts a theological fine point on the preceding truths. The text states that no matter whom people are or what they do, they are all saved in the same way. This is because all human beings are guilty of disobeying God. The verse has in mind two aspects of sin: overt transgression and failure to do what is right. People are all blameworthy on both counts. Regardless of what they attempt—no matter how noble it might be—they still fall short of God’s glorious standard. The Greek verb translated ‘fall short’ is in the present tense to indicate ongoing action. The tragedy is that human beings are always and continuously deficient of God’s glory. The noun rendered ‘glory’ refers not just to God’s magnificent presence, but also to the outward display of divine attributes, including God’s goodness, righteousness, and holiness (cf. Aalen 1986:46; Danker 2000:257; Louw and Nida 1989:696, 736; Spicq 1994:369–370). In brief, human sin separates all people from God and excludes them from enjoying manifestations of his glory.

## **7. The Divine Judgment of the Wicked (Ps 14:4–6)**

The composer rhetorically asked whether ‘evildoers’ (Ps 14:4) were ignorant of the fact that God would one day judge them. This verse is referring to those who were guilty of committing iniquity and creating anguish in the lives of their victims. Though the wicked might intellectually understand the concept of divine judgment, they typically behaved as if it was a hollow truth. The psalmist noted that the reprobate violently and shamelessly exploited others. Indeed, it was as routine for malefactors to do so as devouring a piece of bread. In their arrogance and unbelief, they saw no need to call out to the Lord for help, especially since they presumed they would never experience any

calamity (cf. 10:6; cf. Broyles 1999:89; Clifford 2002:90; Irvine 1995:465; Kraus 1988:222; Terrien 2003:165; Wilson 2002:289).

The author foresaw a situation in which the unrighteous were gripped with fear, all due to the absence of God's sustaining presence in their lives. In contrast, the Lord preserved the 'righteous' (14:5). The righteous referred to members of the covenant community who heeded the Mosaic Law in every area of their lives, whether public or private, sacred or secular in nature. Instead of exploiting others, the upright trusted in God and followed his will. Even when the wicked tried to thwart and humiliate the 'plans' (v. 6) of the afflicted, the Lord came to their defence. In doing so, the divine warrior proved to be their 'refuge' or protection (cf. 46:1; 61:3; 62:7–8; 71:7; 73:28; 91:2, 9). As Weiser (1962:166) surmises, people of faith discern from this outcome that 'human sin is revealed—and confounded—by the reality of God'.

It was noted earlier that part of 53:5 is different in wording, even though it is comparable in theological emphasis, to 14:5–6. As in the case of the latter, the songwriter of 53:5 envisioned the impious being paralysed by dread and completely terrified even in the most benign of situations. This was a fitting outcome, given that the oppressors 'attacked' God's people. The Hebrew verb translated 'attacked' denotes a battle in which the assailants encamped around their victims to lay siege to their city (cf. Brown *et al.* 1985:333; Hamilton 1980:300; Helfmeyer 1986:8–9). The Lord's response was to bring about the demise of the godless. Then, the Creator desecrated them by allowing their corpses to be consumed by ravenous carnivores, which 'scattered the bones' and left them to decay. In ancient times, such an ignominious end for the dead was considered a 'severe infliction of torment upon their disembodied spirits' (Hilber 2009:436; cf. Ps 141:7; Isa 14:18–20; Jer 8:1–2). Moreover, God's contempt for the unrighteous was the reason his people were able to humiliate the impious in battle (Ps 53:5).

## 8. The Petition for God's Deliverance of Israel (Ps 14:7)

The composer petitioned God to deliver the covenant community from evil. The songwriter envisioned the victory arising out of 'Zion' (Ps 14:7). Zion is first mentioned in 2 Samuel 5:7 as a Jebusite fortress on a hill. After being captured by David, this fortress was called the City of David. Here, Israel's monarch brought the ark of the covenant, thereby making the hill a sacred site (6:10–12; cf. Batey 2000:559; Clifford 1972:131; Eliav 2005:2–3; Groves 2005:1022; Klouda 2008:936; Strong 1997:1314; Wilson 2002:290). Later, in Israelite theology, Zion became a 'symbol of security and refuge' (Ollenburger 1987:65–66), that is, the place where the ever-present Creator defended the righteous by vanquishing their foes (cf. Pss 9:1–20; 10:1–18; 20:1–9; 24:1–10; 46:1–11; 48:1–14; 76:1–12; 89:1–18; 93:1–5). Zion was regarded as the Lord's 'holy mountain' (Isa 11:9; cf. Pss 2:6; 3:4; 20:2; 87:1–2; 99:1–3, 9; 128:5; 132:13; 134:3), which is also known as the 'mountain of your inheritance' (Exod 15:17), the consecrated spot reserved for the Lord's own 'dwelling', and the 'city of God' (Ps 87:3; cf. Barker 1991:69; McKelvey 1969:11; Roberts 1982:100; Kraus 1988:72–73).

In that future day of deliverance anticipated by the composer, the Lord would bring the chosen people back from their captivity and restore their well-being. Psalm 14:7 collectively refers to the elect as 'Jacob', who rejoices, and 'Israel', who is filled with gladness (cf. Gen 32:28). The victorious reign of God is also echoed in Psalm 10:16–18. The songwriter expressed confidence in the Lord by using words that are reminiscent of the speech recorded in Exodus 15:18 (which commemorate God's deliverance of the Hebrews from Pharaoh). Psalm 10:16 declares that Yahweh is the eternal, sovereign monarch, who drives out the godless from the Promised Land. This statement looked forward to a day when the chosen people would be in sole possession of

Israel. The psalmist affirmed that not only did God hear the author's prayers, but also all the cries uttered by the helpless. Furthermore, as the Creator responded to their petitions, they were comforted by his presence (v. 17). While the Lord vindicated the cause of those who were orphaned and maltreated, God would bring the wicked to ruin. The Creator would prevent these 'mere earthly mortals' (v. 18) from harassing and tormenting the covenant community (cf. Pss 49:12, 20; 56:4, 11; 62:9; 78:39; 103:14–16; 118:6; 144:4; Isa 31:3; Jer 17:5). Indeed, the Lord sealed the tragic end of the wicked.

