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A Christian Theological Critique of uBuntu in Swaziland

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Abstract

This article hopes to open a biblical discussion on the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*[2]. The discourse critiques the current Swazi praxis—both from a traditional and postmodern perspective; gives a better understanding of *uBuntu* (especially in its rural context where patriarchalism and the Ancestral cult are so conspicuous); provides a biblical evaluation, and considers whether *Ubuntu* could be defended as a universal philosophy. Having reviewed the Swazi praxis, the article considers Paul's statement in Romans 2:14–15 regarding God's law being written on the hearts of all mankind. The paper argues that the statement refers to the so-called Golden Rule (Matt 22:37–39), which appears to have been prevalent throughout the primordial cultures. The research concludes that *Ubuntu* is only viable within a community that upholds the principle of sacrificial brotherly love as advanced by Christ Jesus.

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[1] The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

[2] It will be shown that the traditional praxis of *uBuntu* is vastly different from the philosophy currently being espoused by academics of all persuasions. Hence, this author has adopted Praeg's different emphasis in spelling to denote the traditional Swazi praxis as *uBuntu* and the more currently academically embraced philosophy as *Ubuntu* (2014:96–120).

1. Introduction

Much has been written about the potential of the worldview of *uBuntu* to bring about change to the individualistic and hedonistic view of the Western world. Some advocates believe that this would empower Africans to take back their self-image—lost through the ravages of colonialism. While many academics are proclaiming the worldview's ethical correctness, there is little biblical commentary on *uBuntu* itself. One of the African countries in which traditional *uBuntu* is still practised is the Kingdom of Swaziland. There are a number of reasons for this, but for brevity this author will focus on only two. Firstly, the traditional Swazi way of life has been actively safeguarded by King Sobhuza II and his successor, King Mswati III. Secondly, the vast majority of Swazis can trace their ancestry back to fifteen Nguni clans with a common language—*siSwati*. Thus, this close-knit society is uniquely appropriate to study the impact of both the praxis of *uBuntu* in Southern Africa and to consider whether the traditional praxis could be construed as the philosophy of *Ubuntu* currently promoted by many academics. In doing so, this study will:

1. Review the traditional Swazi praxis of *uBuntu.*
2. Consider the impact that modernity is having on the society in living out their understanding of *uBuntu.*
3. Biblically critique *uBuntu* with special reference to that society. In so doing, both the negative and positive aspects will be highlighted with a hope of coming to a definition of *uBuntu* which could be embraced as a biblically-based philosophy.
4. Arrive at a more powerful dynamic for its expression in both rural and city contexts after considering the origin of a purified *Ubuntu.*

2. The Praxis of *uBuntu* in Swaziland

Before considering whether *uBuntu* can be extended to a philosophy, it is important that we briefly consider what it stands for; its origins; and those aspects that underpin the praxis while undermining its wider school of thought.

The African philosophy of *Ubuntu* recognises that all persons have an element of divinity, and therefore should be recognised, respected and valued (Munyaka and Mothlabi 2009:66). The Swazi greeting, *sawubona* translated directly means 'I see you'. Within the *Buntfu* (or as it is more commonly known across the Globe—*Ubuntu*) philosophy it takes on a deeper meaning, and is translated as: 'I acknowledge your humanity' (Ibid; Curle 2012:80).

Writing in *African Religions and Philosophies*, Mbiti (1969:108–109), the doyen of writers on African Traditional Religion, sets out his understanding of *Ubuntu*:

> Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people. When he suffers, he does not suffer alone but with the corporate group; when he rejoices, he rejoices not alone but with his kinsmen, his neighbours and his relatives whether dead or living. When he gets married, he is not alone, so also the children belong to the corporate body of kinsmen[3], even if they bear only the Father's name. What happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and what happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say, 'I am, because we are, and because we are, I am.' This is the cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man.

[3] Giving rise to the saying, 'It takes a village to raise a child.'

In Southern Africa, the concept is defined in SiSwati, IsiZulu and IsiXhosa as *umuntu ngumuntu ngebantu* - a person is a person through other persons (Schutte 1993:46). Outside its Southern African context, *uBuntu* is known as African communalism or African humanism (More 2006:156).

When compared to the Western individualistic worldview, the African view is social—not personal. Central to the philosophy is the understanding that each one of us is part of a community, and that no single person can function on his own (Rosa 2005:¶8). Mnyandu (1997:81) takes our understanding further as he expresses the belief that, 'Ubuntu is not merely positive human qualities, but the very human essence itself, which lures and enables human beings to become *abantu* or humanised beings, living in daily self-expressive works of love and efforts to create harmonious relationships in the community and the world beyond.'

It is for this reason that marriage, childbearing, divorce and death are seen from a communal viewpoint. Those who do not marry are seen as breaking the continuity between the past and the future (Kunhiyop 2008:68). By not marrying and bearing children, a young person 'offends' the ancestors, whose existence is dependent on being remembered (Mutwa 1998:625). This reference to 'the ancestors' brings up a critical facet of the Swazi culture—its Patriarchalistic overtones. Social ranking is not acquired through personal effort *(Lizinga)* but through birth right *(Sigaba*[4]*).*

[4] When someone's name is mentioned in a traditional meeting, the question will be asked, 'Ungubani yena?' ('Who is s/he?') The response is always linked to his lineage and ancestry, not her/his accomplishments).The same phrase is used when it is

2.1. The *Sigaba* ranking

God is at the apex of the pyramid, but he has delegated authority to his messengers—the ancestors or 'living dead' (Mbiti 1991:69). Hierarchically, their Majesties, the King and *iNgwenyama,* [5] together with his mother—*Ndlovukati* [6] (Kasanene 1993b:94), come immediately below the ancestors (van Schalkwyk 2006:34). Below them are the Princes of the realm: *Lingunqa*, the Chief; *Tikhulu* and the Headmen, *Tindvuna.* The list is continued by Kéba M'baye (1974:143,145): elders who act as sages and judges in the community; adult males (35–40 years[7]); young men; women[8] and children (Turaki 1997:57; Stewart 2005:205; Morgan and Wieranga 2005:261; and Keevy 2014:67 Kuper 1986:3, 18–20, 28–42, 61–62; Manci 2005:67; Curle 2009:70). To this, Broodryk adds the office of a witchdoctor[9] (*sangoma*) (1997:97). This structure defines traditional life in

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believed a person has overstepped his authoritative boundary. In this instance, the saying means, 'Who does s/he think she/he is?' (Langa 2015).

[5] The two titles are used to show that Mswati III is not only king from a conventional English understanding, but is also Head of State in terms of Swazi law and custom. The term *iNgwenyama* is the term that describes a lion when referring to a human—especially His Majesty.

[6] *Ndlovukati* is the term used to describe Her Majesty the Queen Mother. Using the symbol of a female elephant, the term signifies the latent power that she holds. In Swazi law and custom, she has a moderating role to play in the exercise of His Majesty's use of power.

[7] The age of maturity varies from culture to culture. Hence, when a man reaches the age of 35, he can no longer be a member of the ANC Youth League. In Swaziland, males are considered to have reached their maturity when they reach the approximate age of 40 (Curle 2012:86).

[8] In traditional African societies, women are classified as children who fall under the protection and care of their father until the day of their marriage when they become the property of their husbands (Keevy 2014. 67; Curle 2013: 4; Broodryk 1997: 24; Idowu 1975: 77).

[9] In Curle's 2012 study of the hierarchy in Swaziland, he confirmed the hierarchy but classified *sangomas* alongside the chiefs and princes of the realm (313–314).

Swaziland. Cripples, albinos,[10] and homosexuals were added to the very end of the list. (Curle 2012: 313–314). For their part, babies up to the age of about four months are not recognised as children (Marwick 1966:146; Kuper 1947:76; Kuper 1986:52; Oluikpe 1997:36; Curle 2012: 79) and even then only have the potential to achieve humanity.[11]

2.2. The customs that govern the Swazi *uBuntu* praxis and ensure its longevity

Within the Swazi culture, becoming human only happens when one reaches adulthood. Mutwa helps our understanding—children come into this world without a soul or *ena*, it 'only builds up slowly (out) of the memories and thoughts and the experiences as it grows up into a man or a woman' (1998:568–569). It should be noted that even though the child is without a soul, it has the potential to achieve the status of ancestor, and thus the foetus is sacred and should not be aborted.

The upward humanisation process from the time that one is a new-born babe has other barriers: one must first be male (preferably firstborn); have reached maturity; be seen to perform good deeds, be attentive to his responsibilities within the hierarchy and society in general. In so doing the man would be recognised as an elder; and finally, if good enough, become one of the ancestors.

Thus, it can be said that humanisation within Swazi tradition, is very much based on a system of works within the community in comparison

[10] In times long past, women were the midwives. If the child was crippled or an albino, that child 'wouldn't make it'. If questioned about the child they would say '*kuphume Silwane'* (an animal appeared) (Maphanga and Maphanga:2015).

[11] This is why they are referred to as '*umuntf(u)wana'* (the diminutive of '*umuntfu*'—a person) which means 'small, incomplete, or kind of, a person' (Langa 2015).

to the Western view that every individual is human regardless of their status.

The position of the ancestors has a significant impact on the life of every traditional Swazi. Because this role is such an intricate subject, discussion of it is best left to a further study. Suffice to say that they are revered in a manner that many would argue is 'worship'. Swazis believe that their ancestors dwell in the family's kraal[12] where they must ritually pass through on their way to be buried.[13] Praeg (2014:38) comments that:

> The *living-dead* are inseparably part of the land an individual hails from. If community in Africa is understood to include both the living and the living-dead, land refers to both a geographical space where this extended notion of the living community is physically located, as well as to a metaphysical locale where the interface between the living and the living-dead occurs. Land is the locale for the continuity from the visible to the invisible, from the living to the living-dead. As a result, 'burial is important[14] not just because it is a key moment in the cycle of life but also because it makes manifest and keeps alive the concrete link between the world of the living and the dead' (Chabal 2009:20).

Like most Africans south of the Sahara, Swazis believe that not only do the *living-dead* give wisdom and protection (Mbigi 1997:52) but they are the final arbiters in matters of law. Chukwuemeka Ebo states 'Since not only the living but also ancestral spirits punish an offender, African

[12] The 'kraal' or cattle byre is located just outside the family's homestead, which consists of a number of houses.

[13] Royalty have a burial ground in caves in the Mdzimba Mountain (Masango 2008:32).

[14] Mndende comments that 'adherents of African traditional religion … invoke *amathambo alele ukuthula* (the bones that are sleeping peacefully)' indicating that cremation is not an acceptable method of burial (2013:80).

law has a spiritual dimension that has to be attended to before a matter can finally be set to rest' (1995:39). This belief in the power of the ancestors' oversight is so extensive that Ebo comments: 'The spirits of the ancestors'… authority is so overwhelming as to make enforcement by means of a body of officials such as police unnecessary' (1995:39).

Thus, the homestead, and the kraal in particular, are extremely precious to the family in a manner that no Westerner would understand. It is there where the headman of the village, the head of a family, or the eldest aunt (Langa 2015) will take instructions from the living-dead. Were the family to be physically removed from this prime source of guidance and protection, they would be shunned by community and spiritually lost, without hope of ever becoming an ancestor (only an 'evil spirit' (Alola 2007:26) that would continue to torment the living) since they would never have been honoured in death.

Continuing with the 'deference to hierarchy', we turn now to the role of *iNgwenyama.*[15] Princes of the realm and His Majesty's appointed Chiefs. Swazi kings are endowed with mystical powers and are believed to be representatives of ancestors—the departed kings (Masango 2008:6). Thus, while it is true that 'a King is a King by his people' (King Mswati III 1972: 325), the authority of the King (in Council[16]) is final and binding within the Kingdom.

As His Majesty has '*Umlomo longacali'manga* (the mouth that can utter no lie)' (Langa 2015), it would take a brave (or foolish) person to

[15] The dual title of His Majesty reveals a political technicality brought about by British Colonialism—Mswati III is both King within the understanding of the British and *iNgwenyama* as the traditional head of the Swazi State according to Swazi law and custom.

[16] The authority of their Majesties and the manner in which it is curbed is too intricate to describe within this article, and will be dealt with in a separate study.

question his authority, or that of his appointed agents—the chiefs. Should a child[17] be the person in question, then the father will be required to chastise the child[18] (Curle 2012:92). Those who do question established authority, or their father, are brought before their village council and effectively tried by the village elders (Curle 2012:82).

A person brought before the village council might also be someone who 'fails to live in a way that adds value, and can be referred to as a predator[19] (or having lost their humanity)' (Vilakati, Shcurink, and Viljoen 2013:18). Thus persons seen to rise up in the community (Boon 2007:124–125), or who are not prepared to share their resources with those around them, will be considered to be animals—having lost their humanity (Gade 2013:67–68) and dragged before the council. Should someone suddenly acquire material wealth, 'it is deemed to be the result of magic and dealt with accordingly' (Broodryk 1997:11). If found guilty, the person will be shamed, or 'regarded as a non-person or outcast. As an outcast, the offender loses not only his or her status in the community, but also his or her ability to participate in communal activities until the offence is purged and his or her status is restored' (Ebo 1995:39).

While the ultimate penalty over the centuries has been death, losing one's right to live in the presence of one's ancestors is an equally pernicious sentence. For this to happen, all the Chief needs do is to

[17] In the eyes of the community, even a man who has not reached the age of maturity (see footnote 6 above) is subject to his father's authority and discipline.

[18] The father of that child bears the consequences of the crime of the child. '*Umshayele tinyoni*', meaning, the child has shot down a bird for his father (In siSwati, if a boy goes bird hunting, he comes home and prepares that meat for his father, who may or more often, may not, share it with him. So, in the same way, if the son commits a crime, the father 'eats' it, like he would a bird the boy shot down for him (Langa 2015).

[19] *Silwane, translated* literally an animal. (Langa 2015) The equivalent isiZulu word is being currently used alongside *Mkwerekwere* to describe a foreigner.

remove one's right to live within the boundaries of his chiefdom, causing the person to become homeless.

Because communities are kinship based, there is a definite distinction between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Keevy comments, 'In contrast with ubuntu's loving and caring atmosphere that prevails in the brotherhood, "anything outside the kinship is labelled 'outside world"' (Turaki 1997:63; 2014:75). Turaki believes that because this insider/outsider relationship exists, it follows that: 'Outsiders and strangers do not belong. For this reason they are not entitled to the following: (1) equal treatment; (2) ownership; (3) affinity, loyalty, and obligation; (4) community rights and protection; and (5) they are not people, they are outside of the commonwealth, they are strangers' (1997:61).[20]

Coertze (2001:14) identified three examples of how this 'insider factor' impacts on relationships with other people:

1. Only those who speak an Nguni dialect can be referred to as human.[21]
2. Interdependence is actualised 'through a process of enculturation within the extended family (which) ensured that the members of (the) new generation accept the preferred conduct and the duties expected of them.'
3. The peer groups that developed ensured that 'the individual could not only call on support, but was through the pressure of

[20] It is from this 'outsider' viewpoint that allows the Nguni peoples group to moralise their xenophobia (Mnyaka 2003:158).

[21] Thus, to traditional Ngunis, Shangaans, Malawians, Congolese, Nigerians, Whites, Indians and Chinese fall outside the definition of humanity and within their understanding of an animal. The current test in South Africa for determining whether a person is an 'insider' with humanity, is to request the person to use the correct word for an elbow. Langa (2015) considers the pronunciation of the word *indololwane* so difficult as to make the identification of a foreigner a simple exercise.

> the co-members compelled to confirm and perform according to the example and expectation of the majority.'

Because of the historical intermarriage between the clans of Swaziland and KwaZulu, 'insiders' are largely limited to those who are fluent in either of these dialects of the Nguni language. Shangaans from Mozambique are still treated with some disdain (Curle 2012:94) even though their ancestors are also both Nguni (Matsebula 1988:9; Oluikpe 1997:18–19; Curle 2012:73).

It can be ascertained from the above that: *firstly*, individuals are ranked according to their birth right; *secondly* they come into this world as things and must earn their humanity in a 'processional personhood' (Menkiti 1984:173) through works; *thirdly*, they come to live their lives in the intense fear of the possible actions of the ancestors who control their daily lives; *fourthly*, they are conditioned to maintain the status quo in a patriarchalistic system devoid of upward criticism; *fifthly*, they are not to compete to be in a level into which they were not born. And having learnt to accept their social position, they must strive to ensure that others do the same[22] and *sixthly*, they are indoctrinated to believe that only 'insiders' have value and are entitled to *uBuntu.* All these six aspects inherent in the Swazi praxis of *uBuntu*, while culturally the norm, are outside of a biblical understanding of Christianity.

Juxtaposed to these negative realities is the overarching principle demonstrated in the non-negotiable right of a stranger to be welcomed into a home and given food. This is spelt out in the greeting that the stranger will call out to the home:

[22] If a person goes beyond their status of birth, it is common to hear the word '*Utikhandza ancono/ Ucabanga kutsi uncono ngoba*...' ('He thinks he is better than us because...' then the status he has acquired is attached to the statement (Langa 2015).

Ehe eKhaya!!'	Hello the home!
Sisu semhambi asingakanani singange ngingila ye nyoni	The stomach of a stranger can be compared to the gizzard of a bird—it doesn't need much.

Once the stranger has issued the request, there can be no denial. Even if the household is poor, the *uBuntu* response is obligatory. If there is no food in the home, the women of the house will send a child to a neighbour with the request *Make wenana …* The *wenana* is a request for the neighbour to pay forward for a future act of kindness that will be reciprocated.

Thus, even though *uBuntu* could be described as 'collectivist[23] in orientation—expressing the value of collaboration, cooperation and community' (Bolden 2014:3) two questions still remain:

1. One must determine what assets *uBuntu* cultured societies require to be shared. In a rural Swazi society, productive assets include land, livestock (cattle and goats) and wives[24]. If a third party intrudes on any one of these three, blood could be shed.[25]

[23] And socialist (Langa 2015).

[24] Considering one's wife to be a productive asset, while apparently sexist, is nevertheless culturally accurate. The status of women in Swaziland is so wide a subject that it needs to be the subject of much wider research.

[25] 'A man from Mayabuleni Village in the Tsolo, Eastern Cape was assaulted by twenty three people, after being accused of stealing cattle. He died as a result of the assault. A nine minute video clip has emerged of the fatal assault. David Tsali's hands and feet were bound, and his head covered with a plastic bag, whilst he was repeatedly sjambokked by different villagers… Events leading up to the assault have David being summoned by village elders and other men from the village, to be questioned on cattle theft. Initially he was questioned then released. Later that day he was called back and

On the other hand, the communal understanding allows the produce flowing from those assets to be used and shared freely.[26]

2. What happens when there is no land, and resources are few or when it is difficult for people to access those resources - even if they are available? It is this author's opinion that where productive assets—like land, taxi routes, or jobs (the productive assets) are concerned, individuals no longer feel compelled to act according to the requirements of *Ubuntu*—'living in daily self-expressive works of love and efforts to create harmonious relationships in the community and the world beyond' (Mnyandu 1997:81).

The events that took place throughout South Africa in 2008 and later in early 2015 indicate that this lack of access to / protection of productive assets is leading to xenophobia (Human Sciences Research Council 2008; Crush 2008) with its accompanying violence and death.

3. The Changes that Modernity is Bringing to *Ubuntu*

Even though, 'more than any other leader in Africa, Mswati's father, Sobhuza II, managed to safeguard his nation from oblivion by staying

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asked to bring a sheep to be examined if it was stolen. David expressed that he knew nothing of stolen cattle. He was then tied up, his head covered and the beatings began' (Geneva 2015:¶1).

[26] As the produce is a blessing from the Ancestors to the particular individual, permission must first be asked and given regardless of the cost to oneself. Should the owner refuse, word will be spread that that person has no *nfo* (humanity) and is *kwalisa* (stingy). An example given by Langa (2015) was that of a vehicle owned by his parents during the 80s. It was the only vehicle in the village. Thus, although owned by Langa's father, it became communal property; used by everyone disregarding personal ownership and how much it cost.

true to the Swazi culture' (Zevenbergen 2010:24), it cannot be said that the Swazi traditions have remained as they were a century ago. Western culture is significantly impacting the traditional life and through this, the *uBuntu* worldview. Yet, while Swaziland is in a state of transition towards a Westernised way of life, because of the patriarchal structure at work in the rural areas, it will take some time for there to be any real change. The urban situation, however, is somewhat different (Ibid). Much of the adjustment is attributed to a change in the determination of wealth:

- From cattle to paper (backed firstly by gold and then by a governmental promise to meet the payment); essentially—from living reality to the intangible (Curle 2012:116);
- From community land held in trust to 'a commodity to be sold and bought' (Kaoma 2013:95).

This shedding of the rural understanding of *uBuntu* has brought about a hole in the minds of urbanites who look for something of moral value to hold on to as they strive to live out their existence away from kith and kin. The vacuum, caused largely through the migratory labour practices masterminded by Cecil John Rhodes (*Reader's Digest* 1995:206; Curle 2009:48), stripped away the traditional checks and balances (Curle 2012:112). In its place came the sex and shopping (Schnell 2010:5) hunger imported from the West (Curle 2012:63).

From the time a person is a child, through the formative years and, certainly in business, every person is compelled to deliver the goods in a currency-determined economy; driven by a lust for things—'baubles, bangles and bright shiny beads' (Wright and Forrest 1953:¶1). In this Western philosophy, personal value is tied to beauty in women, and the

wealth of men. In their own ways each brings power and prestige to the individual.

Once it was morally incomprehensible for a girl of fifteen to be coerced into premarital sex—now, apparently, it is an established norm. Sadly, no matter what politicians such as Thabo Mbeki[27] and Hillary Clinton[28] say and write, the spirit of *Ubuntu* as it once was, is no more. Instead it is being replaced by one which states: 'I AM'. As Masango puts it, 'That spirit of living together is slipping away' (2006:941) (Curle 2012).

Not only is the philosophy metamorphosing, but it appears to be doing so in different directions. There are those in the cities who do not understand the philosophy at all, having adopted the Western independent, consumeristic way of life. Others are melding Western culture with *Ubuntu.* Some, like Tutu, would have the philosophy retain its positive qualities and adopt a forgiving, transforming Christian discipline. Yet others are more extreme in their concept of what penalties they believe should be imposed on transgressors.

Many of those who write on *Ubuntuism* highlight its benefits and nation-building qualities (Nolte-Schamm 2006:380; Rosa 2005: ¶19). Others, like Masango, conclude their writings with a call for a return to its value systems (2006:943).Unfortunately they omit practical ways to overcome the problems that the philosophy is currently experiencing. Some, like Gordon, would strip *uBuntu* of its religion, stating that 'It is a calling for a society to rise to a standard beyond those imposed on it'

[27] Thabo Mbeki's speech on the renaissance of Africa [Mbeki 1998] is now famous. Unfortunately, it holds little credence at a grassroots level where people are fighting for survival.

[28] Hillary Clinton authored the book '*It takes a village to raise a child'* [1996 Simon & Schuster. New York, USA. In it she quotes the African proverb that is the very essence of *Ubuntu.*

(2014:21). Those who advocate interpreting *uBuntu* as humanism ignore its underlying praxis, i.e. choosing to focus only on the positive aspects and denying the religious pillars that support it.

4. A Biblical Evaluation of *uBuntu*

Much has been written on the positive aspects of *uBuntu*, but there is very little theological reflection on the negative aspects that ensure the Swazi understanding of *uBuntu's* longevity: (1) the determination of status by means of birth right; (2) processional personhood achieved through works; (3) intense fear of the ancestors; (4) unquestioning acceptance of the patriarchal status quo; (5) blind acceptance of one's social status; and (6) only 'insiders' deserve *uBuntu*.

