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Bearing Witness Nicodemusly: A Christomorphic Assessment of Crypto-discipleship in John 7

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Abstract

Johannine scholars routinely argue that the fourth evangelist regarded the secret behaviour of crypto-disciples as cowardly and contemptible. Some further propose that their shaming through the narrative was part of the evangelist's pastoral strategy for 'outing' crypto-believers within the synagogues of his locality. While the broad outline of this assessment may be correct, a more nuanced picture emerges when particular instances of the phenomenon are examined in the light of the gospel's Christology, for in John's gospel, Jesus is sometimes also depicted as operating in secrecy and behaving in a clandestine manner. Scholars frequently interpret this Christological feature using theological categories, but there is copious evidence indicating that Jesus' covert actions were grounded in his socio-historical and cultural setting. In that case, this article postulates that John does not always censure a disciple's secret behaviour, and that each instance should therefore be evaluated with regard to its christomorphicity. To

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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.

test this hypothesis, the article examines Jesus' crypto-behaviour, especially in John 7:1–13, to establish and validate criteria for determining when the evangelist approved of covert conduct. It then employs these criteria to evaluate the portrayal of Nicodemus in John 7:45–52. It concludes that while John generally censured crypto-disciples, he nevertheless approved of secret conduct and witness in particular instances, if they conformed to Jesus' mission. This finding has contemporary application to covert Christian witness in hostile contexts.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

There are ample reasons to support the current consensus among scholars that John's gospel characterises a group of individuals as crypto-disciples. These were believers in Jesus, who, for various reasons, kept their new-found faith secret from their fellow Jews. The evidence is overwhelming. For a start, the matter-of-fact manner in which Joseph of Arimathea is explicitly labelled as μαθητὴς τοῦ Ἰησοῦ κεκρυμμένος δὲ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων (a disciple of Jesus having been in secret for the fear of the Jews; 19:38), suggests that he was one among several such secret disciples. Joseph certainly appears in the gospel in the company of Nicodemus, a character who though not explicitly labelled as a crypto-disciple, is nevertheless repeatedly introduced with indicators pointing in that direction (3:1–2; 7:50; 19:39). Moreover, according to 12:42–43, τῶν ἀρχόντων πολλοὶ (many of the rulers) believed in Jesus, but failed to make public confession of their faith, so as to avoid excommunication, 'for they loved human

glory more than the glory that comes from God'.[2] It is thus safe to conclude that they were of a reasonable number.

Besides, the setting of John's gospel adequately explains why such a group of crypto-disciples would have emerged. After all, Jesus' public ministry, especially in Judea, proceeded within a hostile context of general agitation in society, intra-religious sectarian bullying in the synagogues, and aggressive Roman colonial intimidation, a milieu which would have invariably led to the cultivation of discreet and clandestine conduct on the part of non-conforming minority groups. This inimical atmosphere is plainly evident, for example, in the hostile interrogation of the healed invalid of Bethesda (5:9–12), the ordeal to which the healed blind man of John 9 was subjected by the Pharisees (9:24–34), the cagy reluctance of his own parents to vouch for him (9:20–23), and the heavy-handed plot by the Pharisees to kill Lazarus (12:10). Such an unfriendly atmosphere made clandestine behaviour attractive, especially for those with much to lose in publicly declaring their faith.

Neither was Jesus himself immune from this intimidation. Scouts were repeatedly sent by the Pharisees to spy on him (11:46, 56–57). He foiled attempts to be arrested (7:30, 44) or to be killed (10:31, 39). And the narrative repeats references to secret plots against him (5:18; 11:46–53). Moreover, on occasions, some of Jesus' conventional disciples,[3] aware

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[2] Unless otherwise stated all English Language citations from the Bible are from the NRSV.

[3] John's use of the term μαθητὴς for followers of Jesus is quite fluid and may be classed into four separate categories, namely, (a) the conventional disciples (2:2), (b) named and anonymous characters not within the inner core of Jesus' group but who nevertheless perform discipleship functions (19:38–39), (c) as a general term for people who believed in Jesus and 'continue in my word' (8:31) and (d) for some members of the ὄχλος (crowd), a wider group of followers who believed in Jesus, but whose allegiance to Jesus was not certain and some of whom murmured when they

of being spied on, resorted to covert conduct (e.g. 11:28), and once, for fear, locked themselves behind closed doors (20:19). Indeed, the atmosphere was so charged that, on the fateful day of Jesus' execution, even Pilate was intimidated by, and ἐφοβήθη (afraid) of the crowd (19:8). In such a hostile atmosphere, the fact that some of Jesus' followers chose to keep their heads below the parapet, often within the confines of the existing religious structures, should not be surprising. The fourth evangelist certainly appears quite interested in the comings and goings of the crypto-believers. This no doubt raises several questions of socio-historical, literary-theological and pastoral-rhetorical importance.

1.2. Scholars' assessment of John's attitude to crypto-discipleship

Given this evidence in the text, Johannine scholars have examined the phenomenon with the aim of (a) delineating the concise characterisation of these crypto-disciples (Barrett, 1978; de Jonge, 1971; Martyn, 1968), (b) defining the exact features of the socio-historical situation which necessitated and nurtured their secrecy (Brown 1978; 1979; de Jonge 1971; Martyn 1968), (c) determining the theological motivations and justifications they may have mounted in defence of their clandestine behaviour (Bultmann, 1971; Culpepper 1983; Rensberger 1988), and (d) analysing the evangelist's attitude towards their covert conduct, especially taking cognisance of the probable context of his first readers (Bennema 2009; Conway 2002; Culpepper, 1983:136; Hillmer, 1996: 77–97; Koester 2003; Tanzer, 1991:285–300). The present study contributes to the last category of studies.

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did not understand Jesus' teaching and eventually deserted him (6:61–66), or even attempted to stone Jesus (8:59). Accordingly, even when a character is labelled as a μαθητὴς it is nevertheless possible that John is not asserting that that character fully believed in Jesus as the 'conventional disciples' did.

With regards to the evangelist's attitude towards the crypto-disciples, most Johannine scholars are of the view that he roundly censured their clandestine behaviour, regarding it to be cowardly and contemptible. In the famous words of Brown (1978:11–12; cf. 1966; 1979:72), 'John has contempt for [the crypto-believers] and holds up the blind man [of John 9] as an example of the kind of courage such people should have - courage to leave the synagogue and come to Jesus'. It is safe to say that this view is universally held by most scholars. However, in its details, there are nuanced differences among scholars regarding how they assess the evangelist's attitude in particular instances of crypto-discipleship[4] in the gospel.

Four categories of scholarly approaches may be discerned, namely, (a) John condemns crypto-discipleship in every instance, because the group's Christology was flawed, (b) John condemns crypto-discipleship in general, but offers opportunity for the group's redemption with his account of Jesus' burial by two crypto-disciples, (c) John condemns crypto-disciples in all instances, because of the ambiguities in their praxes, and (d) John condemns crypto-disciples, but employs instances in the narrative as rhetorical strategy to help his readers adopt the correct behaviour in their witness. I now briefly explain each one of these approaches.

1.2.1. John condemns crypto-disciples for their flawed Christology

In the first group are scholars such as Martyn (1968), de Jonge (1971), Esler and Piper (2006:72–73), Freyne, (1985:117–143) and Meeks, (1985:93–115) who believe that John was wholly dismissive of the faith of crypto-disciples, both in Jesus' own time as well as in the milieu of

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[4] For the purpose of this article, I define crypto-discipleship as secret existence and conduct of a Johannine character who also displays signs of devotion to Jesus.

the Johannine community, because he consistently judged their Christology to be fundamentally flawed. These scholars also tend to take the view that the actions of Joseph and Nicodemus in burying Jesus are negatively portrayed by the evangelist, or at best as being 'too little too late'. Similarly, they believe that the evangelist censures Nicodemus' behaviour in the Sanhedrin as portrayed in John 7. In the view of de Jonge (1971:341), for example, Nicodemus in John 7 'stood on the wrong side of the dividing line between the true believers who lived in communion with him whom God sent to the world, and the unbelieving world'.

Martyn (1968:116–128), who proposed reading the Gospel of John as a 'two-level drama', and whose work has served as foundational to scholarly analyses of Johannine crypto-discipleship, proposed five main features of the group, namely, (a) that Nicodemus played a representative role for the group, (b) that their secret behaviour resulted from their dread of excommunication from the synagogues and the immense social consequences thereof, (c) that 'their secret faith is closely bound up with the hope for the Prophet like Moses' (1968:116), (d) that the main theological reason for remaining secret was their inability to use a technical Midrashic exegesis to confidently ascertain whether Jesus was indeed this Prophet like Moses, and (e) that John vehemently disagreed with them because he believed that the settling of Jesus' identity went beyond technical Midrash to a full personal experience of Jesus as the Son of God. Thus for Martyn,[5] the Johannine crypto-disciples could not be regarded in anyway as believers in Jesus since their Christology fell far below the correct Johannine Christological confession (cf. 20:31).

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[5] I concur with Barrett's assessment that Martyn's reconstruction of the history of the Johannine community, and thus of the crypto-disciples 'contains a substantial measure of conjecture' (1978:432).

1.2.2. John condemns crypto-disciples, but invites them to 'out' themselves

The second category of scholars such as Barrett (1978), Brown (1979), Bultmann (1971) and Rensberger (1988) assert that while condemning the crypto-disciples, John nevertheless used his gospel to send them inviting signals, thus opening the door for their potential inclusion in the true faith. In the words of Bultmann (1971:454), 'their faith is not a genuine faith … [yet] … Obviously such secret disciples still have the possibility of their faith becoming genuine'. Rensberger (1988:41), whose contribution may be regarded as archetypical of this approach, argues that the crypto-disciples were successful in concealing their faith to such an extent that it 'caused considerable distress to John and his community… Both their inadequate Christology and their fear of being known draw down harsh criticism from the Fourth Evangelist'.

Indeed, Rensberger postulates that John's chief purpose for writing the Gospel was to draw the crypto-disciples out into courageous public confession of full faith in Jesus: 'it may well be that if the Fourth Gospel has a missionary intent toward anyone, it is toward these secret believers' (1988:41). According to Rensberger (1988:114), in admonishing Nicodemus to be born again, for example, Jesus was urging the crypto-disciples to 'out' themselves from their secrecy, 'to jeopardize their position as rulers and their standing as Pharisees, [and] to align themselves with the "accursed" (7:49)'. Similar to the first category of scholarly approaches, Rensberger believes that the evangelist viewed the actions of Joseph and Nicodemus in John 19 with ambivalence. Likewise, he believes Nicodemus is negatively portrayed in John 7: it is 'hardly likely that [Nicodemus'] timid legal quibble would constitute a confession of faith satisfactory to the fourth Evangelist' (1988:39).

1.2.3. John condemns crypto-disciples for their ambiguous praxes

The third category of scholars, exemplified by Bennema (2013:36–58), Brant (2004), Howard-Brook (2003), Hylen (2009), Koester (2003: 229), Lincoln (2000), Myers (2012b:289–298), Skinner (2013) and Whitenton (2016:141–158), who also tend to employ insights from literary theories, argue that while John no doubt condemned the crypto-disciples, it was not so much their theology but the ambiguities in their non-committal stance which drew the evangelist's opprobrium. So, Howard-Brook, (2003:435) for example, detects several ambiguities and ironies in the actions of Joseph and Nicodemus in relation to Jesus' burial, ironies which ultimately cast them in a negative light: 'This all adds up to a very dark picture of Joseph and Nicodemus, although not one for which we cannot have compassion. These men rest on the all-too-familiar comfortable cushions of Christianity, from which we offer thanks to God without risk of pain'.

Similarly, with regard to Nicodemus' behaviour in John 7, Lincoln (2005:259) observes that the evangelist is at pains to stress that though Nicodemus was sympathetic to Jesus, a sympathy 'which shows itself here in his fairness and concern for due process', he nevertheless remains as 'one of them' and not as 'a disciple of Jesus who was also a Pharisee and Jewish leader'. In other words, in John 7, the evangelist at best portrays Nicodemus as a fair-minded Pharisee, certainly not as a true believer in Jesus. These scholars argue that John's critique of the group stemmed from his own dualistic approach to Christian existence which left no room for the ambiguous stances adopted by the crypto-disciples. In the end, therefore, the concluding 'outing' of the two crypto-disciples expressed John's invitation to the group to abandon their secrecy and join the true disciples.

1.2.4. John depicts ambiguities of crypto-discipleship as pastoral strategy

A fourth category of writers are less dismissive of the ambiguities of faith exhibited by the historical crypto-disciples, but nevertheless assert that John employs his account as a pastoral-rhetorical strategy to draw his readers to reject clandestine Christian existence. The ambivalence exhibited by these characters, according to these writers, leaves room for readers to reach different conclusions as to whether a particular instance of crypto-behaviour by a character is appropriate or not.

So Bassler (1989:635–646), for example, argues that John resists any attempt to positively or negatively resolve the ambiguities associated with the explicitly identified crypto-disciples. He thus ultimately draws the reader to address such ambiguities in their own attitude toward Jesus and thereby resolve to be fully committed to Jesus. To Bassler, the ambiguous conduct of these crypto-disciples was itself indication of their not having reached fully-fledged faith in Jesus. And this is still reflected even in their burial of Jesus. For instance, 'Nicodemus' repeated professions and actions of faith have made him no more than a proximate "other", the other who is beginning to challenge the limits of otherness but who remains "other" nonetheless' (1989:646). So, while Bassler denies that John explicitly passed judgement on Nicodemus as a crypto-disciple, she nevertheless believes John expected his readers to reject ambiguities in favour of a categorical faith in Jesus.

Though she also argues that the evangelist does not resolve the ambiguities surrounding crypto-disciples, Conway (2002:324–341) reaches an opposite conclusion from Bassler in seeing their ambiguous stance in less negative light. She argues that the crypto-disciples are imperfect, but so also are the other Johannine characters, a situation which would have no doubt been matched by the real-life existence of

John's first readers. The ambiguities of crypto-disciples such as Nicodemus therefore reflected the realities of life, and are employed by the evangelist as a way of encouraging the readers to identify with the characters, and so enable them to address the ambiguities in their own faith. Conway (2002:340) thus concludes that the presence of ambiguous crypto-disciples such as Nicodemus,

> [C]omments on the dualism of the Gospel, undercuts it, subverts it. In the process, the notion of faith is also transformed. It becomes less stable, but no less productive. The characters that show signs of faith in the midst of their uncertainties and ambiguity still contribute in significant ways to the ministry and mission of Jesus. Indeed, perhaps they are more effective in and through their expression of a more rounded, more complex life of faith, than they might be from a place of flat and rigid certainty.

It is evident from the above synopsis that scholars universally agree that John globally censured crypto-disciples. However, there are nuanced differences in scholarly assessment of the evangelist's attitude to particular instances of crypto-behaviour of disciples. It is also apparent that these differences in scholarly opinion reflect the lack of firm criteria for determining the evangelist's attitude in each instance of depiction of the crypto-behaviour. The present article argues that the Gospel narrative itself, especially when Jesus' behaviour is placed in the foreground, provides the pointers for determining these criteria.

1.3. The present proposal

As will shortly be shown, the Johannine crypto-disciples are not the only characters of the gospel who act in secret or in a covert manner. Indeed, Jesus, the hero of the gospel, is sometimes also depicted with similar features. In fact, apart from the single instance in which it is

used to identify Joseph of Arimathea in John 19:38, the κρυπτῷ (secret; John 7:4, 10; 18:20) word group and its cognate, ἐκρύβη (hide; John 8:59, 12:36) are used only with reference to Jesus (BDAG 571).[6] As Stibbe (1994:19; cf., 1991:19–37) astutely puts it, in John's gospel, 'Jesus is an elusive hero'.

Scholars have long recognised this particular Christological feature as a significant Johannine theme. Yet, they have tended to solely use the theological idea of 'revelation and concealment of the Messiah' as a conceptual grid to explain it, believing the feature to be imposed by the fourth evangelist on the gospel traditions (Bultmann 1971:294; Dunderberg, 2012:221–244; Hamid-Khani 2000; Stibbe 1994:22). Yet, within the evidently inimical context of hostilities of the religious leaders towards Jesus and intimidation of his followers, Jesus' clandestine behaviour has strong socio-historical resonance. After all, as Neyrey (1998:84) avers, 'groups subject to coercion by more powerful groups deal with their antagonists by trying to equalize power by hiding information or resources'.[7] Even without the antagonism, secrecy was not always viewed negatively in the first-century Mediterranean cultural context, since it often functioned to undergird pivotal cultural values.

Moreover, recent applications of literary theories on characterisation to gospels studies (e.g. Bennema 2009; 2013:36–58; Myers 2012a; Du

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[6] A related word, λάθρα (secret) is used in an approving sense of Martha in 11:28.

[7] This manifestation of the effects of the pervasive hostile social context on the behaviour of the Jesus group is also implied, but in muted ways, in the Synoptic Gospels, for example in Mark's theme of Messianic secret (cf. Luz 1983; Räisänen, 1990; Watson 2010; Wrede 1971). Indeed, Hooker, (1974:40–58) has suggested that several elements of Mark's Messianic Secret are discernible in the Christology of the Johannine prologue. A similar phenomenon has been described with regard to Matthew's gospel (cf. Lybæk 2002:197–243), but the phenomenon is definitely heightened in John's gospel, which admittedly gives more attention to Jesus' Judean ministry than the synoptics.