## 9. Conclusion

An examination of Psalm 8 indicates that the all-glorious Lord has bestowed unparalleled dignity on human beings. At the dawn of history, the Creator, who powerfully ordered the cosmos and now sustains it, decreed that the first humans and their descendants were to serve as the Lord's vice-regents over everything that exists in the world. The poet admitted that people are mere mortals, who seem especially puny and inconsequential against the backdrop of the vast and mysterious universe. Nevertheless, during this present age, the sovereign Ruler has placed human beings a little lower in rank than the angels. Moreover, the Creator has given people governing authority over the non-human realm and other natural forces upon the earth. In light of all God has done for humanity, it is appropriate for them to express continuous thanks to the Creator.

Psalm 14 provides a strong counterpoint to Psalm 8. The songwriter revealed that people have not lived up to their God-given potential. Instead of experiencing the dignity of being the Creator's stewards over the world, they have opted for the disgrace of wallowing in sin. In addition, rather than affirm God as their Lord, they deliberately reason

that either God does not exist or the notion of the divine is irrelevant to their lives. Theologically speaking, they are intellectual, moral, and practical atheists. Moreover, regardless of how sophisticated and accomplished they might be in their personal and professional lives, from God's perspective, they are spiritually and morally bankrupt and thus, fools.

Because the impious deny the existence of God in their attitudes and actions, they have minimal incentive to live in a virtuous and upright manner. In extreme cases, they maltreat the impoverished and exploit the disadvantaged. Rather than seeking to accomplish anything beneficial with their God-given abilities and talents, the reprobate immerse themselves in heinous schemes. They demonstrate by their thoughts and deeds that they are depraved and corrupt. Even in those instances where the degenerate act as if they are enlightened and shrewd, the Creator regards them as being ignorant of his will and ways. Especially insidious is their assumption that since God allegedly does not exist, the notion of being accountable to a supreme being is a figment of a superstitious imagination. The poet revealed that in a future day, the Lord would condemn the wicked and vindicate the upright. Put another way, while a tragic end would be the fate of evildoers, unending joy would be the destiny of the righteous.

Together, then, in contrasting ways, Psalms 8 and 14 remind believers that God is worthy of their adoration, for the Creator both made and sustains them. This truth is also taught in the New Testament. In Matthew 6:25–33, Jesus urged the disciples not to worry about where they would get food to eat, water to drink, or clothes to wear. The Saviour indicated that the Creator would graciously provide what they needed, just as God supplied the birds of the air and the lilies that

carpeted the fields of Palestine. The Lord would do even more for believers, whom the divine supremely valued.

Moreover, as Paul addressed the philosophers of Athens, he declared that God made the world and everything in it and that the Lord gives life and breath to every creature (Acts 17:24–25). The apostle made it clear that this sovereign Creator determines the various eras of history and the limits of each nation's territory (v. 26). Paul also said that this great God gives people the ability to live, move about, and become responsible citizens in their communities (v. 28). Finally, James 1:17 reveals that every good thing, every generous action, and every perfect gift comes from the Creator of the lights of heaven. In short, every aspect of people's lives is under God's loving care. Consequently, the Lord, who is all-powerful, all-wise, and all-knowing, deserves nothing less than humanity's highest praise.

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## Resources

### From the Editor

Although a self-confessed atheist, Isaac Asimov once wrote, ‘from my close observation of writers ... they fall into two groups: 1) those who bleed copiously and visibly at any bad review, and 2) those who bleed copiously and secretly at any bad review.’

As the editor of the journal of the South African Theological Seminary, such sentiments resonate with my experiences. I have learned to appreciate the emotional and spiritual turmoil that young authors experience upon the receipt of a critical and disparaging review from a senior scholar. Such feelings of inadequacy are not reserved to junior scholars alone. Numerous scholars experience feelings of inadequacy and disappointment after publishers reject their publication proposals. It is from within this academic context that two of the Seminary’s most senior and seasoned authors penned two resource articles that may assist and encourage young academics to enter the academic arena and publish their work.

The first postgraduate resource, written by William Domeris, hopes to assist and embolden young scholars to turn their thesis into an academic article. The second resource was written by Dan Lioy, and it is aimed at those seeking to publish their theses or dissertations as an academic book or monograph.



# Taking the Plunge: Turning a Thesis into an Academic Article

William R Domeris<sup>1</sup>

## 1. The Essence of an Article

The expression ‘publish or perish’ has never been truer for one’s academic career than it is today. This is little consolation for the would-be academics who have yet to publish their first academic article. So, mindful of the challenges, I offer this article as an encouragement to such scholars. Since this is a personal reflection, and not an attempt at a definitive work on the subject, I will use examples drawn from my own writings.

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<sup>1</sup> William Domeris is Anglican Priest who works part-time for the South African Theological Seminary. Bill has a PhD in John’s Gospel from Durham University, with degrees in Old Testament and Archaeology from the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. He has taught at the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand and most recently served as the principal of the Anglican College of the Transfiguration (Grahamstown). On the academic front he has published various books and articles including a book entitled, *Touching the heart of God; the social construction of poverty among biblical peasants* (2007). He has about thirty-seven entries on Hebrew words in the New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (1997) and three chapters on Jeremiah in international collections of scholarly articles (1999, 2007, and 2011). In 2002, Dr Domeris was rated number one in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (Wits) for his publications, in terms of volume of accredited points over the previous five years.

Academic articles need creative time. This may be very difficult, if you have a full teaching and administrative load, as young academics often have. Nevertheless, for the sake of your academic survival, you need to carve out a space where you can sit and reflect, write notes and eventually produce a fine piece of academia. So, take your diary and mark off a regular time of at least four hours per week, and guard it with your life. For every hour you spend actually writing the piece, you need about ten hours of thinking and reflecting, not counting the time spent reading and researching. That creative reflection, in my experience, is what turns a mediocre article into a good piece of academic writing.

What is an article? Or better still, what is the essence of a good academic article? Very few articles (less than two per cent, I believe) are ever quoted. When I consider those articles which I have read and which have been cited again and again by scholars, several facts stand out. The articles are often quite short (fewer than ten pages), with a single focus, well-argued, and they are original or they represent an original survey of existing academic writing on a narrow topic. Certainly, that has been true of my articles which have been cited. But for your first article, it is enough if it is well-argued and properly set out.

So, step one, examine your thesis for a potential article—an exercise which needs to be done within your creative space. God has given you the ability to write a thesis, and I am quite sure, his intention is not for it to spend all its days on a dusty shelf. Use your God-given ability to bring your ideas into the public domain.