4.1. Status determined by birth

The fact that women, cripples, albinos and homosexuals are considered to be less than equal to the Swazi male is disconcerting and, to this author's mind, biblically not acceptable. (However, because of the size and intricacy of the debate, the subject will be left to a separate study.)

It is conceded that the Swazi culture is similar in nature to that in existence during the reign of King David, the Jewish culture of 900 BC. However, the writings of the scribes in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Kings should be seen more as a record of the history of the Jewish nation during the time that David was king, and not as underscoring any biblical truth. Such writings should, therefore, not be interpreted as justification for the continuation of a particular cultural trait. For they also record David's significant failings including murder and adultery which, while culturally normal for a king, are ungodly.

Patriarchalism in the bible does not make it biblical, only cultural. Paul gives us a better understanding of biblical ranking in Galatians 3:26–29 where race, status, and gender play no part: for all are equal in the sight of God.

4.2. Processional personhood

The procession from having the 'potential to be a human' as a foetus, through maturing into humanity, to a possible future as an Ancestor is somewhat demanding, and in some ways exclusive. According to the 24th meeting of the IMBISA Standing Committee, to become an Ancestor, one should meet the following standards:

> (to have) died a good death after having faithfully practised and transmitted to his descendants the laws left to him by his ancestors;—who contributed to the continuation of the line by leaving many descendants;—who was a peacemaker, a link, that fostered communion between the living and the dead, through sacrifices and prayers;—A person who is the first-born is a candidate 'par excellence' to become an ancestor because he is able to maintain the chain of the generation in a long genealogy. The right of the first-born is thus an inalienable right (1996).

Thus, 'the status of an ancestor is reserved for those who lived a morally good and an exemplary life within the community' (Allies 2007:50), but also have *sigaba* (inherited hierarchical) status. Effectively, becoming an ancestor is based on works. Pawson (Kindle Locations 2012:13309–13312) comments:

> Most religions of the world are about salvation by works. You must pray, you must fast, you must give alms and so on, and then, at the end of it all, you will get right with God. You save yourself by your own efforts. Do-it-yourself religion appeals to people because it leaves them with their pride, for they feel that they have achieved

> salvation. It is self-righteousness, and that is something that God hates. He would rather deal with sin than self-righteousness.

As Paul quoting from Psalm 14:1–3 comments, 'There is no one righteous, not even one' (Rom 3:10). The downside of this truth is that our works alone cannot save us from the wrath of a righteous God. More than anything else, a Christian's own understanding of his position in Christ will either cripple him or make him 'more than (a) conqueror' (Rom 8:37). CS Lewis spells out the Christian's standing:

> The Christian is in a different position from other people who are trying to be good. They hope, by being good, to please God if there is one; or—if they think there is not—at least they hope to deserve approval from good men. But the Christian thinks any good he does comes from the Christ-life inside him. He does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us; just as the roof of a greenhouse does not attract the sun because it is bright, but becomes bright because the sun shines on it (1958 Book ii:64).

One must therefore reject this aspect of the praxis of uBuntu as unbiblical.

4.3. Fear of the ancestors

As already stated, this subject is sufficiently large to warrant its own study. However, there are two fundamental issues which have an impact on this article.

Firstly, the role of the ancestors acting as intermediaries. As intermediaries, ancestors answer prayers and petitions directly. This is contrary to the New Testament. To Turaki, Jesus Christ is the one and only mediator. If ancestors become spirits, then Turaki argues that such

communications involve speaking to familiar spirits (effectively idolatry), as they take the place of Christ who is the only mediator between God and mankind (1999:254). From the following, it will be shown that believers are instructed to get their direction directly from the Spirit of Christ, who indwells them.

- Jesus engendered his disciples to wait in Jerusalem to receive the Holy Spirit who would empower them to be his witnesses throughout the known world (Acts 1:1–7) having already advised them that the Holy Spirit would lead them into all truth (John 14:16–25; 16:12);
- Jesus told his disciples that they were no longer servants but friends (John 15:15);
- Paul classed believers as co-heirs with Christ Jesus (Rom 8:17) already seated in heavenly places (Eph 2:6);

Secondly, ancestors bring fear to the hearts and minds of traditional Africans. (Gehman 2005:229). But fear of anything other than losing our position in Christ is unbiblical:

- John gives us this hope that perfect faith drives out all fear (1 John 4:18);
- Immanuel (God with us) calls us his friends (John 15:15);
- Paul calls himself, and us, co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17), and not slaves that we must live in fear; but,
- Children of the most-high God are privileged to call Father 'Daddy' (Rom 8:15).

This status is not achieved through any self-worth, but through the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

These two aspects alone of the ancestral cult lead this author to resist this aspect of the worldview.

4.4. Unquestioning acceptance of the patriarchal *status quo*

Jesus was no stranger to patriarchal rule. Life in Judea in the year AD 32 was not dissimilar from life currently in Swaziland. For example, a wife's legal status was similar to that of a child (Num 30:16); a father could sell his daughter as a servant (Exod 21:7; De Vaux 1961:27); the rape of a virgin was not considered an offence punishable by death. Only on discovery, would the man be required to marry the girl and pay her father fifty shekels (Deut 22:28–29; De Vaux 1961:26). (The purpose of the punishment was not the revenge of the rape, but to recompense the loss that the father had experienced, as he would not be able to extract a bride-price for the girl.) Suspected adultery by a woman was subjected to a holy curse to establish whether she was guilty of unfaithfulness. There was no corresponding treatment for suspected unfaithfulness by men (Num 5:11–31).

Notwithstanding Jesus' opposition to the pharisaical leaders of the day, he nevertheless submitted to the Roman authorities. Like most Swazis, the Jews hated paying taxes. Therefore, the Pharisees laid plans to trap Jesus by asking a question that put him in an awkward position, and which would question his loyalty as a Jew in a society dominated by Romans. Yet Jesus answered in a way that submitted to God as well as Caesar: 'So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's' (Matt 22:21; Mark 12:17). Paul, also no stranger to patriarchy, instructed the believers to subject themselves to the governing authorities (Rom 13:1–6).Thus, believers are exhorted to obey those in authority over them. Yet, there are occasions when this general exhortation does not apply. The Bible gives a number of examples where men had to choose to obey God rather than men. For brevity, we

will consider only three: 1 Kings 18:16–18; Daniel 3:4–29 and Daniel 6:1–26. The first example pertains to Elijah's confrontation with King Ahab and the prophets of Baal. To fully understand the confrontation in 1 Kings 18, one must read 1 Kings 16:29–34. Ahab set up an altar to Baal and sacrificed two of his sons. This brought about God's warning in 1 Kings 17.1 that there would be no rain in the land until God released Elijah to allow it. During the three years, Ahab did not repent, which brought about the confrontation on Mount Carmel. This confrontation was yet a further opportunity for Ahab to atone for his sins—which he did not. The second example tells the story of Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego refusing to worship an idol; the third example relates how Daniel refused to bow down and worship the King. Within these verses, we see two areas where believers are called on to challenge those in authority over them. *Firstly*, in a prophetic situation, where God wishes one to declare his word of warning or judgement, and *secondly,* where obedience to God's law takes precedence over man's law. With the exception of a prophet declaring God's word, those who choose to disobey should do so in a submissive manner and bear the consequences of their actions.[29]

Thus, while obedience in most cases is necessary, it cannot and should not be blind. In all cases, the will of God and his law, supersedes the law of humans, making this aspect of the praxis questionable from a biblical perspective.

[29] A good example of both of these occurred when the 1981 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa declared that the policy of Apartheid was heretical and chose to declare to the Nationalist Government that that law on mixed marriages was against God's will (prophecy). The Assembly cautioned its marriage officers that while they might agree to perform the ceremony (disobedience), they would nevertheless have to bear the consequences of contravening the law of the land (submission). It also instructed its ministers to counsel the couple of the probable results of such an action: 'Although the church would recognise their marriage as valid before God, the state was unlikely to do so. Any children would in law be illegitimate, and the wife would have no proprietary rights)' (Horrell 1982:48).

4.5. Blind acceptance of one's social status

If one accepts one's position in Christ, then social strata (along with all their trappings) disappear. Together with Paul, we can adopt a position that declares to the world that as a Christian one is not racist, classist or sexist, 'for (we) are all one in Christ Jesus. If (we) belong to Christ, then (we) are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise' (Gal 3:26–29).

In an Empire where race, class and gender were largely institutionalised, Galatians 3 revolutionises one's understanding of social status. Each of the polar opposites [or couplets] in Galatians 3 (i.e. Jews/Greeks, slaves/free, males/females) are designed to convey the idea of totality or universality. Whether one reads Galatians 3 from a typical egalitarian viewpoint or the hierarchical structure proposed by 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.

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' (Lincoln 1981:192; Horton 2002:126). Dunn 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' (1998:496). This time of tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet' expressively explains the duality of the situation faced by believers today.

It is both logical and reasonable to posit that relationships between two individuals in an 'already-not yet' eschatological biblical understanding are not subject to race/class or gender status. While this may be true, we also need 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-not yet' understanding for a greater good. It must be stressed that this does not imply a laying down of human rights, but only the meeting of Christian obligations. Consider the advice that Paul gives to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthans 7:17–22, where he calls on believers to accept their position, no matter how low, for they are all called as slaves to Christ.

Being a disciple of Christ meant that all other issues were insignificant. Yet, in his letter to Philemon, Paul recommends that Philemon release Onesimus from being a slave (Phlm 1:8–16). To Paul, relationships between believers nullified hierarchical positions, resulting in a worldview where those in authority do not have the 'right' to order their subjects to do anything; in turn, the subjects 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). As each person submits to the other (Eph 5:21), each of them is empowered (Curle 2012:197–201). This is real *uBuntu*. Social status whether in a racial, class or gender connotation can have no place in a believer's life for believers have 'been bought with a price' (1 Cor 7:23).

Therefore, social status as a determining factor of who should be loved and accepted, should be omitted from any valid biblical understanding of uBuntu.

4.6. Only 'insiders' deserve *uBuntu*

The praxis of *uBuntu* does require one to live in community where the focus is not on self but on the community. As Tutu puts it (1999:31):

> Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, '*Yu, unobuntu*'; 'Hey, so-and-so has ubuntu'. Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, 'My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.' We belong in a bundle of life. We say, 'A person is a person through other persons.' It is not, 'I think therefore I am.' It says rather: 'I am human because I belong. I participate, I share.' A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.

Unfortunately, too often community stops at the boundary of the clan, the Swazi Kingdom, or at best, the Nguni people (Coertze 2001:114). Not only do these limits exist racially, but they are abruptly and often violently raised up against non-heterosexual relationships. In the hierarchy of Swazi kinships, homosexuals 'have to look upwards to see the bottom of the pot' (Langa 2011). Across the border, in South Africa, no woman is safe from violence, and corrective rape of lesbians is a serious issue[30] (Martin, Kelly, Turquet, and Ross 2009:5). To explain the different standards applied to 'insiders', Mbennah reduces the standard of love required by *Ubuntu* to a philosophy that is 'natural and

[30] There are an estimated 500,000 rapes, thousands of murders and countless beatings (Africa Check 2014) carried out every year.

man-centred, and to that extent, is not the same as Biblical love' (1988:12). *Ubuntu* only requires one to be 'treated, respected, appreciated or helped to the extent that that person lives within the ubuntu expectations of the community' (Ibid). In Matthew 5:43–47 Christ commented that even pagans achieve that level of love, and argued that it was not the degree demanded by the Father. When an expert on the law questioned Jesus on the second great commandment, Christ answered with 'The parable of the Good Samaritan' (Luke 10:25–37). In it, he exposed the deep racism that Jewish people held towards Samaritans. Eamonn Bredin gives us the following insights:

> The historical setting is a Jewish audience. There are the two temple functionaries embodying a whole social and religious order. There are the Samaritans hated, loathed and despised by all. Jews despised their next-door neighbors as wretched, half-breed outcasts who had sold out on both their religion and their culture. To them the Samaritans were the scum of the earth. Orthodox Jews would have no dealing with Samaritans (John 4:9), they would cross and recross the Jordan rather than enter that province; some Rabbis believed that to accept any help from them would delay the redemption of Israel (1990:36).

Yet Jesus speaks to his Jewish audience and asks them *firstly*, to identify with the man who was beaten and robbed; *secondly* to feel disgust towards the priests of the day and *thirdly*, to accept help from a man they despised. Hereby, Jesus declared the level of love that God requires from humans. In so doing, Jesus widened the scope of the commandment to be all inclusive, rather than restricting it to kinfolks. This author agrees with Rudman's summation that a neighbour is inclusive regardless whether she or he is a woman or a man, a Christian or a Muslim, of Afro-Caribbean or Anglo-Saxon origin, a member of this or that class. There can be no limits placed on the boundaries of neighbourhood (1997:268).

Therefore the 'insider' aspect of the praxis must also be biblically rejected as too narrow.

5. Should the Praxis of *uBuntu* as Practised in Rural Swaziland be Recognised as a Philosophy to be Valued by a Wider Audience?

Since none of the six negative aspects hold up to biblical scrutiny, they cannot and should not be considered if the praxis is to be transferred into any philosophy. Yet Johan Cilliers (2008:1) claims the following:

> The concept of Ubuntu has become well known all over the world as being typical of African and specifically South African culture... It has been described as a way of life, a universal truth, an expression of human dignity, an underpinning of the concept of an open society, African Humanism, trust, helpfulness, respect, sharing, caring, community, unselfishness, etc. In short it means: humanity, or humanness. It stems from the belief that one is a human being through others.

Positive words that were delivered at the eighth international conference of Societas Homiletica, held in Copenhagen, Denmark between 19 and 25 July 2008. However, within the same paper, Cilliers went on to argue that:

> South Africa is presently going through such a movement from Ubu-ntu into 'Into[31]', in which people often treat one another not as human beings, but as things… This phenomenon of treating fellow

[31] Interestingly, one of the insults used to degrade a person would be to say to them, '*Lentfo le*', meaning 'This thing' What the person receiving the insult (and those in earshot) would immediately understand would be that he is not considered a person

> human beings as 'Into' is of course nothing new: under apartheid different forms of dehumanizing-into-Into were practised and indeed officially legitimized. But certain phenomena in present-day South Africa could also be viewed from this perspective: the alarming crime statistics, with some accounts of unspeakable brutality, and an average of 25,000 people being murdered per annum; the stigmatization flowing from HIV and AIDS; the reality of poverty, in which poor, homeless people are often still treated as less than human. It seems as if Ubuntu is being shattered and fragmented by, and into, 'Into' (2008:7–8).

The single greatest problem is the erosion of one of its essential pillars, its checks and balances. While skewed by the negative issues addressed above, the *uBuntu* practised within rural Swaziland does have a system of oversight and support that ensures its longevity. This ordered system is not available on the mines, the farms nor in the megacities of South Africa. In the place of legitimate authority and peer-pressured structures, warlords are rising up and taking authority over the society in which they live (Curle 2009:128).

Therefore, it is difficult to believe that the system currently prevailing in its rural environs could endure the rigours of cosmopolitan life, not only in the hostels and squatter camps, where survival out of limited resources is the goal, but also in the wealthier suburbs, where the current inculcation of Southern Africans by the Western sex-and-shopping consumerist society takes centre stage.

(*uMuntu)*, but a thing'. As such he should not deserve the treatment afforded to and reserved for '*uMuntu*' (Langa 2015).

6. Moving from *uBuntu* to *Ubuntu*

6.1. The metamorphosis of *uBuntu*

How then does one move from the rural praxis of *uBuntu* where the cultural perspectives of patriarchalism, the ancestral cult and kith and kin dominate to a wider philosophy where people 'live, act and behave in the way that fosters harmony in the society and the universe around them' (Ntibagirirwa 2009:306, i). Michael Battle posits that 'African epistemology begins with community and moves to individuality, whereas Western epistemology moves from individuality to community' (2009:135). Because of the influence that each has on the other, in Southern Africa the two worldviews are moving towards each other. Even though the philosophy is metamorphosing, it appears to be doing so in different directions. There are those in the cities who do not understand the philosophy at all, having adopted the Western independent, consumeristic way of life. Others are melding Western culture with *uBuntu*. Many of those who write on *Ubuntuism* focus on its benefits and nation-building qualities (Nolte-Schamm 2006:380; Rosa 2005: ¶19). Others, like Masango, conclude their writings with a call for a return to its *uBuntu* value systems (2006:943). Praeg identifies *Ubuntu* with 'power' or, more specifically, 'the taking back of power', as if restoring the worldview would somehow be a panacea to all the evil that mankind do to their fellow man. Unfortunately, the cosmopolitan and sinful nature of this world leaves scant room for 'returning to neverland'.[32]

Some, like Tutu, would claim that the philosophy retains its positive qualities, and adopt a forgiving, transforming Christian discipline.

[32] Neverland, the fantasy world of Peter Pan, created by Scottish novelist and playwright JM Barrie.

Unfortunately they omit practical ways to overcome the problems that the philosophy is currently experiencing (Curle 2009:128).

6.2. Is God's original 'golden rule' for man inherent in Ubuntu?

The question that needs to be answered is where does a biblical viewpoint of Christianity stand in the midst of this? Does one blindly accept that the Western view necessarily reflects a biblical reflection of the truth, or do both *uBuntu* and the Western view miss the mark? How is it then, that Christians, like Desmond Tutu, validate the *Ubuntu* philosophy? Battle (2009:139) answers the question in this way:

> Ubuntu can be understood as the very thing that God in Christ was up to—reconciling a wayward creation to itself and its Creator. As a people of faith, how do we become the loving and reconciling gaze of God toward a disoriented world? The key to a Christian practice of Ubuntu is embodied in the liturgies of confession and forgiveness, both individual and corporate.

But what does this reconciliation between creation and Creator through Christ achieve for humankind? Until the advent of Christ Jesus, people were operating 'under the conviction that if they could just get *better*—more moral, more disciplined, more spiritual, more kind, more holy and righteous or whatever religious jargon they had picked up along the way—then they would be *in or accepted* or embraced or validated or affirmed by God' (Webb 2013:134–135), or the ancestors or each other. Unfortunately, as Webb points out, this is still a current belief throughout the world. But God does not 'operate on a point or merit system, (for) that is not the Gospel' (Ibid).

Before the coming of the Methodist missionaries who first brought the gospel to Swaziland in 1844 (Reformiert 2002:¶2), neither Christianity

nor the Bible had been heard of. How then did this typically Christian philosophy come to be practised by this primordial people group?

In his Romans theological masterpiece, Paul made this declaration in Romans 2:14–15):

> Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.

Jesus had already spelt out that the entire law and the prophets hang on the commandments to love God with your entire being and your neighbour as yourself (Matt 22: 37–39; Mark 12:29–30; Luke 10:27). It follows that inherent in Paul's declaration is the concept that all humans have God's two laws of love imprinted in their hearts from the time that they are born. If this is true, we should be able to find the love for God and the love for our neighbour throughout the ancient world, where it would have developed independently of any other culture (Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance n.d:¶1).

CS Lewis (1958:19) made the comment: 'If anyone will take the trouble to compare the moral teaching of, say, the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Hindus, Chinese, Greeks and Romans, what will really strike him will be how very like they are to each other and to our own.'

The inference of this is that, alongside the nation of Israel, the primordial cultures in the continents of Asia, Europe, North America, South America, Australasia and Africa grew up with an inbuilt desire to love each person within their community to live out a spirit of

'community, mutual support, sharing, interconnectedness and respect for one another' (Keevy 2014:64), for want of a better description, a spirit of *uBuntu.*

7. Conclusion

In each of these continents are cultures that have adapted the so-called Golden Rule to their own cultural particularities, not least of which is patriarchalism and exclusivism. Whether the culture hails from the west, the east, or here in Africa, the principle of brotherly love has been moulded to fit the prevailing culture. Regarding *Ubuntu*, academics tend to agree that to move from the praxis of *uBuntu* to the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, the negative aspects need to be cut away (Gordon 2014:21; Keevy 2009:19–58; Prinsloo 2013:9, 82–87; Gade 2012:484–503). Praeg refers to it as 'circumcision' (Praeg 2014b:114).

Another word that has relevance to students of the Bible is 'pruning'. In Romans (11:11–22), Paul compares wild olive trees to their cultivated counterparts. The wild olives represent the Gentiles, while the cultivated trees are symbolic of the Jewish nation. At first glance, it would appear that Paul would have us believe that the trees have little in common; one is wild, and the other cultivated. But within the allegory, there is a similarity; they both have similar fruits. To be an olive tree, the tree must produce olives. The difference between the fruit of the wild and the cultivated tree is determined by taste, amount of flesh surrounding the pit and the amount of oil that is produced. The process of cultivation minimises the deficits found in the wild olive. The Bible tells us little about the cultivation of olive trees, except to say that some branches are broken off to make way for new life to be grafted in. Jules Janick, professor in the science of horticulture, informs us that 'Moderate pruning is performed to shape (olive) trees and to remove unfruitful wood' (2005:278). In John 15, we find a similar

process of pruning, where Jesus enlightens us about the cultivation of vines:

> I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Jesus could have used a different allegory that would have had much meaning: 'I am the true olive, The Root of Jesse, you are the olive branches … you will bear much fruit.' Paul speaks of another fruit in Chapter 5 of his epistle to the Galatians, the fruit of the Spirit. Surely, this is the true spirit of *Ubuntu*. This is *Ubuntu* that is neither coerced by patriarchal pressure, nor indoctrinated by circumstance. Rather, it flows through the Spirit of God who indwells us (John 7:37–39; 1 Cor 3:16; Rom 5:5; Eph 3:20; Gal 4:6; Titus 3:5) causing us to do good works. It is not from striving to do good deeds in our own strength (and in so doing please God), for in God's eyes such works evidence only our own self-righteousness (Psa 14:1–3; 53:1–3; Ecc 7:20; Rom 3:9–20) and are seen as used menstrual rags that are fit only for burning (Isa 64:6).

Perhaps the best way to illustrate practically this true spirit of *uBuntu* is to refer to Acts 4:32–37 where the disciples shared everything that they had, not only the produce, but also their productive assets. A more current example can be found in what happens on a daily basis in Shiselweni province, Swaziland. More than one thousand Christian men and women who belong to Shiselweni Home Based Care (SHBC) from

villages within this poorest region of Swaziland volunteer to go out from their homes, without any hope of payment, to become the hands and feet of Jesus as they care for over 4,500 neighbours who are suffering from HIV/AIDS (SHBC 2015).

There are many definitions of *Ubuntu*. All of them point to the humanity required from the individual and the recognition of the other person's being. Few refer to the voluntary nature of that humanity and recognition, nor do they expand the horizons to include not only one's produce, but one's productive assets; even one's life. For *uBuntu* to be *Ubuntu*, the freewill offering of that love for one's fellow man or woman is paramount—'This is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters' (1 John 3:16).

It is this author's belief that it is only within the widespread kinship system of the church that the spirit of *Ubuntu* has any hope of survival. Even so, the Church is not perfect and is in need of pruning in those areas where it does not hold up Immanuel (God with us) as its criterion. Fortunately for the church and the world at large, the Gardener is at work, cutting off the branches that do not bear fruit.

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The Hermeneutical Dilemma behind 'Anti-Judaism' in the New Testament: An Evangelical Perspective

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Abstract

In this contribution the hermeneutical problem of 'anti-Judaism' in relation to the New Testament is approached from an Evangelical perspective. The term 'anti-Judaism' is especially problematic in the light of the hermeneutical distance between the Ἰουδαῖοι of the New Testament and contemporary Judaism. The main questions asked are whether the New Testament can be free of 'anti-Judaism' and whether there is room in prevalent New Testament scholarship for an Evangelical approach to this topic. The concepts of both fulfilment and replacement, which play an integral part in attempting to answer these questions, are identified as integral to the New Testament. The latter conclusion is reached from an overview of various New Testament texts with a focus on the Pauline literature. The conclusion is reached that there are instances in the New Testament where a stand is taken against Ἰουδαῖοι, yet not as distinct from other people, but as part of an element of judgment against all sinful people, which is inherent in the gospel.

