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The Intercession of the Holy Spirit: Revisiting Romans 8:26–27

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Abstract

Traditionally the intercession of the Holy Spirit has been interpreted and understood to be the act of prayer, but an in-depth exegetical and theological analysis of the text revealed that this intercession goes beyond the boundaries of prayer to include an active intervention and mediation in the life of the believer to bring about reconciliation of those areas and issues that are contrary to God's will and purpose. It includes giving believers the appropriate supernatural help needed to accomplish God's will and purpose in their lives. It includes using all circumstances and situations as tools to conform believers to the image of Christ. It involves the Holy Spirit's aggressive fight against the sin and weaknesses that plague and incapacitate believers in their walk of faith. Thus, the Holy Spirit's help in the form of intercession may intervene in various ways to empower and supernaturally strengthen believers to accomplish the purpose and plan of God for them.

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

1. Introduction

Whilst there was a consensus among the reviewed writings that the Holy Spirit helps believers in their weakness by interceding for them, it was observed that there is disagreement among scholars about what this intercession may involve and mean for the believer. The literature reviewed revealed that there are three main areas of interpretation among scholars when discussing the intercessory groanings of the Spirit. The three main views debated among scholars are (a) indirect groans, (b) glossolalia, and (c) direct groans. An in-depth critical assessment and evaluation of each view follows the contributions of the authors in each case.

2. Indirect Groans

The reviewed scholars have interpreted the Spirit's groanings, mentioned in Romans 8:26 as the believer praying, and have contributed as follows.

Arthur Pink (2012: loc 3285) said these groans are produced by the Spirit but expressed by the believer as inward sighs or sobs. Leon Morris (2012:327–328) was of the same opinion, and believes these groanings are inspired by the Holy Spirit, who takes them and turns them into effective intercession. David Jeremiah (1998: loc 438) also agreed with this view, and reported that the Holy Spirit translates the believer's groans into eloquent petitions, and presents them to the Father. Martin Lloyd-Jones (1975:135–136) came across a lot stronger as a proponent of this view, and stated that since it is inconceivable for God to groan, the groans referred to must be those of believers, which the Holy Spirit then translates. Similarly, Robert Haldane (2013: loc 8657) believes it is unthinkable for the Spirit of God to be subject to

such emotions, and thus refutes the idea that these groanings are from the Holy Spirit. Consequently, he proposed that it is the believers who groan as the Holy Spirit excites and motivates them.

Wayne Grudem (1994:381–382) wrote that the use of the Greek word *sunantilambanomai*, translated 'help', implies that the Holy Spirit prays with believers and not instead of them, and as a result has concluded that the Holy Spirit participates with believers and assists them in prayer by turning their wordless groans into effective prayer. Likewise, Benjamin Warfield (2013: loc 689) commented that the Holy Spirit does not remove the believers' weaknesses or bear the burden wholly for them, but He comes to their aid and shares the load with them. John Parry (1912:120) offered the same opinion, and said the Holy Spirit cooperates with believers in prayer. Charles Ryrie (1999: loc 2314) and Allen Ross (2006: n.p.) both agreed, and pointed out that this Greek word 'help' in Romans 8:26 is only used in one other place in the New Testament: when Martha asked Jesus to tell Mary to help her with all the meal preparations (Luke 10:40), hence the implication of the word is that believers will still do their part. To this, Kent Hughes (1991:163) added the illustration of two men carrying a log, one at each end, to demonstrate how the Spirit helps believers with their prayer. Other scholars (Hale 2007:558; Krell 2012: n.p.; Cereghin 2013:259) emphasised even further the importance of believers praying, by stressing the fact that if they do not pray, the Holy Spirit cannot help them, because He will have no prayers to interpret or remould and deliver to the Father.

3. Assessment of Contributions: Indirect Groans

All the proponents of this view agreed and seemed to understand that the Holy Spirit causes the believer to groan in prayer. However, this interpretation does not appear to be accurate, because the text seems to

imply that the Holy Spirit is the one doing the groaning, not the believer (Rom 8:26). Nevertheless, two possible reasons emerged from the authors' contributions, which may have contributed to their arriving at this conclusion.

The first reason is offered by Lloyd-Jones and Haldane, who are of the opinion that it is unthinkable for the Spirit of God to be subject to such emotions, and therefore believe that it is inconceivable for the Spirit to groan. Consequently they are of the opinion that the groans referred to in the text must be the groans or prayers of believers. However, the scriptures teach that God is capable of emotions like grief, anger and joy, and that He is able to express these emotions if He so chooses (Gen 6:6; Exod 32:10; Neh 8:10; Ps 37:13). Would it not then be logical to conclude that the Holy Spirit is able to groan? Curtis Mitchell (1982:234) rightly counters the claim that the Spirit cannot groan, and says by way of argument, 'God is not devoid of emotion. If God loves, grieves, and rejoices, why is it inconceivable that He groans?' Furthermore, the groaning of the Spirit would naturally fit the empathy and identification that accompany and sustain intercession (Grubb 2011:82).

The second possible reason for believing that the groans are from the believer is offered by Grudem, Warfield, Ryrie, Parry, Ross and Hughes, who believe that the word 'help' implies that the Holy Spirit does not bear the burden wholly for the believers, but that He comes to their aid and shares the load with them in prayer. In other words, it implies that believers are still involved, doing their share of praying. This view was strengthened even further by the illustration given by Hughes, of the two men carrying a log, to describe how the Holy Spirit helps believers when they pray. As a result, the emphasis in this view is on the help the Spirit gives believers in prayer, which certainly is

needed, and is most definitely a source of encouragement in the midst of the believers' weaknesses. However, it appears that the intercession of the Spirit for believers is overlooked by this emphasis, and the depth and significance of His help is therefore not discussed. Hale, Krell, and Cereghin emphasised the believer's prayer even further by commenting that the lack of prayer inhibits the work of the Holy Spirit. It appeared, therefore, that the emphasis in this view also suggests that God only responds or acts when believers pray. Where then does God's sovereignty and providence fit in, if He is completely limited to the believer's prayer? Leon Morris (2012:332) offers an accurate opposing comment, and says one should not think that God can only take action when one invites or gives Him permission to do so. In addition to this, it seems that the emphasis on prayer in this view may also cause the motivation of prayer to shift from a 'desire to pray' to 'having to pray', which may not contribute to building an intimate relationship with God or be a real source of encouragement for believers who are anticipating the day of redemption.

Furthermore, one may also need to consider that Hughes' illustration gives a picture of possibly two equally matched participants. But this is not the case when the Holy Spirit, who is omniscient and omnipotent, participates with believers. Whilst there is participation taking place, it is more a picture of a toddler and an adult sharing the load. The toddler may be willing and eager to carry the load, but in reality is totally incapable of offering much assistance, just like believers in their weakness when they don't know how to pray. Thus, sometimes the believer's part may just be very small, and may amount to a simple cry for help. It may look like the toddler merely putting his/her hand on the heavy load but not actually carrying it, just like believers when they do not know how to pray and the Holy Spirit intercedes for them. Hence, this research is not promoting passivity in prayer, and therefore does not dispute the fact that believers need to pray, or that there is participation

taking place with the Holy Spirit when believers pray. It does, however, highlight the point that the participation may not be equally shared, because one participant is finite while the other is infinite. Furthermore, the point emphasised in this research is that the proponents of this view seem to be interpreting these groanings from the believer's perspective and not from the Spirit's perspective. In other words, the position being highlighted is the believer's prayer-life, in which the Holy Spirit participates and helps them, which He does. But, this emphasis redirects the focus of the text, and puts it on the believer, as opposed to keeping the Holy Spirit as the focus of the text and viewing what His intercession involves and means for the believer.

Most of the authors reviewed who hold this view also propose that the Holy Spirit translates the believer's groans into eloquent and effective petitions. However, there is no biblical support given by these authors for this understanding of the Spirit perfecting the believer's prayer. Their view also seems to imply that without the Holy Spirit translating these prayers, God would not know what the believers are praying. However, Scripture teaches that God knows all things, including believers' desires and needs before they even ask (Jer 17:10; Matt 6:7–9; Luke 16:15). This belief also seems to imply that God only accepts and responds to perfect prayer. On this point, Richard Foster (1992:104) offers a contrary opinion. He maintains that God accepts the believer's prayers just as they are, for 'in the same way that a small child cannot draw a bad picture, so a child of God cannot offer a bad prayer'. Would one's prayers not be acceptable to God because of one's relationship with Him as a son or daughter (Matt 6:8–9, Jas 5:16)? Would one's prayer not be effective because of the God one prays to, and not because of one's eloquence or lack thereof?

In summary, this assessment has evaluated the view of 'indirect groans' based on the contributions of the writings reviewed, and it has observed that the emphasis on the believer praying with the help of the Spirit has largely overlooked the Holy Spirit's intercession on the believers' behalf and what significance that may have for them while they wait for the day of their redemption.

4. *Glossolalia*

The proponents of this view have interpreted the Spirit's groanings, mentioned in Romans 8:26, as the believer praying in tongues, and have contributed in the following way.

Grant Osborne (2004:216) explained that the proponents of this view argue that praying in tongues best explains the groanings of the Spirit, because the language used is similar to the *glossolalic* prayer referred to in 1 Corinthians 14:14–15 and Ephesians 6:18. Similarly, Ernst Kasemann (1994:241) said, 'praying in tongues' (*glossolalia*) makes good sense, in his interpretation of the text. Gordon Fee (2011: loc 2463) is of the same opinion, and wrote that the 'inarticulate groanings' most likely refers to *glossolalia*. Likewise, Robert Kendall (2014: loc 2073) is personally convinced that Paul was describing the practice of *glossolalia*. David Bernard (1997:188) agrees too, and commented that *glossolalia* can certainly be included in the interpretation of the text. Frederick Bruce (1985:175) has the same opinion, as he commented that 'tongues may be included in this expression'. He suggested further that believers praying in the Spirit (Eph 6:18) and the Holy Spirit interceding on their behalf (Rom 8:26) are one and the same thing.

5. Counterarguments from Scholars

There are scholars who contest this perspective on the grounds that *glossolalia* does not naturally fit the interpretation of this text. For example, Colin Kruse (2012:382) highlighted two valid reasons why it is unlikely to be glossolalia: (1) the apostle is speaking of the Spirit's intercession for the believer, not His inspiration of prayer in the believer, and (2) Paul says that the Spirit's intercession is through wordless groans, which suggests that the intercession is silent, and not verbal as is the case with speaking in tongues. Likewise, Bob Deffinbaugh (2004: n.p.) and John Cereghin (2013:260) rightly agreed that speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*) is not in view here, because the text refers to 'wordless groans' and tongues which are uttered are expressed by the believer. Charles Ryrie (1999:441) is of the same mind, and said these groans are wordless and therefore not *glossolalia* or any other kind of formulated expression. Likewise, Allen Ross (2006 : n.p.) and Wayne Grudem (1994:1078) both agree, refuting the idea of tongues, because the intercession in question is on behalf of all believers and not just for those with the gift of tongues. Ross argued further that the result of such teaching creates guilt and confusion on the part of those who do not speak in tongues.

6. Assessment of Contributions: *Glossolalia*

Kasemann, Fee, Kendall, Bernard, and Bruce are all of the opinion that the groans of the Spirit are believers praying in unknown tongues (*glossolalia*), based on the view that the language used in Romans 8:26 is similar to the tongues referred to in 1 Corinthians 14:14–15 and the prayer in Ephesians 6:18. This explanation would imply that the tongues prayed by the human spirit (1 Cor 14:14–15) and believers praying in the Spirit (Eph 6:18) are the same as the Holy Spirit making

intercession for them (Rom 8:26–27), which is exactly what Bruce has concluded. However, the Holy Spirit praying for believers (intercession) is not the same as believers being led by the Spirit to pray effectively according to the will of God. Hence, this interpretation appears to be forcing the scripture to say something that it is not saying, which would be a typical example of eisegesis. A more accurate view may be that it is the groanings of the Spirit on the believer's behalf which become the perfect intercessions to God, and not the forced idea of tongues being the perfect intercession. That said, this research is not disputing or contradicting the fact that believers sometimes speak in tongues when they pray. The point being emphasised is that this view may be guilty of eisegesis, as this specific text does not seem to naturally fit the idea of the gift of tongues. Three valid counter-arguments were given, aptly explaining and showing why the text does not naturally fit the idea of tongues.

Firstly, Kruse rightly argued that the Spirit's intercession is for believers, and it therefore does not refer to the prayers He inspires believers to pray (Eph 6:18). This interpretation seems to be the most sound, and therefore the one most preferred by the majority of scholars. Hence, this argument refutes Bruce's suggestion that 'believers praying in the Spirit' and 'the Holy Spirit interceding on their behalf' are one and the same thing.

Secondly, Kruse, Deffinbaugh, Cereghin, and Ryrie concurred and argued further that the groans are wordless groans, implying that tongues, which are spoken by believers, cannot be what is meant. This observation rightly refutes the claims of all the proponents of this view, who seem to be forcing the text to say something it is not saying. Although not mentioned, it may be possible that the proponents of this view may be of a similar opinion, and also believe like Lloyd-Jones and Haldane (indirect view) that it is inconceivable for the Spirit to groan,

and therefore have concluded that believers groan with unknown tongues.

Thirdly, Ross and Grudem both accurately argued that those who don't speak in tongues would be excluded from this intercession, resulting in guilt and confusion. To this, one could add that those who do not have this gift may feel inadequate and somewhat rejected by the Holy Spirit not interceding for them by withholding tongues from them. It appears therefore that this view could be guilty of exclusivity, which seems to be contrary to the inclusive generous heart of God that freely gives believers all things (Rom 8:32).

In summary, this assessment has evaluated the view of *glossolalia* based on the contributions of the authors reviewed. As a result, it has noted that because the interpretation of this view has resigned 'the groanings of the Spirit' to *glossolalia*, it has also contributed to the lack of research on the topic of the Spirit's intercession on behalf of the believers and what significance that would have in their life as they wait for the day of redemption.

7. Direct Groans

The proponents of this view have interpreted the Spirit's groanings, mentioned in Romans 8:26, as His own groanings and have contributed thus.

Douglas Moo (1991:562) and John Stott (1994:245) agreed and seem to understand that the groanings are the Spirit's own intercession, which takes place within the believer. Similarly, William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad (1997: n.p.) agreed that the groanings are related directly to the Holy Spirit, and not to the believer as He intercedes for them.

Keeping the focus on the Holy Spirit, Earl Radmacher, Ronald Allan, and Wayne House (1999: n.p.) remarked that the groanings of the Spirit are unexpressed and unspoken, and therefore are inaudible. Similarly, John Stott (1994:245) refers to the Holy Spirit's intercession for believers as 'speechless groans'; he goes on to explain that the 'unutterable' or 'speechless' groans are 'unexpressed, rather than inexpressible', because the Greek word used for unutterable is *alaletos* meaning wordless. John Polhill (1976:425–436) agrees, and says these 'unutterable groanings' are probably 'unformulated, unexpressed words'.

To Stott and Polhill's observations, Robert Gundry (2011: loc 1688) added that the Spirit's groanings are not only unexpressed but 'ineffable', because they are too deep and way beyond words. Wesley Duewel (2013:327–328) explained that the Greek word for groan is *stenagmos*, meaning 'an inward groaning'. He commented further that deep inner groanings don't need to be expressed or vocalised for God to hear, understand, and answer them. Likewise, authors Charles Barrett (1957:168) and Charles Spurgeon (2014: loc 1027) agreed that the Spirit's groanings do not need to be spoken or expressed, because God the Father knows the mind of the Spirit (Rom 8:27).

John MacArthur (2013:1676) proposed that the Spirit's intercession takes place within believers and on behalf of them, but that it is something that is imperceptible to them. On this subject of imperceptibility, Wayne Grudem (1994:1078) commented that this would mean the Spirit's intercession would be similar to the continual intercession of Jesus mentioned in Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:25.

James Rosscup (1999:151–152) noted that in the context of Romans 8:18–30 Paul was emphasising the Spirit's ability to intercede for believers. He also drew attention to the fact that verse 26 is the only

reference to the Spirit of God interceding by prayer, 'whether in the Old Testament, Jewish apocryphal or pseudepigraphical books, rabbinic writings, Qumran literature, or any known source up to Paul's words in Romans 8' (1999:139). Nevertheless, he also observed that this intercession fits naturally with one of the Holy Spirit's ministry titles as Intercessor. Similarly, Charles Hodge (2013: loc 4026) described the Holy Spirit's intercession, as 'the help of an advocate who pleads the cause or case of believers before God'. John Schultz (2005:72) is of the same opinion, and noted that the Holy Spirit's intercession proves Him to be all that His name, Parakletos, implies and represents.

Colin Kruse (2012:352) argued further and pointed out that these groanings are of a different order to those of creation and those of believers, which stem from frustration and suffering, and noted that the Spirit's groanings are associated with intercession for believers. John Stott (1994:245) agreed and explained that the groanings of the Spirit are not because of imperfection and weakness, but are in empathy and identification as the Holy Spirit shares in the believers' longing for final redemption. Grant Osborne (2004:217–219) contributed that the Holy Spirit's deep groanings are an expression of His deep love and concern for them. In the same vein, John Schultz (2005:73) added that the intensity of the Holy Spirit's intercession reveals His compassion for believers as well as His participation in redeeming God's creation.

8. Assessment of Contributions: Direct Groans

Moo, Stott, MacDonald and others agreed that the groanings are related directly to the Holy Spirit, and not to the believer. As a result, the focus is kept on the Holy Spirit and not transferred to the believer. This seems to be the most accurate and least complicated interpretation, because it does not twist or force the text to say something it is not saying, but it

allows the passage to remain true to its original author-intended meaning of the Holy Spirit making intercession for believers in the midst of their weaknesses.