## 2. Finding the Needle in the Haystack

The first and most critical moment in the birthing of an article is deciding what its major contribution will be. This can feel a bit like searching for the venerable needle in a haystack, especially if it is your thesis which you are perusing. It took me some time before I was brave enough to publish a short article on my PhD, but thanks to the encouragement of others, I took the step (1993).

What I did was simply summarise my thesis and present it rather like a legal court case. There were different academic views about what the title ‘The Holy One of God’ might mean in the context of John 6. I reviewed each of these opinions and argued for my own thesis, which happened to be closest to the view of R Bultmann (1971), and amplified by a significant article on the idea of agency by P Borgen (1968). Several years had elapsed since I had completed my thesis, and so I was able to add some fresh insights and bring in some more up to date reading.

One has a basic choice when turning a thesis into an article. *Choice one* is to take a single chapter and to revise that to form a comprehensive article. For example, you may have conducted interviews around your topic. Your article would refer to the questionnaires and select some of the trends which emerged from the answers. Or, you may have done an exegesis of a specific passage of the Bible, using the various commentaries to establish the outline of (hopefully) two or more interpretations. It would be sufficient to lay out these interpretations and then to end with a question—which of these is the correct interpretation? I could have done that with ‘the Holy One of God’, since no-one had done that before. That would mean, that I could then write a second article in which I argued for one of the different theories or

created (as I did) my own view. So it would be two articles for the price of one.

*Choice two* is to take the main argument and to summarise it over about ten pages. This is what I did with my PhD thesis. It takes courage to revisit a thesis that you have shed blood, sweat, and tears over, but the advantage is that at the time you are probably an authority on the topic and in the case of a PhD, a world authority. It is easier to write from fresh, rather than cutting and pasting, because it allows for your creativity to come to the fore. So, set the thesis on one side and write as if you were telling a colleague about your work.

*Choice three* is to publish the whole thesis as a book, but I would only recommend this in extreme cases, where effectively you have a publisher already eager and waiting. In my experience that is rare.

*Choice four* is to use your thesis as a springboard for another idea. So on the basis of my study on John's gospel, the first article I wrote was on the gospel as a drama (1983). I had happened to come across a brief article on the gospel as a drama, and having studied Greek drama in Classics, I decided that I could write a different article, using the classical Greek plays as illustrations.

Whatever your choice, the decision regarding how you will move from your thesis into an article is the most critical decision you will make. I suggest that once that decision is made, everything else is downhill.

### **3. A Model Article**

As I reflect over the articles which I have written, I realise that I have tended to create a pattern or model, which may be worth replicating. My articles tend to have about seven subheadings over about twelve

pages. In the opening paragraph (introduction, but using a catchy title if possible), I explain why I am writing the article. If this is an article based on your thesis, then you would explain how you came to choose the thesis topic—did it arise from particular reading, or an aspect of your professional work? In this way, you draw your audience into the article and hopefully arouse their curiosity about what you are about to say. Do not give too much away at this point—just enough to encourage them to read on.

Under your next subheading, you lay out the existing research and theories which have been suggested for your topic. Effectively, you are saying: this is the problem and these are some of the suggested answers. At this point, you do not take sides. There is nothing as frustrating as reading an article, and in the opening paragraphs you find that the author has completely dismissed any view but their own. They cite other ideas only to put them down straight away without any serious consideration. At this point you want to keep your readers guessing as to where this article will go.

If your article includes interviews, then this is where you add a brief overview of the interview process. You will also need to explain whether your chosen methodology is quantitative or qualitative and what your intention is behind the research. In the actual article, you would need to add comments on the various answers. Please ensure that in your publication you are not sharing confidential material and that ethics of such research have been upheld.

If your article is really a summary of existing research on a particular topic, then you would map out some of the debates which have taken place. It is important to give a chronological overview, so that the reader has some sense of how the debate has developed over time, as well as what the most recent thinking is on the topic. So, if you were

writing on the burial of Jesus, you would be sure to mention the recent archaeological finds on the sarcophagi of Caiaphas and of James, brother of Jesus. If you were writing on the dating of the Exodus, you would outline the three possible theories which are in vogue and include the most recent articles and books.

If your article involves using a new methodology in order to offer a new perspective on a passage of scripture or a doctrine, then it would be useful at this point to speak of how this method has been used and what it is capable of showing. I once wrote an article on Jeremiah (1999), using the method of socio-linguistics. Before I could begin to interpret Jeremiah, I needed to explain what the methodology was about and why it was appropriate to use on Jeremiah. Quite often, scholars introduce their methodology, but then fail to explain why it is appropriate to use in their chosen context.

Now that you have laid the foundation for your article, under your third subheading you outline the evidence related to the problem. I have another section below, where I discuss using the evidence properly, so here, I will simply say that you need to ensure a balanced representation of the evidence. At this point, you are not debating the evidence, but rather presenting a list of the evidence which you will consider. For example, if you were writing an article on the dating of the Exodus, you would describe the archaeological, historical, and literary evidence that has been used in the debate, as well as any additional evidence which you might think was appropriate.

Under subsequent subheadings, you would present your argument in full, using the evidence (primary and secondary) in your defence. This is the crux of your article, and so you need to write with great care and deliberation. This is also when you need those reflective times, to cogitate about what you have written. Using the analogy of building a



bridge, you need to support your argument every step of the way. Do not assume anything. Rather have too many references than too few and be careful not to miss a logical step. At each point, you ask yourself, ‘what are the possible options?’ and then deal with them properly before you move on to the next step.

For example, in my doctoral thesis on the Holy One of God (1983), I presented the various theories on the title, namely, did it mean the prophet, the high priest, the messiah, or the divine agent of God? This involved a thorough study of the Greek and Hebrew and a survey of Jewish and Greek non-biblical texts, as well as the biblical texts, with the emphasis on the Johannine writings. I, then, argued the case for each title and showed, in the light of John’s christology, why only the last title was appropriate. In my article, I could follow the same outline, but I reduced three-hundred pages to about ten.

Whatever article I write, at various points in the process, I like to review my arguments. So, after each step in the chain of argument, I pause and ask ‘what are the implications?’ and ‘what are the possible options or objections?’ To assist me in this process, I draw up mind-maps (with circles and arrows) and spent hours studying these to ensure that the logic flowed throughout my debate.

Once you have argued the case, resist the temptation to repeat your views (appropriate in a thesis, but not an article). Instead, draw the article to a conclusion by spelling out some of the further implications. So, you might want to suggest further areas for research or make mention of some of the challenges which your thesis has thrown into relief. Remember, although your work will be scrutinised by others, the mood is generally positive as scholars look for material they can use in their own writings and teachings.