[1] The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

1. Introduction

Although the concept 'anti-Judaism' is usually understood as opposition against Jews' religious convictions or customs, while the concept 'antisemitism' would refer to prejudice against race or ethnicity (Langmuir 1971; Murrell 1994; Anti-Semitism 2007),[2] there exists a trend to relate these two concepts with each other (e.g. Gager 1983; Nichols 1993:314; Hoet 2001:187–188; Byford 2006). The rationale behind this trend is that 'anti-Judaism' is seen as a prerequisite for antisemitism (Langmuir 1971; cf. Gager 1983) on the basis that historically, a negative view of Judaism has often led to antisemitism. The holocaust, which is understood as resulting from antisemitism, still has a profound influence on the way Jews and Judaism is perceived today. It influences how the way of life and the customs of the Ἰουδαῖοι ('Jews' or 'Judaeans', see below) of the New Testament are understood, as well as how their relationship with those who accepted Jesus as Messiah is perceived.

In the past few decades, New Testament scholarship has progressively been characterised by the avoidance of 'anti-Judaism', in order to nip in the bud any rise to antisemitism. The avoidance of 'anti-Judaism' is especially characteristic of the so-called *New Perspective on Paul*, which on the deepest level has to do with a positive valuation of the faith and customs of the Ἰουδαῖοι at the time of the Second Temple. The latter approach is a reaction against the traditional approach to see the faith and practices of the Ἰουδαῖοι at the time of the Second Temple as legalistic and meritorious, which especially was the approach of Martin Luther. Hoet (2001:187–188) contended that any statement from the

[2] This distinction is evident in Catholic education before the Second Vatican Council wherein 'anti-Judaism' was seen as an integral part of the defence of the Christian faith (Carrol 2002:40).

New Testament that could give rise to antisemitism should be avoided out of respect for contemporary Jews. To interpret the New Testament in a way that impinges on the interest of contemporary national Israel, became for Kim (2010:329) a 'theological shibboleth' that determines whether one is antisemitic. According to Kim, the fear of being mistaken for an antisemite could hinder one from interpreting someone like Paul's theology objectively.

The main objectives of this article are to determine whether an Evangelical approach to the New Testament can be free of 'anti-Judaism', and if there is room within prevalent New Testament scholarship for an Evangelical approach to 'anti-Judaism'. But before these questions can be answered, the hermeneutical difficulties around the concept Ἰουδαῖοι in the New Testament will be identified: who exactly are they, and can one equate today's Jews with them? Subsequently, contemporary approaches to the question whether the Christian faith is inherently 'anti-Jewish' will be assessed, as well as the question whether 'anti-Judaism' is engrained within the New Testament. Lastly, an Evangelical perspective of the hermeneutical questions around 'anti-Judaism' in the New Testament will be presented by way of an overview of prominent New Testament texts with a focus on the Pauline literature, followed by an attempt to attend to the main objectives mentioned above.

Although an Evangelical approach does not constitute a homogeneous approach, and thus includes a wide spectrum of approaches, Fitch (2011:13) pointed out at least three central points of focus in this approach: (1) a high view of the authority of the Bible, (2) a strong belief in a personal conversion experience and (3) an activist engagement with culture in ways peculiar to evangelicalism itself (cf. Olson 2004:9; Pierard and Elwell 2001:406). It is especially a high view

of the unity and authority of scripture (1) that applies to this article. Naturally, the evangelical approach taken in this article is not intended to be representative of all evangelical approaches, but is presented as *an* evangelical approach to the questions at hand.

2. The Hermeneutical Distance between the Ἰουδαῖοι in the New Testament and Contemporary Jews

One of the areas where strong sentiments about 'anti-Judaism' are in evidence is the way in which the term Ἰουδαῖοι in the New Testament is perceived and translated. Judaism only started to develop into a full scale religious system after the fall of the Second Temple in CE 70 (Neusner 1984:1–5; Mason 2007:502). For Mason (2007:481–488), a 'religion' is a Western category with no counterpart in ancient culture. He saw the Ἰουδαῖοι in the time of the Second Temple, therefore, as an *ethnos*[3] rather than a 'religion' and proposed that the term Ἰουδαῖος in the New Testament should be translated with 'Judaean' rather than 'Jew' (so Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992:32; BDAG, s.v. Ἰουδαῖος; Esler 2003; Elliott 2007) in order to account for this *hermeneutical distance* between today's Jews and the Ἰουδαῖοι of the New Testament. Underneath this translation lies the sentiment that incalculable harm has been caused by translating Ἰουδαῖος in the New Testament by 'Jew' and thereby fostered 'anti-Judaism' through Biblical texts (BDAG, s.v. Ἰουδαῖος). For Esler (2003:62–63), not to distinguish the Ἰουδαῖοι of the New Testament from contemporary Jews encourages the antisemitic notion of '"the eternal Jew" who, it is alleged, killed Christ and is still

[3] Mason (2007:484) defined an *ethnos* as having a distinctive nature or character expressed in unique ancestral traditions, which reflected a shared ancestry, charter stories, customs, norms, etc. This fundamental category or *ethnos* includes important elements of what we know today as a 'religion', but the political-ethnographic category of *ethnos* cannot be equated with 'religion'.

around, to be persecuted if possible'. Esler argued that the translation 'Judaean' does more justice to the territorial connotations inherent in the designation Ἰουδαῖος, which only started to disappear after about the third to even the fifth century CE (pp. 66–69).

Miller (2014:255–259) followed a more fluid approach and showed that a *concept* of what is known as a 'religion' was already present with many of the Ἰουδαῖοι in the time of the Second Temple. He argued that there exists an overlap in what ancient people perceived as akin to the Ἰουδαῖοι and that which is usually understood under the concept 'religion'. He therefore did not restrict the Ἰουδαῖοι of the Second Temple to an *ethnos*. Notwithstanding the reasons stated above for translating the designation Ἰουδαῖοι by 'Judaeans', he reasoned that such a translation evokes another kind of antisemitism, namely, depriving contemporary Jews of their biblical heritage and in so doing perceiving them to be in discontinuity with the Ἰουδαῖοι of the Bible. For Miller the translation 'Judaeans' could create the idea that the Bible is 'purified' of Jews (cf. Levine 2000:160–165). Miller prefers the translation 'Jews' for, in his view, it does more justice to the complexity of the term Ἰουδαῖοι in the New Testament, which carries both ethnic and religious connotations.

Any translation for the Ἰουδαῖοι of the New Testament is thus problematic for two main reasons: (1) there exists a hermeneutical distance between the Ἰουδαῖοι of the New Testament and today's Jews (acknowledged by Miller 2014), and (2), both the translations 'Jew' and 'Judaean' can be interpreted as 'anti-Jewish'. The inevitable question that flows from this is whether 'anti-Judaism' is inherent in Christianity or the New Testament. A problem that is embedded within this question, which relates to the same hermeneutical difficulty, is one's understanding of the term 'anti-Judaism'. If a form of opposition or

antagonism towards the Ἰουδαῖοι of the New Testament can be identified, could such a notion be equated with 'anti-Judaism'? It is because of this inherent hermeneutical difficulty that the concept 'anti-Judaism' stays enclosed in quotation marks throughout most of this article.

3. Is the Christian faith inherently 'anti-Judaist'?

Gager (1983:13) argued that the responsibility of Christianity towards antisemitism is 'not simply whether individual Christians had added fuel to modern European anti-Semitism, but whether Christianity itself was, in its essence and from its beginnings, the primary source of anti-Semitism in Western culture'. According to Ruether (1974) 'anti-Judaism' is engrained in the heart of the Christian message. Ruether (1974:228–229) analysed and reconstructed the basic dualisms that are inherent in the Christian message, which do not acknowledge Judaism and are deeply engraved in Christian language and doctrine. She considered 'anti-Judaism' as the tragic left hand of Christology (pp. 116, 246–251). In the introduction of Ruether's book, Baum (1974:12–13) argued that what has to be examined, is the sense in which eventually all dichotomies of salvation between spirit and flesh, light and darkness, truth and falsehood, grace and damnation, life and death, trust and self-righteousnees, were projected on the opposition between church and synagogue until the Jewish people became the embodiment of all that is unredeemed, perverse, stubborn, evil, and demonic in this world.

For Baum (1974:18), only extensive and probing critique of Christian teaching on Judaism would be sufficient to raise the consciousness that is required 'to redeem Christianity from its anti-Jewish virus and its absolutizing trend' (cf. Taylor 1995:193–196).

In the same line of interpretation, Farmer (1999:49) described 'anti-Judaism' as a specifically Christian attitude which is theologically driven and includes concepts of divine rejection and punishment of Jews, as well as Christian supersessionism and triumphalism. 'Supersessionism' or 'replacement theology' implies that Christianity *replaced* the religious tradition of the Old Testament people of God. The problem is that any form of replacement theology can be perceived as 'anti-Judaist', as it would not acknowledge contemporary Jews' continuity with Israel of the Old Testament, and thus deprive them of their Old Testament heritage (cf. Hakola 2005:239–240; Zoccali 2010:3; Johnson 2013:567–568). The question is whether 'anti-Judaism' can be completely avoided without forfeiting the heart of Christianity. A question that coheres with the latter is whether 'anti-Judaism' can be completely avoided in an evangelical approach to scripture.

4. Is 'anti-Judaism' Inherent in the New Testament?

There is difference of opinion on whether the New Testament is 'anti-Judaist' or not. Although many parts of the New Testament normally feature in this discussion,[4] the two verses where the question about inherent 'anti-Judaism' is probably most pressing, are Matthew 27:25 and John 8:44.

According to Matthew 27:25, 'all the people' who were present after Pilate washed his hands in innocence, answered: 'His blood on us and our children!' If that were to mean that the Jews are to be held

[4] Passages that are mentioned often are for example where Jesus attacked the Scribes and Pharisees and referred to them as 'hypocrites', 'blind leaders', 'whitewashed tombs', 'brood of vipers', and so on. (e.g. Matt 23:1–39 and similar utterances in the gospels).

responsible forever for Christ's death, it is perceived by many as 'anti-Judaist' and even as antisemitic. According to John 8:44, Jesus said to the Ἰουδαῖοι (see John 8:22, 31, 48, 52, and 57) that they had as their father the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning and the father of lies. The question about 'anti-Judaism' is especially pertinent with those who stress continuity of today's Jews with the Ἰουδαῖοι of the New Testament. In the Fourth Gospel, the authorities of the Ἰουδαῖοι are not mentioned in the passion narrative (except 18:3) and οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ('the Judaeans' or 'the Jews') are responsible for Jesus' death by implication (see Hoet 2001:191).[5]

5. Attempts to Avoid 'anti-Judaism'

There are several ways in which New Testament scholars handle the above kind of texts. One approach is to explain away 'anti-Judaism' in the New Testament (see Johnson 2013:546–547). Gager (1983:112–117) proposed that the texts in the New Testament that sound 'anti-Judaist' are not aimed at true Jews, but at gentile 'Judaizers'. Falk (1983:148–161) reasoned that Jesus was not antagonised by good Pharisees from the School of Hillel, but by evil Pharisees of the School of Shammai. Vermes (1983) and Crossan (1995) argued that no Ἰουδαῖοι were involved in Jesus' death, but only Romans. Those who think that the 'anti-Judaist' texts were later redactional additions also belong under this group (e.g. Charlesworth 2001:509). Then there are those who acknowledge 'anti-Judaism' in the New Testament, but who apply censorship by translations or lectionaries used in worship services (Johnson 2013:547). Ruether (1974:116, 246–251) who saw 'anti-

[5] cf. John 12:42–43 where it is described how some of the Pharisees believed in Jesus but did not want to confess it in fear of being banned from the synagogue, loving the glory of people more than the glory from God. cf. also Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 where the Ἰουδαῖοι are described as a 'synagogue of Satan'.

Judaism' as the left hand of Christology, insisted that one must discard Christology, implying that new ways must be found to formulate Jesus' messiahship. Eckhardt (1986) went so far as suggesting that the canon should be dissolved, and that the New Testament must lose its status as Holy Scripture.

Another approach is to acknowledge a form of 'anti-Judaism' in the New Testament, but to distinguish the kind of 'anti-Judaism' therein from contemporary 'anti-Judaism' by contextualising it. Under this approach falls that of Dunn (2001:59), who pointed out the anachronistic nature of the methodology which juxtaposes 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' in the New Testament with each other as if they were two monolithic religions at the time (cf. Mason 2007). For Von Wahlde (2001:426) the conflict between those who followed Christ and the Ἰουδαῖοι has to be understood against the background of a literary topos wherein 'a stereotyped pattern of argument where two alternative ways of life and their characteristics and consequences are described within the categories and worldview of apocalyptic dualism'. The latter implies that one has to understand the conflict within the gospels in the light of the literary conventions of the time. In a similar approach, the belittling language aimed at the Ἰουδαῖοι in the New Testament is understood as part of the ancient rhetoric of vilification (Johnson 2013:560–564) or otherness (Siker 2005:306–307). The idea behind these approaches is that it was standard practice in ancient times to rhetorically categorise opponents in this manner. Johnson (2013:564) understood this rhetoric as part of 'the polemic used against those regarded as deviant within the messianic movement'. Related to the latter is the approach that 'anti-Judaism' was part of an 'intra-Jewish' polemic and therefore not 'anti-Judaist' in the full sense (e.g. Hoet 2001:188; Van Henten 2001:116).

Another approach that falls in this group—although it lies at the other end of the spectrum—is the approach explaining ‘anti-Judaism’ in the New Testament on the basis of the conflict between the Ἰουδαῖοι and the believers in Chirst. De Boer (2001:276) argued that the Ἰουδαῖοι in the Gospel of John were responsible for the exclusion of the Christ-believers, for the discipleship of Jesus could not be reconciled with the discipleship of Moses, specifically when the latter rejected Jesus as Messiah. A similar approach is followed by those who attribute the depiction of the Ἰουδαῖοι in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 as ‘a synagogue of Satan’ to the distance and growing conflict between those who accepted Christ as the Messiah and those (Ἰουδαῖοι) who rejected Jesus as the Messiah. That the Ἰουδαῖοι persecuted the believers in Christ forms part of this interpretation (cf. Roloff 1993:61, 78; Mayo 2006:68; Patterson 2012:139–140).

Bieringer, Pollefeyt and Vandekasteele-Vanneuville (2001:27–29) rightly argued that the Christology in the Gospel of John poses an unparalleled challenge to the unity of the Ἰουδαῖοι, which can even be derived from the earlier Pauline tradition (see below). A commonsense reading of the Johannine material leads one to the conclusion that a ‘Jewish-Christian’ conflict was at play (cf. Culpepper 2001:70–71), even if it was in an early form. According to Tomson (1986:282) the designation οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι is an expression used by those who were not Ἰουδαῖοι (outsiders). The conflict could thus not have been ‘inner-Jewish’. The Johannine writings can be seen as ‘a historical record of the beginning of Christianity and Judaism as separate and opposed religions’ (Bieringer *et al.* 2001:29). The conflict can be understood as ‘a growing social and theological tension and distantiation between the disciples of Jesus and those Jews who did not accept him’ (p. 29). The Gospel of John ‘leaves no doubt that the major issue of the conflict is expressed by John in christological terms’ (p. 29). Bieringer *et al.* (2001:31–33) acknowledge with Culpepper (2001:77–78) that the

Gospel of John's Christology implies a form of supersession. Even the idea of fulfilment, which occurs more broadly in the New Testament, is difficult to disconnect from the idea of replacement.

The question is, if one could acknowledge a form of 'anti-Judaism' in the New Testament, which includes the idea of replacement, how should it be understood? Brown (1979:41–42) described the problem as follows: 'It would be incredible for a twentieth-century Christian to share or justify the Johannine contention that "the Jews" are the children of the devil, an affirmation which is placed on the lips of Jesus'. He added: 'I cannot see how it helps contemporary Jewish-Christian relationships to disguise the fact that such an attitude once existed'. Bieringer *et al.* (2001:38–39) came to three conclusions about the Gospel of John: (1) It contains 'anti-Judaist' elements; (2) 'Anti-Judaism' is part of the 'intrinsically oppressive' dimensions in Scripture and not part of divinely inspired revelation, and thus 'totally unacceptable from a Christian point of view'; (3) Elements of 'anti-Judaism' cannot be removed from the canon by ascribing them to later redactions, for it would imply 'a canon within the canon'. Because they thought that the idea of replacement should be avoided at all costs, Bieringer *et al.* insisted that one must seek ways of developing a Christology and Christian theology that does not imply replacement or exclusion, and is thus free of supersessionism. They proposed an alternative hermeneutical approach to scripture where the theology of revelation is adjusted in a major way (cf. Henrix 2001; Hakola 2005:241; Hanson 2008). They understood 'anti-Judaism' in the New Testament as part of human sinfulness, which would include the writers of the New Testament. God's revelation thus has to be redefined in such a way that it constitutes a dialectical relationship between God and people which is not solely dependent on the written text. In their approach scripture is understood as a witness of people's interpretation

of God's self-communication to them in which the writers of the New Testament are simultaneously virtuous and sinful. Scripture thus does not need to be inerrant, for God 'can write straight on crooked lines' (p. 40). Even texts that imply that no one will be saved except through Christ as Mediator of salvation (e.g. John 3:36; cf. 14:6) have to be seen as part of the authors' sinfulness. For Bieringer *et al*. the notion of all-inclusive love that includes the love of enemies should transcend 'anti-Judaism' in the Gospel of John (Bieringer *et al*. 2001:13, 15, 29, 32–44).

6. An Evangelical Perspective on 'anti-Judaism'

From an Evangelical perspective the question could, however, be asked whether the kind of approach of Bieringer *et al*. (2001:32–44) and others as mentioned above can be reconciled with an approach that acknowledges the sufficiency, reliability and authority of scripture. This is not to contend that everything in the New Testament can be neatly organised into a rigid scheme, but an evangelical approach would at least imply that the New Testament does not contain fundamental incompatibilities or elements carrying differing levels of authority. The question that flows from the acknowledgement of the authority of scripture is whether 'anti-Judaism' forms part of an evangelical approach to the New Testament in any way.

The most basic criticism that can be levelled at the conclusions of Bieringer *et al*. (2001:39) is that their second and third conclusions seem to be at odds with each other. Why should 'anti-Judaist' elements in scripture not be authoritative (2 above) while redaction-criticism would be wrong for it would imply 'a canon within the canon' (3 above)? If one considers parts of the Bible as not being authoritative (2 above), does one not have a canon within the canon again (3 above)? Their approach is thus inherently inconsistent. A further question is

whether one principle from the Gospel of John (an inclusive love that includes love for enemies) can be absolutised at the expense of other elements in the same gospel that includes God's judgment of unbelief (John 3:18; 9:39; 12:31, 48; 6:8, 11). Does the gospel in the New Testament contain only an element of love, or does it also contain an element of judgment, and if so, what is the nature of this judgment and how can it be reconciled with the principle of love? This is the question to which I now turn.

6.1. 'Anti-Judaism' in the context of God's judgment on all people and human depravity

Although according to critics, Matthew 27:25 and John 8:44 contain more explicit forms of 'anti-Judaism', the tension between believers in Christ and the Ἰουδαῖοι lies much deeper in the New Testament. The conflict between Christ-believers and the Ἰουδαῖοι can already be pointed out in the Pauline corpus, which forms part of the earlier writings of the New Testament (45–64 CE, Johnson 2013:545, 548–549; cf. Carson and Moo 2005).[6] Paul referred to his former life in the Ἰουδαϊσμός in Galatians 1:13 (cf. Phil 3:6; 1 Cor 15:8; 1 Tim 1:12–13), which can be rendered as the 'way of belief and life' of the Ἰουδαῖοι (BDAG, s.v. Ἰουδαϊσμός). In 2 Corinthians 11:23–27 he mentioned his stoning and the lashes that he received from the Ἰουδαῖοι. Paul also referred to his continuous persecution because of his provision of access to salvation without circumcision (Gal 5:11), and to those who avoided persecution for the cross of Christ by advocating circumcision (Gal 6:12). Even Paul's reference to the cross of Christ as a 'stumbling block' for the Ἰουδαῖοι (1 Cor 1:23; cf. 1 Cor 1:18; Gal 5:11; Rom 9:32–33) has to be understood in the light of the conflict between Christ-believers and the Ἰουδαῖοι. Sanders (1999:276) argued that those

[6] Paul's death is normally calculated at around 65 CE (Carson and Moo 2005:370).

who are sensitive to the question whether Paul broke with 'Judaism', have to see the 'anti-Judaism possibilities' in Paul's letters.

The strongest and arguably the most controversial indicator in Paul of conflict between the Christ-believers and the Ἰουδαῖοι is 1 Thessalonians 2:13–16, which reports the things that the congregation suffered from the Ἰουδαῖοι who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, displeased God and were against all people. Apart from these, Paul referred to the constant 'filling up [of] the measure of their sins' and God's wrath that 'has come upon them to the end'. That someone such as Best (1972:122) considered Paul's position as 'antisemitic' and therefore as unacceptable (cf. Simpson 1990) was probably the same underlying motivation for Pearson (1971) and Schmidt (1983) to consider this passage as a later interpolation. The latter allegation cannot, however, be supported from the available manuscript evidence (Smith 2000:703). To avoid this passage disrupting the narrative flow, it has to be understood as a kind of digression in the rhetorical build-up to establish a transition to the subsequent matter which Paul wanted to address (Wanamaker 1990:109). In context it seems as if the reference to the Ἰουδαῖοι (v. 14) points to the Ἰουδαῖοι in general rather than to specific Ἰουδαῖοι, although both are possible grammatically. Apart from Matthew 27:25, the idea that the Ἰουδαῖοι in general would crucify Christ (1 Thess 2:15), occurs elsewhere in the New Testament (Luke 24:20; John 5:18; 7:1; 8:59; 11:45–53; 18:14, 31; Acts 2:23, 36; 3:13–15; 4:10, 27; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39; 13:28). Related to the latter is the notion that God's people of the Old Testament killing their own prophets (1 Kgs 19:10, 14; 2 Chr 36:15; Neh 9:26; Jer 2:30) was transferred to the New Testament (Matt 5:12; 23:31–35, 37; Luke 11:48–51; 13:33–34; Acts 7:5), including Paul himself (Rom 11:3; 1 Thess 2:15). Paul thus adopted the Old Testament pattern of the rejection of God's own agents (Wanamaker 1990:115). That the Ἰουδαῖοι 'displeased God' (v. 15) is likely to be

connected to the fact that they did not accept Jesus as the Messiah or as the Mediator of salvation, and that, by the persecution of Christ-believers by the Ἰουδαῖοι resulted in preventing the gospel from spreading, they went against God's will (Wanamaker 1990:115, 118; Martin 1995:92; cf. Bruce 1982:47; Green 2002:145). That the Ἰουδαῖοι would 'oppose everyone' (v. 15) probably reflects the general 'anti-Judaism' of the Greco-Roman world where the Ἰουδαῖοι opposed others on the basis of their own exclusivity (Wanamaker 1990:115; cf. Bruce 1982:47; Green 2002:145).[7]

Other than the latter kind of antagonism, Paul's antagonism towards the Ἰουδαῖοι was directed more at their hindrance of Paul's mission to the Gentiles, whom he wanted to lead to salvation. His opposition was thus aimed more at people (in general) who attacked God's purposes than at the Ἰουδαῖοι as nation or ethnic group. It was therefore theological critique rather than social or ethnic critique (cf. Wanamaker 1990:115–116; Murrell 1994:174; Martin 1995:90–93; Malherbe 2000:170; Green 2002:146). The lashes that Paul received from the Ἰουδαῖοι (2 Cor 11:24) probably have to be understood in the same light (Wanamaker 1990:116). The opposing of the gospel stood for Paul in a greater apocalyptical framework of God's will, including the hardening of Israel in history and God's judgment of them (cf. Wanamaker 1990:116–117; Malherbe 2000:170, 176; Lamp 2003; Rom 9:11–23). The 'filling up' of 'the measure of their sins' (1 Thess 2:16) recalls the same theme in the history of God's people (Gen 15:16; Dan 8:23; cf. 2 *Macc* 6:14) where God's divine purpose was opposed (Green

[7] Tacitus (*Histories* 5:5) wrote that the Ἰουδαῖοι were loyal to one another 'but toward every other people they feel only hate and enmity' (in Green 2002:145; cf. Philostratus in *Vita Apollonii* 5:33). Josephus (*Against Apion* 2:121) claimed that Apion falsely maintained that Ἰουδαῖοι swore to God to 'show goodwill to no foreigner, especially Greeks' (in Wanamaker 1990:115).