Radmacher, Stott, Polhill and others agreed that the groanings of the Spirit are deep inward groanings that are not expressed, or are wordless, and therefore are inaudible. Observing that these 'unutterable groans' are more accurately translated from the Greek text as 'wordless groans' adds weight to their findings, making their observation a valid one, as it proves that these groans could not be tongues. It is possible, therefore, that the Spirit's deep groanings point to emotions of sorrow and heart-ache, alluding to the idea of empathy, compassion and identifycation that accompanies and sustains intercession.

Duewel also said the groanings do not need to be vocalised for God to hear, understand, and answer them. This is a correct and valid observation that contributes to this research, because God knows all things including the mind of the Spirit, and therefore knows and understands exactly what the Spirit's groanings are about without any vocalizing or interpretation needed (Rom 8:27). This point highlights the confidence believers can have in the intercessory help of the Holy Spirit.

Rosscup noted that Paul was emphasising the Spirit's ability to intercede for believers in the midst of their weaknesses. In other words, Paul was not trying to stress the need for believers to pray, but rather the Spirit's ability to intercede for them and help them in their weaknesses. His observation is therefore a valid one for this project, because it keeps the focus on the Holy Spirit's role of intercession, and does not deviate to the prayers of the believer. And rightly so, because it appears that Paul devoted the whole of Romans chapter 8 to what a life controlled by the Holy Spirit looks like. It seems unlikely, therefore,

that he would change focus by putting emphasis on the prayers of the believer, though prayer is important, but not the focus in this text. It seems more likely that Paul wanted to highlight the believers' inability to help themselves in the midst of adversity as compared with God's ability to sustain and keep them while they wait for the day of glorification no matter what suffering and adversity they have to endure in the meantime (Rom 8:18).

Cranfield, MacArthur, and Grudem commented on the imperceptibility of the Spirit's intercession taking place within believers and on behalf of them, but not noticeable to them. Grudem also noted that the Spirit's intercession would thus be similar to the continual intercession of Jesus mentioned in Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:25. This is an accurate observation, for believers know that this intercession is taking place only because the Bible tells them so, and not because they hear anything from the Spirit who dwells within them. But this should not be a difficult thing to grasp or accept, neither does it need to be an area of contention, because the Christian life is one of faith, and there are aspects of the faith (e.g. trinity) that believers accept as true even though they may not fully understand them. This intercession by Jesus and the Spirit is a case in point. So, if this intercession is taking place, then what does it mean for the believer?

Rosscup noted that Romans 8:26 is the only reference in any known source to the Spirit of God interceding for the believer. This obviously highlights the fact that there are no other sources with which to compare it, making interpretation of the text complicated and tricky. To underscore this point even further, the Strong Concordance (1981:518) only records intercession nine times and intercessions only once. As a result, biblical evidence for this word is indeed very sketchy; however, the practice of intercession in scripture is not vague at all. Hence, each

example of intercession found in scripture contributes to the knowledge and understanding of the topic under discussion. So, even though there may be mystery surrounding this topic, and even though one may not fully understand the implications of this ministry, one cannot deny that the reference to the Spirit's intercession is in the text. And so, if it is there, what does it mean, and what significance or encouragement may it have for believers while they anticipate the day of final redemption?

Rosscup, Hodge, and Schultz also made a valid point that this intercession fits naturally with the Holy Spirit's ministry title as Intercessor. This is a title hidden within the Greek word *parakletos* translated helper (NKJV), which according to Strong's Concordance means intercessor, advocate, consoler and comforter. So, despite the fact that this is the only reference to the Spirit of God interceding for believers, it is still a valid reference to His ministry, and, as scholars have observed, it proves that He is all that His name says He is. If the Holy Spirit is interceding for believers, what encouragement does it give them as they endure suffering and patiently wait for their redemption to be fully realised?

Kruse, Stott, and Osborne argue that the groanings of the Spirit are not because of imperfection and weakness, but are in empathy and identification as the Holy Spirit shares in the believers' longing for final redemption. This observation is correct and true, because the Spirit is perfect and strong, and would therefore not be groaning in weakness and imperfection. However, intercession is accompanied and sustained by empathy and compassion, so it seems logical to conclude that the groanings of the Spirit are a reference to His empathy and compassion for believers and not because of any weakness or imperfections on His part; however, these authors have not discussed what this may mean for the believer.

Schultz noted that the Spirit's intercession does not only reveal God's compassion for believers, but it also reveals His participation in redeeming God's creation. This is a valid and significant observation, because the Holy Spirit, who is God's agent in the earth, has been participating and working to redeem all creation since the fall (Genesis 3) and will continue His work until the day of final redemption, when the sons and daughters of God are revealed and all creation is delivered from the bondage of decay due to sin (Rom 8:19–21). This observation also implies that the Holy Spirit has always been an intercessor interjecting on mankind's behalf to redeem that which was lost due to sin. It may also imply that the intercession in view may involve more than prayer and include the possibility of further acts of service, sacrifice and the participation that may accompany intercession.

In summary, this assessment has evaluated the 'direct view' based on the contributions of the authors consulted. As a result, it has observed that although these scholars agree that the groanings in question are from the Holy Spirit, some of them have not acknowledged the empathy and identification found at the heart of intercession. This does not mean that they disagree with the concept, but merely have not acknowledged it. Those who have acknowledged this aspect have not discussed it in detail. As a result, not much consideration has been given to the significance and the encouragement which the Holy Spirit's intercession may have for believers waiting for their final day of redemption.

9. Conclusion of the Three Interpretations

The indirect view proposed that the Holy Spirit causes the believer to groan as He intercedes through them, for it is inconceivable, as some have suggested, that the Holy Spirit should groan. The glossolalic

perspective claimed that the groanings of the Spirit are the unknown tongues expressed by believers when they pray. It was noted that the emphasis in these two views was on the importance of the believer praying, and as a result, the intercessory ministry of the Holy Spirit has been largely overlooked and seemingly ignored. Having said this, this research is not disputing or contradicting the fact that believers ought to pray, or that they sometimes speak in tongues when they pray. However, it is highlighting the fact that these views seem to redirect the focus of the text from the intercession of the Spirit to the prayer of the believer. The direct view proposed that the indwelling Holy Spirit intercedes for the believer directly with His own wordless groans that seem to be inaudible. It was observed that the emphasis in this view remained on the work and ministry of the Spirit; however, it failed to explore the depth of this ministry and the significance it may have for those who believe. Thus, in each case the study gap for researching the nature of the Holy Spirit's intercession on behalf of believers is evident.

10. Exegesis of the Text

10.1. Romans 8:26

In this verse, Paul seems to be highlighting the fact that believers are weak and that the Spirit helps (*synantilambanomai*, συναντιλαμβανεται) believers in the same way that hope helps believers (vs. 24–25). Put another way, just as hope helps believers by keeping them focused on the promise of final redemption (Rom 8:24–25), so the Spirit helps and sustains believers in their weakness while they anticipate their final redemption. Douglas Moo (2009:268) agreed with this point and commented that the Spirit sustains believers in the midst of their weakness in a similar way that hope does. Grant Osborne (2004:216) had a slightly different perspective, and said that just as the Spirit gives the believer hope, so the Spirit helps to sustain them in their weakness.

In other words, it appears that Osborne is saying that the Spirit is the source of the believer's hope, which would be true because He is the firstfruit (Rom 8:23) and guarantee of their redemption being accomplished (Eph 1:14). So, it appears reasonable to say that just as the Spirit helps believers in the area of hope, He also helps them in the area of their over-all human frailty or weakness.

What might that weakness (*astheneia*, ασθενειαις) be? It was noted that some scholars (Cranfield 1975; Shreiner 1988; Kroll 2002) have interpreted prayer as the single weakness of the believer and not just an example of the many weaknesses the believer may exhibit from time to time. James Dunn (1988:477) commented that Paul had the whole weak human condition in view and not just external temptations or an inability to pray effectively. Nevertheless, Paul seems to be highlighting the fact that there are occasions when believers do not know what to pray for, and as a result their prayers can be ineffective. Consequently, Paul encouraged his readers with the Spirit's ability to intercede (*hyperentynchano*, υπερεντυγχανει) on their behalf. John Stott (1994:244) appeared to confirm this interpretation and wrote that just as biblical hope sustains the believer, so the Spirit sustains the believers in their general over-all weakness and specifically in their weakness relating to prayer. He explained further that the believers' weakness in the area of prayer is their not knowing exactly what to pray for. Do they pray for deliverance from suffering or for strength to endure the suffering? Woodrow Kroll (2002:138) also confirmed this, and noted that because believers do not always know how to pray or what to pray, God gives them the Spirit, who makes intercession for them in accordance with the will of God; thus every time the Spirit intercedes on their behalf they can be assured that God's will is being addressed and accomplished. William Barclay (2002:131) verified this, and said believers are weak in prayer because they do not always know what is

best for them and they cannot foresee the future. It seems reasonable to conclude that just as the hope of glory sustains believers in this present life, so the Holy Spirit sustains them in their weakness of prayer, by interceding for them when they are ignorant of God's will and cannot pray effectively for themselves.

In the text, Paul seems to state clearly that the Holy Spirit helps believers by interceding for them with wordless (*alaletos*, αλαλητοις) groans (*stenagmos*, στεναγμοις). Despite the fact that Paul seems to specifically imply that the Spirit Himself groans, it has been noted that some have interpreted these groanings as those of the believer and others believe it refers to the believer speaking in tongues. These two interpretations (the believer praying and tongues) seem to change the focus of the text from the Spirit interceding for the believer to the believer praying. As a result, the focus seems to be on what the Spirit causes believers to do as opposed to what the Spirit is doing on the believer's behalf. As already mentioned, this research is not denying or disputing that the Holy Spirit leads and guides the believer in prayer. It just seems that Paul's focus in the text is on what the Spirit is doing on the believer's behalf.

Grant Osborne (2204:218) suggested the Spirit is entreating or petitioning God more deeply than believers ever could, and explains that the Spirit's groanings are expressions of His deep love and concern for them. This observation rightly draws attention to the Spirit's compassion for believers, which motivates His intercession for them, but it is also noted that it seems to limit this intercession to prayer in the form of entreating or petitioning. John Stott (1994:245) does not seem to interpret the Spirit's intercession as prayer, but as 'speechless groans'. He specifically says that His intercession is 'accompanied by them and expressed in them'. In a similar way to Osborne, he wrote that the Spirit's groanings are an indication of His empathy and compassion

for believers and His desire and longing for them to be glorified. Whilst it does not appear that Stott is limiting the Holy Spirit's intercession to prayer, he is also not saying what it may include or involve beyond 'wordless groans'. Nevertheless, it is also observed that Stott recognizes that the Spirit's groanings are as a result of His compassion and desire for believers to experience redemption in its fullness. Hence, it seems evident that these 'groans' reveal the Spirit's empathy and compassion for believers, but the two contributing authors do not seem to shed much light on what the Spirit's intercession may include or involve, and as a result, neither do they suggest what significance the Spirit's intercession may have for believers anticipating glorification.

10.2. Romans 8:27

It appears that Paul is saying three things in this verse, (1) God searches the hearts of believers, (2) God knows the mind of the Spirit, (3) The Spirit intercedes for believers in accordance with God's will. As a result of this, and in conjunction with the previous verse, it seems reasonable to conclude that Paul was encouraging his readers with the Spirit's ability to intercede on their behalf in accordance with the will of God. Thus, in these two verses, it also seems evident that Paul's emphasis is on the intercessory ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers, who may often find that their own prayer life is ineffective due to ignorance of God's will in the midst of their circumstances. So, does one pray for deliverance from the situation or for strength to endure the situation (Stott 1994:244)? What is not clear from the text, though, is whether this intercession is inextricably linked to the believer's prayer (Hale 2007; Krell 2012; Cereghin 2013) or whether it takes place regardless of it. It appears, from the research thus far, that this has been a debated topic among most theological scholars.

Grant Osborne (2004:218) seemed to agree with the interpretation offered above, as he also said that the Spirit's petitions, which undergird the prayers of believers, are in accordance with God's will, and as a result believers can be certain of God's will being accomplished, even if they should pray amiss. Woodrow Kroll (2002:138) has a similar understanding and wrote that God knows the mind of the Spirit as well as the hearts of all men, and as a result, knows exactly what the Spirit is praying for as He intercedes on the believer's behalf in accordance with God's will. Leon Morris (2012:329) also validated this understanding, and says that God searches the hearts of believers and finds the 'wordless groans' of the Spirit there, and answers these prayers accordingly. Thus it appears reasonable to conclude that Paul was encouraging his readers with the Spirit's ability to intercede on their behalf in accordance with the will of God.

These three observations seem to imply that the intercession of the Spirit does not go beyond prayer and petition. It also seems evident, from the contributions of the authors reviewed, that the Spirit's intercession is interpreted mainly as pleading or entreating God on the believer's behalf. Strictly speaking, it appears that 'intercession' is generally interpreted as prayer and nothing else. However, as this research has already pointed out, whilst prayer and petition is an accurate definition of intercession, it may not be a full explanation of what this ministry may involve.

11. Lexical Analysis of Weakness, Helps and Intercede

11.1. Weakness / Infirmity (*astheneia*–ασθενειαις)

From the authors reviewed, there appeared to be a general consensus that Paul was making reference to the overall weakness and frailty that still afflicts believers in this life. Leon Morris (2012:326) explained that

the believers' weak and frail state is the reason why they need the continual help and intervention of the Lord, for they are not the 'spiritual giants they think they are'. Hill and Archer (2015: n.p.) seemed to confirm this interpretation, and said that 'weakness' means 'without strength' and it refers to a weakness that deprives someone of enjoying or accomplishing the task at hand. In other words, it is a limitation that incapacitates and makes one powerless to do or experience something. In a similar way, Thayer and Smith (2014: n.p.), defined 'weakness' as a lack of strength and an infirmity that may be experienced in the body or the mind due to its frailty. In other words, due to their frailty, believers may lack the ability to understand something or do something perfectly. They may also be incapable of restraining corrupt desires, or lack the ability to bear the trials and troubles they encounter in this life. Likewise, Mounce's Expository Dictionary (2014: n.p.) agreed with Thayer and Smith, and noted that it may be a weakness or feebleness of the body or a frailty and imperfection of the mind that affects one intellectually and morally.

From these definitions it would appear that the weakness the believer encounters is one of body and mind and not one of the spirit, for none of these resources seem to address the area of the spirit in their explanations. So, it would seem logical to conclude that the weakness lies in the area of the body and soul and not in the area of the spirit. This seems to allude to the idiom Jesus used: 'the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak' (Matt 26:41). In other words, believers are not always physically capable of doing what they are willing to do, and thus fail or find it very difficult to live up to the moral standards that scripture demands of them. As a result, they need the continual assistance of the Holy Spirit to help them where they are weak and incapable of helping themselves to attain the level of holiness and perfection that scripture describes and God expects from them. In plain words, believers are

incapable of sanctifying themselves and thus incapable of conforming themselves into the image of Jesus Christ, and thus remain completely reliant on the ministry of the Holy Spirit within them.

11.2. Helps (*synantilambanomai*, συναντιλαμβανεται)

Hill and Archer (2015:n.p) have noted that there are three parts to the Greek word *synantilambanomai*. *Syn* means 'to be closely identified with' and *anti* means 'corresponding to'. Both of these prefixes add meaning to the root word *lambano* which means to 'aggressively lay hold of'. Thus, *synantilambanomai* means to personally and aggressively take hold of a task, together with another in order to give corresponding or appropriate help.

Thayer and Smith (2014: n.p.) defined 'helps' as 'to strive to obtain with others, to help in obtaining, or to take hold with another'. Mounce's Expository Dictionary (2014: n.p.) added to this definition 'to support and to aid someone'. Consequently, and according to Hill and Archer (2015: n.p.), this type of help is one that 'gives assistance with initiative'. In other words, it supplies help as it corresponds to the real need. Hence, this type of help, as Hill and Archer explain, gives the 'intimate and appropriate help' that would bring respite and 'active assistance' to individuals who are incapable of helping themselves. They explain further that this is the type of help used to describe the Holy Spirit's active intervention in the lives of believers to help them live according to God's will. Thus it refers to the Holy Spirit's 'aggressive help and personal interest' in helping believers as He deeply identifies with their real need in every circumstance of life, and gives them the help that is necessary to enable them to fulfil God's purpose in their lives. It would appear then that the help the Holy Spirit gives is not demure and passive, but an aggressive and active one set on accomplishing the will of God. It also reveals a commitment and

determination on the Holy Spirit's part to fulfil His task in sanctifying and preparing sons and daughters of God for their final unveiling. In light of this explanation, this research finds it difficult to envision the intercessory help of the Holy Spirit as only being one of prayer.

This word 'help' does not imply inactivity on the believer's part, but a joint-participation of the Spirit with the believer. In other words, the Holy Spirit does not bear the burden wholly for believers, but bears the burden alongside them. James Dunn (1988:476) confirmed this understanding too, and commented that *synantilambanomai* conveys the meaning to 'take part with, to assist in supporting, to lend a hand, and to come to the aid of'. He added further that this Greek word creates a vivid image of the Spirit shouldering the burden that the believers' weakness and frailty imposes on them (Dunn 1988:477). Hence, the illustration mentioned by Hughes (1991:163), of two individuals carrying a log between them to illustrate the help the Holy Spirit gives to the believer. Likewise, James Maloney (2013: loc 285) wrote that God knows man's weakness and frailty, and understands that they are incapable of fulfilling His purpose in their lives, and so in His grace and mercy He gives them the help and assistance they need. He added that the Greek word *synantilambanomai* means 'to take up our cause, to champion our case, and to heave with us'. Hence, it implies a joint-participation of the believer and the Holy Spirit, and therefore does not imply or condone inactivity or laziness on the believer's part. From these contributions it seems reasonable to conclude that the help the Holy Spirit gives believers is an aggressive and active one that corresponds to their real need in order to accomplish the will of God in their lives. Having said this, it does not, however, permit or condone inactivity or laziness on the believers' part, but requires willing and active participation from them.