In an article I wrote on Shame and Honour in Proverbs (1995), I challenged some of the accepted ideas around shame and honour in biblical times. I had to be particularly careful because I was taking on some serious international scholars. However, it paid off and my ideas were quoted, with approval, in a recent major publication, with one small correction. As I read the article by DeSilva (2008), an American scholar, I was glad that I had done my homework and been careful in the way in which I expressed my criticisms of the other scholars. I strongly urge that in your article, you show respect for other people's opinions, deal properly with their arguments and using your evidence, and gently agree or disagree.

#### **4. Taking Aim**

Once you have your article in draft form, you need to make the next decision, namely, upon which journal are you going to set your sights. I was very fortunate because the Journal of Theology for Southern Africa was published in our department at UCT and I could simply speak to the editor, Professor John de Gruchy. Failing that, you need to identify the likely journals and to peruse the volumes of recent years, in order to get a sense of the type of article that is being published. Fortunately, most journals today carry instructions for contributors which you can follow. You, then, model your article on the journal you have chosen. This means, of course, that you then have to adapt the article, if you choose to send it somewhere else. Some journals are easier to publish in than others, and older scholars will be able to advise you in your choice.

#### **5. Constructing an Argument**

For me, the most important dimension of any article I read is the construction of the argument. In the early two-thousands, I spent time in

a Science Faculty department (Rock Art Research Institute, WITS) completing a Master's degree in Rock Art. I found the time invaluable, especially in learning to write for a more scientific and empirical discipline. It was there, also, that I came across a seminal article by Wylie (1989) on constructing an argument. Basically, what Wyle argues is that when faced with a pile of evidence and various theories based on that evidence, you are creating a logical chain and looking for a 'tightness of fit'. In other words, which theory makes the best sense of all the evidence? Too often, in building our argument, we select the evidence which supports our view and we ignore, or underplay, the evidence which supports the opposing view.

Let me illustrate with what is clearly a controversial example. In Romans 16:7, there is a reference to a certain Junia (so KJV and REB), who is described as 'eminent among the apostles' (REB). Since Junia is feminine, this suggests that here we have a woman who is an apostle. However, some modern translations (NIV and NASV) have the masculine form (Junias), which raises the possibility that that is the original reading. The difference depends on how one accents the Greek; an acute accent for Junias (m) and a circumflex for Junia (f). Since there were no accents in the original text, this creates an interesting problem.

Archaeology informs us that the name Junia is found to be commonly used by women in the first three Christian centuries, but the masculine Junias is unknown during the same time period. In addition, when the Byzantine scribes (in the 900s) began to accent the Greek, they invariably opted for the circumflex, and this is evident in the text of the King James Version (1611). So the femininity of Junia seems beyond controversy, but was she an apostle?

What does the Greek say? Can the Greek phrase 'eminent among the apostles' mean something different? Some scholars have argued for a

different reading, namely, that Junia was praised by the other apostles, but was not herself an apostle (Burer and Wallace 2001). This is a completely acceptable argument and so we have two views on this verse. View one holds that Junia was an apostle and that is what the Greek intends, even if it is rather unusual. View two holds that Junia was not an apostle, but was well-known and esteemed by them. The Greek can clearly be read in both ways.

We are at a stalemate and we need to ask if there is any other evidence of which we need to take notice? For example, what did the early Christians think? John Chrysostom (Patriarch of Constantinople 398–407) writes,

‘Who are of note among the Apostles.’ And indeed to be apostles at all is a great thing. But to be even amongst those of note, just consider what a great song of praise this is! But they were of note owing to their works, their achievements. Oh! How great is the devotion of this woman, that she should even be counted worthy of the appellation of apostle!’ (Thirty-First Homily on Romans, written in Greek).

Clearly, the Greek-speaking Chrysostom believed the text meant that Junia was an Apostle, but was he right?

We need to ask; does this or that evidence have weight?; should it be incorporated or not? This leads to further questions; what about other New Testament texts which deal with women (in general or in leadership)? So the debate continues, until, finally, we reach a solution which makes sense of all the evidence and not just some of it; and we are able to achieve a ‘tightness of fit’.

Evangelicals, it seems to me, are sometimes afraid of tackling the difficult questions and the evidence, which is hard to manage. Yet we,

of all people, should trust scripture and God's inspiration to lead us into his truth. I do not believe there are questions too difficult for us to tackle, provided we are honest with the evidence and are open to God's Spirit.

## **6. Imposed Limitations**

We need to set limits on our work, especially in an article. All too often, we get side-tracked into secondary issues and debates, instead of sticking to our core topic. The wider we spread our discussion, the more chance there is of leaving gaps in our logic. There is nothing more enjoyable than reading a tightly-argued and well-focussed article. I remember reading an article on Bultmann's theory of the Gnostic Redeemer Myth, by a scholar named Colpe (1968). Colpe systematically shows how Bultmann pieced his myth together, from a variety of sources; yet not one of the sources carries the myth in its entirety. In other words, the myth was a creation of Bultmann's imagination. This is a devastating critique in a sharp, focussed article.

For me, the key question is this: is this point critical for this article or can it be left out? Sometimes, we add points just to show how clever we are, or how well-read we are. If it is not an integral part of the logical chain of argument, then leave it out or save it for another article. In writing a paper recently on the poor of the Old and New Testaments, I realised that I had uncovered what seemed to be a new interpretation of Jesus' cleansing of the Temple. This was a problem. Did I deal with this new interpretation, or did I leave it out and write a second paper on the Temple cleansing? I decided to leave it in, because there was an intrinsic connection between my discussion of the Old Testament material and my understanding of the events in the Temple. The two parts of the paper worked in harmony.

## 7. Master of One's Sources

A colleague of mine once applauded me for recommending to him, 'you need always to be the master of your sources'. I do not actually remember saying this, but it does make good sense. What this means is that you do not allow your secondary sources to determine the direction of your argument. Rather, you use your sources (and the evidence) to support your argument. This does not mean that you misrepresent your sources or ignore the vital evidence. Rather, I am suggesting that in bringing forward your academic references, you do so in an ordered and logical way, which leads ultimately to your conclusion. You use your sources, fairly and logically, to build up a clear defence of your position—a chain of reason, which will stand the test of time.