Rand 1985:18–36; Resseguie 2005; Rhoads and Syreeni 2004; Skinner 2013; Whitenton 2016:141–158) have underlined the fundamental importance of employing the evangelists' characterisation of Jesus, clearly in supplementation with their commentaries and footnotes, as standards for determining their 'ideological points of view' or attitude to the characters (Bennema 2013:48). In other words, gospel characters must be evaluated by their christomorphicity—the degree to which their speeches and actions or inactions are conformed to the manner in which Jesus is also characterised in the same gospel.

In that case, and given the manner in which Jesus is depicted in the Gospel, it would appear that secrecy *per se* was not the main factor which invited the fourth evangelist's censure of crypto-disciples. This in turn generates the possibility that John's attitude to particular instances of crypto-behaviour by a crypto-disciple would be nuanced and certainly not *prima facie* negative. One fruitful avenue for establishing criteria for identifying the fourth evangelist's attitude to particular instances of crypto-discipleship, therefore, is to situate the investigation of the phenomenon within the socio-cultural context of the first-century Mediterranean world's attitude to secret conduct, and specifically as this secrecy is expressed in Jesus' behaviour.

When this contextual factor is considered in the foreground, a far more complex picture emerges, whereby the fourth evangelist appears to approve of clandestine conduct, if it conformed to Jesus' mission. John, it is thus hypothesised, censured crypto-disciples who, in order to retain their privileged status in the community, failed to bear witness to Jesus. However, he was less disapproving of particular instances in which the discretion and secret witness of a crypto-disciple was christomorphic.

In this article I aim to test this hypothesis through a christomorphic assessment of the particular instance of crypto-discipleship in John 7.

I first summarise some of the socio-cultural features of secrecy in first-century AD Palestine. I then catalogue Jesus' crypto-behaviour in the Gospel of John and specifically exegete the account in John 7:1–13 in order to identify and validate a set of criteria for the Christomorphic assessment. These criteria are then employed to examine the characterization of Nicodemus in the concluding paragraph of John 7. A final brief section reflects on the relevance of the findings to contemporary Christian witness in hostile contexts.

2. Culture of Secrecy in First-century AD Palestine

Tefft (1980:320) defines secrecy as 'the mandatory or voluntary, but calculated concealment of information, activities and relationship … It is an adaptive device containing five interrelated processes: security (control of information); entrusted disclosure; espionage; evaluation of spying and post-hoc security measure'. It is, in Watson's (2010:19) words, 'intentional concealment'. To be secret about an issue is 'to block information about it or evidence of it from reaching that person, and to do so intentionally: to prevent him from learning it, and thus from possessing it, making use of it or revealing it' (Bok 1989:5).

In that regard, secrecy may on the face of it be frowned upon in large sections of today's westernised world, but it played a pivotal cultural function in first-century AD Palestine. Indeed, secrecy, according to Pilch (1994:151; cf. Freund 1991:45–61; Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998:141–142; Neyrey 1998:79–109), was 'an integral part of Mediterranean culture required by the demands of the core cultural values, honour and shame'. In a society of limited goods as it was, there were definitely occasions when secrecy was regarded as essential, and so praiseworthy conduct.

For a start, the demands for competition imposed by the limitation on goods generated inter-kinship mutual suspicions that in turn compelled discretion and covert actions and speeches to protect kinship advantages (Malina 1978:162–176). Moreover, individuals and groups were acutely sensitive to the envy of others, and for the avoidance of the 'evil eye' adopted behaviours that camouflaged the realities of their existence (Meeks 2003; Smith 1987:66–80). Accordingly, under-information, misinformation and often vague information were common features of the culture of first-century Palestine. As put by Billings (2006:93 n. 11), 'secrecy, concealment, and deception do not have in the ancient world the negative moral overtones often present in the modern Western world. To the ancient Palestinian Jew secrecy and deception are legitimate and even expected social skills that might be utilised to enhance the honour of an individual or group and to bring shame upon opponents'.

This is not to say that secret conduct was always judged positively. A person's covert action or inaction may be hailed as heroic by members of their kinship group because it protected that group's honour. And indeed there was a parallel discourse in the first-century Mediterranean context characterising secret conduct in a negative light (e.g. *Sipre Deut 13:7; Dionysius of Halicarnassus RA 8.78.3*). All the same, such judgements depended on the motivation and purpose for the secrecy rather than the secret conduct itself. Moreover, the same clandestine act would be judged as shameful by other groups because it breached their honour code and excluded them. As Neyrey (1998:80) observes, 'Information control or secrecy serves to establish group boundaries between outsiders and insiders'.

Accordingly, secret conduct was judged secondary to its purpose. Its key importance lay in how it served as a tool for maintaining the pivotal

cultural values of the society and sustaining the boundaries between groups. Disguised subterfuge, subliminal espionage, veiled deception, and certainly wary discretion and reticence in sharing vital information, and other features of secrecy were all employed to maintain group values. In the words of Pilch (1999:46), secrecy in the ancient Mediterranean world was regarded as 'a legitimate cultural strategy for maintainning and safeguarding honour. When secrecy fails, it is equally legitimate to resort to deception and outright lies in order to protect or gain honour'. Indeed, in certain circumstances, 'telling the truth could merit damnation, if this constituted betrayal of another to an oppressor' (Keener 2003:708). This fact no doubt demands nuanced contextual evaluation of secret conduct by biblical characters[8].

An aggravating element in the case of Palestine during the first century AD was the pervasive presence of the Roman colonial authorities. The occupation created constant tensions within the society, and in turn shaped how ordinary people behaved towards the authorities themselves and towards each other, an important component of which behaviour was secrecy. Indeed, invasions of the territory in the prior centuries by pagan powers had only served to inspire various subversive behaviours among the peasantry, and in some cases, as it was with the Maccabean era, resulted in successfully organised revolts (Horsley 1999:11). As stated by Sheldon (2007:99), 'Instead of unifying the Jews, the Hellenising of Judea became a flashpoint for revolt'.[9] The Roman

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[8] The phenomenon of secrecy is also widespread in the OT, on which see Craven (1989:35–49), Roberts (1988:211–220) and Williams (2001).

[9] As Horsley (1999) has eloquently shown, the emergence of violent sects such as the Zealots, the fourth philosophy, and the Sicarii, and non-violent apocalyptic messianic groups such as the Qumran sectaries, and the mainstream Pharisaic sect was directly occasioned by this socio-political situation. Even those in society who disapproved of violence nevertheless covertly protected violent revolutionaries as they hated the invaders even more. A case in point is in the accounts in the Book of Judith in which

invasion of Palestine inherited this internecine agitation, and in fact worsened it with their aggressive and often heavy-handed treatment of ordinary people (Fears 1980). In such circumstances, subversive behaviour directed towards the colonial authorities or their Jewish surrogates in the forms of the religious and aristocratic elites was not just viewed approvingly by fellow Jews, but in fact was encouraged by some. Secret conduct was after all one of the few weapons available to the oppressed to subvert their oppressors.

Moreover, the colonial situation did not totally unite the Jews against the invaders as one would naturally imagine. On the contrary, the invasions merely heightened divisions and inter-group rivalries that fed covert conduct directed towards fellow Jews. To begin with, the Roman colonial authorities employed a 'divide and rule' tactic which ultimately fostered intra-Jewish mutual suspicion of each other, and especially of the religious hierarchy who collaborated with the colonial authorities. In addition to corrupting the religious elites, the Romans developed a 'network of personal alliances with the ruling classes throughout the empire' (Fears 1980:98).[10] Those with privileged power such as the temple rulers and the Pharisees viewed other emerging groups with intense suspicion and employed their powers to bully the general populace and keep them in check. In response, many groups resorted to the use of clandestine behaviour to resist such bullying.

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the heroine employed 'lies, deceit, *double entendre*, assassinations and seductions … for a good cause… She was as righteous as a secret agent can be' (Sheldon 2007:115). Evidently, the Jesus group must be sharply distinguished from such revolutionary movements. Even so, the average first-century reader of John's gospel would have been conversant with this complex attitude to secrecy generated by the centuries of invasions of Palestine.

[10] The Tobiad family line described by Josephus (*Antiquities* 12.154–236) was one such example.

All these resulted not only in disenfranchising the majority peasant poor, but also worsening the sense of awareness of limited goods in society, thus feeding a frenzy of intra-Jewish conflicts in Judea (Hanson and Oakman 1998; Ripley 2015:605–635). Even among the poor, some resorted to espionage on their fellow Jews on behalf of the colonial authorities, evidently for financial gain. Mutual suspicion was thus rife. Minority novelty groups which did not conform to the existing social structures were viewed with even more mistrust by ordinary folks. It was accordingly equally natural that mistrusted groups would behave with wary discretion against others in society. As eloquently catalogued by Smit (1993:20; cf. Watson 2010), the earliest Christians were only one of the many groups who had to respond to this atmosphere by adopting subversive practices and discourses 'that reacted against the dominant discourse of imperial control either directly or indirectly'.

It is no wonder, then, that in this context, watchful discretion and sometimes covert conduct would be part of the conduct of Jesus' earliest followers in Judea. This is clearly evident in the Gospel of John. As Neyrey (1998:107–109; cf. Petersen, 2008:72–75; Richard, 1985: 96–112) catalogues, Johannine characters employ clandestine strategies ranging from the use of information control (e.g. 1:31–33; 8:44, 55; 9:24–25), hiding (e.g. 8:59; 12:36; 3:2), evasive speech (e.g. 9:21–22), deception (e.g. 7:12, 47), espionage (e.g. 7:34–35), differences in public-private discourses (e.g. 11:28 vs. 7:4, 13, 26), use of parables and enigmas (e.g. 10:6; 16:25), ironies and double entendres (e.g. 6:42; 7:27; 9:29) to shield group honour and outwit the opposing groups. North (2001; cf. Tanzer 1991:285–301) has also drawn attention to the underlying current of espionage and clandestine behaviour in the Lazarus narrative as indications of the persecuted status of the Johannine community. As I now demonstrate, a similar feature is seen in how Jesus is portrayed in the gospel.

3. Jesus' Crypto-behaviour in John's Gospel

Pilch's (1999:130) claim that 'Jesus was a master at [secrecy]' is unnecessarily facile and certainly an exaggeration, but it nevertheless captures a significant truth in relation to the characterisation of Jesus in the fourth Gospel. For John's Gospel furnishes several indications that Jesus sometimes behaved in a clandestine manner. For ease of analysis, I categorise these clandestine behaviours into four classes, namely, (a) Jesus' sudden withdrawals from the public, (b) his acquisition of 'insider information' from his opponents, (c) his use of cryptic language on occasions and (d) his specific clandestine conduct in relation to his brothers in John 7:1–13. Since John 7:1–13 contains elements of all categories it will be appropriate to more fully exegete that passage in a separate section. But prior to that, I summarise the general indication of Jesus' crypto-behaviour in the whole gospel.

3.1. Jesus' sudden withdrawals from the public

On at least eleven occasions in John's Gospel (4:1; 5:13; 6:15; 7:1, 30, 44; 8:20, 59; 10:39–40; 11:54; 12:36) Jesus explicitly withdraws from public view in a manner that can only be described as covert. The first[11] explicit statement of this phenomenon is in John 4:1–3, when Jesus became aware that the Pharisees believed he was baptizing more followers than John the Baptist. It is then said that Jesus ἀφῆκεν

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[11] In John 2:23–25, the evangelist reports distrust on Jesus' part towards some of his followers in Jerusalem with language evoking the theme of secrecy—'Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone'. As Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:141) comment, 'Such distrust is rooted in uncertainty about how others might react if secret information were made available. Moreover, secrecy makes it difficult for outsiders to predict the actions of insiders and to take counteraction against them'. It is, however, not stated if Jesus explicitly withdrew from them as a result of his mistrust for these Jerusalem 'believers'.

(abandoned or separated from) his ministry in Judea and 'started back to Galilee'. Ἀφῆκεν in 4:3 is a rather strong word for describing separation from a place (BDAG 156–157) that Moloney (1998:115) for example renders Jesus' movement as 'flight from Judea'. Evidently, Jesus did not want to attract the hostilities of the Pharisees towards himself at this stage, leading to his abrupt curtailment of what was proving to be a successful mission. In 5:13, Jesus is said to have ἐξένευσεν (secretly slipped away, dodged, escaped, or disappeared) in the crowd, a word which was then used not uncommonly to describe the clandestine escapades of terrorist assassins of the time (cf. Josephus' *Jewish Wars* 2.254–255). John perhaps simply meant that Jesus could not be recognised from among the crowd. Yet the evangelist's peculiar choice of word buttresses the general emphasis on Jesus' clandestine conduct.

In John 6:15, Jesus ἀνεχώρησεν (departed or withdrew), or as a few manuscripts have it, Jesus φεύγει (flees; cf. Aland and Others 2005:335 n.3; Beasley-Murray 1987:84) in order to avoid being crowned king by the people. In either rendition, Jesus is depicted as avoiding a situation which conflicted with his divine mission, not by direct confrontation, but by reticence and withdrawal. In 7:1, Jesus again withdrew from Judea because of the assassination plots against him a context which served as 'a continuing ground bass, extending through the whole of chapter 7' (Beasley-Murray 1987:106). The same is reported in 7:30 and 7:44, where it is stated that the temple police failed to πιάσαι (capture) Jesus because his hour had not yet arrived. Exactly how Jesus evaded capture on both occasions is unstated, but it is most likely that John intended his readers to take this to have been a miraculous escape. As Bulmann (1971:302; cf. Barrett 1978:323) puts it, 'it is as if a spell lay on his opponents: no one can lay hands on Him, for His hour is not yet come'.

In 8:20 John again indicates that despite Jesus' apparently provocative teachings in the vicinity of the treasury of the temple, no one ἐπίασεν αὐτόν (captured him), the evangelist's point being that Jesus had public freedom and boldness to teach despite the hostile context. Yet, in 8:59, the offended listeners attempted to stone Jesus for blasphemy, but Jesus successfully ἐκρύβη καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ (hid himself and escaped from the temple). It may well be that John underlines this to be a miraculous escape (so Barrett 1978:353) or a theological gloss by the evangelist underlining the 'idea of the hidden Messiah' (so, Bultmann 1971:328 n.4). Yet, it need not necessarily be taken that Jesus miraculously made himself invisible or even that the assailants were unable to throw the stone. Jesus may well have quickly 'slipped away' to evade the stoning (cf. Luke 4:30; cf. Keener 2003:773).

In 10:39–40, Jesus again escapes capture and withdraws into hiding. The exact location of refuge is debated by interpreters. Some (e.g. Barrett 1978:387; Keener 2003:830) locate it as Peraea. However, it is more likely that it was Batanea, in the tetrarchy of Philip (so Beasley-Murray 1987:178; Carson 1991:400; Lincoln 2005:312).[12] In that case, the passage indicates that Jesus knew that his life was in danger from both religious and political enemies, and needed to seclude himself and in effect took political refuge from his Judean opponents.

In 11:54,[13] Jesus again learnt of the plot by the Sanhedrin to kill him, so as was the case of 10:40, he took evasive actions and withdrew into

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[12] Arguments in favour of Batanea as against Perea include, (a) John 1:28 indicates the place name as Bethany and (b) Peraea remained under Herod Antipas, whose territory was unlikely to have been regarded as a safe haven by Jesus, given his execution of the Baptist.

[13] In 11:30, Jesus inexplicably remained at the outskirts of Bethany, delaying the actual time of entry to the compound of the Bethany sisters to raise Lazarus from the dead. Though this behaviour is difficult to explain, it nevertheless bears some of the

hiding. The place of refuge here is interestingly denoted as ἐρήμου, which describes a desolate, isolated wilderness. This is most likely the mountainous district north east of Jerusalem. The temptation to read this flight in theological terms as 'a new exodus theme' (so Keener 2003:858), is strong, given John's peculiar vocabulary. However, its historical resonance must have impressed itself on John's first readers, who knew that several oppressed anti-society members of the time used these desolate regions as places of secret refuge. Finally, in 12:36b, John states again that Jesus deliberately went into hiding after he had spoken to the crowds.[14] Together, the data show that Jesus sometimes suddenly withdrew from the public into secrecy, a behaviour which can only be judged as appropriate in conformity with his mission.

3.2. Jesus' acquisition of 'insider information' from his opponents' camp

A second feature of Jesus' crypto-behaviour in John's gospel is found in the group of passages in which the narrative suggests that Jesus acquired 'insider information' from the camp of his opponents, information which proved beneficial to his mission. John does not indicate the exact sources of the information, and it is possible that some of these passages indicate Jesus' omniscience. Even so, the evangelist's descriptions on some occasions, lead to the conclusion that Jesus likely received such information through the crypto-disciples among his opponents.

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characteristics of his general clandestine conduct and certainly fits in with the secrecy motifs associated with the Lazarus narrative (North, 2001).

[14] This final withdrawal is interesting because it is theologically linked with the pervasive Johannine theme of light and darkness (cf. Bultmann 1971:357; Keener 2003:882; Moloney 1998:356). The Synoptic Gospels also feature several sudden

The first example of this phenomenon is in John 4:1, where John indicates that 'Jesus *learned* that the Pharisees had heard, "Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John"'. Several features of this verse lead to the conclusion that the information was naturally acquired through a sympathiser within the Pharisees' camp. Firstly, the introductory qualifier Ὡς οὖν (now when), shows that Jesus received the information sometime after the rumour reached the Pharisees, not at the same time as the Pharisees heard it, which would have been the case if Jesus supernaturally acquired that information. Secondly, the passive inflexive ἔγνω (got to know, learned or discovered) is an uncharacteristic way of describing a supernatural acquisition of information.[15] Thirdly, repetition of the name, 'Jesus' in the verse indicates that the fourth evangelist quotes the rumour verbatim (so the NRSV).[16] The general indication from John 4:1, therefore, is that Jesus acquired the vital information through insiders, information which was pivotal to his decision to suspend his mission (Carson 1991:215; Moloney 1998:116).