11.3. Intercede (*hyperentynchano*, υπερεντυγχανει) in verse 26 and (*entynchano*, ἐντυγχάνει) in verse 27

Paul used two different Greek words for 'intercedes' (NIV) or 'intercession' as some of the translations have rendered it. In verse 26 the word *hyperentynchano* is used and in verse 27 the word *entynchano* is used. In verse 26, Paul used the prefix hyper to modify the word *entynchano* and thus add emphasis and meaning to it. The Free Dictionary (2015: n.p.) defined hyper as over, above, beyond and excessive. This resource also stated that hyper originated from the Greek root word *huper* meaning 'over and beyond'. Similarly, the Online English Dictionary (2014: n.p.) says that hyper meaning 'over' has its origins in the Greek language and implies excess or exaggeration. Thus James Maloney's (2013: loc 283) definition of hyper would be an accurate one. According to Maloney, hyper means 'over and above' and 'exceedingly much', which, he explained, would imply that the Holy Spirit intercedes over and above or in addition to and even beyond what believers could ever think or know to ask in any given circumstance. In other words, the Holy Spirit goes way beyond the believers' lack of knowledge to know what to ask for and He intercedes on their behalf according to the will of God. Benjamin Warfield (2013: loc 716) has a similar understanding, and commented that the Holy Spirit's intercession is 'over and above' the believer's prayer. Thus it seems that the prefix hyper emphasises the fact that the intercession of the Spirit takes place over and above, in addition to and way beyond the believer's ability to know what kind of help to even ask for.

Believers may lack the ability to understand something perfectly or accomplish something perfectly. They may also be incapable of restraining corrupt desires, or lack the ability to bear the trials and troubles they encounter in this life (Thayer and Smith 2014: n.p.). This

is the reason why believers need the continual help of the Spirit. In other words, the limitations that incapacitate believers in body and soul and render them powerless to accomplish God's purpose and reach their full potential are the reasons why they need the Spirit's help over and above and in addition to their weak and feeble efforts to help themselves. Consequently, these various contributions seem to confirm and support the researcher's understanding and interpretation thus far, that the Holy Spirit's help and intercession is extremely extravagant and goes way beyond what believers could ever imagine is taking place, let alone ask for.

Keeping the above in mind, both Mounce's Expository Dictionary (2014: n.p.) and Thayer and Smith (2014: n.p.) defined *entynchano* as interceding for someone or on behalf of someone. In a similar way, Youngblood, Bruce and Harrison (1995: n.p.) defined *entynchano* as 'the act of petitioning God or praying on behalf of another'. Likewise, The New Strong's Guide to Bible Words (2015: n.p.) defined *entynchano* as to entreat, to petition and to impinge. Thus it appears that the general meaning and understanding of intercession (*entynchano*) is petitioning, pleading or entreating on behalf of someone else. The Online English Dictionary (2014: n.p.) defines intercede as 'one who mediates or one who interposes on behalf of someone in difficulty or trouble'. The same dictionary defines intercession as 'interposing or pleading on behalf of another person'. Additionally, this dictionary also says 'interpose' means to intervene or assume an intervening position between parties in conflict in order to mediate and bring reconciliation. Thus, intercession (*entynchano*) is an impinging and an intervention by an intercessor who mediates between the parties at variance to bring about reconciliation. If one applies this definition to the Holy Spirit as the Intercessor, then He would assume an impinging, intervening position between God and believers to bring about reconciliation of

those issues that still cause conflict and hinder the purpose of God in their life. Hence the sanctifying works of the Spirit to bring about the necessary reconciliation.

Hill and Archer (2015: n.p.) confirmed this interpretation as they commented that intercession is an intervening to convey a benefit on someone, and that it is used only in Romans 8:26 in reference to the Holy Spirit bringing sons and daughters of God 'in line with' His eternal purpose. Hill and Archer (2015: n.p.) thus explained that *entynchano* is intervention and not intercession (prayer) as such, because, as they clarified, the Holy Spirit is continually intervening for the eternal benefit of believers, as this is the way that He brings every circumstance of the believer's life into agreement with God's will. It would seem that with this understanding that the Holy Spirit's intercession is not altogether dependent on the believer praying, as some authors (Hale 2007:558; Krell 2012; Cereghin 2013) have suggested. These authors seem to suggest that the believer's lack of prayer inhibits the intercession of the Spirit, and that God also only responds when believers pray. However, where then does God's providence and sovereignty fit in? It would seem incorrect to assume that a sovereign God only takes action when believers ask Him to or give Him permission to do so (Morris 2012:332). Furthermore, this would seem to suggest that God's plan and purpose hinges on the prayer of believers. Yet the Lord says that nothing will hinder or stop His plan and purpose from being accomplished in the earth (Num 23:19; Job 42:2; Isa 46:10). It would seem that believers partner with God through prayer in accomplishing His plan and purpose in the earth, and as a result, believers are encouraged and even commanded to pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17). However, thinking that God is completely limited to the believer's prayers would appear to be presumptuous and possibly foolish.

James Maloney (2013: loc 283) offered a similar explanation as Hill and Archer's (2015: n.p.) comment on *entynchano* being an intervention rather than intercession per se. Maloney said that the Holy Spirit throws Himself into the believers' case to direct their prayers and to positively intervene in the circumstances of their life. He explained that the Holy Spirit wraps Himself around the believers' cause, in order to free them from those things that weaken and prevent them from displaying and manifesting the glory of the Lord in the earth. Along similar lines, Michael Bird (2013: loc 14279) commented that the Holy Spirit acts to set believers free, in order to release and redeem them from enslaving powers. Thus, in His intercession, the Holy Spirit frees them from sin, from guilt, and from weaknesses that limit God's plan and purpose in their life. Hence, this confirms the understanding that the Holy Sprit's intercession and intervention brings the exact benefits believers need to accomplish God's plan and purpose in their life.

Additionally, intercede (*entynchano*) means 'to get in line with', 'to light upon', and 'to intervene in order to confer a benefit' (Hill and Archer 2015). Thayer and Smith (2014: n.p.) offered a similar definition, and said *entynchano* means 'to light upon a person or thing, to fall in with a person or thing or to hit (strike) upon a person or thing'. According to the Online English Dictionary (2014: n.p.) 'fall in with' means to 'become acquainted with'. This would seem to imply that the Holy Spirit who dwells within believers knows their weakness and is well acquainted with what they need, and is thus able to give the appropriate help. This dictionary also said that 'get in line with' means to 'conform and agree with'. This definition seems to allude to the purpose and final result of the Spirit's intercession, which is, according to Scripture, to bring the believers' situation and nature in line with the purpose and plan of God for their life (Rom 8:27). That is to say, to conform believers into the image of Christ Jesus and prepare them as

sons or daughters of God for their future glory (Rom 8:29–30). This seems to confirm the understanding mentioned above that the Holy Spirit, as the Intercessor, assumes an impinging and intervening position between God and the believers to bring about reconciliation of those issues and areas of their life that limit them and still cause conflict and hinder the purpose of God in their life.

Additionally, the definitions mentioned above also highlighted the fact that *entynchano* means to 'light upon' someone (Hill and Archer 2015; Thayer and Smith 2014). The Online English Dictionary (2014: n.p.) commented that 'to light upon' means 'to come to rest on' or 'to fall and settle on'. This understanding seems to allude to the presence or power of the Holy Spirit descending upon individuals to empower them to perform a task. This 'lighting upon' is demonstrated in scripture when the Holy Spirit descended upon individuals like Othniel (Jud 3:10), Gideon (Jud 6:34), Samson (Jud 14:6; 15:14), and Jesus (Matt 3:16) to name four. Hence, these few examples confirm how the Holy Spirit in His intercession may descend upon individuals to empower and supernaturally strengthen them for the purpose and plan of God.

Thayer and Smith (2014: n.p.) also mentioned above that *entynchano* means 'to hit or strike upon'. This definition seems to allude to some force and hostility taking place in freeing believers from those issues that incapacitate them. James Maloney (2013: loc 283) confirmed this, as he explained further that one of the ideas *entynchano* conveys is an aggressive action of throwing oneself into the midst of a situation to make a case for or against someone. He added that the inference made by some theologians (none mentioned) is that the Holy Spirit strikes out against the believers' infirmity in an aggressive and angry manner, because He is angered by the weakness that plagues them, and consequently rises up to intervene on their behalf, in order to rip away that which hinders the progress of God's plan in their life. Maloney

(2013: loc 297) added further that because the Spirit is somewhat enraged by the things that weaken and prohibit believers from helping themselves He 'lashes out against the weakness, striking it over and over, thus smashing the weakness on their behalf'.

From this vivid description, it seems reasonable to conclude that the Holy Spirit's intercession is not passive or demure, but rather proactive and bold, as He wars against those things that prevent believers from being conformed into the image of Christ, and being fully reconciled to God in every area of their life. Consequently, it also seems feasible to conclude that the Holy Spirit is not only the Comforter that Jesus promised to His disciples, but an aggressor who invades the believers' life to accomplish God's plan and conform them into the image of His Son. Jack Hayford (1995: n.p.) seemed to concur, and wrote a similar thing. He said that although the word *entynchano* conveys the idea of pleading with a person on behalf of another, he added that at times the petition may be against another. This would confirm the idea that the Spirit intervenes not necessarily to always defend and protect, but in order to attack, release and reconcile those areas of the believer's life that are still at enmity with God. Hayford (1995: n.p.) justified this idea by explaining that sometimes this word refers to 'falling upon' an enemy in battle with hostile intent. This would then confirm the idea of the Holy Spirit also being an 'aggressor' and not only a 'comforter' as mentioned above. This concept is not contrary to scripture, for Jesus is sometimes referred to as the Lion of Judah and sometimes the Lamb of God (John 1:29; Rev 5:5–6), and because the Holy Spirit is both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9), one can safely assume that He has the same aggressive and comforting nature. It seems feasible to say that when the Holy Spirit encounters an enemy of God in the believers' life (sin and weakness in its various forms), He approaches it with hostile intent in order to redeem them and reconcile

those areas to God that they may truly be pure and holy and 'brought into conformity with their legal status [of righteousness] before God' (Erickson 2013:840). Thus it appears that the Holy Spirit's intercession may be a part of the sanctifying process as He actively intervenes and interposes on the believers' behalf to purify them and conform them into the image of Jesus. This would also seem to confirm that His intercession is not a passive and demure prayer, but rather an aggressive proactive intervention to set believers free from those weaknesses that limit and incapacitate them, rendering them helpless to fulfil God's plan in their life.

12. Conclusion

Thus, from the various contributions it seems logical and sound to conclude that due to the believers' weakness and frailty in body and soul they are physically, emotionally and psychologically limited in their abilities to accomplish God's will in their life, and do not even know what kind of help to ask for, but the Holy Spirit does know, and thus intervenes on their behalf (aggressively if need be) according to the will of God and way beyond what they could even contemplate happening. From these definitions and contributions it also seems reasonable to conclude that intercession has a much broader meaning than traditionally understood and believed. It seems to incorporate more action from the Holy Spirit than just prayer. It appears to include an empowering that enables believers to withstand trials and tribulations. It also seems to be an empowering to accomplish the works that God has ordained for them to do. It looks like it includes an enlightening to know God and to understand the will and purpose of God in the midst of adverse circumstances. It also appears to include a warring against those issues that are contrary to God's will and purpose in order to redeem and reconcile every aspect of the believer's life to God. Thus, in

a nutshell, the Holy Spirit's intercession seems to be active and even aggressive intervention on every level to bring about reconciliation between God and the believer.

Whilst this research has shown that the Holy Spirit's intercession goes beyond the boundaries of prayer to include aggressive intervention and participation in various ways, the scope of this research has not allowed for a systematic approach to discover what this intercession may look like from a practical perspective. It has not studied every example in scripture of the Holy Spirit's intervention to ascertain positively what His intercession actually includes or involves.

It is noted that academic scholars like Grudem (1994) and Erickson (2013) have already done systematic studies on the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments, and have included intercession as one of the Holy Spirit's works along with conversion and regeneration of the individual; empowering the believer for spiritual life and service; giving giftings for various tasks; purifying or sanctifying the believer; leading, guiding and directing the believer; giving believers assurance; and revealing, teaching and illuminating believers. It seems evident, though, by definition of the term that many of these separate works may be included as aspects of the Holy Spirit's intercession on behalf of the believer as discussed in this research. In other words, wherever and whenever the Spirit of God intervenes in the life of God's people, in whatever form, it seems reasonable to conclude that intercession may be taking place on their behalf. Thus, it seems apparent that the whole spectrum of the Holy Spirit's work, as it relates to intervening in the affairs of mankind (especially believers), has not been viewed as intercession before. This is possibly due to the limited connotation of the word 'intercession' and the fact that biblical evidence of the word 'intercession' or 'intercessions' is rather scarce.

Having said this, the practice of intercession in Scripture as intervention is not scarce at all. Consequently, this may be an area for further research. A study of this nature would contribute significantly to the current understanding of the Spirit's intercession and possibly reveal the depth and extent of this ministry in much greater detail.

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Putting the Letter from James in Its Place: A Candid Assessment of Its Continuing Theological Value

Dan Lioy[1]

Abstract

This journal article undertakes a candid assessment of the continuing theological value of the letter from James. The incentive for doing so arises from the claim made by some within the Lutheran tradition that James and Paul either contradict or are at cross-purposes to one another. An additional motivation is connected with the assertion put forward by other Lutheran acolytes that in order to preserve the integrity of the gospel, James must be read through a Pauline lens. The major findings of this essay are threefold: (1) a careful and thoughtful reading of James challenges the notion that it either contradicts or undermines Paul's teaching about justification by faith; (2) there remains value in taking the letter of James seriously in its own right and objectively evaluating its theological importance in that regard; and, (3) the epistle's message of salvation is consistent with that found throughout the rest of the New Testament, including what

Jesus taught (as recorded in the Gospels) and Paul wrote (as found in his letters).

1. Introduction

As a permanent faculty member within the graduate programs division of the Institute of Lutheran Theology, I teach biblical theology courses. For instance, during the 2015 autumn semester, I taught a course dealing with the general or catholic (i.e. universal) epistles. I especially remember a two-week duration in which I had the students consider the theological argument and themes of the letter from James.

Of particular interest was the way in which James and Paul deal with the issue of justification by faith. Corresponding issues include the relationship between faith and works, as well as the dynamic tension between law and gospel. In one research paper assignment, I had the students wrestle with the meaning of such phrases as the 'perfect law that gives freedom'[2] (1:25; 2:12) and the 'royal law' (2:8). I especially wanted them to deliberate how the latter related to a Lutheran understanding of the gospel of grace.

Within the Lutheran tradition,[3] there are some who think James and Paul either contradict or are at cross-purposes with one another.

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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] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the 2011 version of the NIV.

[3] The longstanding debate within Lutheranism concerning the canonicity of James is well documented, as noted in the following representative works: Adamson (1989:ix–xii); Brosend (2004:12–15); Chester and Martin (1994:3–5); Laato (1997:43–5); McCartney (2009:1–2); Reumann (1999:129); Wall (1997a:3–4, 293–5). For an overview of how James has been interpreted throughout church history, cf. Johnson

According to this view, interpretive pride of place should be given to Paul. There are other Lutheran acolytes who, while affirming the inspiration and canonical status of James, insist that it must be read through a Pauline lens. Supposedly, Paul's letters should overshadow what James wrote, even if this results in creating a canon within a canon.[4] Otherwise, as the argument goes, there is the risk of undermining the core Lutheran doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator* (Latin for 'at the same time righteous and a sinner').

Yet, it remains questionable whether the preceding sorts of constructs are either accurate or valid. Indeed, one major claim of this journal article is that a careful and thoughtful reading of James challenges the notion that it is goes against Paul's teaching about justification by faith. A second assertion is that there remains value in taking the letter from James seriously in its own right and objectively evaluating its theological importance in that regard. A third contention is that the epistle's message of salvation is consistent with that found throughout the rest of the New Testament, including what Jesus taught (as recorded in the Gospels) and Paul wrote (as found in his letters).

Admittedly, the preceding matters have been debated for centuries among Protestants (as well as those belonging to the Catholic and Orthodox traditions). Also, the dialectic between justification and sanctification remains of interest to the general readership of *Conspectus*. After all, the interpretive and theological implications of one's view on these interrelated issues have repercussions for ministry within various ecclesial contexts, including those located in the global

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(2004:39–83); McKnight (2011:9–13). For a concise survey of how contemporary specialists have assessed the criticism Luther made of James, cf. Harner (2004:23–6).

[4] For a critique of this hermeneutical method, cf. section 6 below.

south. It would be pretentious to think this modest-sized essay somehow resolves the debate; instead, the more realistic goal is to offer an alternative perspective, one that undertakes a candid assessment of the continuing theological value of the letter from James.

2. Background Considerations Related to James

In 1:1, the author is identified as 'James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.'[5] Nonetheless, the question arises, which James? After all, there are four people with the name of 'James' mentioned in the New Testament—James, the son of Zebedee (an apostle), James the son of Alphas (an apostle), James the father of the apostle Judas (not Iscariot), and James, one of the younger half-brothers of Jesus.

The death of the son of Zebedee in AD 44 (cf. Acts 12:2) rules him out, for the date would have been too early for the letter's composition (possibly before AD 50).[6] Furthermore, the authoritative manner in which the writer spoke suggests that he could not have been either of the lesser-known individuals who were named James. That leaves the Lord's half-brother as the most likely writer of the epistle (cf. Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3; Gal 1:19).