In constructing the academic support, one step at a time, it is valuable to use solid quotations, at critical moments, in the defence of your position—like the key pillars of a bridge. When I was writing my book on poverty (2007), I challenged the perception that poverty, in the time of Amos, was as bad as in the late post-exilic period. I raised various pieces of evidence and referred to several secondary sources. At the critical moment, I introduced a quotation from an archaeologist named Holladay (1998), who, on the basis of masses of evidence, shows that house-sizes in ancient Israel were basically the same for the duration of the period of the monarchy. By contrast, in the archaeology of the Hellenistic Period, there was plenty of evidence for peasant hovels and wealthy mansions. This was the capstone of my argument.

A good quotation, based on solid evidence, can be a deciding factor in your defence. In the same book (2007), I critiqued a scholar, who was using a Marxist typology to argue that increasing interest rates had led to a change in land-tenure. I quoted Karl Marx (1981) saying that debt, while painful, did not, in itself, cause a change in the modes of

production. So I used his chosen methodology against him. ‘Know your enemies’ might be a suitable maxim, in this case.

One of the things which I learned from my time in the Faculty of Science was the way in which such scholars reference their papers. Good scientists use far more references than their colleagues in the Arts and Humanities. Nothing is taken for granted and a single comment might have six or seven names attached to it. My suggestion, in your academic article, is to make sure that every point which you make has its support in brackets. In some cases, especially when you come to the heart of your argument, this might mean every sentence, in a paragraph, has its own academic reference. An average of eight to ten references, per page, would not be excessive over a ten to fifteen page article. Try to avoid citing the same scholar back to back, since this creates the impression you have limited your reading.

One of the classic errors of post-graduate students is to refer to several of the major players on different sides of the debate, but only when what they say is in support of the student’s point of view. This, sometimes, amounts to a misrepresentation of the writers. Different points of view need to be fairly represented, including those in opposition to your own. Another tendency is to quote from several (even contradictory) sources and then conclude by giving one’s own idea, but without dealing with the divergences or explaining the rationale for one’s decision. The argument resembles a fruit salad with an unsliced cucumber on the top.

In dealing with sources which are critical of your own position, I have some suggestions to make. Explain the view briefly, and the evidence used in reaching that position. Using carefully chosen academic studies, mount your counter-argument, along with your evidence, while keeping an eye open for cracks in the opposing defence, which you can exploit.

For example, recently I was writing a study guide for TEEC and came across the debate on temple prostitution. There are two views—there were temple prostitutes in Israel in Old Testament times and there were not. The debate centres on a group of women, who were called 'holy ones' (Heb. *kidushin*), and various biblical texts (see Bird 1989). I was arguing against the existence of temple prostitutes and, therefore, was delighted to read one prominent scholar (Hess 2007:323–5), who argued that even though there is no external evidence for these women, nevertheless, they must have existed. This is precisely the kind of statement that allows you to critique a position and at the same time to bolster your own position—your opposition is saying categorically 'there is no evidence for their position'.

In looking for weaknesses (cracks) in the opposing position, I have found it useful to read the footnotes. From time to time, scholars tuck away evidence, or an opposing scholarly opinion, which undermines their opinion, in their footnotes. I read one article, where the author argued for a particular form of land-tenure for pre-exilic Israel. Then, in a footnote, he stated that the one piece of solid evidence dated from the post-exilic period. I was able to use his own footnote to undermine his entire thesis. The evidence was not valid for the pre-exilic period.

By the same token, scholars who read your article will be looking for cracks in your defences. So write carefully and logically; treat the evidence fairly and resist the temptation to bury contrary opinions in footnotes.

## 8. Choosing a Title

Quite often, the title chooses itself, but when the article is based on a thesis, you do need to find a separate title. It would be confusing to



have two separate studies existing under the same title, even where the one may be a summary of the other.

I find, when I reflect on my own articles, that sometimes the title simply summarises the contents—such as ‘Jeremiah and the poor’ (2007) or ‘San Art, aesthetically speaking’ (2005). At other times, I use a catchy title to make a point or to attract attention like ‘The land claim of Jeremiah: Was Max Weber right?’ (2011) or ‘When metaphor becomes myth: A socio-linguistic reading of Jeremiah’ (1999) or even ‘Wise women and foolish men: Shame and honour in Proverbs’ (1995). With the Internet, you need to be careful that you include key words in the title to benefit search engines.

## 9. Co-authorship

In the Sciences, few articles appear under a single name; but in the Arts and Humanities the opposite trend dominates. In the case of an article based on a thesis, it is common practice, worldwide, to publish under the name of the thesis writer and the supervisor, in that order. The order is important because, in the case of an article on a thesis, it indicates that the bulk of the work was done by the candidate, and that the supervisor, at most, offered his or her editorial suggestions.

The advantage of co-authoring, with a recognised scholar, is that the journals might be more inclined to take your work seriously. Unfortunately, journal editors receive so many badly-written articles, that they may become jaded and suspicious of new writers. Moreover, with the advent of the Internet, plagiarism has become a massive problem and no journal wants to be accused of publishing plagiarised work. Editors, therefore, find some safety in established writers. On the other hand, there are some journals which actively encourage young or

unpublished writers, which means that you need to do your homework in your choice of a journal.

Many South African scholars are willing to co-author articles, provided that they have a final say in the manuscript—to protect their academic reputation. Depending on the amount of work I do on an article, I might insist on being the first author; but most often, I do little more than check the final draft and then, logically, prefer to be the second author.

Along with co-authoring, there is an additional advantage firmly utilised by our Science colleagues, namely, the practice of offering draft articles to colleagues to read and comment. Then, in a footnote at the beginning of the article, there is a brief reference thanking these colleagues for their helpful comments and insights. This practice is far more inclusive than the Arts and Humanities, where we tend to sit in splendid isolation and share only once we have published something. What are we afraid of, I wonder?

## 10. Your Bibliography

When you condense your lengthy thesis bibliography into an article-length work, you need to make some important decisions. One possibility is simply to include the cited works. The downside of that is you might lose some of the key reference works in the process. So, in addition to the works cited, you should make sure that you add in key writers to your first draft. In particular, you should select the most recent studies in the area, along with a few of the older, recognised authorities in the area.

One of the first things I do when I preview an article for publication is to check the bibliography for works less than five years old; and the books or articles which, I consider, would be essential to a balanced

presentation; that all happens before I read a single word of the article. So, cast a critical eye over your bibliography, before signing off on your article.