2002:147–148; cf. Bruce 1982:48; Wanamaker 1990:116). Although God's wrath had already broken through in the present for Paul (Rom 1:18), its completion lay in the future (Rom 2:5; cf. 2 Thess 1:7–10; cf. Murrell 1994:175–176; Malherbe 2000:171, 177; Green 2002:149; Fee 2009:102). In terms of the thrust of Paul's thought in 1 Thessalonians 2:13–16, there are noticeable similarities with Matthew 23:31–36,[8] which possibly point to a pre-synoptic tradition (Bruce 1982:43, 49; Murrell 1994:176–177; Malherbe 2000:174–175; cf. Wanamaker 1990:116). Apart from the possibility that Paul linked to such a tradition, Paul's use of language might show signs of a stock feature of ancient rhetoric called *vituperatio*, which functioned in the context of social conflict between individuals or groups with competing interests or claims (Wanamaker 1990:118). These differences in values in turn helped to demarcate and define a new group while simultaneously casting doubt on the legitimacy of the rival group (cf. Punt 2007). Here, the question whether Paul was 'anti-Judaist' in this passage is not completely resolved. A deeper look at the rationale behind his thinking in the light of his gospel is required.

For Paul, faith in Christ is the confession of his lordship and the decisive criterion for salvation. This applied to both the gentiles and the Ἰουδαῖοι—'there is no distinction' (Rom 10:9–12; cf. Murrell 1994:179). According to Paul the 'gospel is veiled' for those who are perishing (2 Cor 4:3), including the 'children of Israel' (2 Cor 3:13). Regarding the gospel, Paul considered Israel as 'enemies of God for

[8] In the Gospel of Matthew, the scribes and Pharisees are depicted as descendants of those who murdered the prophets (Matt 23:31; cf. 1 Thess 2:15a) and they are said to fill up the measure of their father's deeds (Matt 23:32; cf. 1 Thess 2:16b). This would lead them at the judgment to their condemnation in hell (Matt 23:33, and 35; cf. 1 Thess 2:16c). Both passages refer to opposition of the Ἰουδαῖοι to the gospel mission (Matt 23:34; cf. 1 Thess 2:15b). The latter is the most striking parallel (Wanamaker 1990:116).

your [believers in Christ] sake' (Rom 11:28). Paul compared those who insisted on circumcision with 'dogs', which is a play on the pagan custom of mutilating oneself by cutting (Phil 3:2, κατατομή; Reumann 2008:462; Hansen 2009:220; cf. Johnson 2013:553). According to Romans 3:1, Paul specifically asked whether the Ἰουδαῖος enjoyed any 'advantage' (BDAG, s.v. περισσός, § 1) or 'superiority' (Zerwick and Grosvenor 1993:464; Abbott-Smith [1923] 1929:357–358), and if circumcision had any value. He answered the question affirmatively, but described this 'advantage' or 'superiority' as the entrusting of God's oracles to them (v. 2). This probably points to the fact that they were carriers of the Old Testament. Paul possibly had all of God's promises in mind (Moo 1996:182; Schreiner 1998:175), including the gospel in Christ (Kruse 2012:159). Yet Paul argued that 'some' of the Ἰουδαῖοι (v. 3), which he probably used euphemistically (cf. Moo 1996:184; Kruse 2012:160), became unfaithful. Although their unfaithfulness could be connected to God's Word in general, it seems as if their rejection of Jesus as Messiah played an integral part in it (Murray 1960:94; Hall 1983:1986; Moo 1996:184–185; Schreiner 1998:177). In verse 3, Paul asked if their unfaithfulness would nullify God's faithfulness, and answered: 'By no means! Although everyone is a liar, let God be proved true, as it is written, "So that you may be justified in your words, and prevail in your judging."' (v. 4, NRSV).[9] The 'superiority' of the Ἰουδαῖοι (rather than 'advantage') thus does not have so much to do with their position before God or their salvation as such, but ironically has more to do with a *responsibility* before God as carriers of his oracles to obey them. For Paul God's faithfulness (v. 3) is confirmed in that 'everyone is a liar' (v. 4), which includes the

[9] Although some translations translate κρίνεσθαί as a passive ('when you are judged', ESV; cf. GNB; REB), it is more likely a medium in correspondence with Psalm 51:4 which Paul quoted (Moo 1996:188; Kruse 2012:160–162; cf. Matt 5:40; 1 Cor 6:6).

Ἰουδαῖοι, because 'some' (most) of them were not faithful (not believing in Christ as their Messiah). This notion would correspond to the notion in 2:8–9 where the Ἰουδαῖοι are to be considered as 'first' in terms of God's 'wrath and fury' and 'anguish and distress' for those who were 'self-seeking' and did not obey the truth. Paul later asked a similar question as the one in 3:1, namely, 'What then? Are we any better off?' (v. 9, NRSV). His answer was telling: 'Not at all! For we have charged both Jews and Greeks before, that they are all under sin' (v. 9). Not only was God's judgment extended to the Ἰουδαῖοι, but they were also counted as being under sin, together with everyone else.

The expression 'under sin' (Rom 7:14; Gal 3:22) in Paul is similar to the expression 'under the law' (Rom 2:12; 3:19; 6:14, 15; 7:23; 1 Cor 9:20, 21; Gal 3:23; 4:4, 5, 21; 5:18) and points to more than sinfulness or being bound to law, but to an old (eschatological) era and way of existence *before* or *outside* of Christ (cf. Ridderbos 1959:154, 160, 162; Moo 1996:454, 465; Wright 2002:552). This notion is evident in Galatians 3:22–23 where Paul declared that Scripture 'imprisoned all people' (George 1994:268) 'under sin' so that the promise (to Abraham) could be given to those who believe. Before faith 'came' (vv. 23, 25) all people ('we', v. 23, Fung 1988:167) were imprisoned 'under the law' until 'the faith' (τὴν … πίστιν, v. 23) was to be revealed. It is clear that the 'the faith' that was revealed points to a new eschatological era that broke through in the history of salvation in Christ where access to God's promise to Abraham is now obtained through faith in Christ (cf. Fung 1988:168; Fee 1994:385; Schreiner 2010; De Boer 2011:239). The designation 'before faith came' (v. 23) thus points to the old era before or outside of Christ. All people before or outside of Christ are therefore 'under sin' and 'under the law', including all Ἰουδαῖοι before or outside of Christ (cf. Lategan 1986:71; Hays 2000:269; Schreiner 2010). In a sense, Paul expanded the situation 'under the law' in that gentiles before or outside of Christ are included (Fung 1988:167;

George 1994:268). The same notion as in Galatians 3:22–23 occurs later in Romans 3 after Paul referred to the way of existence 'under sin' (v. 9), including Ἰουδαῖοι (see above). According to verses 25–26, God has set forth Christ as a 'propitiation through faith' to show his righteousness 'in the present time' so that Christ could be righteous and could justify those 'of the faith in[10] Jesus'. Thus the idea is that the era of faith represents a *new era that came with the first Christ advent* wherein all people are justified or saved through faith in Jesus Christ (cf. Moo 1996:240–241; Gal 4:4–5).

It can be derived from the above that Paul's negative rhetoric directed at the Ἰουδαῖοι also has to be understood in the light of his view that *all people* before the Christ advent or those who do not accept Christ as the Messiah in faith are 'under sin' or 'under the law'. They are therefore all subjected to an (eschatologically) old, incomplete way of existence that is only resolved in Christ. Paul's rhetoric against *unbelieving Gentiles* is thus *just as harsh if not harsher* than against unbelieving Ἰουδαῖοι (cf. Johnson 2013:564). According to Romans 1:18, God's wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. They did not glorify or thank God, but 'they became vain in their reasonings, and their undiscerning heart was darkened' (v. 21; cf. v. 22). They changed 'God's truth into a

[10] Although many recent interpreters see the phrase πίστεως Ἰησοῦ as a subjective genitive ('the faith/faithfulness of Jesus'; e.g. Hays 2000; Wright 2002), there are still many scholars who consider it more correct to take the phrase as an objective genitive ('faith in Jesus', e.g. Moo 1996; Schreiner 1998; Jewett 2007; Kruse 2012), especially because (1) native Greek speakers had no difficulty in understanding the phrase as an objective genitive; (2) the human response of faith in Jesus is prevalent in the New Testament (e.g. Matt 17:20; Mark 4:40; Luke 17:6); and (3) faith in Paul normally functions as an attribute of believers (Rom 1:5, 8, 12; 3:27, 28, 30, 31; 4:5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20; 5:1, 2, and so on) and never *unambiguously* points to Christ's faithfulness (Silva 2004:227–234).

lie' and 'worshipped and served the created thing more than the Creator' (v. 25). They 'received in their own persons the due penalty for their error' (v. 27, NRSV). God 'gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do the things that should not be done' (v. 28), and so on. These people are said to deserve death (v. 32; cf. 1 Cor 6:9–11). In 1 Thessalonians 4:5 the Gentiles are described as people who do not know God, and in 4:13 as people without hope. For Paul, Gentiles offer to idols (1 Cor 10:20; cf. 12:2). Where Paul wrote about the lashes that he received from the Ἰουδαῖοι (2 Cor 11:24) and the dangers from his own people (κινδύνοις ἐκ γένους, v. 26) he also reported the dangers from the Gentiles (κινδύνοις ἐξ ἐθνῶν, v. 26). In addition Paul utilised a standard rhetoric that considered Gentiles as sinners by default (Gal 2:15).

In the rest of the New Testament, the rhetoric against Gentiles is just as sharp if not sharper than against the Ἰουδαῖοι. Matthew 6:7 refers to the vain repetition of words among the gentiles when they pray. 1 Peter 4:3–4 describes the way of life of the Gentiles as 'living in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry' (NRSV), and of their 'excesses of dissipation' (NRSV). According to Acts 4:27, Herod and 'the peoples of Israel' were not solely responsible for Jesus' death, but included those who gathered against Jesus, Pilate and the Gentiles. Furthermore, the polemic tone against Christ-believers is sometimes just as harsh in the letters and Revelation (2 Cor 11:1–6, 14–21; Gal 3:1; 2 Tim 2:14–3:9; Heb 2:1; 4:1; 6:4–6; 10:26–29; 12:15; 2 Pet 2:1–22; Jude 5–19; Rev 2:13–29; cf. Johnson 2013:564). One of the clearest examples of the latter appears in Matthew 16:23 and Mark 8:33, where Jesus addressed Peter as Satan himself! The way in which Jesus addressed Peter was even sharper than how the Ἰουδαῖοι were addressed in John 8:44.

God's judgment on sin and unbelief is therefore just as integral a part of the gospel as God's love and grace. There is no distinction in respect of

God's *grace and love* for those who (1) accept Jesus as Messiah in faith (John 3:16; Rom 3:22, 29–30; 5:1–2; 10:9–12; Gal 3:28; Eph 2:18–22; Col 3:11), but neither is there any distinction in God's *judgment* on those who stay in sin and do not accept Christ in faith (John 3:18–19; 12:48; 16:9; Rom 2:16; 3:1–20; cf. Heb 10:29). The Ἰουδαῖοι can thus neither be singled out nor excluded from the latter two categories. From an evangelical perspective, a denial of either of these two categories would imply a denial of the heart of the gospel.

6.2. Fulfilment and replacement: continuity and discontinuity

The idea that all people who do not believe in Christ and belong to an eschatologically old way of existence before or outside of Christ, which can only be transformed by faith in Christ into a new way of existence, can be identified on an even deeper level in Paul's thought. This notion is related to the idea of fulfilment-and-replacement. Two of the areas where the idea of fulfilment-and-replacement occurs on a deeper level in Paul, is his thought on (1) the role and nature of the Messiah in God's kingdom, and (2) the 'Spirit' or 'spirit' that is juxtaposed to 'flesh'. These two areas will be examined more closely below.

6.2.1. The role and nature of the Messiah and the kingdom of God in Paul

Paul's eschatology stands in continuity with the prevalent eschatological expectations of his time. It can be assumed with reasonable certainty that a fairly widespread hope existed that a king would come by whom Israel's God would liberate his people (Wright 1992:308; Fitzmyer 2007).[11] The latter took on at least one explicitly

[11] Novenson (2009:364–365) showed that this was one of the things that messiah-language signified in what he called 'Roman-era Judaism'. The Roman writers of the

Davidic form in history in the person of *Simon bar Giora* in 66–70 CE (Horsley and Hanson 1985:120–122), which certainly was current at the turn of the millennium (Neufeld 1997; cf. Horsley 2001:244). This expectation was largely based on the scriptural promise that David's kingdom would be established forever (Wright 1992:310; Hays 2006:60; Fitzmyer 2007:7, 33–55; see 2 Sam 7:4–29; Psa 89:3–4; 132:11–12; cf. *4QFlor* 1:10–13).

Paul saw Jesus as the Messiah of the historical nation Israel (Rom 1:3–4, Moo 1996:46; Wright 2002:415–416; Rom 9:5, Moo 1996:565; Wright 1992:307–320; 2002:629). For Paul, Jesus' Davidic messiahship was confirmed by the title 'root of Jesse' (Rom 15:12; Moo 1996:880; Wright 2002:748; cf. Dunn 1988:850), which Novenson (2009:369) considered as 'full-fledged messianic exegesis [of Isaiah 11:10] by Paul' (cf. Hengel 1983:69). Johnson (2013:555) reasoned that the rejection of Jesus as Messiah by the synagogue was an important stimulus of the reinterpretation of the Torah, which at the time of the first Christian writings had already moved past this phase. The acceptance of Jesus' messiahship in Christ-believing communities thus converged with a gradual departure from messianic ideas by the Ἰουδαῖοι who did not accept Jesus' messiahship. With the latter it later developed into Rabbinic Judaism, where 'messiahship' became an ahistorical kind of system in which the 'anointed' became 'a species of priest' (Neusner 1984:18). Both Dahl (1992:382) and Charlesworth (1992:16, 30) left room for the idea that the understanding of a messiah as it developed in later Judaism was partly in *reaction* to the faith that Jesus is the Messiah (cf. Neusner 1984:12–13; De Boer 2001:276).

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time would also be conscious of the idea of a prophesied universal rule by a king of the Ἰουδαῖοι.

Although messianic expectation in the time of the Second Temple was not uniform (being both royal and priestly),[12] it is probably safe to say that the fundamental hope of the Ἰουδαῖοι was for liberation from oppression, for the restoration of the land, and for the proper rebuilding of the Temple. These beliefs were grounded on the one hand in believing that Israel's one God was the king of the world, and on the other hand, facing the fact of Israel's present desolation. A central way of expressing this hope was the division of time into two eras: the *present age* (עוֹלָם הַזֶּה) and the *age to come* (עוֹלָם הַבָּא). The present age was the time of Israel's misery while in the age to come Israel would be restored (Wright 1992:299; 2003:557; cf. Weinfeld 1997:218–219).[13]

In Wright's (1992:406–407; 2002:691; 2003:726; 2013:1061–1078) understanding of Paul, the exile has been undone in the Christ event, God's people's sins were forgiven and the covenant had been renewed in Christ and the Spirit. Israel's God had poured out his Spirit on all flesh and his Word was going out to the nations, calling into being a new unified people in Christ, including all nations. Understood in this way, the end *had come* and Israel's eschatological hope *had been fulfilled*, although redrawn and renewed. When Paul discussed the promises to Abraham (Gal 3; Rom 4), it is noteworthy that Paul neither mentioned anything about the inheritance of the land, which was part of the promise to Abraham and was part of Israel's expectation (e.g. Gen 12:7; 13:15–17; Isa 57:13; 60:21), nor of Israel's national reign over the nations (e.g. Isa 11:10–14; 42:1,6; 49:6; 54:3; Jer 4:2; 23:5) by way of a worldwide earthly dominion of the Messiah (e.g. Psa 72:8–11; Isa 9:7;

[12] This is especially evident from the Dead Sea Scrolls (Knibb 2010:420–421).

[13] The hope for Israel's restoration via a divine kingdom (e.g. Psa 68:8–9, 16–18; Hab 3:3; cf. Dan 7:13–14; *Ps Sol* 17:21–32) can be traced back to God's dealings with Israel as a king (Deut 33, esp. vv. 2, 5; Exod 15:18; Num 23:21–22; 24:7–8; Weinfeld 1997:218–219).

Jer 23:5). Rather, believers now inherit the whole cosmos (Rom 4:13), which points to all of humanity (BDAG, s.v. κόσμος, §6a) which is Abraham's seed (Wright 2002:496), or points to the restoration of the whole created order that transcends a territorial understanding of the promise of the land to Israel (cf. Dunn 1988:213). The Messiah's reign is now of a different *kind* (Wright 2013:911, 1065) in that he reigns over the dead and the living (Rom 14:9; cf. 15:12).[14] The promise to Abraham in terms of the one new family of believers in Christ from both the Ἰουδαῖοι and the Greek (Wright 2002:535; 15:8) is therefore fulfilled in a way different from prevalent messianic expectations in terms of (1) Abraham's seed, (2) the land and (3) the reign of God in and through his people. The transformation of the messianic expectation of the Ἰουδαῖοι is directly related to Jesus' bodily resurrection and transformation, which in turn vindicated His messiahship and transformed messianic belief (Wright 2003:562–563, 726–728).

According to Paul's understanding of messiahship, the expectation of the Ἰουδαῖοι is fulfilled in *another* way than they anticipated: God's rule and kingdom is not a physical, earthly rule in the sense that it involves political territory or a physical temple. Rather, God's rule is a spiritual (Witherington 1992:57; Fitzmyer 2007:183),[15] cosmic rule (Rom 14:9; 15:12; Phil 2:9–11), where God's people enjoy heavenly citizenship (Phil 3:20) and cosmic inheritance (cf. Rom 4:13). God's people are now the new temple (1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; cf. Eph 2:21) and the Messiah's body in this world (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:12; cf. Wright 2013:1073–1074). According to Romans

[14] Wright (1992:408) and Danker (1989:81) interpreted οὐδένα οἴδαμεν κατὰ σάρκα in 2 Corinthians 5:16 to mean that the Corinthians did not know Jesus as a national Messiah any longer.

[15] 'Spiritual' is here not necessarily meant as non-physical, but under the spiritual reign of Christ and the Spirit.

14:7; 1 Corinthians 4:20 and possibly 1 Thessalonians 2:12,[16] God's kingdom points to a present, *fulfilled* reality in believers' lives, although it contains a future component of *completion*. Believers already share in and live by the eschatological, spiritual reality and power of God's kingdom. A fulfilment of current expectations about the Messiah, God's kingdom and eschatology, which involved the *redefinition* of such expectations, could not only be understood as fulfilment, but indeed implies *replacement* (cf. Bieringer *et al.* 2001:31).

6.2.2. The 'S/spirit' against the 'flesh' as two eschatological eras in Paul

The idea of fulfilment-and-replacement can clearly be identified from Paul's understanding of πνεῦμα ('S/spirit') and σάρξ ('flesh'). For Paul the indwelling Spirit and Christ's resurrection can be understood as the first fruit (ἀπαρχή, Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 15:20, 23) of the general bodily resurrection at the *eschaton*. The Spirit is the 'first instalment' (BDAG, s.v. ἀρραβών) to believers in their hope that they will be 'clothed' with a heavenly body and will live with God eternally (2 Cor 5:4–8). Christ's resurrection is therefore 'an innately eschatological event—in fact, the key inaugurating event of eschatology. His resurrection is not an isolated event in the past, but, in having occurred in the past, belongs to the future consummation and from that future has entered history' (Gaffin 1998:575; cf. Beker 1982:75). According to Beker (1982:40) the powers of the new age are already at work, of which the church is a sign. The essential characteristic of Paul's 'apocalyptic eschatology' is the dualism of two world ages: it is only through the disclosure of the *coming* age that the present age can be perceived as '*this* (evil) age' (Gal 1:4; De Boer 2011:393). It entails God's own eschatological,

[16] Although the kingdom could point here to either a present or future reality, it probably carries the connotation of both (Weatherly 1996).

sovereign action of putting an end to this world-age and by replacing it with the new-world age (cf. Martyn 2000). Paul thus connected to the prevailing idea under the Ἰουδαῖοι who divided time in two eras: the ‘present age’ (עוֹלָם הַזֶּה) and the ‘age to come’ (עוֹלָם הַבָּא, see above). For Paul the ‘age to come’ was already inaugurated.

The dualism of two eras, *before* and *after* the Christ-event, can also be derived from Paul’s juxtaposition between σάρξ and πνεῦμα in their extended application. Although σάρξ and πνεῦμα and their cognates (e.g., σαρκικός, πνευματικός) have a wide semantic range in Paul (see esp. Bruce [1985] 2000:48–59), the deepest, most extended meaning of the contrast they represent, is arguably best expressed in passages such as Romans 7:5–6; 8:4, 5, 8–9 and Galatians 5:16–17, 25. In Romans 7:5–6, the existence ‘in the flesh’ where ‘sinful passions’ come ‘by the law’ is stated in the past (imperfect) tense (ἦμεν, v. 5), and is contrasted with the new (νυνὶ, v. 6) existence where the believers are ‘discharged from the law’, ‘died to’ it, and now serve God ‘in newness of S/spirit, and not in oldness of letter’. In Romans 8:4–9 the concepts σάρξ and πνεῦμα are mainly contrasted as two exclusive ways of existence: those in the ‘fleshly’ state mind the ‘things of the flesh’ (v. 5), ‘death’ (v. 6), and ‘enmity toward God’ (v. 7). They who are in the ‘flesh are not able to please God’ (v. 8). The state in the ‘flesh’ here points to the old existence before or outside of Christ, for verse 9 states: ‘you are not in flesh’. In contrast, those who walk after the ‘Spirit’ mind ‘spiritual things’ (v. 5), ‘life and peace’ (v. 6). Believers are now in the Spirit if the Spirit dwells within them, whereas those without the Spirit do not belong to him (v. 9). According to Galatians 5:16–17, believers who ‘walk by the Spirit… will not fulfil the lust of the flesh’, where ‘flesh’ and ‘Spirit’ are set in juxtaposition. Those who live according to the ‘flesh’ point to the old existence before or outside of Christ, for those who do the ‘works of the flesh’ (v. 19) will not inherit God’s kingdom

(v. 21). Those who belong to Christ, however, have 'crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts' (v. 24; see esp. Fee 1994:469–470, 553).