A second example is in John 7:19 where Jesus accused the Judeans[17] of 'looking for an opportunity to kill me'. The immediate context of the verse could, on first reading, suggest that Jesus was merely making the point that in accusing him of blasphemously leading people astray; his

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clandestine withdrawals of Jesus in Matt 4:12; 12:15; 14:13; 15:21; Mark 3:7; Luke 9:10; 22:4.

[15] Elsewhere in the gospel, John uses the more active γινώσκειν (to know) and ἐγίνωσκεν (he was knowing; 2:24–25), to describe Jesus' supernatural knowledge (γινώσκεις—you know in Jn 1:48; or γνοὺς—having known in John 5:6 and 6:15 or ᾔδει—he had known in John 13:11; εἰδὼς—to know through seeing John 18:4).

[16] For discussion of the textual problems on this, see Barrett 1978:230.

[17] It is not clear whether the accusation was directed at the authorities among the crowd or the crowd as a whole. The two are earlier in 7:11–13, and later in 7:25–26, distinguished from each other, but not in 7:19. Given the surprised response and denial in 7:20, we must probably take it that Jesus was declaring to the crowd that he was aware of the plot by the authorities to kill him.

audience were charging him with heresy worthy of the death penalty (cf. Deut 13:1–18; 18:9–14), a charge about which more will be said in the next section. However, given the 'continuing ground bass' of assassination plots against Jesus in the whole chapter (Beasley-Murray 1987:106), it must be taken that Jesus was accusing them of the specific plot to kill him. And indeed a specific plot had been hatched against him for breaking the Sabbath during Jesus' previous visit to Jerusalem in John 5:18.[18]

In that case, it is worth enquiring how Jesus got to know about these plots, for the crowd to whom he directed the accusation denied knowledge of such plots. One can only conjecture. However, the likelihood that this privileged information came to Jesus via a sympathiser from within the opponents' camp where the plot was hatched cannot be dismissed.

Another example is in John 9:35, where the evangelist reports that Jesus Ἤκουσεν (heard) that the healed blind man had been excommunicated from the synagogue. Given that the information would not have been a privileged one, it is possible that anyone who got to know about the excommunication could have conveyed the news to Jesus. All the same, one possible, if not likely, source of the news could be a sympathiser from among the authorities.

A final example is described in John 11:53–54 following the official resolution to arrest and kill Jesus by the court of the Sanhedrin. Without indicating how Jesus got to know about this resolution, John simply states that as a result, 'Jesus therefore no longer walked about openly

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[18] The similarities between John 5:18 and Mark 3:6 buttress the point that the first plot to eliminate Jesus occurred quite early in his ministry, giving ample opportunities for the information to be leaked to Jesus by an insider sympathiser (cf. Lincoln 2005:198–199).

among the Jews' but withdrew to the wilderness. Even though a miraculous means of knowing the resolution is not impossible, the most likely means would have been through a sympathetic insider from the Sanhedrin. Carson (1991:423) is correct: 'A large council is unlikely to be secure especially if there are sympathizers in it. So it is unsurprising that Jesus found out about the Sanhedrin's decision'. It is thus evident that Jesus' mission regularly benefitted from insider information from his opponents. Could not some of the crypto-disciples have served as agents who conveyed secret information to Jesus?

3.3. Jesus' cryptic language in John's gospel

A third feature of Jesus' crypto-behaviour in John's gospel is the nature of some of his speeches and statements. As already noted above, this was a general feature of Johannine characters that employ covert verbal strategies ranging from information control, evasive speech, rumours, and differences in public-private discourses. The same may be said of Jesus in John's gospel. A classic example of this feature is in Jesus' evasiveness, or at best ambiguous pronouncements before the Sanhedrin in John 18:19–23, and especially before Pilate in John 18:33–40 leading to the latter's evident frustration. As explained by Hanson and Oakman (1998:94), 'It does appear that Jesus' ambiguous answer [to both courts], which plays a role in all of the accounts, fits both his way of dealing with direct challenges (as seen in many of the Gospel dialogues) and his skepticism that any sort of straight answer would satisfy these authorities'. In other words, Jesus adopted evasiveness in these situations as a way of subverting his interrogators.

At other times, Jesus' statements were deliberately cryptic, and certainly confusing to his listeners. A typical example is Jesus' statement in 7:33–34 (cf. 8:21–22) directed at the temple police who were mandated to arrest him, but uttered in the hearing of the gathered

crowd: 'I will be with you a little while longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. You will search for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come'. Though referring to his death, this was 'enigmatically' (Morris 1995:370) rendered as he did not want to make his prediction too plain at this stage of his mission. It is unsurprising, therefore, that it resulted in confusion among the crowd (John 7:36), and ultimately led to the temple police aborting his arrest (7:45). What was plainly a theological statement to insiders was rendered in a cryptic manner so as to result in disarming his opponents.

Another category of clandestine statements by Jesus is his use of metaphors (e.g. 5:35; 6:41; 8:34–36; 11:9-10), ironies or *double entendres* (e.g. 3:3; 7:6; 14:2; 18:5–6), riddles (e.g. 3:8; 4:10; 4:37; 5:19–20; 9:4) and indeed parables (e.g. 4:35–38; 10:1–6, 11–18; 12:24–26; 15:1–4; 16:20–21) in the Gospel (Dodd 1963:366–387; Richard 1985:96-112; Van der Watt 2004:463–481). Though this is an area of apparent divergence between the fourth gospel and the synoptics, all four gospels are in agreement that Jesus' use of such verbal devices served crucial functions, including differentiating outsiders from insiders. As he told his disciples in Mark 4:11, 'To you has been given the *secret* of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables' a statement which finds resonance in John 16:29.[19] It is unsurprising then that on several occasions in John's gospel the result of Jesus' use of such verbal devices among his hearers was exasperation (10:24), desertions by some 'disciples' (6:66) and, indeed, attempted stoning by the crowd (8:59).

This is not to claim that Jesus was always secretive and cryptic in his pronouncements, far from it. Indeed, while defending himself before the

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[19] For a discussion of the question of parables in John's gospel, see Zimmermann, (2011:243–276).

Sanhedrin, he rejected any notion that he was a secretive preacher: 'I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. *I have said nothing in secret*' (18:20–21). In other words, his message was in the public domain. But that accurate answer in itself was uttered as part of Jesus' covert strategy of defence before the Sanhedrin, for though accurate, it was nevertheless evasive and deflected the Sanhedrin's interest in his disciples and thus protecting them (Lincoln 2005:454; Witherington 1995:288). It also enabled Jesus to avoid incriminating himself to the Sanhedrin, as the correct legal procedure was for them to interrogate the prosecuting witnesses, and not the defendant as they were doing (Bultmann 1971:646; Carson 1991:584).

It is therefore evident that Jesus spoke in a manner that each context mandated. As he told his disciples, his choice of covert verbal devices was deliberate: 'I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The *hour* is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures, but will tell you plainly of the Father (John 16:25). As I demonstrate in the next section, the concept of 'the hour' played an important role in shaping Jesus' use of cryptic language and conduct.

4. Jesus' Specific Crypto-behaviour in John 7:1–13

John 7:1–13 is a key passage in the gospel, as it is placed at the head of a long section of four chapters covering Jesus' second of three mission trips to Jerusalem (Attridge 1980:160–170; Keener 2003:701; Lincoln 2005:241; Witherington 1995:164). Though the constituent episodes of John 7–10 superficially appear disjointed, they are cohesively woven together into a coherent whole by three thematic concerns,[20] namely,

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[20] Cory (1997:95–116) has also suggested that the first part of this section of the Gospel (John 7–8) is coherently woven together by the theological theme of

(a) the Jewish festivals and their symbols serving as backdrop—
Tabernacles 7:1–10:21 and Hanukkah 10:22–42, (b) Jesus' conflict with
the unbelieving world leading to threats on his life (7:1, 19, 25, 30, 32,
44; 8:37, 40, 59; 9:34; 10:10, 20, 31, 39–40), and (c) Jesus' consequent
crypto-behaviour in that context (7:1–4, 10, 44; 8:20–21, 59; 10:6, 31–
33, 39). All three themes are concentrated in 7:1–13, which thus serves
as thematic summary of, or in Bultmann's (1971:287; Card 2014;
Lindars 1972; Moloney 1998:232–237) words, 'the introduction to the
whole complex; it prepares the way for Jesus' appearance in Jerusalem
at the feast of Tabernacles'.

For our purposes, John 7:1–13 is crucial to a full understanding of the
Gospel's approach to secrecy, as the passage shines a rare light on
Jesus' covert conduct in the privacy of his relationship with his
brothers. It thus provides an excellent instance for ascertaining the
fourth evangelist's point of view with regard to clandestine conduct by
characters. Moreover, as will later emerge, there are significant parallels
between John 7:1–13 and how Nicodemus is portrayed at the end of the
chapter. The examination of this passage will likely therefore yield a
number of helpful criteria for the subsequent examination. To what
extent did the context of intimidation reflect in Jesus' conduct? What
explanations and motivations does he offer in the defence of such
conduct, if any? And in that respect how does it help decipher the
evangelist's attitude to covert conduct by Johannine characters?

'Wisdom's rescue', while Witherington (1995:168–169) has proposed that the section
is summed up by the judicial theme of 'Jesus on trial'. Indeed, this first half is framed
by the two verbal markers ἐν κρυπτῷ (in secret; 7:4) and ἐκρύβη (was hidden; 8:59), a
fact that also underlines the importance of the secrecy motif in the section (Dodd
1963:345–354; Keener 2003:703). This coherence appears, however, to be broken by
the *pericope adulterae* (7:53–8:11), even though several scholars have identified ways

The passage divides itself into five sub-sections, namely, (a) Jesus' covert withdrawal from public 7:1–2, (b) his brothers' proposal for publicity 7:3–5, (c) his cryptic response to his brothers 7:6–8, (d) his secret attendance at the festival 7:9–10, and (e) secret whispers about Jesus by crypto-disciples at the festival 7:11–13. As I also show, each of the first four sub-sections furnishes a criterion for determining John's attitude to crypto-behaviour, and together with the final sub-section provide a test-case for validating these four criteria.

4.1. Jesus' covert withdrawal from public John 7:1–2

The passage begins by describing the intimidating setting which served as background to Jesus' conduct at this point of his mission. Jesus, we are told, restricted his movements to Galilee οὐ γὰρ ἤθελεν ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ περιπατεῖν (for he did not wish to walk about in Judea). In other words, he avoided public appearances in Judea at this point, because, 'they were seeking to kill Him' (7:1).[21] This danger no doubt refers to the earlier threat on his life in Judea (5:18), insider information of which, as suggested above, likely reached Jesus in a covert fashion.

After a period of 'one year of ministry on which the synoptists focus most of their attention' (Carson 1991:305; cf. Bultmann 1971:290 n.1), Jesus eventually removed the restrictions on his movements and went to

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in which that text fits into this logical flow, for which discussion, see Baum (2014:163–178), Keith, (2009) and Punch (2010).

[21] A minority of manuscripts, namely, W, a, b, cur, Chrysostom, and Augustine (Aland and Others 2005:341) have the passive, οὐ γὰρ ειχεν ἐξουσίαν ('for He was not authorized' or 'for He was not able to') instead of the active, οὐ γὰρ ἤθελεν ('for He did not wish'). Almost all translations and commentaries prefer the latter majority rendition, even though Barrett's (1978:309–310) fourfold argument in favour of the minority rendition is worth considering. Both renditions indicate the manner in which the hostilities were reflected in Jesus' conduct, and that Jesus acted covertly only in conformity with his divine mission.

the dangerous place anyway, even if 'in secret' (7:10). There is therefore no suggestion that this and other withdrawals from public were due to Jesus being afraid of his opponents. Evidently, however, Jesus' conduct was always shaped by his commitment to obey his Father, and complete his mission (4:34; 9:4; 11:9), and hence he avoided unnecessary danger, if such danger threatened his fulfilment of that mission at that time.[22] John's matter-of-fact description of this context and Jesus' covert response to it is, therefore, one criterion for determining the evangelist's attitude to secrecy by a Johannine disciple. The conduct of the Johannine disciple will need to be evaluated in the light of the immediate danger and whether the response remains in conformity with Jesus' mission as portrayed by the gospel.

While this criterion may appear to be uncontroversial, it is seldom applied by commentators in the evaluation of the crypto-disciples in the Gospel. For example, interpreters frequently assert that the fourth evangelist censured covert conduct resulting from φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων (fear of the Jews). Bennema's (2009:193; cf. Keener 2003:1160) evaluation is typical: 'When belief in Jesus is coloured by a fear of people's responses, the result is secrecy or anonymity—a failure to make a public confession of that belief. This, according to John is inadequate. John advocates that people profess their belief openly, even when fear of persecution is a reality'. This view is generally correct, for Jesus' assurances to his disciples not to be afraid (e.g. 6:20; 14:27),

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[22] In his 'two-level drama' reading of the gospel, Martyn, (1968:58–60) suggests that 7:1 reflects the situation of writing of the gospel when some quarters of Jerusalem were so hostile to the Johannine Christians that they avoided those precincts. Martyn's suggestion is to be rightly rejected on historical grounds, but he certainly is right in highlighting the possibility that the earliest readers of the gospel would have applied 7:1 in similar hostile contexts. The avoidance of danger by a disciple is in itself not to be viewed as cowardly, except when such avoidance was not in conformity with Jesus' mission.

certainly underlines the potential for fear to negatively affect a disciple's witness, especially when such fear resulted in conduct not in conformity with Jesus. Even so, and as I shortly argue below, fear in the face of the hostilities in itself is not characterised negatively by John, except in situations in which such fear resulted in speech and actions that did not conform to Jesus' mission.

4.2. Jesus' brothers' proposal for publicity 7:3–5

John then describes a clearly tense and uncomfortable conversation between Jesus and his brothers in which they make a three-point proposal to Jesus, each with its motivation, (a) that Jesus abandons his restriction and heads for Judea for the sake of his disciples 7:3, (b) that Jesus' crypto-behaviour undermined his supposed desire for publicity 7:4a, and (c) that his miraculous works demanded that he took the stage in the capital, and 'manifest yourself (φανέρωσον) to the world' 7:4b. Interpreters' assessment of this proposal is understandably negative, if even existing in a spectrum of degrees, ranging from Barrett's (1978:308; cf. Bultmann 1971:291) labelling it as 'foolish' and a naïve misunderstanding of Jesus' mission, through Keener's (2003:706) middle-of-the-road 'sound political advice', to Witherington's (1995:170; cf. Brown 1966:308) scathing description of the brothers as 'baiting Jesus to go up to Jerusalem…Their attitude seems either to be one of jealousy of Jesus, or they viewed Jesus as on some sort of ego trip'. Whichever slant is placed on it, the brothers' demand was essentially echoed by Jesus' opponents in 10:24, thus thoroughly placing them in a negative light.

Though resonating with the demands of Jesus' opponents, the brothers' proposal does not, however, amount to full-blown intimidation of Jesus, certainly not to the degree in which Jesus' followers were threatened by his opponents, as for example in 5:9–13. Even so, the nature of the

conversation betrays a less-than-friendly comportment of the brothers, and indeed 'conflict' (Keener 2003:704) with Jesus, at least in his conduct of his mission. John's qualification in 7:5 that 'not even his brothers believed' in him, definitely adds weight to the view that the setting was one in which Jesus was faced with opposition in his own home. The brothers didn't reckon that his divine mission required him to live only by God's imperative, for his 'destiny was not popularity, but the hatred of the world' (Barrett 1978:309; cf. Morris 1995:350–351). This hostile context demanded discretion in Jesus' response.[23]

With regard to criteria for determining the evangelist's attitude to secrecy, therefore, it is evident that contrary to the brothers' view, John, would have regarded the alternation of publicity (παρρησίᾳ) with secrecy (κρυπτῷ) in a disciple's conduct as perfectly compatible, so long as such secrecy fulfilled other criteria, namely Jesus' mission. This criterion may be conversely stated, that in a hostile context, fulfilment of Jesus' mission may mandate a Johannine character's discretion and covert action so long as such discretion is temporary and conforms to that mission. This criterion is fully substantiated by the next sub-section of the passage to which we now turn.

4.3. Jesus' cryptic response to his brothers' proposal 7:6–8

Jesus' response to his brothers in 7:6 furnishes a third guiding criterion for determining acceptable covert behaviour by a Johannine disciple: 'My time is not yet present, (ὁ καιρὸς ὁ ἐμὸς οὔπω πάρεστιν), but your

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[23] Beasley-Murray's (1987:106) suggestion that there is a 'concurrence' of the brothers' proposal with the Tempter's in Matt 4:5–7 is perhaps overly negative, but nevertheless reflects the realities of Jesus' constant conflict with the 'world'. Keener (2003:705) also insightfully notes that Jesus' brothers 'serve a literary function in the narrative, challenging disciples to have deeper faith and to endure rejection by their families, a common early Christian situation'.

time is always prepared (John 7:6; cf. 7:8)'. In other words, for Jesus, there was an appointed time, a καιρὸς, for manifesting himself, which was different from that of the world. This answer fits into a consistent theological fabric of John's gospel which describes Jesus' mission in relation to a specific hour, and distinguishes Jesus' καιρὸς or ὥρα from the world's (e.g. 2:4; 5:25, 28; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23-–27; 13:1). In Schnackenberg's (1968–1982:422) words, Jesus operated 'under the law of the hour'. In most cases in John's Gospel, this καιρὸς or ὥρα referred to 'His passion, glorification and human redemption' (Morrison, 2005; cf. Mark 14:35, 41; Matt 26:45; Luke 22:53; 1 Macc 9:10; Daise, 2007; Keener 1993:507–509). In this answer, therefore, Jesus employs a *double entendre* to distance himself from his unbelieving brothers, for the word καιρὸς (time) simultaneously referred to the time for attending the festival, as well as the time of his death. As already argued *double entendres* were one category of cryptic verbal devices adopted by Jesus in hostile situations.