[5] The following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the discourse on the person of James: Adamson (1989); Bauckham (1999); Blomberg and Kamell (2008); Brosend (2004); Davids (1982); Dayton (2009a); Dibelius (1976); Gillman (1992); Hagner (1992); Hiebert (1979); Laws (1980); Martin (1988); McCartney (2009); McKnight (2011); Moo (2015); Motyer (1985); Painter (2001); Shanks and Witherington (2003); Stulac (1993). For a reconstruction of the literary and historical context of the traditions about James outside the New Testament, cf. Painter (1999). For a deliberation of the significance of James within early Christian history, cf. Dibelius (1976:51–7); Eisenman (1997:70–90); Johnson (2004:1–23); Martin (1988:xlii–lxi).

[6] Unless otherwise noted, the dates appearing in this journal article reflect the New Testament chronology appearing in Barker (2011:1577–8) and Carson (2015b:1905–6), respectively.

The following are several highlights in the life of James: initially, he was sceptical about Jesus (John 7:2-5); Jesus appeared to James after the Resurrection (1 Cor 15:7); James joined the apostolic cohort (Acts 1:14); he was renowned for his outstanding character and piety; James had a reputation as a rigorous keeper of the Mosaic Law; he was recognised as a leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal 2:9); James advised Paul (Acts 21:18; Gal 1:19); James wrote the letter that bears his name; he led the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:13); and, James was martyred for the Christian faith (according to Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 2:7–8; and Josephus, *Ant.* 20.9.1; around AD 62).

Concerning the recipients of the letter from James, it is addressed 'to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations' (1:1).[7] The Jewish tenor of the epistle, coupled with the reference to the 'twelve tribes', suggests a predominately Jewish, rather than Gentile, audience.[8] These Jewish Christians may have been descendants of those who were uprooted centuries earlier after the Assyrian conquest of Samaria (722 BC) and the Babylonian overthrow of Jerusalem (586 BC). Subsequent to Stephen's death (AD 35), many Jews living in Jerusalem who had become Christians, travelled to places such as Phoenicia, Syrian Antioch, and

[7] The following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the discourse on introductory matters concerning the letter from James: Adamson (1989); Bauckham (1999); Davids (1982); Dayton (2009b); Dibelius (1976); Hiebert (1979); Laws (1980; 1992); Martin (1988); Moo (2015); Motyer (1985); Painter (1999); Penner (1996); Stulac (1993); Wall (1997a; 1997b).

[8] For an assessment of the Jewish worldview, beliefs, and way of life discernible in the letter from James and how it fits within its first century AD cultural context (particularly, the Judaisms of Qumran, the Rabbis, and the Jacobean community), cf. Eisenman (1997:31–50); Evans (2001); Neusner (2001; 2005). For a comparison of the moral system in James with other Greco-Roman and Judaic texts, cf. Strange (2010).

Cyprus (cf. Acts 8:1; 11:19). James, as one of their shepherd-overseers, endeavoured to provide them with pastoral consolation.

The reference in 1:1 to the 'twelve tribes' reflects the author's conviction that the end-time hope for the return of God's chosen people was now being fulfilled for believers in Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah. This eschatologically-oriented message matches James' self-designation as a bondservant of the Father and the Son. Broadly speaking, the topics addressed in James focus on the theme of living under the new covenant. Indeed, the author alludes often to both Old Covenant Law and to Jesus' new covenant teachings. During Jesus' first advent, he inaugurated the kingdom of God (2:5). Also, through Jesus' words and works, he clarified the foremost ethical priorities of the divine kingdom.

An assessment of the scholarly discourse[9] points to the divine kingdom including God's presence and rule over human hearts, regardless of where and when they live. This kingdom embraces all who walk in fellowship with the Lord and do his will. The kingdom is governed by God's laws, which are summed up in humankind's duty to love the Lord supremely and love others unreservedly. Moreover, this kingdom, which was foretold by the prophets and introduced by Jesus, would one

[9] The scholarly discourse on the divine kingdom is vast. Concerning what the biblical and extra-biblical literature teaches about the kingdom of God, cf. Bivin and Tilton (2015); Duling (1992), Marshall (2009), and McClain (2001). In terms of what the four Gospels reveal about the divine kingdom, cf. Green (2013). With respect to Paul's letters and the kingdom of God, cf. Kreitzer (1993). The theme of God's kingdom, as developed in the later New Testament, is examined in Kim (1997). For a treatment of how the theme of God's kingdom fits within the biblical narrative of the history of redemption, cf. Schreiner (2013). Concerning how the divine kingdom theologically relates to the atoning sacrifice of the Son at Calvary, cf. Treat (2014). A comparison of the three leading millennial views of the kingdom can be found in Walvoord (1983). For two views regarding the connection between the kingdom promises and the testaments, cf. Kaiser (1991); Waltke (1991).

day displace all the kingdoms of this world, following the return of the Redeemer. God's kingdom is the society in which believers ultimately find perfect congruity, but its realisation awaits the end of the age.

3. The Biblical Concept of the Law

The Hebrew noun *tôrâ* is often rendered as 'law'.[10] While in some contexts this legal nuance is present, it is too narrow and rigid to insist on it in all places where *tôrâ* occurs. The more basic meaning of the noun is 'instruction' or 'teaching' and denotes a way of life, that is, one characterised by rectitude and virtue. The purpose of the Torah, then, is not merely to present a fixed number of laws embedded within it. Rather, as divinely revealed instruction, the Torah is the prologue to the redemptive story found in the Judeo-Christian canon. In whole and in part, the Torah presents God's will for his children on how to live in an upright manner.

Similarly, the Greek noun *nomos* is often rendered 'law'.[11] In some contexts, *nomos* refers to a formalized set of rules prescribing what people must do. These can range from ordinances and commands to customs and traditions sanctioned by society. In the New Testament, the noun usually refers to the Pentateuch (namely, the first five books of Moses), but it can also denote the Old Testament as a whole. While the Greek noun primarily refers to that which regulates behaviour, it can also denote the promise of God (cf. Luke 24:44). Additionally, the term refers to a word of instruction that is divine, not human, in origin and that indicates the path of righteousness and blessing.

[10] The information in this paragraph is a revision of material in Lioy (2004:13).
[11] The information in this paragraph is a revision of material in Lioy (2004:15).

Within both Judaism and Christianity, the Ten Commandments (as recorded in Exod 20:1–12 and Deut 5:6–21) hold a premier status.[12] Also, the Decalogue is regarded as the moral law, or the basic list of God's universal ethical norms for proper human conduct. Moreover, the Ten Commandments are considered the theological foundation for all other ordinances and directives in scripture. Accordingly, James 1:25 and 2:12 use the word 'law' to denote the ethical teachings of the Old Testament, especially as expressed in the Ten Commandments (cf. 2:10–11).[13]

This is the same law that Jesus said he came to fulfil, not abolish (Matt 5:17), and which finds its culmination in him (Rom 10:4).[14] Jesus perfectly obeyed the law and brought to pass its types and prophecies. Also, in Jesus, the law finds its significance and continuity. Through the Saviour's ministry of teaching and his redemptive work on the cross, those who are united to him by faith are able to understand and apply the precepts of Scripture, as expressed in the law.

During the first century AD, specialists in Judaism debated which of their many commandments were the greatest. When an expert in the interpretation of the Mosaic Law asked Jesus for his opinion, the Saviour declared that loving God with all one's heart, soul, and mind was the foremost injunction (Matt 22:39; cf. Deut 6:5). The second premier directive was to love one's neighbour as oneself (Matt 22:40; cf. Lev 19:18). Jesus noted that the entire Old Testament was based on these two commands.

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[12] The information in this paragraph is a revision of material in Lioy (2004:6–7).

[13] For an examination of the law motif in James and its connection to the Torah, cf. Ruzer (2014:73–88); Wall (1997a:83–97).

[14] The information in this paragraph is a revision of material in Lioy (2004:137–8).

Concerning Paul, he no longer saw himself as being under the control and condemnation of the law (1 Cor 9:20); yet, the apostle stated that he was 'subject to the law of Christ' (v. 21). Schreiner (1993:544) surmises that the preceding phrase most likely refers to Jesus' ethical teachings, which reiterated the moral standards found in the Old Testament (cf. Rom 8:7; 1 Cor 14:34; Eph 6:2–3). Paul asserted that every directive recorded in Scripture was summed up in the command to love others as much as we love ourselves (Rom 13:9). Verse 10 states that when believers make every effort to treat others with the sensitivity and compassion of the Saviour, they do what is prescribed in the law. In short, love is the essence and fulfilment of the law.

The apostle repeated the same truth in Galatians 5:14, when he wrote that believers, by loving and serving others, satisfied what the law required. Expressed differently, God's people are closest to pleasing him when they are unconditional and unreserved in showing compassion and kindness toward others. The directive recorded in Leviticus 19:18 is the supreme commandment in terms of defining how people should treat one another. This dictum is also royal, for among all the commandments given by God (who is the sovereign King of the universe), it sums up the entirety of the law.

In concord with Jesus and Paul, James 2:8 builds on the preceding theological truth by stressing that the 'royal law' would become the guiding principle in the future messianic kingdom proclaimed by Jesus at the onset of his earthly ministry (cf. Matt 4:17; Mark 1:14–15; Luke 4:43). The author of James observed that believers are doing well when they love others as much as they love themselves. The point is that believers cannot heed the most important directive in scripture and at the same time discriminate against others (cf. 2:1).

Though it is disputed, one view is that the Lutheran confessions set forth a threefold theological use of the Law:[15] (1) a civil use: to restrain evil in the world through punishment (cf. Rom 13:1–7; 1 Tim 1:8–11); (2) a soteriological / pedagogical use: to point out sin and the need for salvation (cf. Rom 7:7–12; Gal 3:19–24); and, (3) a moral / normative use: to provide a guide for sanctified living among the regenerate (cf. Rom 7:25; 13:8–10; 1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2, 15–16). In contrast, the purpose of the gospel is to provide forgiving grace through the ministry of the Word and the sacraments (i.e. baptism and the Lord's Supper).

4. The Biblical Concept of Wisdom

The letter from James shares common theological elements with the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism, the Gospels, and the Pauline corpus. The Greek word for wisdom, *sophia*, occurs four times in James (1:5; 3:13, 15, 17) and serves as a useful, implied concept to group all the various subjects discussed in the letter. In turn, James applied Jewish wisdom, as it was developed and controlled by the ethical teachings of Jesus (mirroring what is recorded in the gospels), to various pastoral issues.

In the first-century AD Greek view of reality, wisdom was equated with understanding how to live to achieve the so-called 'highest good' (Latin, *summum bonum*);[16] in other words, the wisdom of one's decisions and behaviour depended on evaluating it in light of the pragmatic, temporal goal of experiencing a maximal existence (e.g. obtaining self-fulfilment, experiencing pleasure, minimizing pain, and

[15] For a concise, substantive deliberation of the threefold theological use of the law within Lutheranism, cf. Engelbrecht (2011); MacPherson (2009); Murray (2008).

[16] The following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the discourse on the Hellenistic view of wisdom: Blanshard (2006); Goetzmann (2014); Ryan (2014); Wilckens (1971).

so on). Similarly, in contemporary parlance, the notion of 'wisdom' is equated with theoretical intelligence, human speculations, cleverness, and providing secular, utilitarian advice about how to be successful.

In contrast to the preceding views, the biblical notion of 'wisdom' is defined by a fear of the Lord (cf. Job 28:28; Pss 34:11; 110:11; Prov 1:7; 9:10; 31:30; Eccles 12:13) and a faithful submission to his will (cf. Isa 11:1–2; Mal 3:5).[17] Fearing the Lord does not mean responding to Him in cringing terror; instead, it refers to honouring, trusting, and obeying him. Furthermore, a God-centred sagacity is demonstrated by heeding the commandments of scripture, which for the Israelites was codified in the Mosaic Law. Correspondingly, wisdom, as understood in scripture, leads to life, whereas folly ends in death (cf. Prov 26:27; 28:10; Ps 7:14–16). Ultimately, divine wisdom is incarnated in the Son (cf. 1 Cor 1:24, 30).

The writer of James builds on the preceding Hebraic mindset when he explains what it means for the believer's entire person to be characterized by wisdom.[18] His operational premise is that everyone is an indivisible entity, in which the labels 'soul' and 'spirit' are used to refer to the ontological unity that characterizes one's material and immaterial existence.[19] The opposite of such a cohesive mindset would be individuals who vacillate in their resolve to live for God and behave

[17] The following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the discourse on the Hebraic view of wisdom: Goldberg (1980); Rudolph (2005); Scott (2007); Wilson (1997).

[18] Concerning the intertextuality between the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism, and the letter from James, cf. Adamson (1989:363–9); Bauckham (1999:29–35); Chilton (2005:307–16); Davids (2001:77–83); Kirk (1969:32–8); McCartney (2009:45–9, 280–92); Shanks and Witherington (2003:152–6); Witherington (2007:485–91); Wall (1997a:35–8, 88).

[19] An overview of the first-century AD Jewish perspective known as 'ontological holism' can be found in Lioy (2011:28–29).

in ways that conflict with his will. Expressed another way, these are people who flip-flop between heeding the injunctions of scripture and acquiescing to the value system of pagan society (cf. 1:5-7). Such a disposition is associated with folly and manifested in those who live as practical atheists (cf. Pss 14:1; 53:1).

5. The Interrelationship between the Mosaic Law, Faith, and Good Deeds

The issue of the Mosaic Law, faith, and good deeds, especially as it relates to the teachings of James and Paul, warrants particular attention. Evidently, some among the readership of James boasted about their 'faith', but failed to demonstrate it through loving acts to the disadvantaged (2:14).[20] For James, belief in the Son expressed itself in displays of assistance toward the needy. The idea is not that people are saved by doing good works; rather, the reality of their faith is validated by living uprightly and ministering to the destitute. In the absence of these two factors, claims to faith are suspect. Genuine faith that leads to salvation obeys the scriptural injunction to love others unstintingly.

James targeted those who voiced empty platitudes, yet did nothing to help poverty-stricken individuals. In this case, those in need required food and clothing (v. 15). If the religious individual merely left the destitute with a hollow pious greeting, it did the latter person no good (v. 16). The more charitable response was to join meaningful deeds with well-intentioned words. For instance, the wealthy believer could be a source of divine blessing by helping to clothe the naked and feed the hungry.

[20] Portions of the discourse in this section are a revision of Lioy (2013:203–8).

The focus is on a broad concept of intellectual assent versus genuine belief. Intellectual assent is 'dead' (v. 17) and useless, being devoid of charitable acts. An active faith, however, is vibrant, being characterized by concern and compassion for others. The iconic figure of the Protestant Reformation, John Calvin, observed that while faith alone saves, the faith that saves is never alone.[21] James wanted to move his readers from an atrophied and apathetic faith to one that was robust and vibrant. That is why he stressed the necessity of faith in the Son expressing itself by means of good 'deeds' (v. 18).

James anticipates an imaginary objector declaring, 'You have faith; I have deeds'.[22] The idea is that there are two equally valid types of faith, namely, one that simply believes and another that acts on that belief. James challenged the idea that genuine, saving faith has no effect on the way a person acts. In short, trusting in the Messiah is authenticated by doing kind deeds for others. When such faith is planted in the soil of kind acts, it has an opportunity to thrive.

Next, the author commented on the presumed value of merely believing in the existence of God by noting that this by itself does not result in eternal life. After all, even the demons are monotheists, for they affirm that there is only one God and it causes them to tremble with fear (v. 19; cf. Deut 6:4; Mark 12:29). The obvious conclusion is that 'faith without deeds is useless' (Jas 2:20), for dead orthodoxy is barren of eternal fruit.

[21] The exact quote from Calvin (1547) is as follows: 'It is therefore faith alone which justifies, and yet the faith which justifies is not alone'.

[22] In this portion of the letter from James, the author used a common first-century AD style of communication called the diatribe. His pointed interjections to an imagined dialogue partner were not primarily meant to attack but to instruct and admonish (cf. Bauckham 1999:57–60). For a consideration of the basic rhetorical features in and structure of James, cf. Thurén (1995); Watson (1993); Witherington (2007:388–93).

To reinforce his point, James presented illustrations from the lives of two prominent Old Testament characters—Abraham (the patriarch) and Rahab (the prostitute). James introduced each example by means of a rhetorical question with which his readers were expected to give full and hearty agreement. In the case of Abraham, when he was about 85, he believed God's promise concerning a son to be born through Sarah (Gen 15:5).[23]

Verse 6 indicates that the patriarch regarded the Lord's pledge as being reliable and dependable. Indeed, the patriarch was confident that God was fully capable of bringing about what he had promised. Consequently, Abraham's faith was 'credited … to him as righteousness'. Put another way, the Lord considered the patriarch's response of faith as proof of his genuine commitment and evidence of his steadfast loyalty. Paul referred to this verse in Romans 4:3 to stress that an upright standing before God comes through faith, not by means of obedience to the law (cf. Gal 3:6). As Abraham's life illustrated, God unconditionally pardons the believing sinner on the basis of Jesus' atoning sacrifice (Rom 3:25–26).

Years later, when Abraham was about 116, he submitted to God's test to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:1–19). This was an act of faith on the part of the patriarch (Heb 11:17–19) in which he demonstrated that he feared God (Gen 22:12). In keeping with what was noted above about the fear of the Lord, this meant that Abraham followed the Creator in unmitigated obedience. James 2:21 explains that the patriarch's willingness to sacrifice his son, Isaac, proved that his faith was genuine and that he existed in a right relationship with God. It was not the deed

[23] For a comparative analysis of the theme of Abraham's faith in Galatians 3, Romans 4, Hebrews 11, and James 2, cf. Longenecker (1977). The author explores how the various New Testament writings dealt with the relationship of merit to the patriarch's faith, especially within the context of literature arising out of Second Temple Judaism.

that justified Abraham; instead, he showed himself to be justified through the saving faith that was manifested in his virtuous deed. Verse 22 says that the patriarch's faith and actions worked together, with his actions making his faith complete.