## 11. Conclusion

My purpose, in writing this article, was to encourage you to take the plunge and to turn your thesis into an article. This is not simply a case of writing for the sake of writing, but rather, using the talents which God has given us to contribute to Christian understanding of the Bible and related Christian doctrines. So pick up the metaphorical pen and start writing.

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# Guidelines for Converting a Thesis or Dissertation into an Academic Book or Monograph

Dan T Lioy<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

Biblical studies and theology students in masters and doctoral programmes often spend countless hours and several years toiling away in isolation to research and write acceptable theses or dissertations. (In this essay, the preceding two terms are used interchangeably.) It is only natural for them to consider how they might share the fruits of their labour to a wider academic readership. After all, the investigative undertaking is a social enterprise in which students become members of a scholarly community.

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Lioy is an ordained evangelical who serves in the Postgraduate School at SATS. Dan has a PhD dealing with the Christology of the Apocalypse from North-West University. He is also a professor in the School of Continuing Theological Studies at NWU, and holds faculty appointments at George Fox Evangelical Seminary, Marylhurst University, and the Institute of Lutheran Theology. Dan's publications include over thirty books and scholarly monographs, such as *Evolutionary creation in biblical and theological perspective* (2011), *Axis of glory: a biblical and theological analysis of the temple motif in scripture* (2010), and well over twenty scholarly articles, such as Jesus' resurrection and the nature of the believer's resurrection body (1 Cor 15:1–58), *Conspectus* vol. 12; Spiritual Care in a Medical Setting: Do We Need It? *Global Journal of Classical Theology* (2002), including numerous entries to encyclopaedias and dictionaries (e.g. *Concise dictionary of the occult and the New Age*; *The complete biblical library: the Old Testament. Hebrew-English dictionary, Aleph-Beth*).

Academic books and monographs are the established ways to disseminate the results of one's research. This remains the case, even though other popular venues have arisen over the past two decades (e.g. e-journals, blogs, and so forth, made available over the Internet and accessed using a variety of mobile devices, including tablets and smartphones). Junior scholars need to recognise that the process of converting their graduate or postgraduate research into publishable form is neither easy nor straightforward. Expressed differently, it is not simply a matter of delivering the manuscript (perhaps completed a few years back) to a publisher, who then designs an appropriate cover before sending off the unaltered volume to the printers. Instead, the task is often labour-intensive, time consuming (on average, one to three years), mentally exhausting, and filled with uncertainty.

To set the stage for the guidelines appearing in the latter portion of this essay, the next section considers the distinctive nature of biblical and theological research. This is followed by a discussion of the complexities involved in revising one's research findings. Then, the deliberation shifts to the benefits arising from the effort to rework one's thesis or dissertation. Next, a comprehensive, though succinct, cluster of recommended steps is put forward for converting the capstone graduate or postgraduate project into an academic book or monograph. After that are observations about selecting a publisher and preparing the book proposal. The concluding section offers some final thoughts about the arduous process detailed in this essay. There is also a brief list of recommended resources for further reading on this subject.



## **2. The Distinctive Nature of Biblical and Theological Research<sup>2</sup>**

Biblical and theological research is the systematic process of gathering and analysing the information needed from scripture and secondary sources, in order to answer a question and thereby solve a problem. This definition implies that the rigorous study of God's Word is not the mere gathering of information. Neither is it the rote transcription of facts. More importantly, the endeavour involves the interpretation of the pertinent biblical and extra-biblical data in order to increase one's understanding of the issue being explored. The formal research report (e.g. a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation) is an established format to communicate one's findings to interested readers.

Successful research does not just happen. It requires some sort of plan to guide the individual through the process. A good plan will include knowing the kinds of material one will need, how to find that material, and how to use that material. Once the materials are collected, the researcher makes use of them, not in a haphazard way, but rather, in a deliberate and intentional manner. The individual seeks to fashion a report using an approved scholarly apparatus that answers a particular question or set of questions, or resolves a particular issue or set of issues. All the materials gathered are used to fulfill this objective.

A research problem reflects incomplete knowledge or flawed understanding about a particular subject area (whether the latter is connected with academic reading or arises from a real-life

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<sup>2</sup> Portions of what follows in this essay are a revision of material appearing in my online course titled, "Introduction to Integrated Research: MIT5301" (available on the SATS e-Campus website). Used by permission of SATS. All rights reserved.

circumstance). The origin of the problem can be either a practical shortcoming involving concrete situations or theoretical issues dealing with the realm of abstract concepts. A research problem, then, strives to gather enough information on a particular topic that has scriptural and doctrinal importance so that the issue under investigation can be clarified and better understood.

The assumption is that by doing the latter activity a greater good (namely, something more important) will be achieved. Expressed differently, by investigating topic 'A', a larger and more important matter will be clarified. In pure (or entirely academic) research, the consequences are conceptual, and the rationale defines what one wants to *know*. In applied (practical) research, the consequences are tangible (or concrete) and the rationale defines what one wants to *do*. The final, approved draft of the investigative endeavour is called a thesis or dissertation.

### **3. The Complexities of Revising One's Research Findings**

Successfully converting one's thesis or dissertation into an academic book or monograph does not just happen. Making the necessary structural and stylistic modifications from one genre to another requires some sort of plan to guide the aspiring writer through the process. A good plan will include recognising the distinctive nature of one's research findings, the target audience, and the intended publisher. It is within this specific context that graduates of masters and doctoral programmes rework their capstone project into a publishable form that others both within and outside the academy will *want* to read (as opposed to being *required* to read).

Having a plan is crucial, but so is being flexible. A plan is similar to a road map. It provides direction and guidance. Yet, it is not infallible. There are times when the would-be author must modify the plan and alter the original objective(s). This change might be due to an encounter with unanticipated difficulties or unexpected variables surfacing in the manuscript revision process. The main point to remember is that the task of altering the capstone project typically follows a crooked path, takes unexpected turns, and can even loop back on itself.

#### **4. The Benefits of Revising One's Research Findings**

Given the complexities of revising one's research findings, why would anyone bother to do so? On a personal level, the endeavour can prove to be fulfilling and challenging. For those who are intellectually curious, the tasks of gathering information from primary and secondary sources, organising it into a coherent form, and reporting/interpreting/analysing it reliably and persuasively brings immense satisfaction. On a community level, research can advance the field of scriptural and doctrinal knowledge in a particular area of interest. It can make a substantive contribution to the literature base of data, which, in turn, can prove useful to practitioners in that field of expertise.