The use of covert verbal devices is also exemplified in Jesus' statement in 7:8 where he indicated that he would not 'go up to this festival because my time is not yet arrived'. A long-running scholarly debate continues to rage as to whether Jesus lied to his brothers (so Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998:143–145; Neyrey 1998:87), or that he indicated that that he was not *yet* able to go with his brothers, so they could leave without him (so, Barrett 1978:313; Keener 2003:708; Moloney 1998:238). Given Jesus' consistent use of the concept of being 'lifted up' or 'going up' in John's Gospel to describe his death and ascension (3:13–14; 6:62; 20:17), ἀναβαίνω could either be idiomatically understood as meaning Jesus was travelling to Jerusalem, or metaphorically as Jesus was indicating his forthcoming death in Jerusalem.

I share the latter view that the *double entendre* use of ἀναβαίνω (go up), the emphatic qualification, ταύτην placed after ἑορτὴν (festival, meaning, *this particular festival*), as well as the distinction made between Jesus' καιρὸς and that of his brothers, all indicate that Jesus was saying that he was not joining his brothers for this journey. In other words, the brothers would have taken it that Jesus was not attending the whole festival, while Jesus simply meant that he was following a divine programme and not theirs. Regardless of which view is taken, however, almost all interpreters agree that Jesus' answer to his brothers was ambiguous.[24]

As previously argued, ambiguous language was a key tool employed by anti-society to evade attention from outsiders (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998:142). The more pressing question, then, is in what way did John view Jesus' καιρὸς or ὥρα in relation to other characters? In answer to this question, it is evident that on one level, the καιρὸς or ὥρα is related to Jesus alone as it identified his death and glorification. However, on another level, it is emphasised in the whole gospel that believers in Jesus participate in a general sense in this inaugurated eschatology. So for example, Jesus points out to the Samaritan woman in 4:21–23 that 'the ὥρα (hour) is coming' when God will be worshipped in truth and in spirit. Similarly, Jesus warned the disciples that an hour (ὥρα) will

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[24] Almost all, but not every interpreter takes it that Jesus' answer is ambiguous. Bultmann (1971:289) for example argues that if ambiguous, then Jesus would 'have deliberately deceived his brothers, who in this situation could not but understand his words in the way they did'. He instead proposes solving the problem by viewing it as a miracle story akin to Jn 2:1–11. A number of manuscripts (e.g. P[66], P[75], B W Θ, pesh hl sah) contain the qualification οὔπω before ἀναβαίνω, suggesting that Jesus said that he was not *yet* going to the festival (so also New Century Version, NKJV, WEB, Young's Literal; Webster). The authenticity of this textual tradition is debated, some such as Barrett (1978:312) think it was a 'certainly wrong' attempt to eliminate the difficulty, while others, such as Keener (2003:708 n.47) think the arguments for its 'originality, however, are stronger than often noticed'.

arrive when the persecution and martyrdom of believers would be considered as a worshipful act by the perpetrators (John 16:2; cf. 16:21, 25, 32; 17:1). So, it must be taken that, with regard to Johannine characters, covert speech and conduct that accorded with Jesus' appointed καιρὸς or ὥρα would not have been viewed negatively by the evangelist, especially when they fulfilled the other criteria. To put this criterion more positively, ambiguous statements and covert conduct may reflect positively on a character if such ambiguity helps fulfil the mission of Jesus in its proper timing (καιρὸς or ὥρα).[25]

4.4. Jesus' secret attendance at the festival 7:9–10

The fourth sub-section indicates that Jesus eventually went to the festival, ου᾿ φανερῶς, αλλ᾿ ως᾿ εν κρυπτω̃ (not openly, but as in secret 7:10). In other words, he went not as his brothers proposed, but in the manner which was in conformity with his mission. It portrays 'Jesus' firm resolve to do exactly what the Father gives him to do, and at the Father's time' (Carson 1991:309; cf. 5:19–29; Barrett 1978:313; Lincoln 2005:245). Given the backdrop of danger in Jerusalem, and his knowledge of the plot to kill him (5:18), it is unsurprising that Jesus remained in his secrecy for the first part of the festival until the middle session when he went to the temple to openly teach (7:14). This was evidently in line with the previous criteria in which alternation of

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[25] The logical corollary of this criterion is that it reflects negatively on a Johannine character, if the character hurts Jesus' mission by failing to employ ambiguity when ambiguous statement would have sufficed in a particular instance. However, I am unable to locate enough evidence in the current passage to support adopting this albeit logical criterion. However, such evidence appears to me to exist with respect to the indiscreet conduct of the healed leper of Mark 1:40–45 whose unambiguous broadcast of Jesus' healing led to Jesus' premature flight to the desert. Given the concurrence of John's secrecy motif with Mark's Messianic secret, this criterion would therefore not have been farfetched in the Johannine context (cf. Watson 2010).

secrecy with openness was regarded by the evangelist as acceptable conduct in the hostile context.

4.5. Secret whispers about Jesus by crypto-disciples at the festival 7:11–13

At the festival, there were considerable rumours, or as Schnackenburg (1968–1982:143) puts it, immense 'undercover talk' about Jesus. This again underlines the hostile context of the passage, and, indeed, because of this context of φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων (the fear of the Jews), the festival attendees, evidently including those who believed in him, avoided openly speaking about Jesus. Our passage therefore closes with a brief reference to covert conduct of crypto-disciples in a hostile context, disciples who did not openly bear witness to Jesus, but rather resorted to γογγυσμὸς (whispering or speaking discreetly; cf. BADG 204; Morris 1995:356).

This leads to the question as to how the evangelist may have regarded the covert conduct of these crypto-disciples who only bore witness in secret. In other words, taking the criteria outlined above, what are we to make of John's attitude to the crypto-disciples of 7:12–13? To start with, most interpreters regard the whispers of these crypto-disciples as merely 'sympathetic' speculations on Jesus (Beasley-Murray 1987:107), or even indicating 'an awareness of his character and a lack of perception of his Person' (Morris 1995:356), but certainly not betraying any 'profound' faith in Jesus (Carson 1991:309). However, when read in the light of Second Temple Jewish reflections on the subject[26] and specifically on the gospel's vocabulary on 'goodness'

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[26] See for example, Josephus (*Antiquities* 4.67; 10.188; 15.373), *Tobit* (7.6; 9.6), 2 *Maccabees* (15:12), 4 *Maccabees* (1.10; 3.18; 4.1; 11.22; 13.25; 15.9). Jesus' statement in Markk 10:18: 'No one is good but God alone' underlines that the whisper by the Johannine crypto-disciples that He is good' cannot be dismissed as mere

(especially καλός and ἀγαθός; 1:46; 2:10; 7:18; 10:11, 14–16, 32–33, 41), this cryptic whispering of ἀγαθός ἐστιν ('He is good'), presumably within the tents and booths spread across Jerusalem, was indeed profound, for it was secret witness to Jesus' oneness with the Father.

The counter-claim that Jesus was 'deceiving the crowd'; in other words, he was leading people astray, was certainly meant to accuse Jesus of the grave theological crime of blasphemous heresy. This is especially so as this charge directly evokes the language of Deuteronomy 13:6–18 where the sentence for the 'secret' heretic deception of God's people was the death penalty. Indeed, the Pharisees repeat this counter-charge 'He is deceiving the crowd' (cf. 7:47) within the gathering of the Sanhedrin, underlining its gravity. This counter-claim therefore indicates that the statement by the crypto-disciples that ἀγαθός ἐστιν (He is good) is an equally profound one.[27] To put this point another way, the counter-claim suggests that the whisper that 'He is good' was of the same profound level as the charge of heresy. As Heath (2010:528; cf. Howard-Brook 2003:177) has convincingly argued, '"He is good" cannot be uttered lightly in this context, for though it testifies to this-worldly attractiveness and personal relationship to God, it is also dangerous. For the Jews who confess "He is good", there is a risk that they are (or will be perceived to be) putting their faith in a person who is "leading astray" and who therefore deserves stoning, together with his followers'. The passage therefore closes by highlighting that Jesus'

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sympathetic speculation devoid of profound theological claims, certainly if it is taken, as several scholars do, that John knew Mark and wrote assuming also that his readers knew Mark's gospel (Anderson 2013:197–245; Smalley, 2012).

[27] Apart from the NKJV and Young's, most English translations miss this profoundness by rendering ἀγαθός ἐστιν· as 'He is a good man' (so, NIV; KJV; ESV; RSV; NRSV; ASV; GNT; NASB; NLT; Amp). Darby rightly supplies square brackets: 'He is [a] good [man]' to indicate its slanted interpretation.

secret conduct of his mission was paralleled by covert witness by some in Jerusalem. The crypto-disciples of John 7:12–13 therefore fulfil the first two criteria for christomorphicity.

They also fulfil a fourth criterion, with the evangelist's reference to φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων (fear of the Jews) in 7:13. Some interpreters take it that this phrase occurring for the first of four occasions in the Gospel (7:13; 9:22; 19:38; 20:19) censures the whispering witness of the crypto-disciples in a negative manner. So according to Keener (2003:711) for example, 'John did not regard this response to Jesus as adequate discipleship (12:42–43)'. This judgement is, however, premature, for the φόβον word group is more generally employed in the Gospel to describe the intimidating context (BDAG 1062) rather than censure the characters. Indeed, the only occurrence in the LXX of the term φόβον τῶν Ιουδαίων, in Esther 8:17, is in a positive manner. While John does not use the phrase in this positive sense, there is no reason to *prima facie* take his use to explain the behaviour of the blind man's parents in 9:22, to qualify Joseph of Arimathea in 19:38 and to explain why the disciples locked themselves behind closed doors in 20:19, as a censure. On all occasions the phrase neutrally describes the hostile contexts shaping covert conduct of the characters.

Moreover, the not uncommon cross-linkage of the phrase φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων, as in 7:13, with the statement in 12:42–43 where the evangelist censures those among the authorities who failed to bear witness, unfortunately obscures a significant difference between the two contexts. In the first place φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων is not explicitly used in 12:42–43, even though John certainly explains that the failure of those crypto-disciples to bear witness was διὰ τοὺς Φαρισαίους (because of the Pharisees). While 'fear' may correctly describe this reluctance to

bear witness, it does not necessarily belong to the same category as what is implied by the term φόβον τῶν Ιουδαίων.[28]

Secondly John's censure in 12:42–43 is much more reflected in his charge that those crypto-disciples among the authorities 'loved human glory more than the glory that comes from God'. Indeed, a similarly negative assessment of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem in 5:42–44 indicates that, to the fourth evangelist, love for God's glory, a theological notion which indeed is closely bound up with Jesus' death, and καιρὸς or ὥρα (12:16, 23, 27–28; cf. 13:1, 32), constituted a key test of genuine discipleship. True disciples will testify that they have seen this glory in the son (1:14), while those who are not will seek human glory (Caird, 1968–1969:265–277; Cook, 1984:291–297; Van der Merwe, 2002:226–249). This does not describe the crypto-disciples of 7:12–13.

Accordingly, rather than censuring a crypto-disciple, fear of the authorities in the immediate context of threat to life does not necessarily reflect negatively on a Johannine character, except when such fear resulted in behaviour not in conformity with Jesus' mission. It must therefore be concluded that the crypto-disciples of John 7:12–13 are not censured by John in the manner that some assume.

4.5. Summary of criteria for identifying John's attitude to secret conduct

The above exegesis of John 7:1–13 has furnished four helpful criteria to be employed in establishing the evangelist's attitude to specific

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[28] This obscurity is unfortunately repeated by several translations which introduce the word 'fear' into 12:42 (e.g. NIV, NRSV, ESV, NASB, NCV) but the NKJV's 'because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue' (so also ASV) is more accurate.

instances of crypto-behaviour of a Johannine disciple. Firstly, covert conduct must be evaluated in the light of the immediate danger faced by the character, and whether the response remains in conformity with Jesus' mission as portrayed by the gospel. Secondly, a character's conformity to Jesus' mission in a hostile context may mandate that character's covert action or ambiguous speech so long as such discretion is temporary. Thirdly, such covert conduct which accords with Jesus' appointed καιρὸς or ὥρα would not have been censured by the evangelist. And finally, in the immediate context of threat to life, fear of the authorities does not necessarily reflect negatively on the crypto-disciple, unless such fear resulted in behaviour not in conformity with Jesus' mission. Having tested these criteria with regard to the crypto-disciples identified in 7:12–13, I now apply them to examine whether the evangelist censures the conduct of Nicodemus in the Sanhedrin recorded in John 7.

5. Nicodemus as a Crypto-disciple in John 7:45–52

With the notable exception of Brown (1979:72 n.128) almost all interpreters regard Nicodemus as one of the Johannine crypto-disciples, at least at some stage of the Gospel narrative. His close collaboration with Joseph of Arimathea, the explicitly labelled crypto-disciple (19:38), the twice repeated statement that he came to Jesus during the night (3:2; 19:39), the twice repeated introduction by the evangelist that he was one of the Jewish leaders (3:1; 7:50; cf. 12:42) and his devotional acts of participation in Jesus' burial (19:38–42) all patently mark Nicodemus out as a crypto-disciple.[29] Though he appears on three

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[29] Brown objects that the term crypto-disciple should be narrowly limited to those explicitly identified in John 12:42–43 and thus 'disagree with those who treat Nicodemus as a crypto-Christian' (1979:72 n.128). But his approach is too restrictive given the manner in which John himself uses the term μαθητὴς (disciple) to describe

occasions in the narrative, namely, 3:1–10, 7:45–52 and 19:39–42, scholars are most divided in their assessment of the evangelist's portrayal of the charater in 7:45–52.[30] Accordingly, and given also the fact that this passage occurs within the same section of the gospel governed by 7:1–13, a closer examination of the account using the above criteria for Christomorphicity will prove illuminating.

The passage recounts the schismatic consequences within the Sanhedrin of the temple police's failure to arrest Jesus and, as I now show, bears several similarities with 7:1-13. It divides itself into five sub-sections, namely (a) the police report on Jesus 7:45–46, (b) the Pharisees' threatening response to the report 7:47–49, (c) John's evocative introduction of Nicodemus 7:50, (d) Nicodemus' challenge to the Sanhedrin 7:51, and (e) the Sanhedrin's rebuke of Nicodemus 7:52.

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those who show any sign of devotion to Jesus. The identification of a Johannine character as a crypto-disciple must similarly be guided by the evangelist.

[30] Scholars mostly take it that 3:1–10 characterises Nicodemus as at best an ambiguous personality seeking spiritual encounter with Jesus (Barrett 1978:204–205; Bassler 1989:635–646; Bennema 2009:79; Bruce 1983:81; Bultmann 1971:133; Carson 1991:185–186; de Jonge 1971:635; Keener 2003:536; Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998:81; Renz 2006:255–283). Some further argue that the preceding John 2:23–25 serve to introduce Nicodemus as one of the untrustworthy disciples (e.g. Bennema 2009:79; de Jonge 1971:345), but against this view, is the adversative Ἦν δὲ ἄνθρωπος (3:1; so Darby Translation's more accurate rendering 'But a man') distinguishes Nicodemus from the untrustworthy disciples of in 2:23–35 (cf. Bruce 1983:81; Carson 1991:185). It would appear, therefore, that Nicodemus came to Jesus not as fully-fledged believer even though one to be entrusted with Jesus' word which resulted in him becoming a believer. By contrast, a majority of scholars regard Nicodemus' characterisation in Jn 19 as positive, even though, a few are of the opinion that he is negatively portrayed (e.g. Beck 1997:69; Culpepper 1983:136; de Jonge 1971; Esler and Piper 2006:72–73; Freyne, 1985:117–143; Martyn 1968; Meeks 1985:93–115)

5.1. The police report on Jesus 7:45–46

The passage begins with the report from the temple police who were previously instructed to arrest Jesus (7:32). They failed to do so, because 'no one laid hands on him' (7:44), maybe by slipping through their hands as he previously did in 5:13, or simply that the police were too stunned into impotence, or even Bulmann's miraculous interpretation that 'as if their hands were tied' (1971:306). Whichever was the manner of Jesus' escape, having failed to arrest him, the police instead returned to the Sanhedrin and reported their findings: 'Never has anyone spoken like this' (7:46; cf. 4:42). Otherwise stated, 'the speech of Jesus is not the speech of a man' (Barrett 1978:331; cf. Mark 1:22; 12:17; Matt 7:28–29; Beasley-Murray 1987:119).

The police's report was thus not just about their failure, and in fact did not mention the hostilities among the crowd, which would have provided them with a mitigating reason why they failed to arrest Jesus. Instead what they offer as report amounted to a testimony about Jesus: 'Never has anyone spoken like this'. As Morris (1995:382) puts it, 'this must have taken some courage, since they must have known that it would expose them to the rebuke (and the disciplinary action) of the Sanhedrin'. Under the same hostile circumstances, Nicodemus will shortly also discreetly echo the verdict of the police in his statement in 7:51; but for now, it is enough to observe that this first sub-section indicates the hostile context which underlines the passage, and the courage it demanded. The Sanhedrin, having resolved earlier to have Jesus killed, are now thwarted from arresting Jesus.