In the above passages, σάρξ and πνεῦμα carry a distinctive eschatological meaning within the framework of salvation history, which can be summarised as follows: (1) Σάρξ in its extended application denotes an era and way of existence in Adam before or outside of Christ, which is determined and is controlled by the Mosaic law, sin[17] and death (cf. Moo 1996:49–50). Σάρξ therefore stands for a *mode of identity* that is marked off by the external, visible, human marks of identity, including things such as law and circumcision. (2) Πνεῦμα in its extended application denotes an eschatological era and way of existence in Christ and the Spirit that is determined by and under the control of the indwelling Spirit, which is a result of the new creation (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). Πνεῦμα therefore stands for a *mode of identity* that is marked off by the inherent work of the Spirit, which represents adoption as children. The above understanding of σάρξ and πνεῦμα in their extended meaning, including the interpretation of Romans 7:5–6; 8:4–9 and Galatians 5:16–17, 25 largely corresponds to the approaches of Ridderbos (1959:145–147, 174–180), Fee (1994:469–470, 553), Moo (1996, esp. pp. 49–50) and Hansen (2009:221), which I argue and substantiate in more depth elsewhere (Du Toit 2013:242–68, 277–79).

The Christ-event can thus be understood as a new era and a new way of existence in the Spirit which *fulfils*, *completes* and *replaces* the previous era. In the new era in Christ, identity is not partly marked off by

[17] Although Paul used σάρξ often in connection with sin (e.g., Rom 7:14; 8:3; Gal 5:19), it is not as if σάρξ so much points to inherent sinfulness ('sinful nature'), but rather that σάρξ denotes a way of existence under the power of sin (see Fee 1994:30 with respect to Gal 5:16, 19).

external marks such as the law (including circumcision), which can be described as the sphere of 'flesh' (cf. Gal 3:2, 3, 5, De Boer 2011:336).[18] In the new era which was inaugurated by Christ, childhood is marked off by God's indwelling Spirit, which witnesses together with the human spirit (Rom 8:16, Du Toit 2013:277–279). The deepest contrast between σάρξ and πνεῦμα in Paul thus represents both a *salvation-historical contrast* and a *contrast of identity*. Paul's contrasts between the 'new life' (Rom 6:4), the 'new creation' (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15) and the 'new testament/covenant' (1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6) against the 'old person' (Rom 6:6), the 'old things' (2 Cor 5:17) and the 'old testament/covenant' (2 Cor 3:14), have to be understood in the same light. Although there is continuity in salvation history between the old and the new, one can hardly avoid the notion of a *replacement* of the old by the new (cf. Kruse [1987] 1998:97–99; Wright 1991:181, 192; Fee 1994:307–308; Thrall 1994:421, 423, 424; Moo 1996:365, 373; Harris 2005:424, 433, 434; Meyer 2009:73–94).

6.2.3. The idea of fulfilment-and-replacement in the rest of the New Testament

The idea of *fulfilment-and-replacement* can be found on a broader level in the New Testament than only with Paul. This idea is probably engrained much deeper in the New Testament than is generally acknowledged. This includes some of the oldest traditions of the New Testament (e.g. Mark and Heb).

The Gospel of Mark (late 50s to 60s CE, Köstenberger, Kellum and Quarles 2009:298; Carson and Moo 2005:182) is the only Gospel

[18] Although De Boer (2011:336–337) draws this connection between 'flesh' and the 'works of the law', he does not understand 'flesh' so much as a salvation-historical category, but rather as a superhuman power which stands in an apocalyptical struggle with the Spirit, leading to an evil impulse.

containing the saying 'the time is fulfilled' (1:15) in the mouth of John the Baptist. This saying is followed by the words: 'the kingdom of God draws near. Repent and believe in the gospel' (1:15; cf. Matt 4:17). The time that is 'fulfilled' is similar to the notion in Galatians 4:4–5 where the 'fullness of time' came where the adoption as children was received by God's Son (Edwards 2002:47). In the context of Mark, the time that is 'fulfilled' probably points to the dawn of salvation (Edwards 2002:47; Vickers 2004:15; cf. 5:23, 34; 8:35; 10:26, 52; 13:13, 20; 15:31). According to Brooks (1991:46) the 'kingdom of God' in Mark (1:15; 4:11, 26, 30; 9:1, 47; 10:14, 15, 23, 24, 25; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43), with the possible exception of 14:25 and 15:43, points to a present, spiritual dimension of the kingdom on the basis of God's promises.[19] The idea of scripture that is fulfilled in respect of Jesus' ministry occurs in both 14:49 and 15:28. In the Gospel of Matthew there are fourteen explicit references to scripture that is 'fulfilled' in Jesus' ministry (1:22; 2:15, 17; 2:23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 26:54, 56; 27:9, 35), six in Luke (1:1; 4:21; 18:31; 21:22; 22:37; 24:44) and seven in John (12:38; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 19:24, 28, 36).

Isaiah 6:9–10 reports the blindness of God's people that prevents their own repentance. According to Mark 4:10–12 Jesus said to his disciples that it was given for them to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but for those 'outside' everything came through parables. In Mark's account, Jesus incorporated Isaiah 6:6–10 and by implication applied it to the Ἰουδαῖοι who did not repent. While the use of this text in Mark constitutes an element of continuity with God's people of the Old Testament, it equally contains an element of discontinuity with them. In

[19] There has been quite a debate in the twentieth century on whether the kingdom had already come for Mark, or if it was still to come. An ambiguity was probably at play, which implies that the kingdom was both a present and future reality (Black 1995; Vickers 2004).

Matthew's version (Matt 13:14–16) the same prophesy of Isaiah was fulfilled in 'this people' (λαοῦ τούτου, v. 15) who did not understand Jesus' teaching, by contrast to those who did understand. In Acts 28:25–28 the same prophesy of Isaiah is quoted and is applied to the unbelieving Ἰουδαῖοι. Verse 28 states: 'Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen' (NRSV). Mark 12:1–11 contains the parable of the tenant farmers who, after they abused several servants and killed them, eventually killed the owner's son in an attempt to obtain his inheritance. Eventually the owner would destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to another (v. 9). Psalm 118:22–23 is then quoted in the context of the rejection of Jesus: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone' (v. 10). This quotation from Psalm 118 played an important role in explaining the rejection of Christ by the Ἰουδαῖοι (Edwards 2002:360; cf. Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:6–8). The parable in Mark ends with the gospel-writer's remark: 'they knew that He spoke the parable against them'. In Luke's narrative of the same parable (Luke 20:1–18) there is also a reference to Psalm 118, and although the hearers protested the announcement that the tenants would be destroyed and the vineyard given to another (v. 16), Luke wrote that 'they knew that He told this parable against them' (v. 19; cf. Matt 21:45). According to Matthew 21:43 Jesus said: 'the kingdom of God will be taken from you, and it will be given to a nation producing its fruit'. Faith in Christ in all of these passages in the gospels stands in the context of the *fulfilling* of prophecy, is connected to the unbelief of the Ἰουδαῖοι, and implies a form of *replacement* (Blomberg 1992:361; Johnson 2013:565; cf. France 1985:310; Hagner 1993).[20] From all the accounts of the owner and his vineyard, it is noteworthy that the

[20] Although some interpreters avoid the idea of replacement by pointing to a change of ownership (e.g. Carson 1984:454; Osborne 2010:791), it leaves unanswered the question about the Ἰουδαῖοι who did not believe in Jesus.

vineyard belongs to God (e.g. Edwards 2002:359) and that he determines who would enjoy its inheritance. The inheritance only applies to those who receive what God gives. These passages thus underscore the discontinuity between Israel of the Old Testament and those who believe in Christ.

In the Gospel of John the concepts πνεῦμα and σάρξ are juxtaposed in a similar manner to that in Paul, although they do not carry exactly the same meaning. These concepts are presented as two mutually exclusive ways of existence or sources of origin, where σάρξ pertains to that which is natural or human, and πνεῦμα pertains to that which comes from God (Ridderbos 1997:131; cf. Carson 1991:196–197). Christ who was not born of the will of the 'flesh' or the will of a 'man', but of God (1:13), has to be understood in this way. According to 3:3 someone must be born 'from above' or 'again' (ἄνωθεν) in order to enter the kingdom, for 'what is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit' (3:6). Birth 'of the flesh' points to natural birth and the mode of existence of the natural person (Bruce 1983:85; Carson 1991:196; Ridderbos 1997:128). By implication, any claim on God's kingdom on the basis of things such as nationality, ethnicity or even religious tradition (all pertaining to natural existence) cannot assure entrance into God's kingdom. Every person, including both Ἰουδαῖος and Gentile, has to receive the Spirit as 'eschatological gift' (Ridderbos 1997:127; cf. Bruce 1983:110; Carson 1991:224–225). There exists a close relationship in John 3 between spiritual birth (3:5–6) and faith (3:15–18). In John, worship is not bound to an earthly tradition or location (4:21). The hour that has come 'now' when worshippers worship God 'in Spirit and in truth' (4:23–24) points to a time of salvation that has come with Christ and the new relationship in which God is with human beings (Ridderbos 1997:163). As the gospel later indicates, the judgment of the Pharisees, however, is described as being

'according to the flesh' (8:15). The only valid source of life and entrance into the kingdom of God is God's Spirit whom he gives as eschatological gift, and not anything coming from the natural person ('flesh'). The birth and new life of the Spirit can thus be understood as a new, heavenly way of existence in God's Spirit which transcends and *replaces* the old existence in the 'flesh' (cf. Hakola 2005:240).

Lastly, the letter to the Hebrews, which can also be regarded as one of the earlier writings of the New Testament (CE 65 or earlier, Köstenberger, Kellum and Quarles 2009; Johnson 2013:545) probably displays the strongest signs of discontinuity concerning the 'new' *replacing* the 'old' (cf. Johnson 2013:567): the 'new covenant/testament' (8:8, 13; 9:15; 12:24) or the 'new living way' (10:20) is contrasted with the 'old/former [time]' (πάλαι, 1:1) or the 'first [covenant]' that is described as being made 'old', as 'growing aged' and as 'near disappearing' (8:13). The most pertinent notion of replacement is probably stated in 8:6–7 where Jesus is depicted as having 'obtained a more excellent ministry', being 'the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises'. It is stated that 'if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second one' (NRSV).

7. Conclusion

In the light of the hermeneutic distance between today's Judaism and the Ἰουδαῖοι of the New Testament, it remains problematic to equate the opposition of the Ἰουδαῖοι in the New Testament with a contemporary definition of 'anti-Judaism', let alone 'antisemitism'. This hermeneutic distance is especially constituted by the opposition against the Ἰουδαῖοι, which can be identified in the earliest New Testament texts (CE 45–65), in comparison with 'Judaism', which only became a full-scale religion after CE 70 (cf. Dunn 2001:59), making it problematic to identify 'anti-

Judaism' as such in all of these texts, especially those predating CE 70. The hermeneutical distance is widened if it is accepted that there was development in the conception of messiahship of the non-believing Ἰουδαῖοι, especially if it is acknowledged that such a development is partly based on a reaction to a claim on Jesus' messiahship. Can the development of the Judaist identity thus not be considered to involve an 'anti-Christian' element? Yet, even in the New Testament this dynamic was at work, which can especially be derived from the Johannine literature. The identification of 'anti-Judaism' in the New Testament remains entangled within this complex hermeneutical dilemma. Part of this dilemma is the tendency in contemporary scholarship that identifies 'anti-Judaism' in the New Testament to *understate* this hermeneutical distance. This seems to be done because in *overstating* the hermeneutical distance, it is perceived that the danger would be lurking that today's Jews would be deprived of their ancient heritage, which, in turn, could be perceived as 'anti-Judaist'.

From an Evangelical approach to the New Testament, where the unity and authority of Scripture is acknowledged, there are indeed parts of the New Testament that seem to be opposed to the Ἰουδαῖοι, even though such opposition does not necessarily imply that *all* of the Ἰουδαῖοι are always in view. Yet this understanding does not only lie on the surface as if it only has to do with isolated events. The position against the Ἰουδαῖοι lies much deeper, and is especially noticeable in the idea of *fulfilment*, which, in turn, implies *replacement*. Paul contrasted the new era 'under the law' and 'under sin' with the new eschatological era in Christ and the Spirit, where identity is solely marked off by faith and the Spirit and not by anything external. The way in which the new replaced the old is, however, not set against the Ἰουδαῖοι as ethnic or social entity, but is directed against their old mode of existence, unbelief and their rejection of the Messiah. From an evangelical

perspective this opposition is therefore not blindly directed at Ἰουδαῖοι as if only they were unbelievers. Apart from Paul's notion that Christ-believers now consist of people from both the Ἰουδαῖοι and gentiles *without distinction*, God's judgment and wrath is also aimed against both unbelieving Ἰουδαῖοι and gentiles *without distinction*.

In the light of the total depravity of all people, the Ἰουδαῖοι are nowhere *exclusively* held responsible for Jesus' death, although some texts might focus on their involvement. Osborne (2010:1021) is probably right in his interpretation of Matthew 27:25 that all people are in a sense responsible for Jesus' death. Christ's death is after all one of the building blocks of the Christian faith. From an evangelical perspective the New Testament can thus not be 'anti-Judaist' in the sense that any one of the New Testament writers would not want Christ to be crucified or that they would be *against* the people who caused his death, even if the Ἰουδαῖοι or their leaders played a prominent role therein. At heart, the gospel in the New Testament is not against the Ἰουδαῖοι *as distinct* from other people. The element of judgment in the gospel against unbelief or disobedience is just as sharply directed against gentiles or even those who are already believers in Christ. That which critics label as 'anti-Judaist' in the New Testament must therefore be discounted against an element of judgment in the gospel *against all people*.

Regarding the hermeneutical dilemma around 'anti-Judaism' from an evangelical perspective, it seems as if those who identify 'anti-Judaism' in the New Testament are by definition against retaining the *overall* authority of Scripture as well as against an element of *judgment* within the gospel (see esp. Bieringer *et al.* 2001). If the latter notion can be considered as integral to an evangelical perspective, it leads to the unavoidable conclusion that the identification of full-scale 'anti-Judaism' in the New Testament is related to an aversion to an evangelical approach to the New Testament as such. The latter can

especially be derived from Ruether's (1974) suggestion that one should do away with Christology and the questioning by Bieringer *et al.* (2001) of the authority of a verse such as John 3:36, which implies the evangelical notion that Christ is the only Mediator in salvation. It thus seems that there is no room within approaches such as that of Ruether and Bieringer *et al*.—an approach that is arguably much more prevalent in New Testament scholarship—for an evangelical approach. From an evangelical perspective it is precisely the latter tendency that constitutes the heart of the dilemma behind 'anti-Judaism'. The bigger question is, however, whether the avoidance of the overall authority of the New Testament, the avoidance of the idea of replacement therein, the avoidance of Christ being the only mediator in salvation or the avoidance of an element of judgment in the gospel do not threaten to destabilise the heart of the Christian faith. If so, could the emphasis on the avoidance of 'anti-Judaism' not lead to a form of 'anti-Christianity'?

One of the underlying problems that is related to the above dilemma is the different ways in which 'anti-Judaism' is defined:

1. The tendency among Evangelicals to 'anti-Judaism' would be to place more emphasis on the hermeneutic distance between the Ἰουδαῖοι of the New Testament and today's Jews, as well as to accentuate the salvation-historical development and fulfilment of the Old Testament identity. The anachronistic nature of the designation 'anti-Judaism' in reference to the New Testament is thus emphasised more sharply.
2. In many contemporary approaches to 'anti-Judaism' in the New Testament, especially in the *New Perspective on Paul* and its variants, the hermeneutical distance between today's Jews and the Ἰουδαῖοι is diminished, constituting stronger continuity with

Old Testament Israel. Certain texts in the New Testament are therefore understood as 'anti-Judaist'.

The hermeneutical approach to the Ἰουδαῖοι in the New Testament therefore has a decisive influence on how 'anti-Judaism' is defined. The question that has to be asked of both of the above approaches is who must determine the definition of 'anti-Judaism', the evangelicals (1) or those who by implication are against an evangelical approach (2)? A related question is what determines one's hermeneutical point of departure. Is it ethical or moral values that originate from scripture, or is it values that come from society or extra-biblical history? This is not to say that the history of the past two millennia has to be ignored, or that things such as the crusades or the holocaust must be denied. But must ethical problems stemming from such events acquire a higher authority status than certain parts of the Bible itself (cf. Bieringer *et al.* 2001; Henrix 2001; Hakola 2005) or cause us to rewrite the Bible (Hanson 2008:219)? Must the inhumane deeds committed against the Jews in history be ascribed only to anti-Judaism or antisemitism, or are such actions not related to the total depravity and sinfulness of *all people*? Or must the crimes against the Jews enjoy a hermeneutically higher status above other crimes against humanity? Any approach to 'anti-Judaism' has to take these questions seriously.

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Paul's Theology of the Cross: A Case Study Analysis of 2 Corinthians 11:16–12:10

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Abstract

This journal article builds on the work of an earlier essay (Lioy 2015) to undertake a case study analysis of one representative passage in Paul's writings through the prism of his crucicentric thinking (especially in dialogue with a confessional Lutheran perspective). The major claim is that the apostle's theology of the cross (in Latin, *theologia crucis*) helps to clarify his apocalyptic view of reality. The corresponding goal is to validate the preceding assertion by exploring Paul's cruciform mindset in 2 Corinthians 11:16–12:10.

1. Introduction

In an earlier essay (Lioy 2015), I explored Paul's apocalyptic interpretation of reality. The treatise dealt with the nature of apocalyptic literature, Paul's end-time view of existence against the backdrop of Judeo and Greco-Roman cultural contexts, and how the apostle's eschatological worldview exercised a controlling influence on his writings. The preceding assertion was validated by a case study analysis of Ephesians 1:15–23.

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[1] The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

Concerning Paul's apocalyptic convictions, I articulated five key premises that formed the building blocks of his narrative discourse, as follows: (1) Since the dawn of time, the forces of darkness (i.e. Satan, sin, and death) have threatened to undermine the cosmic order, including humankind; (2) The Father has triumphed over these malevolent entities through his Son's redemptive work on the cross; (3) Believers, through their baptismal union with the divine-human Son, are co-participants in his victory won at Calvary; (4) Because the Son reigns supreme over every aspect of the believers' life, all their thoughts, feelings, and actions must be submitted to his rule; and (5) Believers are a foretaste, down payment, and guarantee of the Father fulfilling his promise to reclaim and restore the entire created realm, all of which will be finalized at the second advent of his Son.

Of particular interest to this journal article is premise number 2, specifically its mention of Jesus' redemptive work on the cross. For example, in taking account of the imperial ideologies that prevailed in the first century AD, I observed that Rome's cultural heroes were renowned for their wealth, fame, and power. Also, I pointed out that the latter were seized by brazen self-interest, ruthless competition, and savage violence. In contrast, I noted that Paul urged believers to live in ways that were cruciform in nature. I also maintained that the Cross was the premier expression of God's power and wisdom, both during the present age and for all eternity. According to Elliot (1997:174), Paul regarded 'Jesus' death as the decisive event in a cosmic struggle. Furthermore, the Cross was the central narrative feature of Paul's apocalyptic view of reality (cf. Rom 6:3–8; 1 Cor 1:18–25; 2 Cor 4:10; Gal 2:20; 5:22–26; 6:14; Phil 2:1–8; 3:10; Col 2:11–12, 20).

Taking a cue from Hyers (2015), the historical event of the Cross, as interpreted through the writings of Paul, offers a theocentric and Christocentric view of how to make sense of existence. For instance,

along with the rest of Scripture, the Pauline corpus affirms that 'all regions and forms are the objects of divine creation and sovereignty'. The corresponding truth is that the 'one true God … transcends and governs' the entire universe. Moreover, the Cross defines Paul's 'approach to organising the cosmic reality', both 'spatially and temporally'. Specifically, through the Son's redemptive work, 'chaos is brought under control' and 'order' is reestablished. In a manner of speaking, through the cross-resurrection episode, the Redeemer has entered space-time history and engaged his archenemies 'on their own turf, with the result that they are soundly defeated' (cf. Luke 10:18; John 12:31; Col 2:15).

Beker, in his writings (1990:80–91; 2000:198–208), has drawn attention to Jesus' atoning sacrifice at Calvary and how it fundamentally shaped Paul's end-time view of existence. As Beker (2000:199) observes, the Cross was crucial to the apostle's 'apocalyptic hermeneutic'. Beker (p. 200) also states that the cross-resurrection dyad inaugurated a 'new age' in which the 'glory of God' becomes the 'destiny of creation'. Expressed another way, 'Paul interprets the death and resurrection of Christ primarily in terms of a cosmic-apocalyptic judgment and renewal' (p. 204). Moreover, the Cross is the 'ultimate ground' (p. 205) for the eternal 'blessings' God bestows on believers. In short, the Cross is the 'apocalyptic turning point of history' (p. 205), wherein the 'old age' (p. 207) is destroyed and the 'future age dawns'. Included is the 'overthrow of death' (1990:81), which Paul labelled the 'last enemy' (1 Cor 15:26).

Tannehill (1967:70) contends that the cross-resurrection event 'must be understood' within the 'context' of Paul's 'eschatology'. This includes the 'decisive transfer' of 'believers from the old to the new aeon'. According to Treat (2014:136), Paul regarded the Cross as a

verification that the 'end of the ages' had arrived. Even the 'coming kingdom of God' (p. 227) was impacted by the Cross. Not only was God's reign 'cruciform' in its essence, but also throughout eternity it would be defined by the Cross (230; cf. John 20:27; Gal 6:14; Rev 5:6).[2] Bradbury (2012:67) affirms the preceding observations by stating that as a consequence of Jesus' 'cruciform work' an 'inbreaking age has already formally overcome the age that was'. Horton (2011:524) shifts the focus to the 'present age' when he states that right now the 'kingdom' appears 'weak and foolish to the world'. Despite that, the 'kingdom is more extensive in its global reach'. Likewise, it is 'more intensive in its redemptive power', especially when compared with 'any earthly empire in history'. Along similar lines, Treat (2014:246) concludes that 'God advances his kingdom through the church' whenever it conforms itself to the Cross.

In keeping with the above observations, the major claim of this journal article is that an understanding of Paul's theology of the cross (in Latin, *theologia crucis*) helps to clarify his apocalyptic view of reality. Knowles (2005:64) likens the apostle's paradigm to a 'simple heuristic device' or 'key' that holds the potential to unlock a 'door' enabling one to access a far-reaching 'conceptual domain'. Nolte (2003:52) advances

[2] For a deliberation of the cruciform nature of the divine kingdom, cf. Treat (2014:227–46). It is worth noting that Moltmann (1974) has written extensively about the relationship between the Cross and the kingdom; nonetheless, as Eckardt (1985:19) argues, while both Luther and Moltmann 'focus on the crucifixion', along with its 'effects as the locus of theology', their respective interpretations of the 'redemptive act' (p. 20) are completely dissimilar. For instance, in contrast to Luther, Moltmann rejected the 'language of the atonement' (p. 22) and the 'traditional "two-natures" doctrine of Christ' (p. 23). Also, unlike Luther, Moltmann advocated the 'psychological and political liberation of man from the forces of oppression in the world' (p. 24). In sum, while at times Luther and Moltmann may use similar language in reference to the Cross, what they mean and intend by doing so are 'radically different from each other' (p. 25).

the discussion by reasoning that the Cross is the 'crucial focal point of all theology', for it defines, illuminates, and guides the 'entire theological enterprise'. This includes understanding, as Tannehill (1967:1) puts it, the 'motif of dying and rising with Christ'. These observations are upheld by the synopsis in section 2 and affirm the potential value of using crucicentricity as a hermenutical approach to engage Paul's writings. The corresponding goal is to use section 3 to validate the major claim by exploring Paul's cruciform mindset in the following representative passage in his letters: 2 Corinthians 11:16–12:10.[3]

The choice of the preceding text is motivated, in part, by the recognition that as Gorman (2001:18) puts it, 'for Paul cruciformity encompasses and defines' the 'character of God'. Moreover, the Cross defines the nature of existence for Jesus' followers in the present era, which is dominated by unbelief and disobedience. Concerning the latter, Paul revealed that the Son sacrificed himself for our transgressions in order to 'rescue us from the present evil age' (Gal 1:4). The apostle also disclosed that through the cross-resurrection event, Jesus vanquished Satan (Col 2:15), who is the overlord of the malevolent spiritual forces in the unseen 'world' (Eph 2:2). Amazingly, as the apostle explained, the religious and civil 'rulers of this age' (1 Cor 2:6–8) failed to appreciate 'God's wisdom' revealed in Jesus' death at Calvary; otherwise, they would not have 'crucified' the glorious Lord. Finally, Paul taught that the Son's triumph over the grave was the basis for believers rejecting the 'ungodliness and worldly passions' (Titus 2:12) of the 'present age' and living in a manner that is 'self-controlled, upright and godly'.