The time-consuming task of converting one's research findings to a publishable form (whether the changes are cosmetic or comprehensive) helps the aspiring writer better to understand what one has found and to clarify the relationships among one's ideas. This is the natural result of arranging and rearranging the results of one's research. In the process, one might notice new connections and contrasts, complications and implications that would otherwise be missed. The writing process helps the potential author to see larger patterns of meaning and significance,

and this, in turn, helps one to gain a more coherent perspective on just what is being thought and felt.

The basic task of revising one's thesis or dissertation helps immensely to improve the quality of one's prose. It enables the junior scholar to be more objective, rigorously logical, faithful to the evidence, and willing to question various findings from differing perspectives. Reworking one's manuscript highlights one's desire to enter into a thoughtful conversation with a broader group about what one has done. It says that the aspiring writer cares about what others think and how they respond to what has been discovered. This emphasises a fundamental but often overlooked aspect of scholastic undertakings in biblical and theological studies, namely, it is a social activity involving oneself and others. The academic book or monograph is written in such a way that even non-specialists will be able to follow it without confusion. Choosing to make the discourse as accessible and readable as possible to a wider audience says one strongly desires others to be a part of the work one has done in research.

Interested readers bring clear suppositions to their reading of an academic book or monograph. For instance, they expect the opening chapter to begin in a clear manner with a sense of where the material is going, and why the writer wants to take them there. Readers also require the opening chapter to explain what question the manuscript answers, what problem it deliberates (whether scholarly or practical), and how the treatise addresses the issue. Readers expect the remaining chapters of the publication to be developed in a coherent, sequential fashion. One chapter should build upon the previous ones, and all in turn should help address in a cogent way the primary concern raised in the opening chapter.

The goal, then, in revising one's thesis or dissertation is not just to compile facts about a topic and offer a bland summary or drab report concerning them. It is to engage readers in a thoughtful conversation about a biblical or theological topic of mutual interest. As a result of having achieved this goal in the main body of the academic book or monograph, the final chapter should provide a satisfying and convincing ending to the discourse. This includes stating whether the hypotheses broached in the opening chapter have been supported and making recommendations for further study. Readers want to know how the findings and determinations detailed in the manuscript will change their thinking and beliefs. In short, they want to be told why the research is significant.

As aspiring writers draft their report, they endeavour to accomplish the following tangible goals: (1) to introduce new knowledge or a significantly altered or expanded view of already existing knowledge; (2) to challenge deeper beliefs being held by the readership; and (3) to clarify an enigma, solve a problem, or initiate an action. The greater the shift one wants to produce in the readers' thinking, the harder junior scholars will have to work to be convincing.

## **5. The Recommended Steps for Converting the Thesis or Dissertation into an Academic Book or Monograph**

It can be disheartening for graduates of masters and doctoral programmes in biblical studies and theology to submit their capstone project to various publishers, only to receive back one rejection letter after another. As was previously noted, if would-be authors want to see some aspect of their thesis or dissertation published, they need to invest the time and effort to revise it (in some cases resulting in an entirely new work). This entails converting the manuscript into a form that is

more accessible and inviting to a wider group of readers than just the two or three members of the examining committee who supervised their research. What follows are some recommended steps to accomplish this task.<sup>3</sup>

To begin, the opening chapter will almost always, without exception, need to be heavily reworked. For instance, longwinded explanations and circuitous rationale statements should be taken out. Also, language that is stiff, formal, and pedantic must be replaced by an engaging, cogent, and cohesive narrative voice. As a substitute, think about inserting more personalised opening remarks and stating why the topic is of interest to you. You might also consider recapping how your enthusiasm for the subject arose and what motivated you to undertake your research and writing endeavour. Be sure to explain why the treatise is important, not just to you, but also to the academic guild and the broader church community.

Many graduate and postgraduate reports have an entire chapter devoted to a rigorous assessment of the pertinent literature in their field of study. The intent is to demonstrate convincingly to one's supervisors that one is familiar with the state of the scholarly debate connected with one's chosen topic. Recognise that the situation is completely different for an academic book or monograph. Often, interested readers take for granted that the author is sufficiently qualified to write at length on the subject being exhaustively deliberated in the manuscript. In this case, a detailed, painstaking, and obtuse literature review is unnecessary. This material, then, should be either discarded or reduced to a few succinct

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<sup>3</sup> As a disclaimer, in light of the wide variety of academic presses in the publishing industry, it is difficult to make hard-and-fast generalisations here. Discerning readers should take the recommendations that follow with that caveat in mind.

paragraphs. If the latter option is chosen, the material could be included in the first or the second chapter of the book or in an appendix.

Typical graduate and postgraduate capstone projects will contain chapters that are divided into main sections and various subsections. It is common for the latter to extend to two, three, or even four levels of demarcation. On the upside, this signals to one's supervisors that one knows how to logically organise and sequence one's material. On the downside, it results in a composition that is chopped up and disjointed. For this reason, the multiple layers of subsections should be removed and replaced by appropriate connecting statements and brief transitional phrases. The result is an academic book or monograph that readers find more fluid.

In many theses and dissertations, each chapter will contain one or more introductory paragraphs in which the junior scholar restates what was covered in preceding chapters, rehearses what will be covered in the present one, and conveys the rationale for doing so. Then, in the intervening sections and subsections, various aspects of the opening statements are reiterated in an increasingly complex manner. Finally, the closing section dutifully restates the same information. All this repetition, though, can seem unbearably pedantic to readers of an academic book or monograph. For that reason, the compulsion to endlessly backtrack material should be broken.

There are numerous occasions in which graduate and postgraduate students will feel obligated by the stringent demands of their supervisors to include formal citations for practically every statement made in their research project. These citations could number in the hundreds, if not thousands. While they might look impressive to a team of external examiners, all these citations end up being superfluous for an academic book or monograph. After all, the general readership will

assume that the author is a legitimate specialist in the field of study. In light of the latter, unnecessary and gratuitous citations should be removed. In turn, this will help to make the discourse more readable, since there will be far fewer distracting and interruptive references for non-specialists to trudge through.

Drastically reducing the number of formal citations also leads to paring back the bibliography (sometimes by as much as two-thirds). What is left is a leaner and more focused list of works actually referred to in the academic book or monograph. Often, the bibliography will be a straightforward alphabetical list. On other occasions, in order to make the bibliography of greater use to readers, the junior scholar might consider categorising the listings by subject, especially as it pertains to one's research topic. A related option is to separate primary and secondary sources from one another. Also, print and Internet sources could be delineated. In any case, the main goal is to figure out the most suitable way to make the bibliography as architecturally coherent and user-friendly as possible to one's target audience.