James 2:23 and Romans 4:3 both quote Genesis 15:6 when referring to Abraham's justification. Paul maintained that God counted the patriarch to be righteous because of his faith. James stressed a related truth, namely, that Abraham vindicated the reality of his previously existing faith and his upright status before God by obeying the Lord. Specifically, the patriarch showed by his actions that he genuinely was God's friend (cf. 2 Chron 20:7). This indicates that Abraham so pleased God by his life that the Lord showered the patriarch with his favour in a distinctive way.

A superficial reading of James 2:24 seems to teach that people are justified by what they do and not by faith alone. Moreover, some have been confused by the author's concept of justification here, and how it relates to Paul's teaching on the subject (cf. Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16; 3:11); yet, a careful analysis of scripture indicates there is no real disagreement.[24] Laato (1997:77) clarifies that 'James and Paul differ from one another terminologically'; yet, they remain in agreement 'theologically'. Likewise, McCartney (2009:272) observes that while James and Paul utilize 'shared vocabulary and examples of Judaism',

[24] Varying approaches concerning the relationship between the teachings of James and Paul on the issue of justification can be found in the following representative secondary sources: Adamson (1989:195–203); Bauckham (1999:113–20); Chester and Martin (1994:46–53); Brosend (2004:78–82); Dibelius (1976:174–80); Davids (1993); Dayton (2009b:461–2); Laato (1997:71–81); Laws (1992:625–6); McCartney (2009:53–6, 272–9); McKnight (2011:259–63); Moo (2015:59–65); Painter (1999:265–9); Penner (1996:47–75); Shanks and Witherington (2003:156–62); Witherington (2007:466–70); Verseput (1997:105–15); Wall (1997b:555–6).

they do so in ‘different ways’ and against the backdrop of ‘quite different problems’.

A prime example of the above is the concept of ‘justification’, which appears in both the writings of Paul and the letter from James. For Paul, ‘justification’ means to declare a sinner not guilty before the Father by means of faith in the Son and his death in the sinner’s place. Because the Messiah died to atone for humankind’s iniquity, the repentant sinner can enjoy a standing of righteousness before God. In James, the concept of ‘justification’ is taken one step further to include the validation of one’s faith in the sight of God and others. Expressed differently, the upright status of believers with God is vindicated by the way they choose to live.

Both James and Paul affirm that those who are born again possess saving faith. For instance, at the Jerusalem Council (circa AD 48), Peter notes that it is ‘through the grace’ (Acts 15:11) of the Saviour that the penitent are ‘saved’. In turn, James endorses Peter’s statement (vv. 13–18). Likewise, in James 1:18, the author states that the Father gives believers spiritual ‘birth through the word of truth’ (i.e. the gospel). Similarly, Paul declares in Ephesians 2:5 and 8 that it is ‘by grace’ that people are ‘saved through faith’. Moreover, according to Galatians 2:9, ‘James, Cephas, and John’ affirm the gospel message Paul taught.

From a Lutheran perspective, the Spirit uses the means of grace to bring about a change in a sinner’s disposition. More specifically, the Spirit works through the proclamation of the gospel to foster a metamorphosis of one’s view, feeling, and purpose in life. This radical transformation results in the penitent turning to God with a corresponding turning away from sin. The natural consequence of saving faith is a lifestyle that actively promotes and demonstrates righteousness (cf. Rom 10:8–15).

Rahab the prostitute is the second example put forward by James of genuine, saving faith. Joshua 2:1–21 records the episode in which Rahab hid the Israelite spies and sent them safely away by a different road. Like Abraham, Rahab was shown to be righteous when her trust in God prompted her to act in a way that met with his approval (Jas 2:25). God was pleased with Rahab's virtuous deed, because she operated in faith (cf. Heb 11:6, 31). James 2:26 reveals that the connection between genuine, saving faith and godly deeds is as close as that between body and spirit. When the spirit (or breath of life) is separated from the body, the latter dies (cf. Eccles 12:7). Likewise, faith that is barren of any fruit is equally dead. Oppositely, living faith manifests itself in good works advocated by God's moral law.

6. The Christological Emphases Found in James

On one level, while engaging James, it is constructive to recognise the interpretive primacy and controlling influence of the gospel. This includes centring the hermeneutical enterprise on the person and work of the Messiah and regarding him as the redemptive link between the Old and New Testaments (cf. Luke 24:27, 44–47; John 5:39; Acts 13:27).[25] The endeavour also affirms the priority of a Christ-centred, cruciform theology (such as that found in the writings of Paul).[26]

[25] A thoroughgoing exploration of a gospel-centred hermeneutic can be found in Goldsworthy (2010). He maintains the following interrelated presuppositions: (1) This approach 'functions as the matrix for understanding the relatedness of the whole Bible to the person and work of Jesus' (p. 15); (2) Jesus' salvific identity and ministry provide regenerate interpreters with a 'single focal point' for making sense of 'reality' (p. 21); and, (3) Jesus 'mediates the ultimate truth about God in all things and thus about the meaning of the Bible' (p. 48).

[26] For a case study analysis of a representative passage in Paul's writings through the prism of his crucicentric thinking, especially in dialogue with a confessional Lutheran

On another level, it crucial to avoid lapsing into a gospel-monism, in which one's interpretation of scripture collapses into a narrow, sterile, and one-dimensional view of what God's Word supposedly teaches. Even Paul, in his farewell speech to the Ephesian elders, affirmed the importance of proclaiming the 'whole will of God' (Acts 20:27). The apostle was emphasising the Creator's purpose and plan throughout salvation-history, as revealed in the entire Judeo-Christian canon.[27]

The preceding observations bring to mind the earlier discourse about a so-called 'canon within a canon. As Carson (1984) observes, this phenomenon is a kind of biblical 'reductionism'. It occurs when one portion of scripture (such as the four gospels or the Pauline writings) is overemphasised and valued, while other portions (such as the letter from James) are downplayed and treated with suspicion. The peril of this approach is that interpreters, by 'arbitrarily' placing the 'locus' of 'controlling authority' on what they favour over what they disfavour, stand in judgment of God. Furthermore, such a hermeneutical method calls into question the inspiration and authority of the Old and New Testaments (cf. Deut 4:2; 2 Tim 3:16–17; 2 Pet 1:20–21; Rev 22:18–19).[28]

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perspective, cf. Lioy 2015. For a consideration of the cruciform theology found in the letter from James, cf. Davids (1980).

[27] For an explanation of the essence, contours, and significance of salvation-history, cf. Carson (2015a:236–9) and Lioy (2014:78–87). In terms of messianic themes and prophecies found throughout the Old Testament, cf. Kaiser (1995), Van Groningen (1990); Wright (1992). For a synopsis of how the letter from James adumbrates the redemptive storyline of scripture, cf. McKnight (2011:4–9). For a consideration of intertextual issues in the letter from James (e.g. Old Testament quotations, biblical allusions, etc.), cf. Popkes (1999).

[28] Various specialists have deliberated the phenomenon of a 'canon within a canon', especially as it relates to a Christ-centred hermeneutic (e.g. Hasel 1991:66–7, 107; Osborne 2006:360–1; Thielman 2005:36–7). This includes members of the SATS academic community. For instance, Peppler (2012:132–3) affirms that such an

Concerning the letter from James, a thoughtful reading of the epistle challenges the notion that it is at cross-purposes with Paul's teaching about justification by faith. (The latter is a major point advocated in the discourse of the preceding section.) As a corollary, there is value in taking the letter of James seriously in its own right and objectively evaluating its theological importance in that regard. The preceding endeavour includes considering the strong Christocentric emphases in James.

Admittedly, the name of Jesus is only mentioned twice in the epistle, specifically, in 1:1 and 2:1. This crude metric could lead to the incorrect inference that the author pays little attention to the Messiah and his redemptive ministry, especially when compared to the four gospels and the writings of Paul; yet, an exegetical analysis of James calls into question such a supposition.[29] A corresponding point is that whatever James states in his letter (e.g. concerning such matters as dealing with temptation, taming the tongue, and the relationship between faith and deeds) is grounded in the truth he affirms about the Saviour. These observations should give one pause in hastily relegating the teachings in the epistle to a virtual second-tier status, especially when compared to other New Testament writings (e.g. those found in the four gospels and the Pauline corpus).

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approach not only results in, but also requires a 'form of Canon within a Canon'. In response, Smith (2012:162–3) raises the concern of a 'two-tier approach to the scriptures', wherein the four Gospels (or any other portion of Scripture) are treated as 'superior revelation to the remainder' of God's Word.

[29] The following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the discourse on the Christological data in James: Barker (2002:51–6); Bauckham (1999:138–40); Davids (1982:39–41); Hurtado (1997:173); Jobes (2011:185–94); Reumann (1999:129–35); Wall (1997a:27–34, 295–7).

A useful starting point is the direct reference in James 1:1. The author refers to himself as a 'servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ' (θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος). The NIV rendering notwithstanding, none of the Greek nouns have an article (i.e. they are anarthrous). One inference is that the references to 'God' and 'Lord Jesus Christ' denote two of the three persons within the Trinity, namely, the Father and the Son. A second under-appreciated implication is that the verse presents an exalted view of the Messiah. For instance, when James refers to himself as a bondservant of the Father and the Son, the insinuation is that the two equally exercise divine authority. Moreover, James sees himself as submitting to and worshiping the Father and the Son without any differentiation.

A second direct reference is found in James 2:1. Here the author identifies his readers (Greek, *adelphoi*, 'brothers and sisters') as those who have trusted in 'our glorious Lord Jesus Christ' (τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης). Because of their baptismal union with the Messiah, James urged them to eschew all forms of discrimination and preferentialism. There are several ways in which the genitival form of the Greek noun, *doxes* ('glory'), can be interpreted. One option is that the term is taken to be a genitive of sphere or place. If so, the grammatical construction draws attention to the exalted condition or nature of the Son. He conquered death, returned to heaven, and exists in a state of 'glory' at the Father's right hand (cf. Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33; 7:56; Phil 2:9; Heb 1:3).

A second option considers 'glory' as being appositionally related to the phrase rendered 'our Lord Jesus Christ'. If so, the Greek noun clarifies a specific aspect of the Son's personhood, namely, that he is the ineffable presence of God incarnate (cf. Col 1:15; 2:9; Heb 1:3). This observation brings to mind the way in which the rabbis later described the Lord's glory abiding with Israel as *shekinah*, from a Hebrew word

for 'dwelling'.[30] God's *shekinah* dwelt with the Israelites in the wilderness period, came to Solomon's temple when it was built, and then departed when the temple was destroyed. The evangelist in the Fourth Gospel depicts Jesus as God's *shekinah* returned to earth (John 1:14). In a similar vein, Paul said it was possible to see God's glory in Jesus of Nazareth when he was on earth, and that believers have the promise of sharing in that glory (Rom 5:2).

Both of the preceding options communicate an exceedingly high Christology. Be that as it may, numerous English translations render 'glory' as an attributive genitive.[31] The exegetical implication, then, is that *doxes* refers to some quality or characteristic of the Messiah and should be taken to have the meaning of 'glorious'. A logical query is the way in which James considers Jesus to be 'glorious'. Three possible responses are noteworthy: (1) Jesus unveils the inherent glory of the triune God (cf. John 1:14; Heb 1:3); (2) the glory of God enabled Jesus to rise from the dead (cf. Rom 1:4); and, (3) Jesus dwells in eternal glory (cf. John 17:5; Rev 1:5, 12–18).

Irrespective of how the genitival construction of *doxes* is to be syntactically understood, the author's pastoral emphasis remains the same. In particular, the diaspora community is summoned to put their faith in the risen and exalted Messiah. A further analysis of the letter from James indicates that the two overt references to Jesus are neither incidental nor peripheral to the writer's main argument; instead, 1:1 and 2:1 point to a Christocentric perspective that is woven tightly throughout the fabric of the epistle's discourse.

[30] The information in this paragraph is a revision of material in Lioy (2007a:27).
[31] E.g. Lexham, NET, NIV, NASB, NLT, and NRSV.

The preceding statement is validated by other discernible comments made in James concerning the Messiah. For instance, both 1:1 and 2:1 refer to Jesus as 'Lord' (Greek, *kyrios*). Admittedly, Hellenistic writers could use the noun, not to point to an individual's divine status, but to signal his place of high rank within society (comparable to the medieval appellation, 'lord of the manor'). For all that, hundreds of years before the Son's incarnation, the Septuagint consistently translated the Hebrew proper noun, *Yahweh,* as *kyrios*. Eventually, within Hellenistic Judaism, *kyrios* was consistently used to denote the covenant name for Israel's God.

Centuries earlier, after the chosen people returned to the Promised Land from 70 years of exile in Babylon, they renounced the polytheistic ways of their forbears and became staunch monotheists. For this reason, Deuteronomy 6:4 operated as a central tenet of their faith.[32] Otherwise known as the *Shema* (a transliteration of the first Hebrew verb appearing in the verse), Moses declares that the 'LORD our God, the LORD is one'. As the NIV margin notes, the Hebrew can be translated in several different ways. Other possibilities include the following: 'the LORD our God is one LORD'; 'the LORD is our God, the LORD is one'; and, 'the LORD is our God, the LORD alone'.

One meaning of the *Shema* is that Yahweh is the only real God. Also, the statement, 'the Lord is one' expresses not only the uniqueness but also the unity of God. There is no essential division or multiplicity in God. For this reason, the Israelites were always to worship only the Lord as their God and never divide their devotion between the one true God and any pagan deities (cf. Exod 20:1–6; Deut 5:6-10). James 2:19

[32] The information in this paragraph is a revision of material in Lioy (2008:409–10).

reflects this strong monotheistic perspective when it states, 'there is one God' (or 'God is one'; Greek, εἷς ἐστιν ὁ θεός).[33]

In light of what has been noted, it is astonishing that the author uses *kyrios* ('Lord') to denote both the Father and the Son. Indeed, the writer makes no attempt to explain how it is possible for *Yahweh* to be applied equally to the Father and the Son. Incidentally, an examination of the rest of the New Testament indicates that *kyrios* is often used to refer to Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Acts 2:36; Rom 10:9; Phil 2:8–11). The implication is that the four gospels and the Pauline corpus, along with the letter from James, applied God's covenant name to Jesus.

A comparison of James 4:12 and 5:7–9 offers another striking example of the exceedingly high Christocentric perspective found throughout the letter. The former verse declares that God alone is the righteous 'Lawgiver and Judge' (v. 12), and that only he has the authority to overrule or change his edicts.[34] This is true because as the 'Lawgiver', God is the author of the Mosaic legal code. Also, as the 'Judge', he is the administrator of the law. In short, he is both the legislator and enforcer of His eternal decrees. Accordingly, only He has the right and power to 'save and destroy'. Moreover, while the law given by the

[33] In addition to affirming the unity, or singularity, of God's being (cf. Mark 12:29), Deuteronomy 6:4 reveals that God is simple and unchanging in his essence. He is not composed of different elements, and nothing can be added to or taken away from him. Scripture also teaches the existence of three persons in the Godhead. This is called the doctrine of the Trinity (from the Latin word *trinitas*, which means 'threeness'). The notion of the three-in-oneness of God is nowhere fully formulated in the Bible; yet, scripture provides ample evidence to support the doctrine. It affirms that the Lord exists in three personal distinctions known respectively as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14). Each person is co-equal and co-eternal with the other two (cf. Isa 48:16; Matt 3:16–17; Lioy 2007a:101).

[34] The information in this paragraph is a revision of material in Lioy (2007c:421).

Lawgiver brings condemnation to transgressors, the righteous Judge is the only one with the authority to save the condemned offender.

In 5:7–9, James spotlights Jesus in His role as the sovereign Lord and righteous Judge.[35] The writer notes that at Jesus' Second Advent, all manner of economic and social injustice would be addressed. His eschatological agenda includes overturning and reversing every inequitable judgment the wicked rich make against His impoverished, socially-ostracized followers. The consequence is that James views the Son as united with the Father in the role of divine Judge. The implication is that Jesus exercises a prerogative reserved only for God in the Hebrew sacred writings (cf. Eccles 3:17; 11:9; 12:14). A correspondingly exalted Christology is found in Revelation 22:3, which reveals that the 'Father and the Son jointly share the responsibility of ruling and adjudicating from the celestial throne' (Lioy 2003:152).

A related phenomenon is that the letter from James restates didactic information attributed to Jesus in the four gospels, especially Matthew.[36] Indeed, an analysis of the relevant biblical texts indicates that James made use of a common oral tradition of Jesus' teachings. Nonetheless, while there are unmistakable conceptual and thematic links, no direct word-for-word correspondences can be found between what James wrote and what appears in the Gospels. Most likely, then, James composed his letter sometime before any of the four gospels were written.[37] If so, the implication is that James communicates an inspired tradition of the Messiah's discourse that predates the gospels.

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[35] The information in this paragraph is a revision of material in Lioy (2007c:426).

[36] For an assessment of possible sayings of Jesus' in the letter from James, cf. Adamson (1989:173–94); Bauckham 1999:93–108); Johnson (2004:136–54); Penner (1996:241–54); Shanks and Witherington (2003:146–52); Wall (1997a:22–3).

[37] The general scholarly consensus is that Mark's Gospel was written first (circa the mid-50s to the late 60s AD), with Matthew (circa AD 50 to 70), Luke (circa the 60s to

The use James makes of Jesus' gospel-centred teaching corresponds to, rather than conflicts with comparable didactic portions found in the gospels. This phenomenon in James points to another aspect of its high Christology. For instance, both James and the gospels portray Jesus as completely overshadowing Moses,[38] in which there is continuity and advance in God's redemptive plan. Also, in the Gospels, Jesus' teaching becomes the biblical standard for his disciples to heed. Similarly, in the letter from James, the restatement of the Messiah's words becomes an ethical compass for a displaced faith community in crisis. Furthermore, as in the gospels, so too in James, the author affirmed that what Jesus taught is the valid and correct benchmark for upright conduct among members of God's eschatological household. It just so happens that Paul articulates a corresponding view in his writings (cf. Rom 8:2; 1 Cor 9:19–21).