[3] Due to the limitations of space in this essay, only one of numerous passages within the Pauline corpus is the focus of the case study analysis appearing in section 3.

2. A synopsis of Paul's Theology of the Cross from a Confessional Lutheran Perspective

At first glance, one might advocate culling through the entire Pauline corpus to determine the apostle's theological understanding of the cross; yet, such an endeavour would be unrealistic for the present modest-sized essay. Another option might be to engage all the scholarly publications dealing with Paul's cruciform teaching. Admittedly, though, the secondary literature is vast and there is no consensus within the academic guild concerning the meaning and significance of the apostle's crucicentric perspective. This reality makes it unfeasible to itemize and evaluate comprehensively what other specialists have said on this subject over the course of church history.[4] So, for the sake of

[4] For an exploration of how the Cross formed the centre of Paul's relationship with God, including the themes of faith, love, power, and hope, cf. Gorman (2001). For an exploration of the relevance of the Cross for the Christian faith, including how the Cross indicates the way in which God is actively present in the world, cf. McGrath (1987). For a synopsis of the place of the Cross within contemporary theology, cf. Madsen (2007:1–13). For a review of trends in contemporary evangelicalism dealing with a crucicentric spirituality, cf. Tidball (2001:21–9). For an appraisal of the gaps in the academic literature on the significance of the Cross in the New Testament and Christian theology, cf. Hood (2007). For an analysis of various proposed solutions to the problem of evil and the importance of the Cross within this debate, cf. Blocher (1994). For contrasting approaches in understanding Paul's cruciform theology, cf. Anthony (2010:52–105); Bayer (2003:6–7); Beer (1984); Becker (1990:80–91; 2000:182–212); Bradbury (2012:13–146); Brandos (2006); Cousar (1990); Fast (2011); Forde (1997); Heim (2006); Hendel (1997); Hinkson (1993:18–51); Käsemann (1970); Klug (2003:39–56); Kolb (2002); Madsen (2007:15–63); Mateo-Seco (1982); McGrath (1993:192–7; 2011); Nestingen (1992); Nolte (2003); Persaud (2014); Schreiner (2001:87–102); Stott (2006:302–28); Tomlin (2006:111–8); Watson (1947:102–48); Wells (1992); Wengenroth (1982); Wengert (2002).

expediency, in this section, I provide a synopsis of Paul's theology of the cross from a confessional Lutheran perspective.[5]

One reason for adopting this particular approach is that I minister as an ordained clergyperson and teach as an exegetical theologian within this ecclesial tradition (i.e. the North American Lutheran Church and the Institute of Lutheran Theology, respectively). A second reason is that, as von Loewenich (1976:13) argues, 'Luther's theology of the cross . . . corresponds exactly' with what Paul articulated in his letters. A third reason is the rich and well-established discourse within Lutheran scholarship concerning the apostle's writings on the Cross, including how it shaped his apocalyptic view of reality. A fourth reason is that the Lutheran perspective has been a major point of reference and interlocutor (of sorts) for specialists from other philosophical and theological perspectives, especially as they deliberate Paul's understanding of the cross-resurrection event.

To begin, Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation* of 1518 is regarded as the classic text on the Pauline concept of cruciform theology (cf. Luther 1957:39–58). Even though, as Wengenroth (1982:272) notes, the crucicentric tradition 'dominated Luther's entire theological and

[5] In Lioy (2014:72–9), I discussed the issue of Jesus' atoning sacrifice, particularly as it relates to 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:12; nonetheless, it is beyond the scope of the present journal article to delve deeply into the debate regarding the nature and significance of the Son's redemptive work at Calvary. The latter includes the penal substitution view of the atonement, which I favour. For a salient defence of the preceding stance, including a biblically grounded and theologically nuanced response to objections made against it, cf. Erickson (2013:731–52) and Marshall (2005:1–16). Also, for one recent approach to reconcile penal substitution and the *Christus Victor* theory, cf. Treat (2014:174–226). In essence, he argues for a synthesis of '*Christus Victor* through penal substitution'.

ecclesiastical career',[6] Hendel (1997:223) appropriately clarifies that the *Disputation* theses are Luther's 'most focused articulation' of his thoughts in this area. To be sure, there are a number of scholarly treatises that elucidate the historical setting and development of Luther's reasoning.[7] This includes the recognition that, as Hinkson (1993:20) indicates, 'Luther's *theologia crucis* . . . did not arise in a vacuum'. In particular, he was 'influenced' by the 'mystical traditions' found in 'late medieval spirituality'. To the latter, Madsen (2007:83–91) adds that Church 'tradition' about 'humility' and 'free will' also 'shaped Luther's theology of the cross'.

Despite the importance of the preceding historical backdrop, the intent of the present section moves in a different direction, namely, to provide a concise distillation of what Luther taught in his *Disputation* about Paul's theology of the cross. Admittedly, my area of expertise is exegetical theology. For this reason, I draw upon the work of various Luther scholars to inform the discourse appearing in this section. Forde (1997), in particular, provides a lucid and cogent treatment of Luther's thought, and for this reason serves as a useful primer here. Specifically, Forde (xii) explains that Paul's cruciform mindset signifies a distinctive way of perceiving the 'world and our destiny'. Jesus' followers have died to the 'old' (p. 13) reality, now live in vital union with the Saviour, and eagerly anticipate 'being raised with him'. This mindset is radically different from the 'optimism' (xiii) found within a 'theology of glory' (in Latin, *theologia gloriae*), especially its heretical, legalistic emphasis on the 'place of good works in the scheme of salvation'.

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[6] Along with Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation*, as the analysis of Madsen (2007:75–83) demonstrates, Luther's emphasis on the Cross can be found in *Lectures on the Hebrews* (early 1518), the *Asterisci Lutheri adversus Obeliscos Eckii* (March 1518), and the *Explanations of the 95 Theses* (August 1518).

[7] E.g. Bradbury (2012); Madsen (2007); McGrath (2011); Tomlin (2006); von Loewenich (1976); Westhelle (2006).

On the one hand, the preceding approach is characterised by a 'suffocating sentimentality' (Forde 1997:viii) that portrays God as using the Cross to identify with 'us in our pain and suffering';[8] on the other hand, Paul's theology of the cross teaches that Jesus laid down his life at Calvary to atone for the sins of humankind. In turn, God allows Jesus' followers to endure 'suffering' (ix) because they 'look on the world anew in light of Christ's passion'. The focus in Paul's theology of the cross is on people being 'sinners' (x) in need of redemption, not 'victims' requiring 'affirmation and support'. Ironically, the pagan religionist's 'thirst for glory' (xiv), which is often evidenced by the performance of allegedly meritorious deeds, leads to greater 'despair' (xiv). Just as counterintuitive is the outcome of increased 'hope' being found in Paul's cruciform teaching. Furthermore, in keeping with what Luther observed in his *Disputation*, the cure for humanity's existential plight is not endless sessions involving psychotherapy; rather, as Paul stressed in his letters, it is to hear the good news and be saved. The paradox is that when the cross-resurrection event and its implications are either downplayed or abandoned, it leads to increased pessimism, not optimism, and insecurity, not self-esteem (xi).

[8] Billings (2014) refers to the trite view of God that prevails in the West as 'Moralistic Therapeutic Deism' (or MTD; 133). He summarises its 'set of core beliefs' (p. 134) as follows: (1) 'A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth'; (2) 'God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions'; (3) 'The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself'; (4) 'God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life, except when God is needed to resolve a problem'; and, (5) 'Good people go to heaven when they die'. Billings explains that within the context of a postmodern, consumer-oriented, and religiously pluralistic culture, it is typical for people to 'pick and choose' (p. 135) from a range of traditions, beliefs, and philosophies to create their own private spirituality, one that bears no resemblance to the 'biblical and Christ-centred' teachings of the historic, Christian church.

Forde (1997:3) emphasizes that a theology of the cross is not the same as crafting dogmatic 'propositions' about what the Pauline writings teach concerning Jesus' death and resurrection, even though the latter emphasis serves an important role within academic discourse; instead, the emphasis is on the Cross itself being the locus of attention. As Luther put it, the 'cross alone is our theology' (in Latin, *crux sol est nostra theologia*). In accord with this cruciform perspective, the 'goal' (p. 4) is to 'become a theologian of the cross'. This entails believers 'operating' in a certain way, not just researching and composing tractates in a detached manner about the subject. Taking a cue from Galatians 2:20, Forde (p. 7) observes that 'just as Jesus was crucified, so we also are crucified with him'. On one level, believers *take part* in the cruciform narrative; yet, on another deeper level, the Cross *becomes* their personal defining narrative. In brief, it marks out the course of their temporal and eternal 'destiny' (p. 10).

While Paul's theology of the cross has an existential component, there remains a place for articulating key propositional truths connected with a crucicentric outlook. In this regard, McGrath (2011:211–4) advances the discussion by listing five 'leading themes' or 'motifs', as explained by Luther:[9] (1) It is a 'theology of revelation, which stands in sharp contrast to idle speculation'; (2) This divine disclosure should be 'regarded as indirect and concealed' (cf. Luther's reference to the 'crucified and hidden God'; in Latin, *Deus crucifixus et absconditus*; Exod 33:18–23; Isa 40:13; 45:15; Rom 11:33–35; 1 Tim 6:16); (3) 'God's self-revelation' is centred in the 'humility and shame' of the Cross, not in 'human moral activity or the structures of the created order'; (4) The 'eye of faith alone', not unaided and speculative 'human

[9] The general contours of McGrath's analysis are echoed in the following: Anthony (2010:56–7, 103–4); Bradbury (2012:131–4); Hendel (1997:224–31); Kolb (2002:449–54); Nolte (2003:53); Treat (2014:228); Tomlin (2006:114, 183–5); von Loewenich (1976:22).

reason', recognises the 'veiled disclosure' of the Father in the agony and ignominy of the Cross as being an authentic 'revelation'; and (5) The Father deliberately 'chooses to be known' through the 'suffering' endured by the Son as well as his followers, both corporately and individually.

The way in which God works through the suffering of believers warrants further attention. Kolb (2002:443) aptly remarks that it was 'not in flight beyond the clouds' that the Creator came to disclose the unvarnished truth 'about himself and about humanity'; rather, it was 'in the dust of the grave'. Stott (2006:320) provides a bit of perspective in stating that though the Cross does not philosophically resolve the 'problem of suffering', it 'supplies the essential perspective' from which to consider it. Paul's experience is an illustrative case in point. He not only taught a theology of the cross, but also lived it out in his evangelistic work. In truth, he regarded his suffering as vital to his mission as an apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15–16; 14:22; 20:23–24; 21:11; 2 Cor 11:23–29; 2 Tim 3:12). Expressed another way, the trials Paul endured were the means by which he proclaimed the gospel to the nations. His distress validated and legitimated his message, demonstrating the truth of the gospel.

There is a sense in which Paul regarded his sufferings as a corollary to the sufferings Jesus endured (cf. Col 1:24).[10] The emphasis here, as Treat (2014:229) observes, was not on believers such as Paul imitating Jesus' life and ministry, as salutatory as the latter might seem; rather, the priority was on living in baptismal 'union' with the Saviour's 'death

[10] For an overview of the history of interpretation for Colossians 1:24, cf. Ruemann (1990). For an exploration of the cruciform or cross-bearing aspect of the Christian life, cf. Clancy (1994); Clark (2006); Ellington (2012); Hendel (1997:229–31); Hood (2009:286–94); Kolb (2002:454–64).

and resurrection'. As Schreiner (2001:100–1) explains, this does not mean the apostle thought Jesus' atoning sacrifice at Calvary was deficient and that Paul's anguish helped to bring about the pardoning of repentant sinners. Likewise, the apostle never claimed that in his distress he somehow bore the sins of God's people in a substitutionary death as Jesus did; instead, Paul regarded his adversities as mirroring what Jesus endured. In this way, the apostle replicated the earthly sojourn of Jesus. Accordingly, the apostle's tribulations were central to his calling, since they provided evidence for the veracity of the gospel he declared.

To return to the main discussion, McGrath (2011:205–6) notes that God's decision to reveal himself through the Cross sheds light on the affective and cognitive realms of the believers' faith. The *theologia crucis* also challenges natural human judgments about God, revelation, and justification. Paul's cruciform perspective is the means by which God demolishes the impediments of hubris and foolishness, which inhibit people from discerning the divine presence and purpose. Furthermore, McGrath (p. 210) observes that in the crucicentric tradition, 'faith and doubt, righteousness and sin' are shown to be 'correlates' that are simultaneously 'intrinsic to the identity' of the whole person (in Latin, *totus homo*). It is a 'dialectic' or tension that cannot be rectified this side of eternity. While the circumstance of being justified and a sinner at the same time (in Latin, *simul iustus et peccator*) is 'theologically messy and existentially distressing', it corresponds exactly with the pattern of life that believers experience.

According to McGrath (2011:206–8), Paul regarded the Cross to be the underpinning and benchmark for any trustworthy approach to knowing God. The Cross challenges natural human perceptions of what God is like and how he should act. The Cross not only contests human self-confidence and complacency, but also forces people to seek and find the

mercy of God. McGrath (209–10) explains that the Cross, as an epistemological metanarrative, recognises the inscrutable aspects of faith and resists any attempts to extract some abstract, sterilised dogmas from the savagery and trauma of Jesus' execution. The Cross also illuminates how believers are to exist in the murky, barren terrain of a sin-cursed world filled with uncertainty and iniquity. Moreover, the Cross helps believers cope with the anxiety produced by the inexplicable contradictions of living on a planet characterised by strife, narcissism, and injustice. Affirming the presence of God in a world of shadows, confusion, and distress speaks to those who would otherwise be driven to atheism, especially due to the seemingly irresolvable tension between theory and experience, belief and practice.

3. Paul's Theology of the Cross in 2 Corinthians 11:16–12:10

Both external and internal evidence point to Paul's authorship of 2 Corinthians.[11] The letter was widely circulated by AD 140 and was

[11] In this section, the latest editions of the Nestle-Aland / United Bible Societies' *Novum Testamentum Graece* have been used. Also, unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are my personal translation of the respective biblical texts being cited. Moreover, I have intentionally refrained from filling every paragraph and page in this portion of the journal article with an excessive number of formal citations from secondary sources. So, for the sake of expediency, the following are the lexical and grammatical sources I consulted in the researching and writing of the corresponding discourse: *A dictionary of biblical languages: Greek New Testament* (J Swanson); *A grammar of the Greek New Testament* (N Turner, JH Moulton, and WF Howard); *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (FW Danker, ed.); *Exegetical dictionary of the New Testament* (H Balz and G Schneider, eds.); *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains* (JP Louw and EA Nida, eds.); *Greek grammar beyond the basics: an exegetical syntax of the New Testament* (DB Wallace); *Greek New Testament insert* (B Chapman and GS

recognized without question as the work of the apostle.[12] The writer twice identified himself in the epistle (cf. 1:1; 10:1), and in addition, referred to himself in ways that unmistakably mark himself as Paul. While there is considerable certainty about the authorship of 2 Corinthians, numerous questions have arisen about the exact time of the writing. The consensus view is that this letter was likely penned in the fall of AD 56. Several references clearly identify the region of Macedonia as the general area where Paul wrote 2 Corinthians (cf. 7:5; 8:1; 9:2–4).

In this epistle, Paul dealt with his own triumph and joy as well as with some of his disappointment and despair. As noted by Black (2012:53), the 'idea of weakness' operates as a 'central motif' here. Because Paul was so transparent in what he wrote, probably no other letter gives readers a clearer glimpse of the apostle and his cruciform theology,

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Shogren); *Lexham Theological Wordbook* (D Mangum, et al., eds.); *New international dictionary of New Testament theology and exegesis* (M Silva, ed.); *The Lexham discourse Greek New Testament* (S Runge, ed.); *The new linguistic and exegetical key to the Greek New Testament* (CL Rogers); *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (G Kittel and G Friedrich, eds.); and *Theological lexicon of the New Testament* (C Spicq; JD Ernest, ed.).

[12] The scholarly literature on 2 Corinthians is extensive. Also, the majority of relevant exegetical and theological works frequently convey the same sort of information on this Pauline passage. So, for the sake of expediency, the following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the discourse: Abernathy (2001); Balla (2007); Barnett (1997); Belleville (1996); Black (2012); Bray (2005); Bruce (1986); Collins (2013); Ellington (2012); Elliott (2004); Fitzgerald (1990); Furnish (1984); Garland (1989; 1999); Glancy (2004); Gorman (2001); Hafemann (1990; 2000a; 2000b); Harris (2005; 2008); Hubbard (2002); Hughes (1962); Keener (2005); Kistemaker (2002); Knowles (2005); Lambrecht (1996); Lenski (1961); Madsen (2007); Marshall (2004); Martin (1986); Matera (2003); Morrow (1986); Murphy-O'Connor (1991); O'Collins (1971); Pickett (1997); Plummer (1978); Sampley (2000); Schütz (1975); Tannehill (1967); Thrall (2000); Wright (2013).

especially against the backdrop of an apocalyptic understanding of reality. By allowing his readers to identify with his struggles, Paul indicated that the same comfort and strength he had received from the Saviour was available to all believers. Indeed, the apostle hoped his epistle would repair his relationship with the church at Corinth—a relationship that had been damaged by false teachers trying to discredit his apostolic authority and undermine the credibility of his ministry.[13]

While Paul never specifically identified the impostors, a portrait of them can be pieced together from 2 Corinthians. The spiritual frauds came from outside Corinth (possibly from Judea) and needed letters of recommendation (3:1). Paul complained about the pretenders invading his sphere of ministry (10:13–16). They preached a false gospel—one that may have deemphasised the Messiah's role in the salvation of believers (11:4). If so, their human-centred soteriology was akin to a theology of glory. The deceivers apparently declared themselves to have spiritual authority that was superior to Paul's (v. 5) and claimed to be apostles of the Saviour (v. 13). The false teachers may have been seeking to earn a living from those to whom they preached and taught

[13] For a detailed examination of the enmity existing between Paul and the Corinthians, cf. Marshall (1987). He explores 'Greco-Roman traditions' (vii) to elucidate the 'causes of the hostility', the 'form it takes', and the 'efforts' Paul made to 'win back the Corinthians'. Marshall deduces that 'much of Paul's terminology in the conflict' (ix) mirrors 'normal social usage'. Marshall also observes that the apostle used a 'number of traditional techniques' (p. 341), including 'non-naming, comparison, self-praise, self-derision, and innuendo', to 'derogate his enemies'. Furthermore, Marshall (xiv) regards the nature of the 'dispute' as 'primarily a socio-cultural' altercation, one in which the evangelist was 'discredited as a socially and intellectually inferior person' whom the Corinthians could not trust. Against this backdrop, Marshall (p. 364) argues that Paul was 'willing to allow his apostleship to be judged on the basis of failure and weakness'. In short, Marshall (p. 374) discerns that Paul used himself as a 'foil' to portray his 'rivals' as 'arrogant, insolent, and shameless' persons.

their counterfeit doctrine (vv. 7–9). The frauds were, in actuality, ministers of Satan, while masquerading as apostles of the Lord (vv. 14–15). The impostors may have been Judaizers, who placed more emphasis on their Hebrew heritage than on the grace of the Messiah (v. 22). They were also guilty of putting the Corinthians in spiritual bondage (v. 20).[14]

Given the above circumstance, a foremost reason for Paul's writing 2 Corinthians was to refute the accusations false teachers were making against him. Having gained the ear of the church at Corinth, these duplicitous hucksters apparently declared that Paul was untrustworthy and double-minded, and that he ministered solely for the purpose of self-elevation. The apostle's motivation in defending himself in this letter, however, did not arise from self-interest or pride, but from his desire to protect the church at Corinth. Because Paul's integrity was so closely linked to a crucicentric understanding of the gospel, a successful effort to discredit him would have inevitably led to an undermining of the faith preached in the city by the apostle and members of his missionary team.

[14] For a consideration of the secular underpinnings of Paul's critique of his opponents at Corinth, including the first-century AD Greco-Roman social setting, cf. Savage (2004). He explains that 'self-appreciation' (p. 19) was the 'goal' and 'self-glorification' was the 'reward'. Also, within 'Roman society rank was a prized possession' (p. 20). Moreover, flaunting one's 'status' (p. 22) in society was crucial. For a comprehensive inquiry into the identity of Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians, the claims they made about themselves, and the assertions they made against Paul, cf. Georgi (1986). He describes the rivals as 'migrant preachers of Jewish origin' (p. 315) who obtained 'great prestige' among the believers at Corinth. Georgi thinks the 'intruders' leveraged their celebrity status to 'further their own work and to dismantle Paul's influence'. Georgi surmises that Paul saw his 'very existence threatened' (p. 316) by the antagonists, especially since they assailed his 'function as a missionary'. In the view of Georgi, Paul's 'criticism' of his enemies was 'motivated by the presence of the crucified and exalted Lord'.

Undoubtedly, Paul had several other purposes in addressing this letter to the Corinthians. For instance, Titus had brought the apostle the welcome news of the favourable response to his most recent letter, as well as possibly disturbing news concerning the church, and Paul wanted to reply to the report he had received. He also wanted to encourage the Christians at Corinth to complete their collection for the believers at Jerusalem before his forthcoming visit. Moreover, because the false teachers had apparently pointed to his change of itinerary as evidence of his being undependable, the apostle wanted to explain why he had modified his plans. Finally, he called on his readers to distinguish between true and false teaching (especially a theology of the cross vs. a theology of glory), to separate themselves from all idolatrous associations, and to pray for him and his evangelistic outreach.

In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul created a list of the sufferings he had endured as part of his ministry.[15] Garland (1989:378) considers these adversities as a 'kind of parody of the boasts' made by the apostle's opponents, which in turn he used to deride their 'exalted claims'. Sampley (2000:157–8) refers to this 'hardship catalog' as 'Paul's badge of honor'. At the conclusion of the list, he stated in verse 28 that his oversight of the churches under his pastoral care was a burden he shouldered day-to-day. Perhaps no other church took a greater toll on

[15] For a detailed examination of the ancient literary convention of compiling lists of hardships (technically referred to as *peristaseis* catalogues) and how they compare with what is found in the Pauline corpus, especially the Corinthian letters, cf. Fitzgerald (1988). He explains that in the 'ancient world' (p. 203) it was 'axiomatic' that 'adversity' was a 'litmus test of character'. Also, a 'person's virtuous attitude and action while under duress' offered 'proof' that this individual was of 'genuine worth'. Fitzgerald surmises that 'placing Paul's catalogues within the literary traditions of antiquity' (p. 2) confirms that the missionary's enumerations 'legitimate his claim to be an apostle of Christ'. In brief, Paul wanted his readers to recognize him as a 'person of integrity' (p. 206) whom they could trust.

the apostle than did the one at Corinth. In addition to the above reasons mentioned, he wrote this heartfelt and candid letter to urge his readers to depend on God rather than themselves (i.e. to live as theologians of the cross, not theologians of glory). Within this cruciform context, Paul had found God's comfort and strength to be more than adequate to meet the afflictions and challenges associated with his own ministry, and he knew that God offered to all believers this same encouragement and energy.