5.2. The Pharisees' threatening response to the report 7:47–49

The response of the Pharisees to the evidently positive report on Jesus was frustration. They were irritated, not just by the continued spread of

the fame of Jesus in Jerusalem but even more so by the inability of their police to arrest Jesus. Their threatening riposte to the testimony is in three parts which together indicate the nature of the dangerous context, namely, (a) that by their report, the police were already led astray 7:47, (b) they overconfidently assert that not 'one of the authorities or of the Pharisees' had believed in Jesus 7:48, and (c) that the ignorant crowd profess faith in Jesus because they were under Jesus' spell 7:49.

The first statement no doubt betrays the Pharisees' previously conceived judgement charging Jesus with the heretic deception of the false prophet of Deuteronomy 13:6–18 and thus worthy of the death penalty. The police's failure to arrest him, but instead to bear testimony on behalf of Jesus was thus a grave warning to the Pharisees. Their riposte then amounts not only to shouting down and shutting up the police lest they are condemned along with Jesus. It was also a not too subtle warning to other members of the Sanhedrin that any attempt to defend Jesus would face the same consequences. Nicodemus would shortly defy such intimidation and rather urge on them that they were wrong to 'question the competence of those who heard Jesus firsthand (7:46) without hearing from Jesus themselves (7:51)' (Keener 2003:732).

Some interpreters rightly argue that the second assertion by the Pharisees is a classic example of Johannine irony which thus places the Pharisees in further negative light (Carson 1991:331; Lincoln 2015:259; Renz 2006:255–283). Yet at the level of the story itself, their rhetorical question, 'Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him?' also betrays the Pharisees' bullying attempt to enforce uniform adherence to their point of view within the Sanhedrin. It was a threatening gauntlet to all membership of the Sanhedrin, both the

ἀρχόντων (rulers) and the Φαρισαίων (Pharisees), to publicly declare their hands and denounce Jesus.

Similarly, the final statement: 'this crowd, which does not know the law—they are accursed', does not just smack of Pharisaic elitism (so Keener 2003:731), or their snobby 'abuse' (so Beasley-Murray 1987:120) of ordinary people. More than that, it betrayed the Pharisees' bullying attitude to any expression of sympathy with Jesus, let alone belief in him. Anyone who dared to utter a defence of Jesus was in effect not just being labelled as ignorant, but also as 'accursed'. Put together then, the Pharisees' threatening riposte to the police report was not just hostile to the police, but was calculated to breathe hostile threats to any member of the Sanhedrin who dared to differ in their assessment of Jesus. It was in this hostile context that Nicodemus dared to differ and speak up.

5.3. John's evocative introduction of Nicodemus 7:50

John's introduction reminds his readers that Nicodemus had previously gone to Jesus and was εἷς ὢν ἐξ αὐτῶν (one from among them; John 7:50). Several interpreters take this introduction as stressing that at this point Nicodemus must be regarded as still one of Jesus' opponents. So according to Lincoln (2005:259; cf., Brant, 2004:191; de Jonge 1971:341) for example, Nicodemus here 'continues to be designated as "one of them" and not "a disciple of Jesus who was also a Pharisee and Jewish leader"'.

Yet, when taken in its immediate literary context and in direct relation to the statement that precedes it, which it must, εἷς ὢν ἐξ αὐτῶν in fact sheds favourable light on Nicodemus. For, it serves as an ironic rebuttal of the boast of the Pharisees. They claimed that none from among them had 'believed in [Jesus]' (John 7:48), to which the evangelist replies,

Nicodemus, 'who was one of them', spoke up to counter their false confidence. It is indeed in the same distinguishing sense that Nicodemus is introduced in 3:1, even though 7:50 lacks the δὲ (but) of 3:1. Certainly, in John's ironic construction, Nicodemus is meant to be seen by this introduction to be an exception to the rulers and Pharisees of 7:48, and not in cahoots with them.

Furthermore, the use of ὁ ἐλθὼν (the one having come) to characterise Nicodemus' coming to Jesus, instead of the more grammatically appropriate ἐξέρχομαι (went) or even the idiomatic ἀνέβη (gone) is indicative of the evangelist's positive evaluation of Nicodemus. This is significant, for in the gospel, the ἐλθὼν (having come) word group when used of characters 'coming' to Jesus, has positive connotations as it describes an attempt towards commitment to Jesus (e.g. 1:30; 4:29; 5:40; 6:44; 7:37; 10:41). Thus, in reminding the reader that Nicodemus had previously come to Jesus, John was differentiating Nicodemus from his colleagues, rather than seeking to associate him with them. As Nicodemus himself would point out to his colleagues, it was imperative to encounter and discover what Jesus does before judging him. John's evocative introduction of Nicodemus in 7:50 therefore identifies him as a crypto-disciple placed in the intimidating context of a hostile Sanhedrin meeting.[31]

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[31] Given the pervasive irony in the whole passage, it is remotely possible but unlikely that the phrase εἷς ὢν ἐξ αὐτῶν (one from among them) in 7:50 is meant to identify Nicodemus as one of the 'accursed' people in 7:49 who had come to believe in Jesus (so, Howard-Brook 2003:189). By contrast, it is much more likely that the two αὐτῶν in 7:50 refer to the same Pharisees rather than the crowd. All the same, even if it is granted that the second αὐτῶν refers to the crowd, this would be another strong indication that John approved of Nicodemus as a crypto-disciple. Whichever referent is the second αὐτῶν in John 7:50, whether the crowd or the Pharisees, the designation εἷς ὢν ἐξ αὐτῶν certainly differentiates Nicodemus from the Pharisees, and does not condemn him as unbelieving.

5.4. Nicodemus' challenge to the Sanhedrin 7:51

In the hostile context of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus the crypto-disciple speaks up to query the threats of the Pharisees: 'Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it' (7:51)? Some interpreters aver that this query does not amount in any way to a confession of faith, or even a credible defence of Jesus (Barrett 1978:332; Bultmann 1971:311; de Jonge, 1971:345; Howard-Brook 2003:433; Keener 2003:733; Rensberger 1988:39; Stibbe 1991:54). To cite Lincoln (2005:259) as representative, Nicodemus merely displays sympathy for Jesus, a sympathy 'which shows itself here in his fairness and concern for due process … [H]is question calls into question the Pharisees' knowledge of the law by reminding them of such passages as Deuteronomy 1:16–17, with its injunctions to give a fair hearing, to judge rightly, not to be partial, and to hear out the small and great alike'.

There are reasons however to reject these negative assessments of Nicodemus' statement in 7:51, especially when the intimidating context is taken seriously, and the criteria for christomorphic assessment are appropriately applied. In the first place, the context of Nicodemus' statement in the Sanhedrin fulfils the first criteria for christomorphicity as it was made in a hostile atmosphere. The statement of sympathy would implicate the crypto-disciple with the same charge of blasphemous heresy worthy of the death penalty as Jesus, and thus demanded the kind of discretion and reserve which Nicodemus displays. Whether Nicodemus himself felt his life in danger at this point is difficult to say, but in any case it is a moot point. Any response to the threat demanded some discretion on the part of the crypto-disciple without compromising Jesus' mission.

Secondly, and as a matter of fact, Nicodemus' statement went beyond the standard demands of the deuteronomic law which required a fair hearing of a case before the court. The law required that the courts should give the accused a fair hearing before they passed judgement (Deut 1:16). Nicodemus was thus right in raising the objection. However, what Nicodemus said was: Μὴ ὁ νόμος ἡμῶν κρίνει τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐὰν μὴ ἀκούσῃ πρῶτον παρ' αὐτοῦ *καὶ γνῷ τί ποιεῖ* (literally, our law does not judge a man except after hearing from him first *and might know what he does*; John 7:51). This statement adds a second precondition to be met before judgement. While the deuteronomic law and contemporary commentaries on it demanded a hearing of the accused before passing judgement, they never demanded *knowing* the works of the person as a second precondition (cf. *Exodus Rabbah* 21:3 commenting on Exod 14:15). In adding this second precondition, therefore, Nicodemus was challenging his colleagues to take Jesus far more seriously than they would have taken any other accused person.

Indeed, and as pointed out already, Nicodemus' demand echoes the police report, and thus he was patently inviting his colleagues to test the experiences of the police who had testified: 'Never has anyone spoken like this' (7:46). Such a challenge more likely came from one whose concerns went beyond seeking fair adherence to due process. He was asking them to in effect 'taste (or hear) and see' what Jesus was like. Nicodemus was thus not making a mere 'legal quibble' (Rensberger, 1988:39). He was bearing witness, albeit in a discreet manner, thus fulfilling our second criterion above (Renz 2006:267).

Thirdly, Nicodemus' use of ambiguity in his statement is compatible with our third criterion for Christomorphicity. To start with, though the word, ἀκούσῃ (might hear; 7:51b) was typically used to describe a technical judicial hearing (BADG 38), in the gospel of John, it is more

often used to refer to giving Jesus a hearing with the ultimate aim of coming to faith in him (4:42; 5:24–25, 37–38; 6:45, 60, 64; 8:43, 47; 9:27; 10:3, 8, 20; 26–27; 12:46–48; 14:24; 16:27; 18:21, 37; cf. Bultmann 1971:259; Lincoln 2000). So, on the lips of Nicodemus ἀκούσῃ serves as an ambiguous *double entendre.* On the one hand it stated the legal position, yet, on the other hand it bore witness inviting the Sanhedrin to give Jesus the sort of hearing that might lead to faith. It is admitted that this ambiguity makes it uncertain to determine if his statement was a full witness on behalf of Jesus, that is, whether the Pharisees would have taken it as such. Even so, and as the second criterion indicates, the hostile context means that the evangelist likely approved of such ambiguity. And in any case, the rebuke of the Pharisees indicates that they certainly detected that Nicodemus was bearing witness about Jesus as 'prophet'.

Fourthly, and in its details, the two key words in Nicodemus' second precondition, καὶ γνῷ τί ποιεῖ (and might know what he does), echo important Johannine theological concepts that are related to Jesus' mission, thus fulfilling the first three criteria. So, for example, while Nicodemus' use of the word, γνῷ (might know) could be taken to refer to judicial discovery of the bare facts of the case, elsewhere in John, the γινώσκω word group when used with Jesus as the subject expresses coming to a spiritual knowledge of Jesus akin to conversion (e.g. 6:69, 10:38; 17:8). Certainly with the apparent conversion of the police officers in mind, the Pharisees would have grasped Nicodemus' invitation to them to follow suit.

Nicodemus' use of γνῷ (might know) in relation to another Johannine technical-theological terminology, τί ποιεῖ (he does) places this interpretation on even surer footing. For in John's gospel, what Jesus does is a special Christological term describing Jesus' σημεῖα (signs)

and ἔργα (works; e.g. 2:11, 23; 3:2; 4:34, 54; 5:36; 6:2, 14, 30; 7:3, 4, 21, 31; 10:37–38; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 15:24; 17:4; 20:30). In that case, in his second precondition, Nicodemus was challenging the Sanhedrin to not just give Jesus a fair hearing, but to seriously consider the works of Jesus in a manner that could perhaps lead to faith in Jesus. He was asking the Pharisees in effect to do what Jesus later also invited his disciples to do: 'Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; *but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves*' (14:11). Nicodemus was thus not just bearing witness in his discreet manner; he was in fact being christomorphic in his witness.

It is apparent, therefore, that in John 7:51 Nicodemus effectively shares his own prior experience, even if using judicial terminology to the Sanhedrin. He earlier came to Jesus confessing, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for *no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God*' (3:2). Now he challenges his colleagues to take the same plunge as he did that night, so they too could know what Jesus does. He certainly meets three of the four criteria, the criterion on Jesus' hour excepted at this stage.[32]

5.5. The Sanhedrin's rebuke of Nicodemus 7:52

The response of the Sanhedrin to Nicodemus' challenge was a sharp rebuke: 'Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee' (7:52). This is rightly taken by most interpreters as reflecting negatively on the Sanhedrin, Bultmann's assessment being typical: it 'shows that they are interested only in their own security, to which the scripture is no more than the

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[32] A legitimate but ultimately unanswerable objection may be mounted as to whether the words were Nicodemus' or were placed on his lips by John. But on both counts, they reflect a theological tendency which would certainly have enjoyed John's explicit approval.

means' (1971:312; cf. Barrett 1978:332; Keener 2003:734; Lincoln 2005:260).

However, there are reasons to believe that this rebuke also reflects positively on Nicodemus, and indeed holds him out as fulfilling the functions which Johannine witnesses are charged to fulfil, under the circumstances. Firstly, the overall effect of Nicodemus' statement on his colleagues indicates that it was taken by his colleagues as more than a 'legal quibble' or even a plea for due process. The sarcastic put-down by his colleagues, 'Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you?' indicates that Nicodemus' intervention at best irritated his colleagues, and perhaps more. Yes, his witness is discreet, ambiguous and certainly not as openly emphatic as John's statement in 20:21— 'that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God'. Even so, in the hostile judicial context, it was enough to underscore the uniqueness of Jesus and to invite them to explore him in that sense. Given also that in John's gospel, this type of angry reaction is often the typical response of Jesus' opponents to positive testimony, [33] it is evident that the Pharisees understood Nicodemus to be making more than a neutral defence of Jesus.

Secondly, in its details, the rebuke by the Sanhedrin to Nicodemus suggests that they detected his sympathies towards Jesus. So for example, the insulting put-down, Μὴ καὶ σὺ ἐκ τῆς Γαλιλαίας (not you also among the Galileans), is meant to associate Nicodemus with the accursed crowd of 7:49 thus indicating that the Pharisees at least judged Nicodemus' statement as witness at par with that of the police and the crowd. Thirdly, the Pharisees' appeal to scripture was incorrect and betrays not just their deficiency of knowledge, but also that their elitist

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[33] In the case of Jesus, they grumbled about him (6:41, 61), they disputed among themselves (6:52), deserted him (6:66), division among them (7:43; 10:19–21), and attempted stoning him (8:59; 10:31).

disdain for the crowd in 7:49 was ill-founded. No passage in the Scriptures states that 'no prophet is to arise from Galilee', and given that Jonah (2 Kgs 14:25) and Nahum (Nah 1:1) came from Galilee, their claim places them in a negative light (cf. Barrett 1978:333; Carson 1991:332; Lincoln 2005:260). This again suggests that the force of Nicodemus' witness put the Pharisees on the defensive. Finally, in implying that Jesus claimed to be a prophet from Galilee, the Pharisees indicate that they indeed understood Nicodemus to be making a claim on behalf of Jesus that he was God's agent.

All these amount to one conclusion: within the intimidating context of the Sanhedrin, and with the potential danger of being condemned to death alongside Jesus as a heretic deceiver of the people, Nicodemus the crypto-disciple within the Sanhedrin bore witness, but in the discreet manner that would accord with Jesus' mission at this stage of the narrative. Nicodemus' secret witness therefore fulfils all four criteria of Christomorphicity above. This last point is now confirmed by comparing how Nicodemus functions in the Sanhedrin with Jesus' crypto-behaviour in John 7:1–10.

5.6. Comparison of Jesus in John 7:1–10 with Nicodemus in 7:45–52

A brief comparison between Jesus' crypto-behaviour in 7:1–10, with Nicodemus' in the Sanhedrin is likely to yield some fruitful insight, given especially that the two accounts occur in the same sub-section of the Gospel sharing the similar themes. This no doubt confirms the Christomorphicity of Nicodemus' crypto-witness. In the first place, in both passages, the protagonists are presented as part of a group, only to be sharply distinguished from the group as different (7:4–8; 7:50). Secondly, in both, the opponents employ sarcasm to seek to humiliate and intimidate the protagonist (7:4; 7:52). Thirdly, both protagonists employ discretion and ambiguity in a manner that was in conformity

with Jesus' mission (7:8; 7:51). And finally, in both, the encounter does not end in a satisfactory resolution, but with the apparent division or parting of the ways between the protagonist and the group (7:10; 7:52). These similarities indicate the christomorphicity of Nicodemus' witness.

Indeed, a similar but less obvious number of parallels are also found between the crypto-behaviour of Nicodemus in 7:45–52 and the arraignment of the blind man before the Pharisees (9:13–34). In both cases, the protagonists show more positive openness to granting Jesus a fair hearing (7:51; 9:25). In both, the witness centres on the prophetic pedigree of Jesus (7:52; 9:17). And in both, the Pharisees intimidatingly show contempt and cast aspersions on the protagonist (7:52; 9:28, 34). Even though the healed blind man exhibits less reserve and discretion than Nicodemus, such striking correspondences nevertheless undermine the not uncommon view that Nicodemus does not fulfil the high standards of witness set by the healed blind man. Certainly, these correspondences suggest that the first readers of John's gospel would have regarded Nicodemus as a crypto-disciple acting as an effective agent of Jesus within the hostile confines of the Sanhedrin.

6. Summary and Reflections on Contemporary Implications of Findings

The foregoing analyses have yielded a number of insights to enable us to address the question posed regarding John the evangelist's attitude to the crypto-disciples in the narrative. Scholarly opinions, though diverse on this question, appear to have been significantly slanted by the evangelist's condemnation of crypto-disciples who failed to bear witness to Jesus due to their love for human glory (12:42–43). The article has argued that given how Jesus is sometimes portrayed acting in

a clandestine manner and the general socio-cultural attitude to secrecy in first-century AD Palestine, it is more likely that John assessed secret behaviour of the characters in a nuanced manner. It therefore hypothesized that while John censured crypto-disciples who did not bear witness to Jesus in order to retain their privileged status, he was less disapproving of particular instances in which the secret witness of a crypto-disciple was christomorphic.