7. The Emphasis on Law and Wisdom in James

Consonant with what was articulated earlier, in Jewish thought, the Torah is understood to be divine instruction on how to live in a godly manner. An underappreciated truth is that a comparable emphasis can be found in both the gospels (e.g. John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10) and the writings of Paul (e.g. Eph 2:8–10; Titus 2:14). It is conceded that some might feel uneasy with the preceding observation, either out of concern for an incipient legalism being expressed or a semi-Pelagian view of one's relationship to God being affirmed.

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the 80s AD), and John (circa AD 50 to 85) being penned in the subsequent years and decades; cf. Bock (2002); Brown (1997); deSilva (2004); Strauss (2007).

[38] For a deliberation of the truth that Jesus completely overshadows Moses, cf. my forthcoming journal article titled, 'Making the case for Paul, not Jesus, as a new or second Moses'.

In response, the focus here is not on meriting one's salvation, especially since that is received by the Father's grace through faith in the Son. Incidentally, this truth is stressed in both the writings of Paul and James (cf. Eph 2:5; Titus 3:5; Jas 1:18). To clarify further, the emphasis is on God enabling believers to express the reality of their salvation through their upright conduct, which includes loving others unconditionally and unreservedly. This point is also stressed by Paul and James (cf. Rom 12:8–10; Phil 2:12–13; Jas. 1:27). In short, the letter from James voices a theological tenet articulated in the gospels and the Pauline corpus.

Furthermore, the letter from James reiterates the thoroughly Christ-centred outlook found in the four gospels. A case in point would be John's treatise, in which he presents Jesus as the epitome of wisdom and the divine, incarnate Torah.[39] Since the Son, as the culmination of the Father's revelation to humankind (cf. Heb 1:1), transcends the Mosaic Law and all its associated institutions, it is Jesus' teaching that becomes the foundation for what it means to live for God.[40] As argued in the preceding section, this mindset is affirmed in the letter from James.

In accord with the preceding outlook, Paul asserts that the Messiah is the incarnation of divine sagacity (1 Cor 1:22–24) and that the fruit produced by the Spirit forms the heartbeat of Christlike conduct (Gal 5:22–25). What Paul reveals about the Spirit's role in the lives of believers is complemented by what James discloses regarding the qualities connected with godly wisdom for Jesus' followers.[41] By way

[39] A comprehensive evaluation of the Fourth Gospel's identification of Jesus as the epitome of wisdom and the divine, incarnate Torah can be found in Lioy (2007a).

[40] A detailed consideration of the moral law from a Christ-centred perspective can be found in Lioy (2007b).

[41] For differing perspectives concerning whether the concept of wisdom in the letter from James is functionally equivalent to Paul's emphasis on the Spirit and the virtues He produces in the lives of believers (esp. Gal 5:22–23 and Jas 3:17, respectively), cf.

of example, the Father lavishly provides the Spirit to believers. In turn, the Spirit furnishes Christians with discernment and prudence to remain devoted to the Saviour, regardless of the adversities they encounter.

As noted in section 3, James considers the royal law as the guiding principle of God's eschatological kingdom. Correspondingly, the royal law serves as the foundation for the varied ethical declarations throughout the epistle (cf. 1:25; 2:8, 12). As in the gospels, the letter from James regards the two foremost injunctions to be an unconditional love for God and an unmitigated compassion for one's fellow human beings (cf. Matt 22:37–40; Mark 12:28–31; Luke 10:25–28). By serving others sacrificially, believers demonstrate the validity of their claim to worship the Creator. Moreover, they fulfil the ethical commands of the old covenant, which finds re-expression in the new covenant.[42]

The prominence given in the letter from James on the royal law mirrors the shift in emphasis in the Gospels from the Mosaic Law to the good news about God's kingdom. This change in focus is done in the following ways: directing attention away from a slavish observance of the rituals and customs mandated in first-century AD Judaism (e.g. being circumcised, offering temple sacrifices, and maintaining ritual purity); encouraging believers to find solace in the gospel; stressing the importance of God's law being internalised (by the Spirit through the means of grace); and, enabling believers to pursue godliness, especially by serving others in a humble, sacrificial manner.

Baker (2008:296–302); Chester and Martin (199:43–4); Davids (1980:103); Kirk (1969:25–8); Laato (1997:75–6); McCartney (2000:58–9).

[42] An affirmation of the moral law's enduring relevance can be found in Lioy (2004:189–201).

In summary, James urges his readers to conduct their lives in a godly way, especially in light of their baptismal union with the Son. As a result of their new birth, they abide in his sacred presence and submit to his will. This reflects a regenerate mindset and lifestyle, one that thrives in the soil of the Father's saving grace. Jesus' followers welcome this new covenant form of existence, for they know that at Jesus' Second Advent, he rights all wrongs and acquits his followers. Ultimately, the Spirit uses the believers' God-given faith to motivate and enable them to behave in a manner that reflects what the Creator originally decreed for humankind at the dawn of time.

8. Conclusion

This journal article undertakes a candid assessment of the continuing theological value of the letter from James. The incentive for doing so arises from the claim made by some within the Lutheran tradition that James and Paul either contradict or are at cross-purposes to one another. An additional motivation is connected with the assertion voiced by other Lutheran acolytes, who maintain that in order to preserve the integrity of the gospel, James must be read through a Pauline lens. Supposedly, Paul's letters should overshadow what James wrote, even if this results in creating a canon within a canon.

This essay recognises that Lutherans are not alone in wrestling with the dialectic between justification and sanctification, including how James and Paul approach this recurrent issue. The intent is not to somehow resolve a longstanding area of dispute; rather, it is to put forward an alternative view. The latter involves working through the following points of deliberation: background considerations related to James; the biblical concept of the law; the biblical concept of wisdom; the interrelationship between the Mosaic Law, faith, and good deeds; the

Christological emphases in James; and the emphasis on law and wisdom in James.

As the discourse unfolded in the various major sections of the journal article, the teachings in James were analysed and compared with the teachings of Jesus recorded in the gospels and the writings of Paul. As a result of this endeavour, it is reasonable to conclude that when James is carefully and thoughtfully read, it is found to complement, rather than contradict and challenge, Paul's teachings on justification by faith. A second major finding is that there remains exegetical benefit in taking the letter of James seriously in its own right, along with objectively assessing its theological importance in that regard. A third determination is that the message of salvation found in James is consistent with that appearing in the gospels, the Pauline corpus, and the rest of the New Testament.[43]

Jobes (2011:198) aptly observes that 'for too long the Protestant church has not appreciated the unique character of the book of James and has been distracted by questions raised when James is read in the canonical context of the Pauline writings on soteriology'. Adamson (1989:423) opines that despite those who disparage the theological value of the letter from James, it has a 'steady stream of enthusiastic admirers'. In this regard, Johnson (2004:242) avers that 'throughout the history of interpretation, James has been most appreciated theologically when allowed to speak in its own voice'. In a similar vein, Wall (1997a:295) offers two salient observations: (1) 'James is a Christian writing that retains a distinctively Jewish ethos'; and, (2) the 'faith community' is prudent to 'hear' the 'voice' of the letter and acknowledge it as being 'canonical'.

[43] For a synopsis of contemporary scholarship dealing with the continuing significance of the letter from James, cf. Harner (2004:26–8).

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The Theology of Truth and Social Justice in the Present Context: An Examination of the Relevancy of the Kairos Document 30 Years after its Draft

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Abstract

This year marks 30 years since the final draft of the Kairos Document. The Kairos Document was drafted during a very tense political environment. The issues expressed in the document are still relevant in the current African context. There are many countries that are governed by what are perceived to be corrupt governments, and some are classified as failed states. The Kairos Document focuses on the attitudes of the churches under these hardships. Although it places the value of all human life on an equal platform and calls for the governments to govern in fairness and morality within God's moral law, its position on civil disobedience could be seen to lack adequate biblical foundation. In addition, its biased view on reconciliation does not achieve what it desires; a true and unified reconciliation.

[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

The Kairos Document was first drafted in 1985, and was followed by the second and final draft in 1986 in Apartheid South Africa during one of the most violent periods of the anti-Apartheid era, when the state of emergency was declared to try to maintain order (Eckardt 1986:218; Mtakati 2010:20–26; Vellem 2015:1). The tense situation caused black local churches to reassess their position in the struggle, as they were faced with the harsh realities of the day—even men of the cloth had to carry the 'dompas' (a pass book issued in terms of the Pass Law), and were also subjected to restrictions placed on all Non-White racial groups (Mtakati 2010:26). The Kairos Document was drafted by, mostly, those in oppressed and marginalised communities. The primary focus of the document is on the relationship between the Church and the state in a context where the state is seen as the oppressor and the cause of poverty and social injustice in the lives of certain groups of its citizens (Kairos 1985:368).

The Church found itself in a vigorous debate about the role of the Church in apartheid South Africa. Even after the publication of Kairos Document the debate still continued, resulting in the publication of Evangelical Witness in South Africa in 1986 and responses from churches in Europe. Webb describes this document as 'an example of grassroots theology born in the midst of bloodshed and death of increasing bitterness and polarisation, and of rising anger in the townships' (Webb 1986:5). For a long time the Church had understood its purpose solely to concentrate on its ecclesiastical duties and not be involved in politics. However, this had proved difficult, primarily for the churches in the black and other Non-White communities, as the evidence of oppression was real. This does not mean that there was disinterest from urban white churches; however, the black clergy were faced with pastoral duties in communities that were ripe with discontent

and suffering (Webb 1986:5). It is within this context that the authors of the document present a Church divided primarily along racial lines.

The underlining question that the Kairos Document seeks to answer is, what is the role of the church in a country where many lives are consistently lost or negatively affected due to the direct cause of state policies or acts of terror? This question is equally valid in the contemporary international context with much political turmoil in Africa and the Middle East, due to what has been termed the Arab Spring (Prashad 2012:6). Demonstrations and revolts are the norm in many states, all over the world, due to the challenging economic and political landscape. The question that has plagued the Christian community for centuries is what theological view should be adopted by the Church regarding obedience to the state? This question guided the Christian community during the Apartheid era in drafting the Kairos Document. The Kairos Document focuses on the issue of divine truth and social justice in connection with obedience to the state. This issue was paramount as the Apartheid system was deemed immoral, as was the biblical defence of the system by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) (Dyrness and Kärkkäinen 2008:54).

There are many issues expressed in the Kairos Document, such as poverty and its criticism of capitalism, but these should be interpreted within its context. More so as these issues will not be the primary focus, since poverty should be interpreted as state-induced poverty due to its policies, and the criticism of capitalism should be viewed as how it was practised by the Apartheid regime that sought to benefit only the few. However, from an evangelical perspective, if the Kairos Document should be criticised on its negative view of capitalism, it should not be done in favour of capitalism. Evangelicalism should not be based on any economic system. Both socialism and capitalism have been

ineffective in dealing with poverty and social inequality, and evangelicalism should not be associated with either. Thus the criticism should be based on whether or not the Kairos Document advocates socialism.

The questions that will be examined here are, what is the evangelical theological and biblical view of the relationship between the Church and the state and social justice, and does the Kairos Document adhere to such views? How relevant is the Kairos Document to the contemporary context, 30 years after its publication?

2. The Basic Layout of the Kairos Document

The Kairos Document begins with a critique of State Theology and its employment of Romans 13:1–7 and the concept of Communism, and a critique of Church Theology and its irrelevancy in addressing the pressing social injustice facing the black community (Kairos 1985:368-369). Second, there is a critique of Church Theology that argues against passivism of the church community and the notion that is plausible to conclude to adhere to the state's interpretation of Romans 13:1–7. The writers argue that reconciliation cannot be possible if the oppressive system still exists, thus once it is removed, then a journey to true reconciliation may be initiated. Third, there is what the Kairos Document calls the Prophetic Theology that attempts to present a picture of the context of the document and makes an argument against oppression, by depicting God as the anti-oppressionist and a fighter for the oppressed. It also attempts to bring a message of hope to the oppressed and assurance of freedom. Lastly, the Challenge to Action section calls for the Church in South Africa and abroad to act against injustices against the non-whites in South Africa. The document also calls for the support of both civil disobedience and even an armed campaign against the apartheid system.

The Kairos Document does not attempt to present a biblical justification for its position by starting with biblical exposition, and this could be seen as one of its shortcomings, particularly from the evangelical perspective. The writers' presentation juxtaposes the struggle between the oppressive government that is fighting to keep its laws to suppress the freedom of all its citizens, and the fight against good and evil, God and the devil. This sets the tone of the document as the language continues in the next section. Only in the third section do the writers, apart from their argument in the first section against the state's interpretation of Rom 13:1–7, present a more convincing biblical perspective on oppression. However, it is essential to examine the document and its arguments.

3. A Critical Examination of the Relationship between the Church and the State in the Kairos Document

As stated earlier, the Kairos Document presents a partisan church that is the division what the document calls the White and the Black Church.[2] According to Eckardt (1986:220) there are three approaches to apartheid. First is *the Pro–apartheid radicalness*: under this, the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) and the majority of the Afrikaans and some English churches can be placed. This is what the Kairos Document calls State Theology (Eckardt 1986:220). The second is the *Christian spiritual approach*. This is the passive stance of the church where the denunciation ends only in theological disposition and statements, but no decisive action is taken. This is what the Kairos Document calls Church Theology (Eckardt 1986:221). The third is *Militant anti-apartheid Christianity*. Eckardt believes that the Kairos

[2] The churches that were perceived to be supporters of apartheid, and those that were supposed to be against apartheid.

Document belongs to this category. This deals with both the affirmation of public statements, while still acknowledging and accepting overt revolutionary praxis. Eckardt (1986:222–223) states that the document's classification of apartheid as a heresy is one thing, but a call for civil disobedience and revolution is something entirely different.

A question that arises is, should a call for civil disobedience and a call for armed struggle be classified together? It is my firm opinion that the three above-mentioned approaches given by Eckardt are insufficient, and that an addition should be provided to pro-Apartheid radicalness, Christian spiritual approach and Militant anti-Apartheid Christianity. *Peaceful civil-disobedience* should be added as a fourth classification, as distinction should be made between an endorsement of armed struggle and peaceful protest against unjust laws. Although I understand the motivation of Eckardt in placing the Kairos Document under the militant anti-apartheid Christianity grouping, it is essential to note that the advocacy of armed-struggle is presented at the last resort.

The classifications presented by Eckardt could be adapted to fit the general world context. The pro-Apartheid radicalness could be classified as *pro-state activism*. This is for churches that ideologically and actively support the state and its policies. An example of this group is the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) church commonly known as the Chinese state church. This is a church movement that supports the policies of the Chinese Communist Party. This church movement has been responsible for the persecution of the non-registered churches. According to the *Country Report on Human Rights Practices of 1997* (1998:156–157) the TSPM church movement aided the government in implementing a three-stage plan to dismantle non-registered religious movements, which saw many of the church leaders imprisoned or fined.

The second classification of Christian Spiritual approach could be maintained without any additional conditions. An example of the churches in this classification are the Syrian Christian churches. Najib Awad (2012:86), a Syrian national Christian theologian, states that Christians in Syria do not support the ideology of the Assad regime, but believe that the regime is the only barrier between peace and persecution of the Christian minority. Awad says that the regime does not protect the Christian minority, but that the stance of the church is pragmatic when the alternative of an Islamic state that may be oppressive to the Christian community is a possibility. Judith Rubin (2015:339), a respected Israeli academic on the Middle East, supports Awad's view and states that Syria has been a haven for Christians who escaped the massacres in Turkey during the First World War. The security was not due to a direct interaction with the Assad regime, but the secular nature provided by the regime is more favourable to Syrian Christians than the religious alternatives should the regime fall. Awad (2012:86) states that Syrian Christians are not involved in the conflict, but hope and pray for peace in the country and the region.

The third and fourth classifications are civil disobedience approach and militant anti-state tactics respectively. The former is an approach that could be associated with that of Bishop Desmond Tutu and Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. Hendrick Pieterse (2001:31) points out that civil disobedience during apartheid, and this can include other contexts where prejuduce was challenged on a national level like the American civil movement, was more than a tactic but a principle that guided the heart of the liberation movement. This is evident in the manner that leaders such as Desmond Tutu and Martin Luther King Jr conducted their movements and campaigns. For the militant approach it is difficult to point to any Christian church movements that embraced this approach as the sole solution to the social and political challenges

similar to the apartheid regime. Bettina Koch (2015:116–120) calls the churches that supported the armed-struggle the revolutionary churches; however, she concedes that these churches always saw the armed struggle as the only option after all peaceful means had proved futile. These four classifications are sufficient in judging many theological positions that any individuals or Christian groups may adhere to, regarding the appropriate and biblical way that the Christian community should react to a tyrannical and oppressive state. It is essential to establish what the biblical presentation is of the role of the state and the relationship between the state and the Church.

3.1. A biblical examination of the role of the state, and the relationship between the Church and the state

The Kairos Document contends that, '"State Theology" is simply the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism, and totalitarianism. It blesses injustice, canonises the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy' (Kairos 1985:368–369). It goes on to charge the state with misusing theological and biblical concepts and texts for its own political purposes. It gives three main charges; the use of Romans 13:1–7 to give an absolute and 'divine' authority to the state, the use of the idea of Law and Order to determine and control what the people may be permitted to regard as just and unjust, the use of the word 'communist' to brand anyone who rejects State Theology, and the misuse of the name of God in the South African Constitution, calling the document idolatry.