Earlier, in 11:1, Paul said he was going to use discourse characterised by 'foolishness', in which the underlying Greek noun, *aphrosynēs* (genitive, singular, feminine), implies what seems to be thoughtless or senseless, especially by conventional standards of human wisdom. Belleville (1996:284) clarifies that Paul did not have in mind 'someone who is stupid or witless'; instead, the apostle targeted those whose 'self-perceptions are blown all out of proportion'. Next, in verse 16, Paul assured his readers that he was not really a fool (*aphrona*, adjective, accusative, singular; 'foolish'), even though they might conclude he was behaving imprudently. The apostle was referring to his decision to momentarily engage in 'boasting' (verb, aorist, middle, subjective, *kauchēsōmai*; 'may boast') about himself. In drawing attention to his own achievements, his purpose was to expose the hubris of his antagonists and discredit anyone who embraced their anthropocentric views. Barnett (1997:529–31) elucidates that the apostle's 'rhetorical exercise' in 'parody', known in that day as the 'Fool's Speech' (or 'Fools Discourse'; extending from 11:1–12:13),[16] was a 'daring

[16] Matera (2003:237) draws attention to the debate among scholars concerning where the literary section beginning in 2 Corinthians 11:1 ends. He notes that some favour 12:10 as the concluding verse, whereas others opt for either verse 13 or 18. The reasons for or against any particular view notwithstanding, this treatise has made 11:16–12:10 the principal focus of investigation.

countercultural exercise', since it was common for people to brag about their 'achievements,' not 'weaknesses'.[17]

Keener (2005:231) explains that Paul composed a 'caricature that assails his opponents rather than himself'. The apostle's ostentatious assertions (*hypostasei kauchēseōs*, in which the second noun is understood to be an attributive genitive, 'boastful confidence'; 11:17) were motivated by a pastoral concern for the wellbeing of the church at Corinth, as well as for the preservation of the gospel. Though he disfavoured speaking proudly about his ministerial work, he regarded doing so as necessary for the cause of Christ. With that in mind, Paul requested the Corinthians' forbearance as he recited what he experienced as he obeyed the Lord. Paul explained that he was not following Jesus' example when the apostle bragged about what God had done through him. In one sense, Paul caricatured the intruders' example. They had commended themselves to the Corinthians, and apparently some of the Corinthians attentively listened to them.

Paul wanted to prevent the Corinthians from drawing superficial inferences about his ministry based only on what the false teachers said. So, the apostle decided to follow their lead by discoursing in a foolish manner (*aphrosynē*, verb, dative, singular, feminine; 'foolishness'; v. 17). In essence, Paul gave the Corinthians a detailed description of his ministry for the sake of comparison. His hesitancy to boast was mitigated by the recognition that his readers were at ease with such self-commendation. As theologians of glory, Paul's adversaries in Corinth

[17] For a survey of ancient rhetorical discourse used in Greco-Roman culture, along with a corresponding stylistic analysis of 2 Corinthians, cf. Long 2004. At the end of his examination of 11:16–12:10, he concludes that 'there can be little doubt Paul followed the apologetic tradition of self-adulation, even though he seasoned it with parody by appealing to his weaknesses' (p. 190).

operated in the 'flesh' (v. 18), in which the underlying Greek noun, *sarka* (accusative, singular, feminine), theologically referred to the sinful state of human beings. In this context, the emphasis was on the pagan standards the frauds used to rationalise gloating over their alleged achievements (cf. Jas 3:13–16).

Even worse for Paul was that some of the Corinthians delighted (*hēdeōs*; adverb of manner, in the emphatic position; 'gladly'; 2 Cor 11:19) in putting up with (*anechesthe*; verb, present, either middle or passive, indicative) these self-absorbed braggarts (*aphronōn*; adjective, genitive, plural; 'fools'). The apostle, by sarcastically calling his readers 'wise' (*phronimoi*; adjective, nominative, plural), intended to rebuke their willingness to endure the presence of such morally deficient persons as the charlatans in their midst (cf. 1 Cor 4:10). As it turned out, the Corinthians' tolerance of the false apostles led to the acceptance of their tyrannical behaviour. Specifically, the Corinthians were welcoming (*anechesthe*; verb, present, either middle or passive, indicative; 'bear with'; 2 Cor 11:20) these interlopers, even while being manhandled by them.

For instance, the false apostles, as theologians of glory, tried to strip the Corinthians of their liberty in union with the Messiah and shackle (*katadouloō*; verb, present, active, indicative; 'enslaves') them to the Mosaic Law. In all likelihood, these intruders taught a combination of Christianity and Judaism, in which they emphasised legalistic righteousness as a prerequisite for salvation. Even though they affirmed Jesus as the Messiah, they stressed obedience to the Law of Moses as the way to gain and retain God's acceptance. In addition, the charlatans were guilty of the following offences, which Matera (2003:257) indicates amplify one another: preying upon the Corinthians (*katesthiei*; verb, present, active, indicative; 'devours', 'consumes'); exploiting them by using deception (*lambanei*; verb, present, active indicative;

'takes advantage of'); engaging them in an egotistical, presumptuous manner (*epairetai*; verb, present, middle, indicative; 'exalt oneself'); and maltreating them (*derei*; verb, present, active, indicative; 'strikes').

Throughout verses 16–20, Paul used sarcasm to call attention to the irony of the Corinthians' acceptance of those who harmed them. The apostle's derision reached its rhetorical peak in verse 21, where he confessed that, to his disgrace (*atimian*; noun, accusative, singular, feminine; 'shame'), he was too cowardly (*ēsthenēkamen*; verb, perfect, active, indicative; 'have been weak') to exploit his converts. This was a biting comment for those who had criticised him for being timid while he was in Corinth. Did the believers really want an apostle who was cruel to them? There were occasions in the first century AD for those holding religious authority to strike others in the face for displaying impiety or disrespect. By way of example, Jesus was slapped in the face because of an answer he gave during his questioning before the high priest, Annas (cf. John 18:22). Another high priest, Ananias, ordered that Paul be struck on the mouth because of the words he spoke before the Sanhedrin (cf. Acts 23:2). The Corinthians, too, were enduring this type of abuse from the false apostles, who had invaded the church with their counterfeit teaching (2 Cor 11:20).

While Paul refused to emulate the charlatans' harsh treatment of his readers, he would match their brazenness in exaggerated self-praise (cf. the use in v. 21 of *toima*–verb, present, active, subjunctive, third person, singular; 'dares [to boast]'–with *toimo*–verb, present, active, indicative, first person, singular; 'dare [to boast]'). The apostle admitted that in defending the legitimacy of his apostleship, he again was talking like a fool (*aphrosynē*; noun, dative, singular, feminine; 'in foolishness'). He discerned he could do so, since he had more to brag about than his rivals. In particular, none of them had experienced all that he had for

the sake of the gospel; and now he was now prepared, in a crucicentric manner, to list those hardships substantiating his devotion to the Messiah. Keener (2005:233) observes that 'contrary to those who claim Paul's adventures in Acts must be Luke's fiction', the apostle's catalogue of sufferings 'reveals that Luke omits far more than he includes'.

Before Paul detailed his individual afflictions, he first recounted his ancestral claims. Perhaps his opponents derided him for supposedly being less than a purebred Jew. After all, he was originally from the Roman province of Asia Minor (specifically, the city of Tarsus), rather than the Jewish homeland of Palestine (especially Jerusalem). That being the case, Paul wanted to establish that his spiritual heritage as a Hebrew of Hebrew parentage, as a bona fide member of the nation of Israel, and as a circumcised descendant of Abraham, was equal to that of the intruders (v. 22; cf. Phil 3:5–6). The upshot, as expressed by Murphy-O'Connor (1991:115), is that 'culturally, racially, and religiously' Paul was in no way 'inferior to his opponents'. This emphasis is brought out with rhetorical potency by the apostle's threefold usage of *kagō* (2 Cor 11:22). It is as if, for each claim the antagonists made about themselves, he forcefully countered with the declarative, 'So am I!'

Next, Paul used an autobiographical sketch to indicate that his achievements were superior to his rivals. Still, he conceded that, at least on one level, his manner of speaking seemed irrational (*paraphronōn*; verb, present, active, participle; 'as beside myself'; v. 23). On another level, though, it was far more ludicrous for the interlopers to claim to be 'servants' (*diakonoi*; noun, nominative, plural, masculine) whom the Messiah had chosen and commissioned (in which the noun *Christou* is understood to be a qualitative genitive). Paul again tersely maintained that his apostolic call and authorisation was even greater. In this regard,

the phrase *hyper egō*, which Furnish (1984:514) considers a 'rhetorical heightening' of the triple appearance of the pronoun *kagō* in verse 22, could be rendered 'I am more so!'

In the remainder of verses 23 through 29, Paul recounted his personal experiences and concerns (cf. Gal 6:17; 1 Cor 4:9–13; 2 Cor 6:4–5). As he did so, his readers could discern that while he ministered as a theologian of the cross, the charlatans misbehaved as theologians of glory. Paul's intent was to demonstrate that God, in his grace, met all his bondservant's needs, even in the midst of unimaginable adversities. Specifically, compared to the religious frauds, Paul had laboured more arduously, been jailed more frequently, been beaten more cruelly, and faced the spectre of death more often (2 Cor 11:23; cf. the fourfold use of *en* as a preposition of means).

Paul did not exaggerate the nature of the life-threatening circumstances he repeatedly endured for the sake of the Cross. Verses 24 and 25 list four kinds of those exposures to death, as well as the number of times each kind had so far occurred in the apostle's life. First, on five different occasions, Jewish leaders ordered Paul to be lashed 39 times with a whip (cf. Deut 25:1–3). Hafemann (2000b:439) identifies 'doctrinal heresy, blasphemy, and serious offences against Jewish customs' as the 'three most probable crimes' to trigger this punishment. Especially likely is Paul violating 'food and ritual purity regulations' due to his 'ministry among the Gentiles'. Though the Bible does not describe any of these incidents, they undoubtedly resulted from the apostle angering his religious peers for proclaiming the truth about the crucified and risen Messiah. Second, Paul recalled three episodes in which a Gentile mob beat him with wooden rods, perhaps for 'disturbing the peace' (p. 440). This had happened despite the fact that

it was illegal for a Roman citizen—such as Paul—to be forced to endure this cruel punishment (cf. Acts 16:22).

Third, Paul had once been stoned (2 Cor 11:25). This was a prevalent form of execution used by the Jews and other peoples in the first century AD. Perhaps the apostle was recalling his experience in Lystra, a city of central Asia Minor (cf. Acts 14:19–20). Though angry citizens thought they had killed him, he miraculously got up and walked away. Fourth, Paul had been shipwrecked (2 Cor 11:25). On the one hand, undergoing this experience was not technically a punishment, but a hazard of travel; on the other hand, it had happened three times to Paul, a frequent traveller. The Bible does not describe any of these three mishaps. (The shipwreck recorded in Acts 27:39–44 occurred after the apostle wrote 2 Cor) It was due to one of these shipwrecks that he spent a night and day afloat on the open sea before being rescued.

In 11:26, Paul listed eight more kinds of danger he encountered that pointed to the crucicentric nature of his evangelistic outreach (with each subordinate clause being preceded by the noun, *kindynois*, a dative of manner; 'in dangers'). During his numerous, long excursions, he was in peril when he tried to ford swift rivers, and his life was threatened when he encountered robbers while travelling on isolated stretches of road. The apostle braved the menace posed by Jews and Gentiles who were hostile to the gospel. He put his life at risk when he ministered in urban centres, as well as when he made his way through remote wilderness areas. Paul withstood the hazard of voyages on the seas and the brutality of people who only pretended to be Christians.

Besides the dangers of travelling, voluntary privations for the sake of the Cross made Paul's life difficult (v. 27; cf. the fourfold use of *en* as a preposition of means). These hardships were in such basic areas as rest, nourishment, and clothing. For example, in the apostle's efforts to

evangelise and teach, he often deprived himself of sleep, even labouring to the point of exhaustion long into the night. Also, whether as part of a religious fast or because his work made it impossible for him to eat properly, he often went without food and drink. Moreover, because of his poverty or due to his generosity to others, Paul frequently did not have enough garments to keep him warm in cold weather. In addition to the preceding external deprivations (which was only a partial, representative list), doctrinal and moral problems that besieged the churches under Paul's care placed a continual internal burden on him (v. 28). Indeed, his concern extended to the individual members of the church (v. 29). When they felt weak, the apostle also shared in their feelings of weakness. Oppositely, when believers spiritually strayed (*skandalizetai*; verb, present, active, indicative; 'made to stumble'), he became intensely upset (*pyroumai*; verb, present, passive, indicative; 'burn [with indignation]').

Ironically, while setting out to counter the self-commendations of the interlopers, Paul ended up boasting (cf. the twofold use of the verb, *kauchaomai*; v. 30) about circumstances in his life that showcased his feebleness (*astheneias*; noun, genitive, singular, feminine; 'weakness').[18] For pastoral reasons, the apostle felt it was necessary to do so (cf. the use of the verb, *dei*; present, active, indicative). Specifically, he prided himself on his vulnerability, because it furnished opportunities for God's supernatural power to show itself in Paul's cruciform life experiences. The fact that the Lord was able to do so much through the apostle's ministry, despite his hardships, proved the

[18] For an examination of every occurrence of *astheneia* and its cognates in the Pauline letters, cf. Black (2012). He determines that the concept of weakness is foundational to Paul's anthropology, Christology, and ethics (p. 151). Black also discerns that 'through weakness, the power of the resurrection finds its fullest expression in the apostle, in his apostolic mission, and in the communities he founded' (p. 165).

authenticity of his calling. Because his catalogue of sufferings appeared far-fetched, he invoked the Creator's affirming witness. So, while referring to him as the 'God and Father' (v. 31) of the 'Lord Jesus', as well as the one deserving eternal praise, Paul declared that the Creator knew his bondservant was telling the truth.

Paul set the record straight by noting that fierce opposition to his preaching had begun in the earliest days of his ministry. He recounted that while he was in Damascus (about 20 years earlier), the governor of the region (*ethnarchēs*; noun, nominative, singular; 'ruler of the people'), whom the Nabatean king, Aretas IV Philopatris (9 BC–AD 40), appointed, had ordered the apostle's arrest due to his evangelistic activity in the synagogues (v. 32).[19] To help him escape certain death, some local believers lowered him in a large, woven rope-basket (*sarganē*; noun, dative, singular, feminine) through the window of a house built along the city wall (v. 33; cp. Josh 2:15; 1 Sam 9:12; Acts 9:23–25). So, Paul emphasised that from the beginning of his ministry, God had worked through the apostle's frailties and humiliations, just as God had done for the decades following the above incident. In short, as Barnett (1997:553–5) notes, the Lord sustained his bondservant—no matter how low he was brought—so that God could raise up his emissary to herald the truth of the Cross.

[19] In an attempt to correlate the parallel accounts concerning Paul in Acts 8, Galatians 1, and 2 Corinthians 11, Harris (2005:826) offers the following reconstruction: (1) Paul's conversion on the road heading to Damascus (Acts 9:1–8); (2) Paul's temporary residence in Damascus (vv. 9–24); (3) Paul's preaching in the synagogues of Damascus (vv. 20–22); (4) Paul's time in the Nabatean kingdom of Arabia (Gal 1:17); (5) Paul's return to Damascus (v. 17); (6) Paul's escape from Damascus (Acts 9:25; 2 Cor 11:32–33); and (8) Paul's first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion (Acts 9:26–29; Gal 1:18–24).

Despite Paul's reluctance to continue boasting (*kauchasthai*; verb, present, either middle or passive, infinitive; 2 Cor 12:1), there remained one more area where the apostle felt that it was necessary (*dei*; verb, present, active, indicative) to counter the assertions of his opponents in Corinth. Because of his crucicentric perspective, Paul admitted that boasting did not edify him spiritually (cf. the use of the participle, *sympheron*; 'profitable, beneficial, advantageous'); nonetheless, if his rivals could brag about their 'visions' (*optasias*; noun, accusative, plural, feminine; often experienced in dreams) and 'revelations' (*apokalypseis*; noun, accusative, plural, feminine), so could he (12:1). Though Paul's encounter with the risen and glorious Saviour was beyond anything the self-stylised 'super apostles' (11:5; 12:11) of his day (or anyone else) could imagine, the missionary noted it was counterbalanced by a painful ailment God used to keep his bondservant humble (cf. the reference to 'thorn in the flesh' in 12:7).[20]

So, with biting irony, Paul turned to visions he received from the Lord (cf. the plural nouns used in vv. 2 and 7). As Murphy-O'Connor (1991:118) points out, a 'journey to another world' was a 'common theme in apocalyptic literature' of Second Temple Judaism (involving such persons as Enoch, Levi, Moses, Ezra, and Baruch; cf. Collins 2013:236). The apostle's reticence to talk about what he saw is evident by his oblique reference to himself in the third person, as though he were speaking about someone else (v. 2). Garland (1989:388) surmises that Paul refused to directly 'claim this private religious experience as an apostolic credential'. These visions occurred fourteen years earlier (about AD 45), perhaps a decade after the apostle's conversion (about AD 35), but before his first missionary journey (AD 46–48). It is

[20] The information in the following two paragraphs is a revision of material in Lioy (2011:71–2).

possible that he had these experiences around the time he spent ministering in Antioch (cf. Acts 11:25–26).

In the revelatory episodes, Paul was snatched away (*harpagenta*; verb, aorist, passive, participle; 'caught up'; 2 Cor 12:2) to the 'third heaven' (*tritou ouranou*) or 'paradise' (*paradeison*; noun, accusative, singular, masculine; a 'walled enclosure', such as a garden or park; v. 4). Jewish writings of the day subdivided the heavens into three or more layers.[21] It remains unclear how much of this thinking Paul accepted, though his wording in 2 Corinthians 12:2 and 4 suggests he embraced the prevailing Jewish cosmology of a plurality of the heavens. If it is assumed that the first heaven is the sky and the second heaven the more distant stars and planets, the third heaven refers to the place where God dwells. Paradise is the abode of blessedness for the righteous dead. For believers, it also signifies dwelling in fellowship with the exalted Redeemer in unending glory.

Though Paul was clear about what he saw (i.e. supernatural revelations from and about the Lord Jesus; v. 1), the apostle was ambiguous about whether he remained in his body or drifted out of it during these experiences. He wrote that only God knew for sure what really happened to his bondservant (v. 2). The fact that Paul was suddenly taken up into 'paradise' (v. 4) may account for his uncertainty regarding his state during this time (v. 3). Apparently, he entered the throne room of God. In turn, the apostle saw things so sacred and mysterious that he could not express them and heard words that he was not allowed (*exon*;

[21] Cf. Deut 10:14; 1 Kgs 8:27; 2 Chron 2:6; 6:18; Neh 9:6; Ps 68:33; Apoc Abraham 19:5–6; Apoc Moses 35:2; 37:5; 40:2; Ascen Isa 3:13, 18; 4:14, 16; 6:13; 7:8, 13, 17–28, 32–37; 8:1, 7–9, 12, 15–16, 19, 21, 25; 9:1, 4, 6, 18–19, 23; 10:1, 5, 8–9, 11–12, 14, 17, 19–27; 11:24–32, 40; 3 Bar 11:1–2; 2 En 8:1; 20:1; 31:1–2; 3 En 17:1; 48:1; Test Levi 2:7; 3:1; 18:5–6; Luke 21:26; Eph 4:10; Col 1:16, 20; 2 Pet 3:5, 7, 10, 12–13.

verb, present, active, participle; 'authorised, permitted') to repeat. Most likely, these ineffable experiences were given to Paul to strengthen him for all the persecution he was to endure in the coming years. Surely, these visions served as a constant reminder to him of the glory awaiting him after all his days of affliction on earth (cf. Acts 9:15–16; Rom 8:17–18).

Paul did not want his readers to form their opinion about him solely on the basis of his ecstatic visions. That God had granted the apostle a glimpse into glory did not add to his personal status or importance. His boasting was not in receiving spectacular revelations or in being a flamboyant orator (cf. 1 Cor 2:4; 2 Cor 10:10), but in what God could accomplish through his bondservant despite his infirmities (*astheneiais*; noun, dative, plural, feminine; 'weaknesses'; 2 Cor 12:5). Paul would not be exercising poor judgment (*aphrōn*; adjective, nominative, singular, masculine; 'foolish'; v. 6) for stating what he actually experienced (*alētheian*; noun, accusative, singular, feminine; 'truth'); and even though the apostle's visions were real, he held himself back (*phedomai*; verb, either middle or passive, indicative; 'I am refraining') from boasting any more about his supranormal experiences.

Paul did not want his readers to settle on an opinion of him (*logisētai*; verb, aorist, middle, subjunctive; 'credit, regard'; v. 6) based on whatever he did, said, or experienced (including fantastic revelatory encounters); instead, the apostle wanted the Corinthians to remember something they could see for themselves, namely, how God had worked openly and repeatedly through his bondservant's limitations. Paul's intent here may also have been to caution the Corinthians against gullibly accepting the false apostles' claims to have had visions. Unlike the theologians of glory, who sang their praises to the Corinthians, Paul sought to remain a humble theologian of the cross from start to finish.

It was possible that Paul could have been overtaken with pride (*hyperairōmai*; verb, present, subjunctive; 'over-exalted'; v. 7), especially after his remarkable (*hyperbolē*; noun, dative, singular, feminine; 'extraordinary degree or character') visions of the glorious Messiah. So, in order to (cf. the triple use of the *hina* adverbial conjunction to denote purpose) keep his missionary from succumbing to such an enticement, Jesus allowed the apostle to be tormented by a 'thorn in the flesh', in which the noun *skolops* refers to a small, pointed stake, or as Hughes (1962:447) explains, a 'sharpened wooden shaft'. The referent is clarified further by the appositional phrase 'a messenger of Satan' (in which the noun *Satana* is understood to be a qualitative genitive). The divine purpose was to cause Paul harm (*kolaphizē*; verb, present, active, subjective; 'torment, trouble, harass'). The result was (as stated above) that he would shun all forms of hubris (cf. the use of *hyperairōmai* twice in v. 7).

The Greek phrase rendered 'thorn in the flesh' could indicate something mental or physical, as well as huge or tiny, in nature. The obscurity of the apostle's language makes any identification of his vexation impossible; but that has not kept interpreters since the earliest days of the Church from drawing upon biblical and extrabiblical sources in order to venture a guess. One suggestion is that Paul's affliction may have been Jewish persecution that hindered his work and proved to be an embarrassment in his effort to reach the Gentiles. A second theory is that the apostle's problem could have been impure thoughts or some other type of temptation. A third conjecture relates Paul's aggravation to some sort of physical ailment. In this regard, one view holds that severe nearsightedness was the problem. Another option is that it might have been epilepsy, a speech impediment, or a recurring illness, such as malaria. In any case, how could this adversity (regardless of its nature) be both from Jesus and Satan at the same time? One possibility is that

the devil actually harassed Paul, while the Saviour permitted as well as set limits on the extent of the tormenting he would allow.