The exegesis of John 7:1–13 furnished four criteria for determining Christomorphicity of a Johannine crypto-disciple, namely, (a) that covert conduct must be evaluated in the light of the immediate danger faced by the character, and its conformity with Jesus' mission, (b) that such conformity may mandate a character's temporary covert action or ambiguous speech, (c) that covert conduct that accords with Jesus' appointed καιρὸς or ὥρα would not have been censured by the evangelist, and (d) that fear in the context of threat to life was not viewed negatively by John, except when such fear resulted in conduct not in conformity with Jesus' mission.

These criteria were then employed to examine the portrayal of Nicodemus in 7:45–52, and it was concluded that in accordance with the criteria for determining christomorphicity, he indeed bore discreet witness for Jesus within the hostile context. This demonstrates that the fourth evangelist would have regarded the particular instances of secret witness of crypto-disciples in John 7 with approval. The scholarly consensus that the evangelist roundly censured crypto-discipleship therefore needs to be qualified to reflect this evidently more nuanced and christomorphic attitude.

The above findings no doubt have significant implications for contemporary reflections on clandestine Christian witness in response to hostile contexts. As organizations such as Open Doors, Barnabas

Fund, International Christian Concern and Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, to name just a few, have shown, there is currently a global rising tide of hostility and persecution of Christians (Grim 2012; Mahendra 2016:33–45; Marshall, Gilbert, and Shea 2013; Sauer 2013; Shortt 2012). While hostility towards Christians has been a common feature in certain countries for many decades, the recent escalations especially in the Middle East have been particularly vicious. As noted for example by Brown (2016:202), 'Though multiple religious communities are negatively impacted by the actions of IS [in the Middle East], the Christian community is the most significantly affected religious minority community in numerical size. One recent report claimed that after 2,000 years of continual existence Christianity could be almost completely eradicated from large swaths of the Middle East in the next five years'. Even if this particular report somewhat exaggerates the situation, few will disagree that Christians living as minorities in many parts of the world are being called upon to witness in the face of intensely heightened dangers to their lives.

Moreover, there are good reasons to support the view that even in developed countries where religious liberties are in theory legally protected, professing Christians are, in parallel with this world-wide trend, nevertheless also undergoing what Philpott (2017:17) identifies as 'polite persecution', or Ali (2012:28–35) has described as 'the rise of Christophobia' or even 'Christianophobia' (Shortt, 2012). The evidence for whether such a trend in the West is indeed real or merely perceived, and even if real, whether it is as systematic, is disputed (Ellis 2016:36; Yancey and Williamson, 2014). Some writers, (e.g. Boston 2017:34–35), label the talk of persecution of Christians in the West for example, as 'myth', while others catalogue several instances in which hostile treatment of Christians occurs in these developed settings (Open Doors 2017).

Despite this dispute, there is certainly the need to place the difficult challenges and in some cases, the inimical context that professing Christians who are increasingly in the minority in developed Western countries face in bearing witness to Jesus, in the correct and sober perspective. The hostilities and intimidation they face is not to the same degree as some Christians experience in other regions of the world. Even so there is no doubt that the contemporary environment for bearing witness in most Western countries is increasingly becoming unfriendly, anti-Christian and plainly hostile (Malesic 2009). Ellis' (2016:36) insightful summary of the nature of the hostile context in the US towards Christians is a very perceptive example of this phenomenon:

> Today, cultural disdain toward Christianity is increasingly palpable. Whether we are talking about a group of nuns providing services for the marginalized, an educational institution that wishes to maintain faith-based standards for faculty and students, or a medical provider exercising conscience in right-to-life decisions, I believe we will continue to see more constrictions for people of faith.

In that case, this article has some relevance in informing Christian witness under such hostile conditions. It has demonstrated that the ideal in these circumstances would be courageous open witness and certainly a dogged determination to seek 'the glory that comes from God', and not of human beings. It also shows, however, that some particular instances may demand covert witness for Jesus so long as such witness is temporary, is christomorphic and does not compromise the mission of Jesus to save the world. Such discreet acts of bearing witness Nicodemusly may be as courageous and powerfully effective as open unfettered witness.

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Blessed are the Consumerists: The Ideology of Contemporary Mega Church Architecture

Robert Falconer[1]

Abstract

Church architecture is commonly a tactile expression of theology, revealing to us who we are, what we believe and how we practise Christianity. While the content of the Gospel message is significantly more important than church architecture, we nevertheless ought to work towards an architecture that creatively and meaningfully expresses Biblical Christianity, its faith, theology and praxis. In this paper I argue that most contemporary mega church architecture is unfortunately an expression of consumer-capitalist ideology, and fails to contrast itself as 'other', by aligning itself with secular architectural typologies. These generally govern the form, space and aesthetics of the contemporary mega church. It is argued that contrary to good architectural design theory, the mega church building all too often is a form that does *not* follow function, but is rather a manifestation of consumerism and capitalism. And while this manifestation of ideology is arguably noble, because of its apparent evangelistic objective,

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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.

I demonstrate that this is problematic on several accounts, ultimately offering an inversion of authentic Christian community. The paper then endeavours to offer counter-cultural ideologies from Scripture that are often in contrast to the ideologies of the mega church and its Christianity. Some of these Biblical ideologies and other ideas are then developed into features that might inform any church architecture. It is hoped that further reflection on this topic would encourage a Biblical theology and spirituality that leads to world-class church design.

1. Introduction

Architecture tells us something about ourselves and the world in which we live. The same has always been true of church architecture; it tells us how we ought to relate to God and to one another. Church architecture is commonly a tactile expression of its theology. Mohler (2005:online) is in agreement, he says, 'Architecture does signify meaning and intention' and gives the example of the difference between the 'soaring nave of a Gothic cathedral and the flat auditorium of many evangelical church buildings'. The Gothic style communicates transcendence and majesty, while the flat auditorium is an expression of nearness, fellowship and teaching. The verticality in the Gothic style draws us in awe, and on the other hand, the flat auditorium offers a more horizontal perspective (2005:online), perhaps relational.

Much has been written about traditional church architecture, but little on contemporary church buildings. By contemporary church architecture, I wish to distinguish between two very different expressions. (1) *Contemporary Sacramental Church Architecture:* More often than not they are of modest size and are elegantly designed

in one of the architectural styles. The church building usually belongs to traditional or sacramental denominations. Among many others, such churches include, (i) Tadao Ando's magnificent, *Church of the Light* (1989) in Ibaraki, Japan, employing a Japanese modernist style whereby Ando uses raw concrete to enclose spaces, where light and solid convey deep spiritual meaning. (ii) Richard Meier's *Jubilee Church* (1996) in Rome, Italy, designed in the abstract modernist tradition, and (iii) Reiulf Ramstad Arkitekter's *Community Church Knarvik* (2010), in Hordaland, Norway, which is a contemporary timber-cladded church, taking cognisance of its environment, landscape and cultural heritage. (2) *Contemporary Mega Church*[2] *Architecture:* While these churches may be designed well, they often take on a theology of prosperity and the typology of shopping malls or entertainment centres with large parking facilities and spacious auditoriums. Although many such churches have been built, very little, if anything has been published on contemporary *mega* church architecture, perhaps because it is a recent phenomenon. The interest of this paper concerns the architecture of the contemporary mega church.

García-Lozano believes that church architecture 'should provide a response to the specific persons they try to serve, to their experience of faith and to the expression of the communion with God and with people'. He further says that the church, or 'temple' as he calls it, is founded upon specific theological ideas that serve as its bases (2014:41). Arizmendi (2014:55) pushes this further, by calling our attention to the purpose of contemporary church architecture, as responding to the globalisation and secularisation of the cityscape. It is an 'immigrant', so to speak, in the secular urban fabric and must find meaning by expressing 'otherness'.

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[2] A *Mega* church is usually characterised as having more than 2 000 members.

This 'otherness' is contrasted by the secular architecture of the contemporary mega church whereby the building appeals to the elite and the popular, with its superb imagining, music[3], interior design, shops, and signature eateries and coffee bars, and more often than not, the auditorium is a hi-tech state-of-the-art performance venue [4] (Mulugeta 2010:online).

The focus of this paper, therefore, explores what it is that drives contemporary mega church architecture. To achieve this, I will examine the ideologies that inform the buildings of mega churches. Secondly, the evangelistic objective of contemporary mega church architecture will be considered. Thirdly, I hope to demonstrate how this contributes towards an inversion of Biblical Christianity. It would be unseemly to offer a critical response without offering an alternative, and thus the fourth discussion will explore Biblical ideologies for Christian community, after which I will offer ideas and suggestions towards a Biblical expression in church architecture.

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[3] Staub makes and interesting observation when he says, 'sensory repetition can desensitize the audience to a particular sensation, producers have learned that to retain an audience and avoid boredom requires a constant escalation of new and more sensational experiences' (2007:9).

[4] Recently, the satirical evangelical Christian website, The Babylon Bee, created by Adam Ford, put out a short online satirical article titled, *Mall Shoppers Suddenly Realize They're Actually At Megachurch* (2017), highlighted this spectacle humorously in tongue-in-cheek fashion.
Available at http://babylonbee.com/news/mall-shoppers-suddenly-realize-theyre-actually-megachurch/.

2. Ideologies and Contemporary Mega Church Architecture

2.1. Introduction

Before we discuss ideologies that contribute to the trend in contemporary mega church architecture, it should be made quite clear that church is not the same as church architecture. The two are quite different. The church, or ἐκκλησία[5], is an assembly, a community of Christians with a shared belief (Arndt, Danker, Bauer 2000:303), or as the Greek implies 'those who are called out', presumably out of the world and into the kingdom of light, becoming followers of Jesus Christ.[6] Nevertheless, church architecture, I argue, is an expression of its church gathering and its theology.

Arizmendi observes that there have been collective changes in the way western cities understand the purpose of church buildings. The God of the creeds, has become, he believes, displaced by the 'god of the machine, and traditional Christian architecture has been assigned a role of less if not, at worse, irrelevance in the context of the machine/city of modernism' (2014:57). If Arizmendi is talking about traditional (sacramental) Christian architecture, what about modern evangelical church architecture? How ought we to respond?

Traditional church architecture may be found in the Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic (and later Neo-Gothic), Renaissance, Baroque and Rococo architectural traditions, where one goes to experience spirituality or to commune with God, and to experience the awe and

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[5] cf. Matt 18:17; Acts 5:11; 9:31; 11:26; 12:5; 1 Cor. 1:2, 10; 11:18; Eph 5:23-24; 1 Thess 2:14; Rev 1:11.

[6] cf. discussion by Beltran 2014:online.

magnificence of God (or his architecture). Modern evangelical church buildings on the other hand are primarily about functionality. Among others, one might highlight (1) the 'basic bare-minimal' church building, (2) The warehouse or shed, as a church facility, (3) the tented church, (4) the rural mud hut, (5) the experimental church which usually duplicates into another function like an art gallery or a coffee bar, or even (6) the house church[7] without a church building, and of course, (7) the contemporary mega church, the state-of-the-art religious centre, where one may experience great spectacle. The church building is usually driven by theological and socio-economic considerations. I will argue that both theological and economic considerations are deeply embedded in contemporary mega church architecture.

2.2. Form follows function

Theological and socio-economic concerns inform church architecture, but at a more basic architectural level, the question is, 'why do buildings look the way they do?' The form, space and aesthetics of any building is driven by its function. A school looks like a school, a house looks like a house, a stadium looks like a stadium, and so on. It would be unusual if a school looked like post office, one might call this 'architectural dishonesty'.

American architect, Louis Sullivan (1856–1924) who practised in Chicago and is celebrated for his contribution to the development of Modernism, came up with the famous idiom, 'Form follows function'. He argued that the exterior form should express the activities or the

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[7] cf. Acts 2:46; I Cor 16:19; Rom 16:3, 5; Col 4:15; cf. recent article by Sheryl Lynn, titled, Francis Chan Goes into Detail with Facebook Employees on Why He Left His Megachurch (2017), available at http://www.christianpost.com/news/francis-chan-goes-into-detail-with-facebook-employees-on-why-he-left-his-megachurch-190136/#.WVaDEtgzmsI.facebook

functions of the interior[8] (Craven 2016:online; Righini 2000:92). Further, in his book, *Thinking Architecturally,* South African architect Paul Righini urges his readers to design buildings while also keeping in mind what is valued. That is, buildings reflect value, they are not merely aesthetic objects (Righini 2000:3). He continues, 'Style reflects attitudes to the crafting of buildings as well as issues of cultural taste and appropriateness' (Righini 2000:3). So while the Christian philosopher Woltersorff (2012:online) is correct when he states that, 'Architecture is the art of enclosure and the carving out of enclosure', the architectural form should also express function (Righini 2000:93). And while 'form follows function' was the primary unifying idea of many Modernist architects and designers (Righini 2000:36), the basic concept remains true in varying degrees throughout history and architectural styles, even though to a lesser degree in deconstruction. The Parthenon on top of the Acropolis in Athens, speaks the language of a classical Greek temple. And while Frank O. Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, is a spectacular expression of architectural deconstructivism,[9] it's not impossible to conceive it as museum of modern and contemporary art, despite having all its traditional architectural typologies stripped away, rather than, for example, an Engen fuel station. According to Craven, Sullivan had remarked that 'all things in nature have shape, that is to say, a form, an outward semblance, that tells us what they are, that distinguishes them from ourselves and from each other'. These shapes, Sullivan believed, express the inner life, and that this is a law in nature and should be followed (Craven 2016:online).

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[8] cf. Sullivan 2012.

[9] I use the Guggenheim Museum as an extreme example due to its deconstructivist style, whereby, even if the architectural categories are intended to be blurred and the architecture is unidentifiable, it nevertheless still resembles a certain type of building.

Wolterstorff (2012:online) is right when he says that when it comes to church architecture, we should begin by reflecting on (1) what kind of architecture does the liturgy[10] call for? (2) how should the architecture enclose the space 'identifying the activities that will be performed in that place and then asking what will enable, enhance and fit those activities',[11] (3) and then of course, as I have already mentioned, affordability (economics).

Irrespective of the architectural style of any church architecture, whether it be an expression of a traditional classical style, or whether, modernist, postmodernist, deconstructivist, or other, it ought to exhibit architectural honesty, as should all other buildings; even if there is a 'blurring of edges' with respect to architectural language and meaning, for example, as we see in deconstructivism.

Today's contemporary mega church architecture, often does not reflect the internal function of church and Christian worship, but rather those of secular ideologies, speaking the architectural language of performance centre and shopping mall. A church building where form does *not* follow function suffers dishonesty.[12] Such religious centres, I believe are informed by certain ideologies, and these ideologies are all too often the 'architects'.

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[10] By 'liturgy' I do not simply mean the style of worship practices by traditional and sacramental churches, although I mean that too, but also the general arrangement of worship in Reformed, Pentecostal, Charismatic, non-denominational and 'mega' churches.

[11] Wolterstorff, speaking of a contemporary church he attended, recounts how he was unable to imagine any practice and understanding of the Christian liturgy that would call for such an enclosure (2012:online).

[12] These mega churches *do* follow function when they have shops, restaurant, coffee bars, parking garages, performance auditoriums, *et cetera*, but *not* in so far as they are said to be a church, a place of worship.

2.3. Architects of contemporary mega church architecture

If the architecture of the contemporary mega church is an expression of the performance centre and the shopping mall motif, one is compelled to ask whether the ideologies of consumerism are its architects. As a case study, the founder and leading pastor of such a church in Sandton, South Africa, in a recent article titled, *Christ and Capitalism Reconciled,* in the *Mail & Guardian* believes that, 'Capitalism is a biblical system endorsed by the Bible', and that 'many mistakenly believe that the Bible endorses socialism'[13] (Whittles 2017:17). Even if capitalism is endorsed by scripture (and I am unconvinced that neither capitalism nor socialism are endorsed), should it influence church architecture over and above all the other grand theological motifs?

The founding pastor explains how capitalism is unashamedly incorporated into the service and in the daily functions of the church. He acknowledges that this may seem out of place for those visiting for the first time, but nevertheless sees this as a vital part in keeping the church open and Christianity alive (Whittles 2017:17). Horton makes a revealing statement,

> Jesus has been dressed up as a corporate CEO, life coach, culture-warrior, political revolutionary, philosopher, co-pilot, cosufferer, moral example, and partner in fulfilling our personal and social dreams. But in all of these ways, are we reducing the central character in the drama of redemption to a prop for our own play? (Horton 2008:25).

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[13] This is no better demonstrated when he gives a tour around the church building (cf. THiNK International. Church Building Design — Rivers Church Sandton Building Tour, n.d. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmRMPEEajCA.

One wonders whether capitalism in Christianity encourages people to 'obey God in order to get things from God', rather than obeying God to get God— 'to delight and resemble him' (Keller 2012:85). As Keller says, urban churches ought to train Christians to be neighbours in the city, not simply consumers (2012:175).

Whittles, from the *Mail & Guardian,* points out that the main branch of this particular church is a multipurpose centre for Sunday worship, Bible study *and trade*[14]. This, he says, 'resembles a mini-mall and franchise stores such as the Italian Illy café complete with family-owned and operated food and drink shops, as well as a Christian bookstore.[15] The article comments that this is an 'effective networking space'[16] (Whittles 2017:17).