The manuscript should be read with a critical eye, and this includes recognising the benefit of thoroughly editing the document. Editing is sharpening a thought to a gemlike point and excising useless verbiage. Choosing one's words precisely helps to clarify one's writing. It eliminates foggy thought, jumbled statements, and lifeless phrasing. It is best to use simple words, concrete nouns, and active, expressive verbs. Shorter, more succinct sentences tend to work better than long, contorted ones. Aspiring writers should be alert to modification, as misplaced phrases and clauses can create havoc with the thoughts being conveyed.

As the thesis or dissertation is revised, excessive amounts of information should be spotted and drastically reduced. Other areas,



where an issue is insufficiently treated should be revisited and expanded accordingly. If there is newer information that is pertinent to the would-be author's discourse, the findings of that research should be judiciously incorporated into the treatise, especially to add fresh insights to the study. Keep in mind that only material that advances the discussion or illustrates a point being made should be included.

Those who are novices at academic writing in the areas of biblical and theological studies are prone to face the following common shortcomings: spending too much time simply repeating what others have said; spending too little time analysing, synthesising, and evaluating the material of others and the data being collected; failing to organise the information gathered in research in a clear, coherent fashion; failing to correct a lack of flow in communication; failing to interact and document interaction with relevant, credible, and scholarly outside sources; excessively using quotes from outside resources (which come across as raw, undigested data); failing to understand that academic books and monographs are not a compilation of other people's views, acting as ventriloquists for the writer; failing to comprehend that many and extensive quotations can detract from the professional quality of a manuscript, and can point to the author's inability to render original work.

There are numerous ways to overcome the preceding pitfalls. At all times, it is important for junior scholars to stay in control of their argument and let their own authorial voice speak for them (e.g. in an unpretentious, engaging, and personal tone). They should include ideas from other sources only when those ideas add weight to their argument. They must also select quotes carefully. In general, they should not select quotations that only repeat points they have already made. Moreover, authors should ensure that the line of argument is theirs,

made up of their ideas and in their 'voice'; yet these ideas must be informed by what other specialists have to say on the subject. In turn, this information should be presented objectively and scientifically, in the sense that writers are arguing from a broad knowledge of the subject, and can support what they say through the well-chosen references they make.

## **6. Selecting the Academic Publisher and Preparing the Book Proposal**

Once the preliminary revisions have been made to the thesis or dissertation, time needs to be spent considering which academic publisher to choose. Guidance can be obtained from one's supervisors, other respected specialists, and trusted professional peers. This advice should be augmented with information obtained from the publisher websites. The pertinent data includes recently released titles that are in one's general and specific fields of study, along with the overall reputation of the publishers under consideration. If a particular publisher has a relevant series of interest, the series editor or acquisitions editor are likely individuals to contact.

Take into account whether a subvention (or subsidy) is charged to defray the production costs (including evaluating, editing, designing, printing, marketing, and distributing the completed work). In some cases, this can run into the thousands of dollars. Also, find out about the marketing and distribution services provided by respective academic publishers. This includes whether an effort is made to display new titles at applicable conferences and getting monographs reviewed in respected journals. Learn what the turnaround time is for the review and acceptance/rejection process of a manuscript proposal (or prospectus). The typical range is three to six months.

In preparing the proposal, make the prose as readable as possible. This includes describing the work in terms that are readily understandable to non-specialist marketing staff. For example, avoid using obscure, overly technical words, cumbersome phrases, and tortuous sentences. Put together a clear, discursive table of contents, a few representative sample chapters (rather than the entire manuscript; e.g. a strong introductory chapter and one or two substantive chapters from the main part of the book), and a series of well-crafted short summary statements of the manuscript's contents. Be sure to communicate how much of the envisioned treatise is done and approximately how long it will take to finish the entire work.

Make the effort to tailor the proposal to the specific publisher to whom it will be sent. Academic presses post their author guidelines on their websites, so be sure to review and follow their instructions carefully. Often, acquisition editors want to know the title of the book, how it makes a significant contribution to the field of study, and in what way it reflects competent scholarship. They want to see whether the manuscript represents a unified whole, how it compares to other books currently published in the field that might offer competition to the work under consideration, and whether the latter could serve as a text or assigned reading in a college or university course. Each of these factors helps to determine whether the project has sufficient academic merit and is economically viable.

Remember that the proposal is a formal way of signalling to a prospective publisher that one's academic book or monograph is intellectually valuable and worthy of being made available to a wider readership (including both scholars and non-specialists). An acquisition editor and the editorial board of the press will want to know why they should publish this manuscript (typically resulting in a print run of only

a few hundred books). For instance, what new discoveries does it present and/or what new information does it put forward? In what specific ways does this proposed publication add to or expand the existing field of knowledge? It is best to remain as objective and truthful as possible. Discerning editors and reviewers can spot when an aspiring writer is overstating the prospects for the work under consideration.

## 7. Conclusion

Here are some final thoughts about the arduous and time-consuming process of converting one's thesis or dissertation into an academic book or monograph. Begin with prayer, especially for oneself, one's motivation, and God's glory. Also, try to stay enthusiastic and persistent. This includes planning carefully and being resourceful when things go wrong.

Furthermore, allow plenty of time to revise the manuscript for publication. For instance, if it is has been several years since the completion of the capstone project, the junior scholar might have to make several additional visits to the library to update the research. This includes taking one's time while at the library to thoughtfully and carefully access the pertinent up-to-date sources of information. Moreover, aspiring writers should be prepared for obstacles—books that are checked out, online searches that do not seem to work, and sources that are not what one thought they would be. Keep in mind that these sorts of issues are all part of the revision process.

## Recommended Resources for Further Reading

- Domeris WR 2013. Taking the plunge: turning a thesis into an academic article. *Conspectus*. 15:245–263.
- Harmon E *et al.* (eds.) 2003. *The thesis and the book: a guide for first-time academic authors*. University of Toronto Press: Toronto.
- Germano W 2001. *Getting it published: a guide for scholars and anyone else serious about serious books*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.
- Germano W 2005. *From dissertation to book*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.
- Luey B (ed.) 2008. *Revising your dissertation: advice from leading editors*. University of California Press: Berkley.