Paul implored (*parekalesa*; verb, aorist, active, indicative; 'entreated, appealed'; v. 8) the Lord Jesus three times to remove (*apostē*; verb, aorist, active, subjunctive; 'would depart, go away') this affliction (cf. Acts 7:59–60; 1 Cor 1:2; 16:22; 1 Thess 3:11–13). Keener (2005:240) points out that 'Paul's threefold prayer recalls' the Messiah's 'own threefold prayer at Gethsemane, with an analogous result' (cf. Matt 26:36–46; Mark 14:32–42; Luke 22:40–46). Though Paul's request was legitimate, he did not receive the answer he wanted from the Saviour; rather, in the midst of the apostle's excruciating suffering, Jesus revealed a profound truth, one that is at the heart of cruciform theology. Murphy-O'Connor (1991:119) clarifies that the perfect, active, indicative tense of *eirēken* ('he has said') denotes a 'permanently valid decision', one in which there would be 'no more prayers for release'.

Specifically, the Redeemer declared that his enablement (*charis*; noun, nominative, singular, feminine; 'grace'; 2 Cor 12:9) was all his bondservant needed (*arkei*; verb, present, active, indicative; 'sufficient, enough'). The reason (cf. the use of the explanatory conjunction, *gar*) was that Jesus' 'power' (*dynamis*; noun, nominative, singular, feminine) was brought to completion or fulfilment (*teleitai*; verb, present, passive, indicative; 'perfected') in the believer's feebleness (*astheneia*; noun, dative, singular, feminine; 'weakness'). Harris (2005:863) points out that in this verse *charis* and *dynamis* are 'essentially synonymous' in their usage. Schütz (1975:187) describes the interplay between human 'weakness' and divine 'power' as having a 'thoroughly dialectical texture'.

In the present context, the Saviour used the afflictions Christians experienced to manifest his life-giving potency. This seemingly

illogical truth, which possibly is the capstone of Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians, summed up his crucicentric approach to ministry. Pickett (1997:166) mentions that the apostle's opponents considered his infirmities to be an indication of a 'low social status with respect to the cultural values of Greco-Roman society'; yet, according to Gorman (2001:30), Paul still let the stigma of his cruciform existence define the entire narrative of his 'life and ministry'. Ultimately, then, his distress was a case where Jesus, through his grace, brought eternal good out of temporal anguish. It was also a situation in which, as Lenski (1961:1286) explains, 'when we are reduced to nothing, God is allowed to be our everything'. Concerning Paul, it was his 'weakness that made him so excellent a tool for the Lord' (p. 1306).

Given Jesus' response, Paul discerned that instead of his avoiding tribulation, Jesus' mighty presence (*dynamis*; v. 9) would establish its tent-like abode (*episkēnōsē*; verb, aorist, active, subjective; 'may reside, rest') over the apostle's life (cf. 1 Pet 4:14). Thrall (2000:828) agrees with other interpreters that Paul had the 'concept of the *Shekinah* in mind', with Exodus 40:34–35 forming the Old Testament backdrop for such a literary connection. In support of this view is 2 Corinthians 3, where Paul conveys his 'close familiarity with the Exodus theme of the divine glory reflected on the face of Moses' (cf. Exod 25:8; Ezek 37:27; Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34; John 1:14; 2 Cor 6:16; Rev 21:3).

As Matera (2003:286) explains, Paul's 'weakness becomes the place or the occasion' for Jesus to 'manifest power'. Hafemann (2000a:24) adds that it also is 'part of the divine plan for the spread of the gospel'. Marshall (2004:297) equates the Saviour's 'strength' with the 'experience' of God's 'grace'. In turn, he 'enables' bondservants such as Paul to deal with adversities, including 'weariness, injury, disease, and death', as well as 'poverty and lack of esteem'. Because of their 'inner experiences of communion with God', his children are acutely

aware of his love. They also receive from him the fortitude they need to 'communicate the gospel effectively' and invite others to experience new life in baptismal union with the Redeemer.

Concerning Paul, personal suffering was an opportunity for his enthusiastic (*hēdista*; adjective, used with a superlative emphasis; 2 Cor 12:9) boasting in the Lord. For this reason (cf. the use of the inferential conjunction, *dio*; v. 10), and in order to benefit (*hyper*; preposition of advantage) the Saviour's redemptive cause, Paul took delight (*eudokō*; verb, present, active, indicative) in his afflictions (cf. the fourfold use of *en* as a preposition of circumstance). The latter included infirmities (*astheneiais*; noun, dative, plural, feminine; 'weaknesses'), verbal and physical abuses (*hybresin*; noun, dative, plural, feminine; 'insults'), dire circumstances (*anankais*; noun, dative, plural, feminine; 'distresses'), maltreatment (*diōgmois*; noun, dative, plural, masculine; 'persecutions'), and predicaments (*stenochōriais*; noun, dative, plural, feminine; 'difficulties'). The apostle endured all of these troubles because (cf. the use of the adverbial causal conjunction, *gar*) the Saviour was glorified in his bondservant being weak. It also became the occasion for him being filled with the Lord's power (*dynatos*; adjective, nominative, singular; 'strong').

4. Conclusion

In Lioy (2015), I used a case study analysis of Ephesians 1:15–23 to validate that Paul's apocalyptic interpretation of reality exercised a controlling influence on his writings. The present journal article builds on the preceding work by undertaking a case study analysis of 2 Corinthians 11:16–12:10 through the prism of his crucicentric thinking (especially in dialogue with a confessional Lutheran perspective). The major claim is that the apostle's theology of the cross helps to clarify

his apocalyptic view of reality. For instance, one of Paul's eschatological convictions was that the Father has triumphed over the malevolent forces of darkness (i.e. Satan, sin, and death) through the Son's redemptive work at Calvary. Even more to the point, the Cross is the central historical event and narrative feature of Paul's end-time view of existence.

In my discourse, I noted that God's present and future reign is cruciform in character. The Cross is the basis for Jesus' followers experiencing the blessing of his presence and provision through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Jesus' redemptive work at Calvary also provides the incentive believers need to live as members of God's family and citizens of his eternal kingdom. Metaphorically speaking, they are a foretaste of the righteousness, peace, and holiness to be established by the Creator throughout the cosmos at the consummation of the present age. The Church's role, however, is only possible whenever it conforms itself to the Cross.

Given the above observations, it is appropriate to explore through a representative Pauline passage how the apostle's *theologia crucis* functioned as a heuristic device. Put differently, there are various prisms through which to view and interpret Paul's writings, including crucicentricity. So, before engaging 2 Corinthians 11:16–12:10 in earnest, a synopsis was provided of the apostle's theology of the cross; yet, because of the extensive secondary literature and the lack of consensus within the academic guild concerning the meaning and significance of Paul's cruciform outlook, it seemed expedient to approach the latter endeavour from a confessional Lutheran perspective. Historically speaking, this frame of reference has been a major interlocutor (of sorts) for specialists from other philosophical and theological traditions.

In stepping back from the synopsis provided, it is clear that secular human culture, whether in the first-century AD or in the twenty-first century, has an aversion to suffering; in contrast, Luther understood the theology of the cross as the heartbeat of Pauline theology. On the one hand, a theology of glory insists that people have the ability to justify themselves before a holy God; on the other hand, the apostle taught that because of the depravity of people and the bondage of their will to sin (cf. Rom 3:9–20; 7:18), the cross of Christ is the only true source of spiritual knowledge concerning who God is and how he saves the lost (cf. 1 Cor 1:18–31). More specifically, it is only at the foot of the cross that fallen persons can receive from the indwelling Spirit genuine insight and understanding concerning the triune God (cf. 1 Cor 12:13; Rom 8:9; Eph 1:13–14).

The preceding observations establish the context for a consideration of Paul's crucicentricity in 2 Corinthians 11:16–12:10. An examination of 10–13 indicates that his opponents believed that genuine apostles did not suffer; instead, they allegedly experienced the glory of God's powerful presence by performing signs and wonders. In contrast, though Paul performed miracles, he was convinced that strength in weakness was even more distinctive of a genuine apostolic ministry. Indeed, while setting out to counter the self-commendations of the false apostles, Paul ended up boasting about his weaknesses (11:30). The apostle prided himself on his vulnerability because it furnished opportunities for Jesus' power to show itself in his bondservant's life. The fact that the Saviour was able to do so much through Paul's ministry despite his hardships proved the authenticity of his calling. The Redeemer declared that his all-sufficient grace was brought to completion in Paul's weakness (12:9). Expressed another way, the fullness of the Son's strength was most evident in the frailty and limitations of human weakness.

Although Jesus would not remove Paul's affliction (described in vv. 7–8), Jesus promised the apostle that he would never lack divine grace to endure the weakness brought about by any hardship he experienced, particularly for the sake of the Cross. So, instead of being able to avoid tribulation in his life, Paul would be given strength to triumph over it. In turn, this became the focus of his boasting in the Lord. The apostle made general reference to his afflictions, which included infirmities, verbal and physical abuses, dire circumstances, persecutions, and calamities. All of these things he endured for the cause of Christ because the Saviour was glorified in Paul being weak. In short, he was quite content with his infirmities so that he could be filled with the power of the Lord (v. 10).

What is striking about the early followers of Jesus, including Paul, is that they endured indignities voluntarily so that the gospel could be proclaimed to the lost. The effectiveness of the message of the cross is evacuated if the messengers are hucksters and cheats. In contrast, heralding the good news in the midst of suffering commends the gospel to the hearers. So, for example, in 1 Corinthians 1, Paul countered proponents of a theology of glory by emphasising the theology of the cross. The apostle saw the latter as an effective antidote to the conceit that boasts in ministers rather than in God. Paul's emphasis on crucicentrism reminds believers that salvation is accomplished through the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus. He did not bring salvation by coming to earth as a powerful monarch, but by taking upon himself the degradation of Calvary. In turn, Jesus' atoning sacrifice at the cross is the means by which salvation is accomplished for all who repent and believe.

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Review of Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Triune God*.

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Macchia F D 2010. *Justified in the Spirit: creation, redemption, and the triune God*. Pentecostal Manifestos. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans.

1. Introduction

In Frank Macchia's work, the author attempts to 'develop a pneumatological theology of justification inspired by a Pentecostal metaphor, the baptism in the Spirit' (p. 14). He proposes that divine koinonia, or the mutual indwelling of the Trinity, is the most fruitful context for bridging the gap between the usually isolated doctrines of creation, justification and sanctification. This noted Pentecostal-ecumenical theologian takes a deep look at both the Protestant and Catholic doctrines of justification, moving past both in order to reconcile them within the Spirit's embrace. Therefore, Macchia highlights the role of pneumatology in order to lead 'toward a Trinitarian integration of justification' (p. 293).

Pneumatological reflections, and as a result, Trinitarian theology are the means by which Macchia develops his vision of justification. This vision is both metamorphic and forensic by developing justification from within the indwelling Spirit's eschatological mission of bringing all of creation into the embrace of the divine koinonia. For Macchia,

[1] The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

this Trinitarian embrace finds its ultimate fulfilment in the resurrection of the dead and the new creation. Consequently, justification is essentially eschatological, as justification must have its beginning and ending in the extensiveness of the life of the Spirit.

2. Summary

Throughout the chapters of his book, Macchia sets out to develop a Trinitarian theology of justification with an emphasis on Spirit baptism. Justification then is pneumatological in substance, 'consisting of pardon, the victory of life over death, divine witness and vindication, and participation in the divine koinonia' (p. 13). In the first part of the book, which consists of chapters 2, 3, and 4, the author explores three models of justification and how these connect with the Spirit: Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal.

Macchia first shows how the Catholic doctrine of justification moved in the direction of a moral view of the justified relationship and an anthropological emphasis on acquired virtues (p. 36). However, the modern Catholic reach for the Spirit has the potential to help view justification within the wide-open spaces of the Trinitarian self-vindication as the Creator, who makes the creation the divine dwelling place (pp. 30–35). Further, Macchia moves on to look at the Protestant doctrine of justification and shows how it both neglected and reached for the Spirit at the same time. Macchia suggests that in fixing the legal overtones of Protestant soteriology what is needed is a fresh emphasis on the Spirit instead of faith as the very substance of justifying righteousness. This move serves to maintain the God-centric theology of the Reformation (p. 74). On the flip side, the Protestant view of justification has always reached for the Spirit in that it reached for a Trinitarian soteriology, but the great insight into justification as a

divine judgment requires a strong pneumatology in order to help the robustness of the Trinitarian structure (p. 73).

Therefore, both the Catholic and Protestant doctrines of justification miss the Spirit's activity on their emphases: habitual grace and imputed righteousness. In chapters 2 and 3 he shows how both of these ultimately are the Spirit's activity, and thus argues that both can become more effective by adopting Pentecostalism's distinctive emphasis on Spirit Baptism. Thus, in chapter 4, Macchia shows how the 'justified relationship is not primarily legal or moral but rather involves mutual indwelling and embrace, which is its ecumenical significance' (p. 99). He expands Pentecostalism's typical theology of Spirit baptism and the typical theologies of justification found in the Christian West in order to discover the enormity of their eschatological scope. However, this not only serves to bridge the gap between Protestantism and Catholicism in relation to justification, but this dialogue serves to also help Pentecostal theologians rethink some of the ambiguities and difficulties of their own varied tradition (p. 75).

In the second part of the book that includes chapters 5, 6, and 7, the author moves to look at the justification-Spirit connection found in the Old Testament, in Christ's life found in the gospels and Acts, and then in the rest of the New Testament following Pentecost. This promise of the Spirit is then fulfilled in Christ's life, especially in the atonement when corresponding to Jesus' later role as Spirit Baptizer.

First, in the Old Testament, the author finds that God will fulfill the promise to Israel and, ultimately, to the world and the creation through the gift of the Holy Spirit (p. 128). The prophesied Messiah will have God's favour and will rule in justice as the man of the Spirit. He will proclaim the year of the Lord's favour as empowered by the Spirit (p. 118). However, he notes that what is unclear in the Old Testament

witness is the exact link between the Messiah and outpouring of the Spirit of life on flesh (p. 129). The idea of Jesus as the dispenser of the Spirit, or the Spirit Baptiser is the breakthrough notion of the New Testament, especially found in the gospels and Acts. According to Macchia, 'Spirit baptism will link the righteous Messiah with the rightwised creation' (p. 129).

In Christ as the man of the Spirit, God spreads himself through the chasm in order to open all of creation to the gift of the Spirit. This is the angle that Macchia takes in order to overcome the gap between justification in the cross and subsequent events involving Christ that are generally more widely recognised events of the Spirit—resurrection, exaltation, and Spirit-impartation (pp. 132–133). Therefore, there is no way to exclude the Spirit from justification by way of using the cross. God has decided to open the Spirit to creation, through the meditation of the crucified Jesus (p. 184).

Macchia proceeds to again talk about the basis of justification in the metaphor of Spirit baptism with a renewed focus on Spirit outpouring after the resurrection. He sets out this time to show how justification is more deeply connected to the indwelling and new life of the Spirit in the New Testament witness than is commonly assumed. The scriptural witness concentrates all soteriological categories not only on Christ but also on the Spirit, both of whom are sent by the Father to accomplish His will and to bring creation into the embrace of the divine koinonia (p. 215). Thus, 'Spirit baptism provides the link between the Spirit-indwelt Christ and the Spirit-indwelt church, or between Christ's justification and ours' (p. 215).[2]

[2] In relation to 'Christ's justification' see 1 Timothy 3:16 and Romans 4:25. According to Macchia, the sin that is overcome in Jesus' justification in the Spirit at his resurrection is our sin and not his, but it is still the sin that he bore for us on the

Chapters 8, 9, and 10 make up the third part of the book. As a whole, these chapters focus on the biblical treatment of justification in connection to how it is worked out eschatologically in the life of the faith, the communion of the church and the life of the Trinity. First, the author discusses possession of the Spirit. In the context of Spirit baptism, faith is the means by which we possess God, as God has possessed us in Christ and in the embrace of the Spirit (p. 221). Therefore, although faith involves belief it cannot be reduced to it as faith more deeply involves mutual indwelling and participating. For Macchia, we are justified 'by grace through faith' or more specifically 'by the Spirit in Christ through participation in his faithful witness' (p. 257).

The author then moves to discuss how justification in Christ and by the Spirit means justification through communion. Just as Christ rose from the dead through the fullness of life in the Spirit, so the church rises with the same fullness. Humanity is, as a result, rectified in reconciliation and communion with the 'other' (p. 292). Without the other, there can be no communal renewal, as we were created to live out the Spirit-filled life with one another.

Finally, in the concluding chapter, attention is turned to the Trinitarian structure necessary to the author's task. This final chapter highlights the role of pneumatology in leading one towards a Trinitarian integration of justification. He began by moving beyond 'a mere knitting together of Protestant and Catholic understandings of justification' (p. 293). He then asserts that the Spirit brings about justification through Christ in

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cross. Jesus' justification is an expression of God's own self-justification as faithful creator and redeemer, whereas our justification is a gift received in faith and lived out (imperfectly) in faithfulness.

the mutual love and koinonia of Father, Son and Spirit and then uses the mutual indwelling of Trinitarian koinonia as a context for understanding the overlapping and integrated nature of justification and sanctification and the theological categories of creation and redemption. Lastly, a concluding reflection is offered in chapter 11 using Ezekiel 37 as a metaphor for justification in the Spirit.

In sum, Macchia concludes that to be justified is to participate in the fullness of the Trinitarian embrace. This means that the risen and glorified Christ as well as the communion of love enjoyed between each member of the Trinity is now available to be enjoyed by the believer. Without the Spirit's embrace and witness, both traditional Catholic and Protestant understanding of justification will continue to be put in opposition to each other. Therefore, the Spirit serves to be the central link and the eschatological fulfilment of both the divine legal declaration and the infused virtues. What is left is a pneumatological theology of justification using Spirit baptism as the central metaphor that propels readers towards a more Trinitarian soteriology.

3. Critique

This brilliantly written and argued book sets forth a robust pneumatology of justification. Finally a theologian has been able to effectively join both Protestant and Catholic views of righteousness by placing the Spirit's indwelling at the very centre of justification, all outlined within a Trinitarian framework. One of the most noteworthy aspects of this remarkable project is that Macchia effectively moves beyond the anthropocentric tendencies of Western Christianity, especially in relation to theologies of justification. For Macchia, the Spirit brings about justification through Christ in the mutual love and koinonia of the Trinity. This mutual indwelling of Trinitarian koinonia

is the context for understanding the overlapping nature of justification, sanctification and creation.

This focus on God's redemptive purposes for all of God's creation is an important element in this project that deserves due attention. Macchia's theology of justification as it relates to creation is especially relevant to doing theological science pneumatologically and done from a distinctly Pentecostal perspective. Although Macchia does not explicitly mention the term 'science', his theology of creation in relation to pneumatological justification resembles many other 'scientific' theologies of nature. Here Macchia advocates for a redemptive eschatological and pneumatological theology of creation:

> We should also bear in mind that the forsaken creation entered by the forsaken Christ and the blasphemed Spirit at the cross was already a reality sustained by the Spirit in its implicit witness to God (Rom 1:20) and also precisely in its implicit yearning for the liberty of redemption. 'We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time' (Rom 8:22). There is no such thing as a Spiritless creation: 'If I make my bed in the depths, you are there' (Psa 139.8). In the cross God reaches down into a forsaken creation that is crying out for liberty with the aid of divine pathos, the Spirit of creation. The Spirit who descended with Christ into suffering and alienation at the cross brought to fulfilment the Spirit's longstanding intercession for creation in the midst of its groaning for liberty. In the cross, the Spirit now wilfully opens up to be assailed by the dark forces that keep creation in bondage in order to remain true to this intercession … God achieves justice for creation, not only as judge, but also as intercessor and advocate in solidarity with the guilty and shamed defendants. (pp. 179-180)

Ecological theology and theologies of nature/creation fall within the scope of scientific theology, which Macchia touches on here. Further, Macchia also is implicitly scientific in his approach, that is, his theology is criticizable, shareable, and expandable. However, Macchia distinctively uses the eschatological Spirit to develop a Pentecostal theology of justification that includes all of God's creation, even non-human life. As he said above, 'There is no such thing as a Spiritless creation' (p. 179).

Scientific theology needs a robust pneumatology in order to effectively engage other sciences. Macchia has indeed provided this. However, it is important to note that doing theological science pneumatologically also demands prudence. When done from a Pentecostal perspective, scientific theology must reject panentheism as well as any theology that separates the Holy Spirit's work from Christ. This is especially important, as Pentecostalism emphasises Jesus as the Spirit Baptiser. Nonetheless, despite these two concerns, theological science done pneumatologically and from a distinctly Pentecostal ethos, I believe provides an immense opportunity for theology into the twenty-first century.

Although Macchia's work is brilliantly written and articulated, I find certain aspects of it wanting. For instance, as noted before, although Macchia's work surpasses many glaring weaknesses of Western theologies of justification, I found myself wanting more dialogue with Eastern Christianity. Although justification is typically a Western doctrine historically speaking, that is not to say that Eastern Christianity has nothing to add to the conversation. I find this especially relevant as Macchia's 'mutual indwelling' has a clear similarity to the Eastern notion of theosis. Along the same line, his engagement with Pentecostalism is clearly written from a Western theological context. Normally I would not penalise a theologian for his own context, yet

since Pentecostalism especially is now primarily in non-Western nations, I believe it would have been beneficial to engage these emerging voices.

Further, another weakness to consider is the apparent lack of dialogue on practising our theology. One of Macchia's overall achievements is how ecumenically useful his theology is for the church at large. However, readers are left with the question, 'now what?' The reader is left with little dialogue on how to begin to use this ecumenical pneumatology of justification in ecumenical conversation and in the church at large. To solve this, a suggestion for further consideration would be for Macchia to have written the last chapter, chapter 11, with some final thoughts on how to practise this theology. The preceding critical comments, though, should not divert anyone from the paramount importance of this project for Pentecostal theologians in particular and the church as a whole.

4. Conclusion

Consequently, Macchia's project as a whole is of vital importance for ecumenical theology, pneumatology, theologies of justification and Pentecostal theology as a whole. In relation to theological science, there are a few things to be cautious about when doing it pneumatologically, but Macchia's balanced approach shows that a robust pneumatology is most full-bodied when it is situated within a Trinitarian framework. Despite a few minor weaknesses, Macchia's project as a whole is a brilliant theology that deserves much attention and admiration. His pneumatology and Trinitarian framework is useful for more than only justification, and could be used as an engagement tool for many other theological disciplines, such as theological science.

Reference List

Macchia FD 2010. *Justified in the Spirit: creation, redemption, and the triune God. Pentecostal Manifestos*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Editorial Policy

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Since *Conspectus* is a scholarly publication that is evangelical in its theological orientation (i.e. predominately classical and historically orthodox in its interpretive approach), submissions entirely void of a theological component (i.e. engagement with the Old Testament and New Testament scriptures), along with submissions that deny, either directly or indirectly, the key tenets put forward in the SATS statement of faith, will not be considered for publication. It is in the discretion of the editorial board to make the decision, and their decision is final. *Conspectus* is a refereed evangelical theological e-journal published biannually by the South African Theological Seminary (www.satsonline.org). The journal is a publication for scholarly articles in any of the major theological disciplines.

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The purpose of *Conspectus* is to provide a forum for scholarly, Bible-based theological research and debate. The journal is committed to operate within an evangelical framework, namely, one that is predominately classical and historically orthodox in its interpretive approach, and that affirms the inspiration and authority of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. The journal seeks to publish well-researched essays and reviews on a broad range of suitable biblical and theological topics that are as clear and accessible as possible for the benefit of both specialist and non-specialist readers.

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