Although mega churches explain why money is necessary and justify how their money is spent, including feeding the poor, which is a laudable endeavour, there remains a growing concern for the role of money in the practice of Christianity, as Whittles puts it. There seems to be 'an underlying principle that distances worldly riches from Christian belief' (Whittles 2017:17). While the Bible does talk about money and

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[14] Commenting on much of contemporary Christianity, Staub argues that instead of being theological, 'it is therapeutic; instead of intellectual, it is emotional and revivalist; instead of emphasizing a serving community, it is consumerist and individualistic; instead of producing spiritual growth and depth, it is satisfied with *entrepreneurialism* and numeric growth' (2007:43; italics mine). Even if there are Bible studies, these seem to be overshadowed by entrepreneurship and the focus on numeric growth.

[15] When I visited this 'branch' and walked in to both its bookstores, the shelves were filled almost entirely with books promoting therapeutic deism and self-help, not to mention books on good business practice and success, all from a 'Christian perspective' of course.

[16] One is not surprised then, that its founding pastor authored, *The Principles of Business Success* (2012) and *12 Things that Undermine Our Success* (2015), and that business management feature prominently in his talks (Whittles 2017:17).

business practice, and Jesus certainly did (e.g. Matt 25:18–27; Luke 19:23). The theme is not as prominent in the New Testament as one might expect. The issue for Jesus is focused on one's attitude towards money, rather than promoting capitalism.

The internal activities or functions of these church buildings call to mind certain gospel narratives; (1) While I doubt all that happens in the so called 'trade centre' of any contemporary mega church is akin to the 2nd Temple being a 'den of robbers' when Jesus cleansed it (Matt 21:12–17, Mark 11:15–19, Luke 19:45–48), one does, however, wonder whether Jesus might cleanse the 'trade centre' on other grounds, the imagery being indicative. (2) There is no reason either to question whether wealthy individuals have come to salvation and have entered the kingdom of God. But is a wealthy church with excessively grand décor, technology, glitz and architecture appropriate? After all, Jesus did say, 'It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God' (Matt 19:24, ESV[17]). (3) In Mark 6:8 Jesus sent out his twelve disciples and charged them 'to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts'. The parallel is found in Luke 10:4, but later in Luke 22:36, Jesus says, 'But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one'. The concern in the first scenario is to have no money, an antithesis of capitalism if you will, and then later in Luke's account to take a money bag, if a disciple had one. The issue here is financial need or provision, rather than wealth. (4) The theme of moneybags is also found in Luke 12:33, and here Jesus encourages his listeners to sell their possessions and to give to those in need, and to acquire 'moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that

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[17] All scripture references are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise indicated.

does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys'. In this instance, the concept is not monetary wealth, but spiritual wealth. (5) In addition to Jesus' words, Paul reminds us in 2 Timothy 3:1–5 'that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money … lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power'.[18]

Mulugeta (2010:online), quoting from Paul Germond, a lecturer of the sociology of religion at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, says that 'all these churches[19]—are mega churches that preach a gospel of prosperity in which theology says that God rewards the faithful in material ways.' This Germond believes, 'fits in neatly with consumer capitalism. You see it in the car, homes, dress … the conspicuous consumption.'

Indeed, the architects, consumerism and capitalism, have changed the form, spaces and the aesthetic of contemporary churches, and I argue Christian Theology included. As a result, the unique style, form and aesthetics of church architecture is flattened, fitting inconspicuously into the secular urban fabric. Arizmendi (2014:57) articulates this well when he writes,

> The ascent of modern institutions to perceived higher echelons of cultural importance have subsequently created the conundrum of the Church's sacred spaces becoming less iconographic in urban contexts, backdrops to the life of the City, no longer central or as relevant in

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[18] I am hesitant to suggest all the vices of 2 Tim 3:1–5 are applicable to the attendees of contemporary mega churches, and neither do I wish to suggest that all are lovers of money and such pleasures, on the contrary one should expect to find a number of faithful and genuine believers in these congregations, for this reason I have contracted the verse.

[19] Referring to South African Churches, Rhema Church, Grace Church, His People, and Rivers Church.

meaning. At worse, it is the absorption of the sacred aesthetic by the profane.

He proceeds by asking whether the church should respond architecturally, and 'should it adopt secular form and styles, movements or themes in an attempt to gain relevance in the secular cityscape? (Arizmendi 2014:57).

2.4. Conclusion

It seems then that there are generally two issues at play that contribute to the trend in contemporary mega church architecture; (1) There is a conscious shift away from the architectural idiom, 'form follows function' in much mega church architecture, whereby the architecture of the church takes on secular architectural typologies, for example, a shopping mall. This then lends itself to 'dishonest architecture', where a building is said to be what it is not, a church. Such an architecture, I believe, is the result of the second issue. (2) Consumerism and capitalism are the socio-economic ideologies, the architects, that promote the expression of the performance centre and shopping mall motifs found in many contemporary mega church buildings. These two work conjointly.

3. The Evangelistic Objective of Contemporary Mega Church Architecture

Despite serious problems, the ideologies of contemporary mega church architecture do serve a purpose, they have an objective. The objective is an evangelistic one, bringing people into the church, being relevant to the youth and seeking to contextualise Christianity.[20] Notwithstanding,

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[20] cf. Mulugeta 2010:online

even if such churches are effective in doing just that, and there is a sincere evangelic objective, why is all the expense in décor, technology and architecture not being exploited towards gathering the people for teaching in sound theology and biblical exposition in preaching with evangelistic focus, rather than powerful messages on being successful, offering life and business principles. This seems to be the norm in many contemporary mega churches. One ought to ask, not only what message is being preached to church members and visiting non-believers, but what message does the architecture of the church convey? What Gospel does it preach, and what are people being converted to; a religious brand of consumerist capitalism?[21]

Beltran, of *Visioneering Studios,[22]* an American architectural practice that specialises in contemporary church architecture makes it clear that church architecture has an evangelising purpose when he says, 'we help churches with storytelling and architectural evangelism' (2013:online). Nonetheless, as Arizmendi points out, 'Church architecture which seeks to compete with the iconography around it fails its primary purpose, incorrectly thinking it can measure and demonstrate God's glory to the world using a secular yard-stick'. He believes, and I think rightly so, that when a church building does this, it conforms to the secular and denies its intrinsic sacred existence (2014:59). To clarify, the building is

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[21] At the back of the glossy information brochure from a South African mega church, is an invitation to salvation together with a 'sinner's prayer'. And while there is mention to a relationship with Jesus, it begins by quoting Jeremiah 29:11, 'The Lord declares that He has "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future", and then continues, "God said this because He made you and wants to bless you…"' Notwithstanding that this is taken entirely out of context, it is an indication of the consumer capitalist ideology.

[22] Visioneering Studios has designed many contemporary church buildings, from high to modest budget. Much of their architecture is contextual, and while some of their church buildings are done successfully and sensitively to the Christian faith, others look like commercial shopping malls (cf. http://www.visioneeringstudios.com).

not itself sacred, of course the church is its people, but the building does house sacred activity and is an expression of sacred function and of the 'sacred faith'. Arizmendi argues that such contemporary churches are misaligned, having a dogma (ideology) that cares less about Christian theology than it does about the age. Meaningful church architecture, however, 'follows theological and liturgical vigour'. If we are to design appropriate church architecture in the urban fabric in our contemporary world, we are 'to have a rigorous understanding of how former Christian approaches developed a synthesised architecture that was both relevant and timeless' (2014:59).

Former Christian approaches to architecture were timeless as is the message of scripture. The presentation (architectural style), however, remains cultural, argues Beltran, using examples from Jesus' own ministry. He believes that if Jesus was walking around today, he would use 'technology, music, buildings, and everything else at his disposal as tools to reach people where they are' (2014:online). Staub, on the other hand argues that we have created 'a spiritually confused, superficial popular culture that is artificially sustained by technology, money, and marketing' (2007:27). Staub (2007:46) laments later in his book,

> I simply note that Christian use of media has been primarily imitative, striving to look like and sound like mainstream media while adapting the lyrical and moral content to the reductionist, feel-good gospel of pop Christianity. Generally, it lacks spiritual depth, intellectual firepower, and artistic originality, and for the most part, it is satisfied with being a counterpart to the popular culture: entertaining and mindless and driven by celebrity, technological competence, good marketing, and above all else, profitability.

And if media has been primarily imitative of secular media, one could say the same for contemporary mega church architecture. Shopping

malls and performance centres, fitted with multi-storey parking garages are all imitative of secular consumerist culture.

Keller acknowledges the need to rightly contextualise Christianity, saying that, 'All gospel ministry and communication are already heavily adapted to a particular culture'. But we do need to contextualise consciously, he says. However, he makes a salient point when he writes, 'If we never deliberately think through ways to rightly contextualize gospel ministry to a new culture,[23] we will unconsciously be deeply contextualized to some other culture. Our gospel ministry will be both overadapted to our own culture and underadapted to new cultures at once'. This he believes will lead eventually to a distorted Christian Gospel (2012:96). I believe that this has unfortunately become the downfall of many contemporary mega churches, and their architecture is the expression of the same.

Staub picks up on this idea, that in almost every way the evangelical quest for cultural relevance is influenced by secular culture rather than the culture being influenced by evangelicals (2007:39). In like manner, contemporary mega church architecture is largely influenced by a consumer capitalist culture, not to mention its influence on Christian faith and theology. It seems, according to Staub, that even though contemporary mega church Christianity seeks for cultural relevance, it is mostly unsuccessful. Yes, they are very successful by business standards, with its wealth, 'electronic and print media empires', its marketing and even its political influence, but there is little evidence that this is transforming culture. Staub asks, 'If evangelicals are

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[23] Keller sees the first task of contextualisation as an immersion of oneself in the questions, beliefs and hopes of the recipient culture, in order that a biblical, gospel-centred answers might be offered in response to its questions (Keller 2012:96). This is evident in Keller's own ministry and writing.

dominating American culture, why is our culture in such bad condition spiritually, intellectually, morally, relationally, and aesthetically?' (2007:39). Secular media does not find such a form of 'evangelicalism noteworthy for its spiritual depth', nor even for its 'intellectual rigour, aesthetic richness, relational health, or moral purity'. Staub is right, one rarely, if ever, hears of contemporary Christianity described 'as a profoundly spiritual movement offering deep union with a transcendent God or as the basis for a spiritually inspired, intelligent, and aesthetically rich cultural renewal' (2007:43).

While the evangelistic objective of contemporary mega church architecture might be sincere, and achieves much of what it envisions. I do not believe, for the most part, that it provides a meaningful reflection on authentic Christianity, a Christianity that is neither consumerist nor capitalist, or even socialist. Arizmendi offers a striking proclamation, 'In the Christian context, a relevant architecture within the secular city can only be created if the Church takes seriously the significance of its own revelation' (2014:63).

4. The Inversion of Authentic Christian Community

This discussion examines how contemporary mega church architecture inverts authentic Christian community. Beltran, while acknowledging that there is nothing wrong with traditional church buildings and traditional church music, he suggests that a church will continue to be ineffective in reaching its community, and the unreached in the culture of today by 'using methods and facility prototypes created hundreds of years ago'. He likens this to a doctor using leeches and other medical 'technology' of a few hundred years ago to treat a patient today (2014:online). I think Beltran is right here, but misses the point when he begins asking, 'What type of places and buildings do people choose to

go to spend their free time? What type of music do people choose to listen to on their iPods? Churches need to be offering their community what their community needs' (2014:online).

In an earlier article, Beltran, speaking about his architectural studio, writes, 'we use services such as planning, vision clarity, design, architecture and construction, but they are merely a means to fulfilling our core businesses'. He then askes a series of three *business* questions for the church and accepts that such questions might be uncomfortable to ask. He asks; (1) Who are your customers? (2) Who is your competition? (3) What products do you produce? (Beltran 2013:online). To which I ask, ought a church community to ask such questions at all, or is the church something entirely different from business and its practices?

I am convinced Belran and those who advocate such a contemporary mega church architecture are wrong on several accounts, and in essence invert authentic Christian community. My argument is as follows: (1) If people wish to see a movie, they visit a movie theatre, if they wish to experience live rock music, they should attend a rock concert, if they wish to go shopping, they should visit a shopping mall, if they wish to drink artisan coffee they visit a coffeehouse. The church need not and should not imitate secular subculture. (2) The church is a place of worship, not another secular venue. It ought not to be an extension of secular activities with a Christian aroma. The issue has everything to do with authentic Christian devotion, and nothing to do with 'keeping up with the times'. Garbarino (2017:online) in his book review of Hurtabo's, *Destroyer of the gods: Early Christian distinctive in the Roman world,* writes,

> If Christianity wishes to grow in an increasingly pluralistic West, we
> can't accommodate to secular social norms any more than early

Christians could accommodate to Roman social norms. If we believe and act just like everyone else, what's the point? Christians were different at the founding of the church, and many of the things that made them distinct are just as relevant today.

(3) The church ought to be a 'strange' place, different from the familiar places we so often visit in our secular society. Hurtabo (2016) says that Christianity, even in its inception has been referred to by outsiders as 'different, odd, and even objectionable'. Garbarino (2017:online) in his book review of the same, tells us how Hurtabo, 'describes how Christians in the first three centuries set themselves apart from the broader Greco-Roman society. Christianity, with its universal claims, must be accessible to all cultures, but *it shouldn't accommodate itself to that culture in a bid to be relevant.*'

Being accessible and odd at the same time, Hurtabo argues, *helped Christianity grow* (emphasis mine).

This idea is evident in a recent online article put out by the *Telegraph,* which says, a 'study, commissioned by the Christian youth organisation Hope Revolution Partnership and carried out by ComRes, suggested that levels of Christianity were much higher among young people than previously thought'. It continues to mention that 'the influence of a church building was more significant than attending a youth group, going to a wedding, or speaking to other Christians about their faith'. Further, the study also suggests that 'new methods invested in by the Church, such as youth groups and courses such as Youth Alpha, are less effective than prayer or visiting a church building in attracting children to the church'. And so some of the 'old school' methods, like church architecture, are still some of the most effective ways of getting people

into the Christian faith[24] (Rudgard 2017:online). It seems quite clear that the church ought to offer relief from the mundane and the familiar. The church is a place to retreat from the 'secular noise', images and experiences of this world. We are after all the *Ekklesia*, 'the called out ones', the church's 'profile' is different from the world and its systems. Jesus calls people out of society and into something new, and yet we are still to participate in our world meaningfully[25] (John 17:14–15; cf. Rom 12:1–2). (4) While churches require some element of business and management, it is not a business enterprise. The business of the church should be in the foreground, preferably unnoticed. Jesus himself managed his ministry and it appears he had Judas Iscariot manage the moneybag that was used for ministry (John 13:29). Yet, the financials of Jesus' ministry barely features. Luke tells us how Jesus said, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head' (Luke 9:58). (5) Beltran suggests that a church facility could be a '7-day-a-week Christ-centred community' rather than a '2-hour-a-week Christian insider's club' (Beltran 2014:online). There is merit in making full use of the church building, but Beltran fails to remind us of the great commission in Matthew 28:16–20, where Jesus says, 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations…',[26] which is the

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[24] Even if one were to question the study and ask questions about the depth of theology, devotion and discipleship, and whether young people truly become followers of Jesus Christ, one cannot help but notice the importance of Church architecture in evangelism, as a starting point. I believe the same holds true for all church traditions.

[25] Indeed, Bonhoeffer (2003:245) wrote, 'The 'unworldliness' of the Christian life is meant to take place in the midst of this world. Its place is the church-community which must practise it in its daily living'.

[26] Wallace notes that πορευθέντες (go) is the first of two participles in verse 19, βαπτίζοντες (baptising) is the other. He argues that πορευθέντες 'fits the structural pattern for the attendant circumstance participle; aorist participle preceding an aorist main verb (in this case, imperative)'. Further, he says that there is no grammatical reason 'for giving the participle a mere temporal idea'. Should πορευθέντες be an adverbial participle, the Great Commission becomes the *Great Suggestion*; as he aptly

apex of the missionary motif in Matthew's Gospel.[27] We attend church and smaller gatherings to pray, to worship, to hear the exposition of Scripture and to be taught the Christian faith, but we are to live out that faith publically in the marketplace, in educational institutions, or wherever we might find ourselves. Although it is a good thing to bring people to church services and call them into fellowship with Jesus Christ and with believers, we are called to be witnesses, the light of the world (Acts 1:8; Matt 5:14–16). Frost proclaims how Christians should live meaningful 'incarnational lives' in mission, engaging one's community as the body of Christ, proclaiming and demonstrating 'the universal reign of God through Jesus Christ by engaging at a deep, personal level with the brokenness of humanity', as well as being a part of a physical gathering around Scripture. Frost offers this as an alternative to the intrinsically excarnate, highly individualised and emotional culture found in many of the mega churches (Frost 2014; Falconer 2016:104, 109–110).

Previously, as Staub bemoans, churches sought after 'thoughtful biblical expositors to serve as pastors, but now they require entrepreneurs and magnetic personalities who could establish new churches or develop strategies to reach target markets'. The expectation now is for pastors to be CEOs of local churches which function like franchises, submitting reports that are evaluated by their numerical

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puts it. Wallace, along with most other translations, therefore translates πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς… as, 'Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations…' (1996:645). Young (1994:158) also points out that 'the participle πορευθέντες should be translated in the same mood (imperative) as the leading verb', μαθητεύσατε (make disciples).

[27] David Bosch offers detailed discussion on the Great Commission and how the whole gospel of Matthew points towards these final verses, and that 'all the threads woven into the fabric of Matthew, from Chapter 1 onward, draw together here' (1991:57; cf. pp. 56–83).

growth (2007:38–39). The church has aligned itself with popular culture which reveals to some degree, that, 'despite our magnificent spiritual, intellectual, and imaginative capacities, have chosen to wade in the shallow but spiritually toxic waters of superficiality' (Staub 2007:6).