State Theology was a theology that sought to legitimise an illegitimate state, for it was a theology of the apartheid state that canonised racism, capitalism and a totalitarian state against the Black people of South Africa (Vellem 2015:2). To achieve this end, State Theology misused theological concepts and biblical texts, such as Romans 13:1–7. Some

will remember what was then called the Doctrine of Common Purpose that empowered the state to incarcerate without trial people who were believed to have pursued an agenda of undermining the state. Under this regime, even the meaning of 'a meeting' assumed a different definition. More than two people, for example, found standing at any corner of the street in the township would easily be detained, because meetings or gatherings were against the law of the apartheid regime. Law and order had become an aberration which resulted in the ubiquitous presence of the legions of the military force invading and hovering over almost every space of life in the township (Vellem 2015:1).

Eckardt's concludes the climax of judgment against State Theology, whereby the Kairos theologians equate the state's use of the name of God with the praxis of Satan, the anti-Christ in the following,

> This means that much more than heresy is involved. 'State Theology' is not only heretical, it is also blasphemous. As Christians, we simply cannot tolerate this blasphemous use of God's name and God's Word. Here is a god who exalts the proud and humbles the poor—the very opposite of the God of the Bible who 'scatters the proud of heart, pulls down the mighty from their thrones and exalts the humble (Eckardt 1986:224).

The Kairos document begins with the observation that throughout the history of Christianity totalitarian regimes have misused the text to legitimise an attitude of blind obedience and absolute servility by its subjects. This is echoed by Monera in the following,

> In the history of its interpretation, this passage has often been invoked, even grievously perverted, to support the political interests of the readers and interpreters. There are expositors that endeavoured to derive from this text of Paul the offensive principle of unresisting, unquestioning obedience to civil authority of

> whatever brand. No matter how tyrannical or immoral the rulers are, they ought to be obeyed and no resistance is ever lawful (Monera 2005:107)

According to the Kairos Document the apartheid state is guilty of the same crime, and one may argue that this use of the text was consciously and deliberately misleading (Kairos 1985:368–369). Many scholars have written on this subject and focused on the responsibility of Christians towards a tyrannical state, and many have called for proper exegetical tools to be employed when examining the text, and this notion is also what the Kairos Document supports. It states,

> To abstract a text from its context and to interpret it in the abstract is to distort the meaning of God's Word. Moreover, the context here is not only the chapters and verses that precede and succeed this particular text nor is it even limited to the total context of the bible. The context includes also the circumstances in which Paul's statement was made. Paul was writing to a particular Christian community in Rome, a community that had its own particular problems in relation to the state at that time and in those circumstances. But most revealing of all are the circumstances of the Roman Christians to whom Paul was writing. They were not revolutionaries. They were not calling for a change of government. They were what has been called 'enthusiasts,' and their belief was that Christians, and only Christians, were exonerated from obeying any state at all, any government or political authority at all, because Jesus alone was their Lord and King (Kairos 1985:369–370).

What is essential is to examine the role of the state and the role of the Christians regarding the state. First, I will examine Romans 13 verse 4.

θεοῦ γὰρ διάκονός ἐστιν σοὶ εἰς τὸ ἀγαθόν. ἐὰν δὲ τὸ κακὸν ποιῇς, φοβοῦ· οὐ γὰρ εἰκῇ τὴν μάχαιραν φορεῖ· θεοῦ γὰρ διάκονός ἐστιν, ἔκδικος εἰς ὀργὴν τῷ τὸ κακὸν πράσσοντι.

> For, indeed, he is a servant of God for the good. Moreover, if ever anyone practises evil he should be afraid, for he indeed does not bear the sword in vain. For, indeed he is a servant of God, an avenger of wrath to the evildoer.[3]

Paul uses διάκονος *(diakonos)* to describe the ruler or the state. *Diakonos* has three meanings: minister, servant(s), and deacon. *Diakonos* is understood as 'someone running errands, and doing the will of the master' (Bruce 1985:223–224). In the Gospels, Jesus uses *diakonos* in reference to a specific attitude that his disciples and all believers should have towards each other (Matt 20: 26; 23: 11; Mark 9: 35; 10: 43; Bruce 1985:223–224). In Matthew 20:25–26 Jesus contrasts the attitude of the rulers of the Gentiles and the believers. Jesus uses κατακυριεύουσιν (*katakyrieuousin*) meaning to exercise lordship over and κατεξουσιάζουσιν (*katexousiazousin*) meaning to exercise authority over the subjects in reference to the nature and the manner of governance that is unacceptable, and in contrast to being a servant as the acceptable and godly alternative.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus' use of *diakonos* is in a personal directive, as meaning the service of the believer to him (John 12: 26). Paul's use of the term in his epistle is often in reference to both allegiance to Christ, and service of believers in the Christian community. One Timothy 3 is the first time Paul personally uses the term, but in plural form, διακόνους (*diakonous*) in reference to a specific office within the Christian community (1 Tim 3:8). This is why many translations opt to use the word 'servant' rather than 'minister' (Bruce 1985:223–224). Therefore, governments are servants appointed by God to do his will.

[3] My own translation.

We will compare the translation of the term in the following translations; New King James Version (KJV), New International Version (NIV), English Standard Version (ESV), and New Living Translations (NLT).

> KJV: For he is the *minister* of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.
>
> NIV: For the one in authority is God's *servant* for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer
>
> ESV: for he is God's *servant* for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.
>
> NLT: The authorities are God's *servants*, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God's servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong.

With the government as servants of God, the primary focus is to;

- Do the divine will of God and uphold his Truth, moral law and social justice.
- Execute laws that reflect the personality of God and uphold righteousness among its citizens.

- Execute punishment on evildoers in society (Bruce 1985:223–224).

Bailey (2004:28) also supports this notion, as he observes that specific historical conditions could have prompted Paul to include the section on obedience in the paragraph. Bailey (2004) adds that just as nationalistic tendencies among the Jews created opposition to Rome, so the belief that Christians were citizens of a heavenly kingdom with their allegiance to Christ could have caused them to look upon government with a lack of respect, which potentially could endanger their continued existence. He continues by stating,

> Yet in spite of the fact that this paragraph may reflect historical conditions at Rome or elsewhere in the first century AD, the text is primarily an example of Paul's preaching on the general relationship of Christians to civil government. It does not deal with the problems that arise when human governments fail miserably at their divinely instituted responsibilities or when demands of government violate the conscience of a Christian. What it does provide is an example of Paul's political paraenesis. And the basic message is that Christians demonstrate obedience to God by submission to civil government (Bruce 1985:223–224).

Bailey's argument is that the text does not support the view of blind obedience to a tyrannical or oppressive state, but teaches general conduct and attitude towards civil government. This is supported by Dyck (1985:46) in stating that 'the obvious problem for the idea of the divine institution of all authority is the fact of evil government, which in the text seems not to be accepted.' Like Bruce and Bailey, Dyck (1985:46–48) argues that Paul's real task was not to encourage an exalted view of the state that requires absolute obedience, but to discourage rebellion. Like many others, Dyck looks at Paul's Jewish

background and the general attitude towards Rome, and observes that the rising tide of zealotry in Palestine could not have escaped Paul's notice. Although it may not be the background for this text, it may have made him more acutely aware of similar tendencies among other Roman subjects (Dyck 1985:48).

Towards the end of his work, Monera (2005:113) points out that although the passage is written in a somewhat general tone, it does not legislate for every conceivable situation in which Christians find themselves. Monera (2005:113) states that it is of limited value, albeit its principles can guide us in dealing with political problems that concern people today. Therefore, based on the presented argument I believe the use of Romans 13:1–7 in support of absolute obedience to the state is an error. The word error is used here consciously instead of blasphemous or heretical, as it is not directed towards the then, apartheid state, but focuses on the use of the scripture to advocate obedience. Motive and intent plays a decisive role in the determination of classifying something as error or blasphemous, and if a state uses biblical texts with deceitfulness knowing the real meaning, then the latter is appropriate.

Romans 13:1–7 can be paralleled with Titus 3:1, where Paul instructs Titus to remind the believers of their obligation to the state.

ὑπομίμνῃσκε αὐτοὺς ἀρχαῖς ἐξουσίαις ὑποτάσσεσθαι, πειθαρχεῖν, πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἑτοίμους εἶναι,

> You should remind them to submit to the rulers and be obedient to the authorities and be ready for every good work.[4]

[4] My own translation.

The New International Version, New King James Version and many others interpret Titus 3:1 as, 'Remind them [the people] to submit to the rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work.' Titus 3, although it can be paralleled with Romans 13, places the instructions in a uniquely different position from Romans 13. Paul wrote the letter to the Romans during his third missionary journey (AD 53–58) during the time when the main opposition to the Gospel message was the Jewish authorities (Gundry 2012:433). This was during the time of transition between the Roman Emperor Claudius (AD 41–54) and Nero (AD 54–68) when there was a time of relative peace for the Christians (Gundry 2012:32). The letter to Titus was written between AD 63 and 67. Commentators like Benware (2003:230) opt for the earlier date, while others like Polhill (1999:405) point to the later date, which places the letter in the time of Neronian persecution. If the later date of AD 64 to 67 is adopted, then Paul's instruction could be viewed as telling believers to remain obedient to the authorities during the time of persecution. This would apply to 1 Peter 2:13, which was written during the same period and gives similar instructions. Thus the instructions that continue in verse 2 of avoiding speaking ill of others and maintaining the attitude of gentleness and peace bear a deeper meaning if put in the context of extreme persecution by a tyrannical state. If Titus 3:1 and 1 Peter 2:13 were written during the time of persecution, the instructions expressed would contradict the nature of the Jewish zealots and other revolutionary groups that existed at that time. Paul and Peter, with their backgrounds, would have been familiar with the nature of the revolutionary groups in Palestine opposing the Roman occupation. The instructions given in these letters could be considered as counter-revolutionary in nature, as they discourage believers from taking stances that would cause public discourse.

The debate on the power of the state is relevant in the current democratic society. The power of the state is not divorced from God's divine Truth; rather it is to enforce the Truth and God's moral law in society while making sure that it is not in violation of it (Bruce 1985:223–224). However, in a situation where a state is in violation of its obligation to God and its citizens, there is a lack of biblical mandate for believers to react against the state; rather, they ought to conduct themselves with gentleness, humility, and godliness. This does not mean that the Church has to promote ungodly legislatures. If I have to place the instructions expressed in Romans 13:1–7, Titus 3:1 and 1 Peter 2:13, under one of the four classifications I mentioned earlier, they will fall under Christian Spiritual approach that encourages dialogue, prayer and practical Christian spirituality rather than civil-disobedience or the militant approach. The question that I will examine is how does the Kairos Document critique this approach, which it calls Church Theology?

3.2. A critical examination of the Kairos Document's view of Church Theology and Civil disobedience

The frustration felt towards the advocates of Church Theology as accused by the Kairos Document writers is felt when reading through this section. It is easy to conclude that the writers felt that the so-called English-speaking churches did not understand the seriousness of the situation. According to the Kairos Document peace cannot be genuine until the system of oppression is removed, and this would not happen unless the government repented and removed the system that had placed the minority white community in an advantageous position above others.

The Kairos Document states,

> The trouble with "reconciliation" is that in South Africa today there are not, morally and Christianly speaking, two sides to the story.

> There is only a wrong side, 'a fully armed and violent oppressor,' and a right side, people who are defenceless and oppressed. Therefore, it is "totally un-Christian to plead for reconciliation and peace" until the present injustices are removed (Kairos 1985:373).

The Kairos Document continues with a harsh rebuke of the advocates of Church Theology, as it classifies the summons to reconciliation as sin. The document states, 'It is asking us to become accomplices in our own oppression, to become servants of the devil. ... What this means in practice is that no reconciliation, no forgiveness and no negotiations are possible without repentance' (Kairos 1985:374). Thus Church Theology can be understood as a position that discourages all types of resistance against the state. The accusation of the Kairos Document is that this notion does not consider the possibilities of failed negotiations, but rather just pushes for meaningless dialogue. The Kairos Document, on the other hand, encourages the Christian communities to engage in civil (non-violent) disobedience. This position is presented, as it is accepted by the writers that they are in the right; they have a moral justification based on God's truth and his divine character.

The debate about civil disobedience existed even during the time of the Early Church. As we have examined the context of Romans 13, it is easy to imagine the debate early Christians had regarding the relationship of the Church and the state, even more so when the state became increasingly oppressive towards the believers. Since the fall of Nazi Germany, it has been more accepted within certain Christian communities that civil disobedience is acceptable, but in certain situations.

Geisler (2006:440) presents two general views in support of civil disobedience; when the government promulgates a law in contrast to the Word of God, and when the government commands believers to do evil.

Regarding the first point, the issue of justice has been discussed and concluded that justice and morality are founded on the basis of God's divine truth. Thus, the government ought to implement God's law and truth in society. The Kairos Document argues that the oppressive system of apartheid not only violates God's word, but is unjust. In addition, one may argue that the law or legislation that enforces the separation of facilities, forces Christians to do evil. Store and restaurant owners are forced to discriminate against people of other races, and the Kairos Document points out that "Christian soldiers and police shoot and kill Christian children" (Kairos 1985:373-374). The concept of unity in Christ expressed in the Gospels and the epistles is consciously violated, even by those that profess Christ.

Geisler (2006:440) argues that the Bible tells us not only when civil laws ought to be disobeyed, but also how. Geisler argues for non-violent civil disobedience, not violent revolt. He states (2010:251) that biblical civil disobedience does not fight against the punishment of the state, but accepts it and gives the example of Shadrach, Mishach, and Abednego (Dan 3) and Daniel in the lions' den (Dan 6). Geisler also states that fleeing the state is an alternative form of disobedience, instead of fighting against it. He (2010:251) provides compelling reasons against revolt. First, God gave the sword to the government to rule, not to the citizens to revolt. Still on Romans 13, Geisler focuses on verse 4, that the government is the one to use the sword on the citizens and not the other way round. Second, God exhorts against joining revolutionaries. This point serves as a continuation of the first and Romans 13. Lastly, Revolutions are consistently condemned by God. On this, Geisler points to several passages in the historical books of the Old Testament, including Numbers 16 which records the Korah's rebellion against Moses. Geisler (2010:251) acknowledges that the revolt against queen Athaliah (2 Kings 11) was sanctioned by God, but argues that this was the only one, and was necessary to preserve the

only link to Christ's bloodline. Geisler's view corresponds with my biblical examination of Romans 13, but more so with Paul's instructions in Titus and Peter's in his epistle, if the later authorship date is adopted.

Philip Wogaman (2000:270) states that civil disobedience could be a tool for Christian witness in a context where the state implements destructive and immoral legislation, but Mark Kreitzer (2015:99–100), a professor at Grand Canyon University, argues that this could be done in an orderly manner without chaos. Kreitzer argues that God is not a God of disorder, and the Church should aim to maintain order. Kreitzer points to Jesus' attitude in the garden of Gethsemane when Peter wanted to revolt, and chastised him for his attitude (Matt 26:50-53). However the Kairos Document sees chaos as a necessary evil in dealing with the greater evil of oppression (Kairos 1985:383-385). Its defence of violence springs from what it considers an unfair comparison between the state's sanctioned violence against unarmed demonstrators and the reaction of the people by throwing stones and burning cars out of frustration (Kairos 1985:374–377).

I have three main criticisms of the Kairos Document's position on civil disobedience. The first is that the views of the authors of the document are based on emotions and sentiments, rather than on biblical grounds. They do not attempt to present a convincing biblical view of their position, but only the political realities they have witnessed. Emotion-based theologies without a strong biblical basis are counterproductive and could be disastrous. My examination of Romans 13, Titus 3 and 1 Peter 2, shows there is greater biblical support for a position contrary to what the Kairos Document advocates. Geisler (2010) and Kreitzer (2015) in their respective works provide a convincing biblical position of how the Church could deal with an oppressive government.

My second criticism is regarding the potential loss of life. I'm cautiously against the Church encouraging tactics that could result in the loss of innocent lives. It could be viewed as hypocritical, if the Church that has advocated pro-life policies consciously advocates tactics that could place many innocent lives in danger. This does not mean that Christians should obey the state for fear of losing their lives. Disobedience of the church by not implementing their policies, is different from advocating acts such as civil disobedience, especially violent disobedience.

The last criticism is its failure to openly condemn violence within the townships perpetrated among Black factional groups. It is logical to conclude that this is because the Kairos Document sees that as a symptom of the oppressive system of government, with its focus on police brutality, and not the black-on-black violence. Nonetheless, the defence given is not acceptable, as it could be seen as the classical 'the devil made me do it' excuse, only that the devil is the state. It would have been advantageous and constructive had the authors of the Kairos Document called for the oppressed to take the higher moral ground and cease such acts. On the human level, one can imagine the anguish and pain when so many people lose their lives in their quest for *liberté, égalité, fraternité* meaning freedom, equality and fraternity (Kairos 1985:383–385).

4. Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Kairos Document

One of the key issues regarding the Kairos Document is the issue of reconciliation. Can there be true reconciliation between the oppressors and the oppressed? What role does truth have in the reconciliation process? The Kairos Document authors painted a black and white, right and wrong, picture of the South African political and social scene. It is

logical to criticise even the portrayal of State and Church theologies as divisive and alienating. The Kairos Document offers only one condition for reconciliation; total repentance and reversal of the segregation policies. Botman (2000:105-120) points out that one of theological criticisms against the Kairos Document is that its understanding of reconciliation lacked future vision of how nations are formed.

This may be true when we look at political situations like the Israel-Palestine, and the South Korea-Japan tensions. The Kairos Document's version would not apply to the first situation, as both feel justified in their actions, thus neither one would relent and repent. In fact, is it appropriate to view the position presented in the Kairos document as idealistic; true from a theological perspective, but difficult to implement in institutional and political reconciliation process? An example of the latter situation concerns one nation that colonised another. If the former colonisers feel that they have done enough to apologise, if they ever did, any more demands lead to friction and clashes. It would have been more constructive if the reconciliation focused on both sides rather than just on one. In the modern world, reconciliation may require compromise by both parties.

Even though Botman may be correct in his critique, the problem is deeper than just providing a precedent for future conflicts. One of the areas that justifies criticism is its presentation of the white and black churches. The picture that the Kairos Documents paints is that the white Afrikaner churches were the sole supporters of the Apartheid regime and the English-speaking churches were silent supporters or critics of the regime. However, this ignores black churches that could fall under either the State or Church theology groups. One of the examples of such churches is the Zion Christian Church, the largest AIC church group in Southern Africa with membership in neighbouring countries such as

Swaziland, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Ashforth (2005:191) notes that the Zion Christian Church remained disengaged during the anti-Apartheid era. Ashforth gives the example of when the church invited State President P.W. Botha to its annual pilgrimage where thousands of its members from all over South Africa converged on its headquarters in 1985 before the final version of the Kairos Document was drafted. The failure to recognise the existence of black churches that fell under these criticised categories creates a biased presentation against specific targeted church groups.

My second critique is regarding its view on black-on-black violence. The conditions presented in the Kairos Document are based on the state and the oppressed, but it forgets the need for reconciliation among the oppressed, especially where the tensions are tribal. The political conflict between the African National Congress that, primarily, consists of the Xhosas and the Sothos, and the Inkatha Freedom Party of the Zulus, is well documented. Although it is difficult to find a firm estimate of the number of deaths between the two factions, the period between 1984 and 1990 was the most volatile (Sisk 2009:88). The approach by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1995 attempted to strike a balance by including in its investigations the black-on-black violence as well as acts perpetrated by the liberation movements. The Kairos Document fails in this essential task.

The Kairos Document presents a moral argument for the value of human life, the role of the government, and the responsibility of the Church in enforcing God's divine truth and justice. Although there will always be a debate on the Church-State relationship, the Kairos Document explored this issue under challenging circumstances. It maintains a general evangelical view of divine truth in its view of the role of the state under the lordship of Christ and pushes for the moral responsibility of the state and the Church. Cooperation between the

state and the Church is needed in ensuring a great life for all. Regardless of the weaknesses of the Kairos Document, the moral argument that it presents is essential and relevant in the contemporary context.

5. Conclusion

The Kairos Document serves as a moral voice of the responsibility of the state and the role of the Church in society. It focused on the question of what the Church should do where the state fails in its moral obligation to care for all its citizens, more so when the state is the oppressor. Its critique of State Theology is warranted, and its call for the Church to hold the state accountable for its duty to promote God's divine Truth and social justice is plausible. However, the document fails in not presenting adequate biblical support for civil disobedience and militant actions against an oppressive state. Romans 13:1–4, Titus 3:1 and 1 Peter 2:13 do not promote direct actions such as civil disobedience against the state, but call for peace and order. The actions of the early Church during persecution provide the best example of being an effective witness in an oppressive society.

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Review of Frost, *Incarnate: The Body of Christ in an Age of Disengagement*

Robert D. Falconer[1]

Frost M 2014. *Incarnate: the body of Christ in an age of disengagement*. Downers Grove: IVP

1. Introduction to the Author

Michael Frost is a leading missiologist with an international voice in the missional church movement, and frequently speaks at conferences throughout the world. Frost co-founded the Forge Mission Training Network together with his friend, Alan Hirsch, with whom he has co-authored several books. He is also the Vice Principal of Morling College and the founding director of the Tinsley Institute, a mission study centre located at Morling College in Sydney, Australia. Many of his books explore missiology in the postmodern age, and are required reading for colleges and seminaries in many parts of the world. Some of these books include, *ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church* (2008, co-authored with Alan Hirsch), *The Road to Missional, Journey to the Center of the Church* (2011), and most recently, *Surprise the World: The Five Habits of Highly Missional People* (2015) .

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

2. The Purpose of the Book

Frost, in his book, seeks to show his readers how contemporary society has become what he calls excarnational, that is, living a defleshed human existence, disengaged with the physicality of the here and now. He laments that 'Christianity has become an out-of-body experience-personalized, privatized, customised…' and sees 'dualism as one of the chief problems facing the evangelical church'. His purpose for authoring such a book is to critique our age of disengagement in both the secular world as well as in Christianity, and to argue that the church is called to live an incarnational lifestyle, rooted in the physical present. Frost, not only tells us what is wrong with our age and society, but also proposes how the church might live incarnational lives meaningfully in the way of liturgy and worship, and in mission, engaging our communities as the body of Christ.

To make the point, *Incarnate* begins by providing ancient examples of the ritual of defleshing as seen in the cultures of old, up until medieval Europe, whereby the flesh of the deceased is removed and the bones bleached for burial purposes. Frost draws parallels between this ancient, obscure practice with that of the postmodern defleshing of human experience, or excarnation, as he calls it, calling our age an age of disengagement.

Frost offers a powerful and relevant critique of the contemporary life which lures us into the process of excarnation. One cannot help but identify with the plethora of examples which he provides of defleshing of the human experience in our present age. Frost engages with an array of contemporary media, namely, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, online gaming and zombie movies, which he refers to as the disembodiment of morality. His commentary on pornography as excarnation is particularly striking. As an example, Frost reflects on the novel, *Lost Memory of*

Skin, written by the novelist Russell Banks. The story is about a sex offender and porn addict, referred to as the Kid, living in a makeshift camp in close proximity to an airport where the 'down and out' and other sex offenders live. Pornography continues to destroy his life. While the Kid is still a virgin, he has seen all there is to see, at least of the virtual kind. Yet, his only real friend is a pet, an iguana. Frost observes that the irony is that the Kid knows more about the feeling of iguana skin than he does about anything truly human, relationship, sexuality and the touch of human skin. An example of excarnation.

A practical illustration which most of us experience is an airport departure lounge. Frost highlights some points of excarnation; (1) it's a lounge filled with people who do not belong in that moment, (2) they participate in trivial interactions, if there are any interactions at all, (3) the spaces are depersonalized, all airport lounges look similar, if not, the same, lacking architectural particularity, (4) people sit, ignoring their neighbour, as they do in all public spaces, with devices in hand and immediate access to Wi-Fi. The layouts and arrangements of airport lounges are designed to be like that, with social engineering in mind for desired environments and behaviours. Frost's observations are dead right, the departure lounge is the last link in the assembly-line process, to get the passenger from one point to the other via the 'human assembly line'. Not to mention the security screening, removing laptops, wallets, watches, belts – excarnation, and sometimes even dehumanisation.

It is not difficult to feel the existential undercurrent of Frost's book. And while his examples were probably one too many (I have only shown two of them), they were nevertheless masterfully interwoven and served the purpose of making a significant point, that many people in

today's age of disengagement belong everywhere but nowhere, experiencing spiritual and emotional homelessness.

Frost explains, 'What was intended to honor the dead has become the unconscious habit of the living. Practising excarnation on the dead gives meaning to life; practising excarnation among the living is destructive, violent, death-bringing'. This movement towards excarnation had an effect on Christianity whereby our religious expression in bodily forms of worship, ritual, liturgy and practice moves towards cognitive expressions of worship in which the church experiences a loss of liturgy and sacred space and practice.

Frost believes that ultimately all this has resulted in a disembodied approach to the mission of the church, a drift toward non-incarnational expressions, where disembodiment is encouraged and preferable to getting one's hands dirty, so to speak, serving our local community as the body of Christ. We see this in the preference for short-term mission trips and 'treasure hunting' approaches to evangelism, now widespread, started nevertheless in Bethel Church, Redding, California, where we are expected to minister to strangers we will likely never see again. Frost emphasises,

> In a time of disengagement and excarnation, the body of Christ is required all the more to embrace a more thoroughly embodied faith, a truly placed way of living that mirrors the incarnational lifestyle of Jesus. Now, more than ever, it seems, such a call to incarnational living needs to be heeded.

In his book, Frost puts forth a call for all Christians to leave evangelical dualism and 'to be fully present in our bodies, to inhabit flesh and to be home in the world where God has placed us is a difficult task, particularly for Christians who have for so long been taught to yearn for a home in the age to come'.

Jesus, of course, is the incarnate one par excellence, he mingles with the sinners and finds his way to the sick, the blind, the lame, the dead and the demon-possessed, and he cures them and offers life, calling them to a renewed hope. And so Jesus, being the only bona fide incarnation, Frost takes incarnational to mean that Christ followers are being discipled and shaped on the incarnation; this should empower them. Of course, this also includes joining the great quest of the incarnational mission of God.

3. Evaluation of the Book

While Frost makes use of media, film and novels to make his point, I also appreciated his interaction with various scholars, which made for some fascinating writing and interaction. Among other scholars, of interest were (1) the philosopher and theologian Nancy Murphy, (2) the Polish socialist Zygmunt Bauman, (3) the Roman Catholic philosopher Charles Taylor, (4) the medical missionary, philosopher and theologian Albert Schweitzer, (5) the French philosopher of social science René Girard, (5) the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, and (6) the Missionary and Missiologist Lesslie Newbigin, whom Frost himself greatly admires. One can also sense the presence and influence of the New Testament Scholar N.T. Wright, and the philosopher James K. A. Smith, throughout much of the book. He interacts with them too.

The book offers honest articulation of the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the physical in Christianity. Frost highlights three such dichotomies: (1) Christian Anthropological dualism has its roots in Platonism, the temporal and the eternal, which was later developed by René Descartes, who explored the idea of the human as divisible into body and soul. The ascetic monks' flagellating themselves is an unmistakable expression of such dualism. (2) Christian

metaphysical dualism emphasises that heaven is of great importance and that earth is more or less unimportant. The evidence of this is the preoccupation of many Christians with 'all things otherworldly to the exclusion of anything good or godly in this world'. (3) Christian religious dualism promotes faith as an exclusively personal and private matter with little to do with daily life. Such dualism also encourages 'moralistic therapeutic deism', whereby the Christian calls on God as if he were a cosmic vending machine.

This is where Frost's study on Murphy's 'spirited bodies' is helpful. Frost explains, if we are spirited bodies, we have an invitation into a rich and lively union with God through Jesus Christ. Simultaneously, while our bodies are who we are, our union with God enables us to be 'spirited'. Frost continues and explains how Murphy rejects the mainstream views and 'develops the idea of spirited bodies as a kind of physicalist alternative to the dualism of bodies and souls: We are, at our best, complex physical organisms. Imbued with the legacy of thousands of years of culture, and, most importantly, blown by the Breath of God's Spirit; we are Spirited Bodies'. With this in mind, Frost believes, and I think rightly so, that 'the church has largely embraced an overly developed dualism that has proved to be unhelpful and has given religious endorsement to the excarnational forces in secular society'.

Frost offers reflection on the thoughts of the Christian philosopher James K. A. Smith, who considers public rhythms of liturgy, worship, contemplation, reflection and prayer as fostering attitudes of incarnation and spiritual practice. He seeks to broaden Smith's horizons to 'include missional practices and daily habits'. This is especially evident in Frost's latest book publication, *Surprise the World*.

While some might view *Incarnate* as a provocative read, it certainly is thought-provoking. Frost offers a sustained argument throughout,

furnished with copious examples from a variety of sources; these include his own experiences, pop culture, and scholarly works. Although the book itself is written on a semi-popular level it is well researched and yet very much readable. As one who has thought through some of the issues raised, and having read N. T. Wright and James K. A. Smith, I found *Incarnate* a challenging yet delightful read.

Of course, Frost is a missiologist, and so he also provides helpful insight on the practical and missional applications on how to live as the Body of Christ in an Age of Disengagement. He explores these further, though, in his book, *Surprise the World*. But I think the present book, *Incarnate*, lays a firm foundation. This brings us to the next discussion.

4. Missional Applications

With a slight allusion to a certain awkward eschatological notion, Frost rightly states that God does not 'pluck us out of this world', but rather redeems us so that we may be sent to love and serve others and to reflect the image of Christ to those around us. Our vocation is to live in the here and now.

While in his book, *Incarnate*, Frost does not go to great lengths in describing how we should live incarnate lives as Christians, he suggests that the Christian community should demonstrate to the world 'what a truly earthed, communal, relational, embodied experience of life can be like'. Some of this, he believes, may be expressed through various activities like weekly practices and embodied liturgy, rather than drawing from the shallow wells of podcasts, social media and televangelists for one's spiritual nourishment. These are intrinsically excarnate, not to mention the highly individualised and emotional culture found in many of our churches, in the way of Megachurches,

rock music, stimulating visuals, to name but a few. As an alternative to such, the book advocates the importance of physical gathering around Scripture, 'embracing the embodied task of being a hermeneutic community'. And then to proclaim and demonstrate the universal reign of God through Jesus Christ by engaging at a deep, personal level with the brokenness of humanity.

I appreciate Frost's emphasis on both right Christian theology being taught, together with incarnate practices. Drawing again from the contemporary philosopher James K. A. Smith, Frost reminds his readers that we are creatures of desire, and that all Christian education (or theology) should be to influence and infirm these desires, assisting in drawing others into this biblical picture of human flourishing and ordering our lives rightly around God's universal reign. Such rhythms of practice, habits and liturgies really need to punctuate both our private and communal lives in such a way as to maintain, orientate and order our affections.

Frost also points out some concerns in the field of missiology, namely the popularity of short-term mission trips where people can participate in mission as 'vacationaries', offering people a taste or an experience of mission overseas without even rooting themselves in the culture and language of the people. Such short term missions are often unhelpful.

Towards the end of the book, Frost helps us with four essentials that may be adopted in order to live incarnationally in an effort to engage our communities meaningfully, (1) Anthropological (move in), that is to embed oneself in our communities and learn to appreciate the needs, hope and yearnings of such communities, and to make one's presence felt in the immediate community. (2) Empathically (listen to them), that is to actively listen to those around us, to be attentive to the disenchantment (a reference to Charles Taylor no doubt) of our

neighbours, so that we may know how to offer something more than the heartless secularism. (3) Collaboratively (Partner with them), by this Frost means to partner with other churches, businesses, city councils, social organisations, and so on, in order to be a part of restoring our cities. This is demonstrating the kingdom of God. (4) Sustainability (stay with them for a long time), church leadership needs to become a part of the fabric of the community, through the good times and the bad times. We need to be there through it all.

Reflecting on what he has written, Frost's epilogue is certainly thought-provoking, calling us to make a change in the way we live out our Christian faith in the world, how we do church, how we worship, how we do mission, and how we pastor and care for others. I think it would be appropriate to let Frost have the last word.

> When all our cultural impulses are pushing us toward disembodiment and disconnection, how do we reverse them sufficiently to not only live out an incarnated version of the Christian faith as an end itself, but to also bring about meaningful cultural change? I think the answer to these questions has ecclesiological, liturgical, missional and pastoral implications.

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Editorial Policy

Positioning Statement

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.

Purpose

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.

Standard

Conspectus aims to combine sound scholarship with a practical and readable approach. Submissions must present the results of sound research into a biblical, theological, or practical problem in a way that would be valuable to scholars, pastors, students, missionaries, or other Christian workers.

Kinds of Articles

Conspectus publishes three kinds of theological research:

- *Scholarly essays* of 3000–10000 words on biblical, theological, or ministerial topics, which should demonstrate mastery of the current scholarship on the topic.
- *Book reviews* of 1000–5000 words reviewing publications in fields of interest to *Conspectus*. We favour detailed reviews that can offer students and pastors insight into the content, strengths, and limitations of the book.
- *Project reports* of 1000–4000 words reflecting the findings of theological research projects, including theses and dissertations.

Doctrinal Basis

In doctrine, the South African Theological Seminary is broadly evangelical. We believe in the inspiration of Scripture, the doctrine of the Trinity, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the sinfulness of man, the need for salvation through the atoning death of Jesus Christ, the ministry of the Holy Spirit in and through believers, and the centrality of the local church to the mission of God. SATS stands on the triune doctrinal foundation—Bible-based, Christ-centred, and Spirit-led. *Conspectus*

reinforces these three core theological tenets by means of scholarly research that deliberates their meaning and application for the modern church.

Submitting an Article

The author of an article that is submitted for review is required to submit the names and contact details of three potential referees. The entire review process is completely anonymous from the perspective of both the reviewers and authors.

The Review Process

The article is provisionally evaluated by the senior editor or assistant editor of the journal to determine whether it is in line with the type of articles the journal publishes, and is of sufficient academic quality to merit formal review. If in the opinion of the editor the submission is not suitable, the author is notified and the article is not sent to reviewers. If the editor sees some potential in the article, he proceeds with the remainder of the review process.

The senior editor advances the submission to two referees with appropriate expertise on the particular topic. The editor removes the name of the author from the submission. The potential reviewer receives an electronic copy of the submission, together with a Conspectus Review Form, which contains three sections: (a) the review criteria, (b) the recommendation, (c) developmental feedback (i.e. comments).

Each reviewer is required to make a recommendation, which must be one of the following four options: (a) publish without changes, (b) publish with minor changes, (c) publish with major changes, and (d) do

not publish. The reviewer is also expected to provide qualitative comment on aspects of the article that he/she believes could be improved.

The review process is developmental in nature; reviewers provide in-depth assessment of both the strengths and weaknesses of the article. If they recommend 'publish with minor changes' or 'publish with major changes', they are expected to explain the perceived deficiencies and offer possible remedies.

Based on the recommendations made by the reviewers, the editor compiles the feedback for the author, indicating any changes that are required prior to publication. The final decision as to which changes are required lies with the senior editor. When the required changes are substantial, the revised submission is returned to the reviewers so that they can confirm that the deficiencies which they raised have been adequately addressed.

In the case of conflicting reviews, the decision to publish or not publish lies with the senior editor. If the senior editor sees merit in the recommendations of both reviewers, he may forward the article to a third referee.

Before publication, the author receives a proof copy of the article in PDF format for final inspection and approval.

Closing dates for submissions:

- 28/29th of February for the March issue
- 31st of August for the September issue