Traditional architecture, as the philosopher Žižek, explains, was intended to include the interior from the exterior, but today it often attempts to enclose the exterior itself, providing a protective screened outside. This envelope he explains, isolates a set of buildings from one another, this architectural version is long known in political economy as the 'enclosure of the commons'… (Žižek 2010:online). In other words, the building cuts itself off from the rest of the world, in isolated fashion without integrating meaningfully into urbanity and its cityscape. While church architecture should be distinguishable from other buildings, they still need to relate to the urban fabric, its built environment and context, opening out onto the streetscape, without being an isolated envelope, disregarding its outside world.

Associated with contemporary mega church architecture, because of its visual function and ideologies, is its use of media, which is for the most part imitative of the secular, 'striving to look like and sound like mainstream media while adapting the lyrical and moral content to the reductionist, feel-good gospel of pop Christianity', says Staub (2007:46). Arizmendi is right, all church architecture after all is for the church, and not for the world and its ideologies! (2014:57).

Architecture has always had a tremendous political-ethical responsibility, and this is 'grounded in the fact that much more is at stake in architecture than it may appear'. Architects materialise not only public ideologies, but go off without realising ... right there in stone, 'also what public ideology cannot say publically, the obscene secrete of the public ideology', says Žižek with outright insight (2010:online).

Likewise, much contemporary mega church architecture materialises the ideologies of consumer capitalism, in brick, mortar and steel, rather than pronouncing the ideologies quite so explicitly in public.[28] Biblical Christianity, on the other hand, offers ideologies for Christian community that are starkly different.

5. Biblical Ideologies for the Christian Community

5.1. Introduction

In the previous section I explored how contemporary mega church architecture inverts authentic Christian ideology. Other than the architecture of the Judaic temple and references to synagogues, there is no biblical teaching on church architecture; understandably when church architecture came later. However, we can examine biblical ideologies that are in contrast to the ideologies that inform many mega church buildings. In the discussion which follows, I will offer Biblical exposition, highlighting some biblical ideologies of the Christian community that are counter-culture.

5.2. Give us this day our daily bread

Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray in Matthew 6:9–13, traditionally called, The Lord's Prayer.[29] What is of interest to us is, τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον·(v. 11), rendered as 'Give us this day our daily bread' (my translation). Verbrugge (2000:787), explains that bread was a staple and was used as a synonym for food or

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[28] Whittles' (2017) article in the *Mail and Gaudian*, *Christ and Capitalism Reconciled,* is an exception. Here the ideologies are expressed publically by the founder and pastor of such a church.

[29] It's curious that contemporary mega churches rarely, if ever, pray the Lord's Prayer in community or encourage it to be prayed by individuals.

nourishment. To eat bread meant to have a meal, it is concerned with our bodily[30] needs. Keller picks on the same, that '"Daily bread" is a metaphor for necessities rather than luxuries' (2014:114). The imperative[31] δὸς, 'give', is employed to express a request directed towards God (Wallace 1996:488). Yet it is also a modifying verb, 'give to us', δὸς ἡμῖν (Porter 1994:126). Wallace explains that δὸς[32] ἡμῖν σήμερον stresses the urgency of the action, and the specific situation is usually in view here rather than a general precept (Wallace 1996:719). The sense of community is emphasised here, where we ask for 'our daily bread', and not my 'daily bread', and that this prayer is inclusive of our neighbours, evident in 'our Father' and 'our bread' (Bailey 2008:122).

Verse 11 has a social dimension, according to Keller. For everyone to get the 'daily food', there must be a flourishing economy, a just society and good employment. To pray, 'give us our daily bread' implies a praying against exploitation' in business, trade, and labour which inevitably deprives the poor of their 'daily bread' and nourishment. In essence it is to pray for 'a prosperous and just social order' (Keller 2014:114–115). While we should affirm economic and national prosperity[33] and a just social order for any country, Bailey points out that in the petition, we ask for bread and not cake, after all, bread is a gift. He continues by saying that, consumerism and the kingdom of *mammon* have no place among those who pray this prayer. We ask for that which sustains life, not all its extras' (Bailey 2008:122).

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[30] Verbrugge (2000:787) includes spiritual needs as well.
[31] Earlier similar imperatives include ἐλθέτω and γενηθήτω in verse 10.
[32] The parallel in Luke, however, has the present δίδου rather than δὸς (Wallace 1996:720).
[33] I am not alluding to the prosperity gospel here.

5.3. Sell your possessions and give to the poor

Later on in Matthew, a man comes to Jesus asking what he should do to have eternal life. Jesus responds by asking whether he has kept the commandments, to which the man replied that he had done so. And Jesus responds by saying that if he wishes to be perfect, he should, 'go and sell all that he possesses and give it to the poor, and he would have treasure in heaven, and then he should go and follow Jesus (Matt 19:16–22; my paraphrase). Of interest here are Jesus' words in verse 21, ὕπαγε πώλησόν σου τὰ ὑπάρχοντα καὶ δὸς [τοῖς] πτωχοῖς, καὶ ἕξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν οὐρανοῖς, καὶ δεῦρο ἀκολούθει μοι, rendered as 'Go away, sell what belongs to you and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven, and come follow me' (My translation). The verse has four imperatives; (1) ὕπαγε, 'Go away', (2) πώλησόν σου τὰ ὑπάρχοντα, 'sell all that belongs to you', (3) δὸς [τοῖς] πτωχοῖς, 'give to the poor', and (4) δεῦρο ἀκολούθει μοι, 'come follow me'.

The focus it seems is not so much giving to the poor, although that's important too (and many mega churches do just this extravagantly), but rather on giving *sacrificially,* and following Jesus, living simply and without excessive luxury. Contrary to the wealthy man in Matthew 19:16–22, Bonhoeffer notes how 'people left everything they had for the sake of Christ and tried to follow Jesus' strict commandments through daily exercise. Monastic life thus became a living protest against the secularization of Christianity, against the cheapening of grace'[34] (2003:46–47).

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[34] Neither Bonhoeffer nor I are suggesting here that we should live monastic lifestyles.

5.4. Devotion, prayer and fellowship

In some ways Acts 2:42–47 is a practical outworking of both the previous discussions on Matthew 6:11 and 19:16–22. The believers devoted themselves to (1) the apostles' teaching, (2) fellowship, (3) the breaking of bread, and (4) to prayers. These certainly were characteristics that identified the early Christians as rather peculiar and separate from the secular world as they continue to be today. Verse 44 alludes to a kind of micro benevolent communist society, where 'all who believed were together and had all things in common'.[35] This idea is developed further in verses 45, reminiscent of Matthew 19:16–22, where the believers themselves take on Jesus' command to the rich man by 'selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need'.[36] While no one was obligated to sell their possessions, they did so sacrificially. The architectural theme in verse 46 is interesting. The believers met in two places, in the temple and in one another's houses where they broke bread and shared food, perhaps an implicit reference to, 'Give us this day our daily bread' (Matt 6:11). It is not surprising that the early Christian community met in the temple, especially since that was where Jesus often taught, and that the early believers were mostly Jewish. While the intent of the 2nd temple may be dubious, having been built by Herod who was not the true king (Wright 1992:225–226), it was nonetheless religious

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[35] I don't mean to suggest that the New Testament supports communism, but rather I mention this by way of illustrating that Acts 2:42–47 certainly does not support consumerism and capitalism.

[36] The textual variant in verse 45 reads as, καὶ ὅσοι κτήματα εἶχον ἢ ὑπάρξεις ἐπίπρασκον, D (syr), rendered as, 'and as many as had possessions or goods sold them'. Metzger argues that this 'may have been introduced in order to avoid giving the impression that all Christians were property-owners' (1994:263).

architecture, different from secular architecture,[37] marking out a certain (Jewish) theology, and was in some ways even missional (Mark 11:17; cf. Is 56:7). Despite the strangeness of early Christianity and its unusual activities, 'the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

5.5. Deny yourself and pick up your cross

In a culture where consumerism and capitalism are promulgated at every corner in media and marketing, Christians tend to forget that we are called to deny ourselves. Jesus called a crowd together with his disciples and said, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me' (Mark 8:36). In verse 34, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν, 'Let him deny himself' and ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ, 'take up his cross' are in the imperative. Wallace, in a footnote under his illustrations of the imperative, lists Mark 8:34 as an example where 'the Greek is stronger than a mere option, engaging the volition and placing a requirement on the individual' (1996:486). A similar theme finds expression in Hebrews 13:12–13 where the author reminds his readers of Jesus' sacrificial death, and then concludes, τοίνυν ἐξερχώμεθα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς τὸν ὀνειδισμὸν αὐτοῦ

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[37] I acknowledge that the 2nd Temple combined the functions of religion, government and being a national figurehead, and included the idea of being the city, the financial and economic world. It was even 'the main slaughterhouse and the butchers guild'. Hence the desire of the Essene community to dissociate from it. Nevertheless, it was one of the most beautiful buildings constructed during its time (Wright 1992:224–225) and for the most part, its architecture shaped Judaic culture, rather than vice versa. Though, this was not always evidently so, as was shown in my mention earlier of Jesus cleansing the Temple (Matt 21:12–17, Mark 11:15–19, Luke 19:45–48). Detailed discussion on this topic can also be found in Aslan's (2013) controversial book, *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth.*

φέροντες·, meaning, 'so let us go to him outside the camp enduring his abuse[38]' (my translation).

5.6. Free from love of money

A few verses earlier in Hebrews 13, in verses 5–6, readers are told to flee greed. The clause, ἀφιλάργυρος ὁ τρόπος, is awkward to translate into English, but the meaning may be adequately rendered as, 'Ensure your way of life is free from the love of money' (My translation; cf. Arndt et al. 2000:157, 1017). We are also to be satisfied (ἀρκούμενοι) with what we have, because Jesus said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'. And verse 6 implies that even if we are in need or in fear, 'the Lord is my helper'. Many contemporary mega churches pursue a culture of consumerist capitalism, which, in my view, subjects itself to the love of money and possession. Hebrews 13:5–6 (and v. 13) points us to a very different way of life and theology.

5.7. Aspiring to live quietly

The very nature of the mega church is characteristically large, bold, enterprising and public. Yet, Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 4:11–12 calls believers to aspire to live quiet lives (φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἡσυχάζειν), minding one's own affairs. He continues advising that Christians ought to work hard with their hands and earn a living and be dependent on no one.[39] The teaching of contemporary mega churches which embrace

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[38] The BDAG renders ὀνειδισμός as an 'act of disparagement that results in disgrace, reproach, reviling, disgrace, insult' (Arndt, Danker and Bauer 2000:710).

[39] One should accept that the situation of 'those in need' in Acts 2:42–47 mentioned above is different, and that these people had real needs (cf. Acts 4:34–37 and 6:1–2). Contemporary mega churches are also very effective in feeding the hungry and supplying the needs of the poor.

consumerist capitalism, and some proponents of the prosperity gospel do advocate hard work, and this should be commended.[40]

Thielman argues that Paul was concerned that the Thessalonian Christians' conduct was poor outside the church, and their bizarre behaviour was encouraging increased persecution. To prevent further suffering, Paul urges them not to give reason for offence. There is also the possibility that their behaviour may have prevented 'the ability of the church to communicate the gospel persuasively to outsiders' (2005:444). Therefore, Paul 'commanded them to lead a quiet life, mind their own affairs, and keep this rule: "If anyone does not want to work, he shall not eat"' (2 Thess 3:10; Thielman 2005:257). Believers today should consider how they might 'aspire to live quietly' in peace and tranquillity, and yet also how they might work hard so that they may be examples to outsiders.

5.8. Conclusion

This Biblical exposition has demonstrated that Christianity is counter-culture, offering a different image to the contemporary mega church typology. Even if the times have changed, the teaching of scripture and the essentials of Christian life and devotion stay the same. Arguably, some contemporary mega churches do demonstrate some degree of the characteristics mentioned in the biblical discussions above. However, for the most part, it seems to me that the consumerist and capitalist ideologies have 'hijacked' authentic Christianity, where prosperity, consumerism, business structure and principles, state-of-the-art technology, and performance take centre stage. Having examined the

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[40] I noted in a Rivers Church pamphlet recently that a course on business and entrepreneurship is offered. While I disapprove of such courses run by a church as part of a discipleship programme, the point is that they do encourage hard work.

Biblical ideologies that are in contrast to the ideologies that inform contemporary mega church architecture, I now wish to explore how these Biblical ideologies along with other ideas might help towards a Biblical expression in Church architecture.

6. Towards a Biblical Expression in Church Architecture

6.1. Introduction

It is hoped, in this discussion, that church leaders and the architects of churches would consider carefully the theology and ideologies that inform their architecture, and provide ideas on how they might be implemented. The following are a collection of principles and ideas for good contemporary architecture, mega or otherwise. This list is not meant to be exhaustive.

6.2. Church as sacred space

I agree with contemporary (post)evangelical theology that the church is its people, not the building, and that the church building is not especially holy or sacred in and of itself.[41] However, as already noted by Arizmendi (2014:57), all church architecture is for the church, not for the world. A church building also houses certain special activities, such as worship, prayer, preaching and teaching, baptism and the celebration of the Lord's Supper, which are 'sacred' and specific to a church building. For this reason, the church building should be

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[41] García-Lozano says it well when he says, 'the actual temple of God is not spatial for Christians, but personal: Jesus-Christ, God's Son. Because of his humanity and embodiment, he is the real temple of God. When he is worshipped, God is worshipped' (2014:42).

considered and treated as 'sacred space'.[42] The church is sacred because it is 'other', it is different from the places and spaces experienced in secular culture[43]—it is a place to retreat from the 'hustle and bustle' of the secular world and its ideologies. The architecture of the church and its media and music should also offer, not emotional experience, but spiritual experience. Staub proclaims that 'having been made for God, humans are designed for a spiritual experience and long for the transcendent, for a reality beyond the limits of their pedestrian daily lives' (2007:188). He urges for better crafted, thoughtful, spiritual, original and imaginative art (Staub 2007:176), likewise I urge for better church architecture and sacred space.

6.3. Form follows function

Contemporary church architecture need *not* follow the same architectural elements of traditional church buildings. Although it could make use of such elements in creative, meaningful ways. The church building, however, ought to have sufficient 'discourse markers' that communicate that this is a church building and it should communicate not only that it *is* a church, but also its theology and (Biblical) ideology. The form of the church building must follow its function, in one way or another. Church architecture should be truthful,[44] but also creative, relating to its social and urban (or rural) milieu meaningfully.

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[42] I understand that many of these activities are enacted in other building types, for example, a church services in a school hall, or prayer in a prayer room facility at an airport or hospital. I am not suggesting that church activities are limited to church buildings, but that we consider the church building as sacred space because of the nature of its activities.

[43] cf. 2 Cor 6:14–18.

[44] Architectural integrity may also be expressed by working honestly with raw materials, light, space, void and mass, colour, and structure.

6.4. Modesty

Church communities are the body of Christ,[45] and John tells us that those who abide in Christ ought 'to walk in the same way in which he walked' (1 John 2:6), that is, we are to imitate him.[46] It is doubtful that this means we are to live in poverty, rather our lifestyles should be modest. In the same way our church architecture should be an example of Jesus and his ministry. Modesty in church architecture goes a long way towards such a biblical expression.

6.5. Community

The aesthetics and spatial planning of church architecture are to communicate a spirit of community,[47] where *all* are welcome and are safe.[48] The (sacred) spaces are to facilitate gathering where people come, share and participate together as we saw in Acts 2:42–47, where believers met to hear teaching, to fellowship, break bread and to pray. Keller correctly explains that 'the gospel creates a human community radically different from any society around it' (2012:311). On the other hand, consumerism and capitalism foster a culture of individuality.

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[45] cf. Rom 12:5, 1 Cor 12:27, Eph 4:12; 5:23, Heb 13:3.

[46] cf. 1 Cor 11:1, 1 Pet 2:21.

[47] Mega churches attempt to do this my means of incorporating food courts or 'trade centres', but of course this is consumerist, and in my estimation fails to do justice to Biblical community.

[48] Arizmendi writes, 'But if we regard the Church's primary purposes, it is this positioning which primes it to become the safe haven for the disenfranchised, the foreigner (in spirit and in actuality) and ultimately the ark of the eschatological resolve of present chaos. It is this positioning which allows it to renew its sacramental purposes and its relevance within a new philosophical urban context' (2014:63).

6.6. Meaning

The forms, spaces and aesthetics of the church building should be designed creatively so as to communicate theological meaning and Biblical praxis. García-Lozano rightly considers that 'religious architecture is manifested by means of theology in its concept of people and the Church, as well as its way of comprehending God' and affirms that there is a connection between theology and religious architecture', even if it has not always been so (2014:42).

6.7. Address the street

Church buildings and their property could explore creative ways in opening up onto the street, asking firstly, how could the building pull people off the street and into the church building? —possibly by opening up the entrance.

Secondly, how could it lead the congregation out into the street with a missional attitude of going into the world as 'the salt of the earth' (Matt 5:13–16). Keller believes that the church should transform culture by engaging with it, 'largely through an emphasis on Christians pursuing their vocations from a Christian worldview and thereby changing culture' (2012:195). The way the church building addresses the street may offer an opportunity for believers to reflect on how their vocations engage their world.

6.8. Transparency

Consider how the façades might communicate transparency and honesty. This may be achieved by allowing passers-by to peer into the building and reflect on the activities within. Glazed façades are the obvious way to accomplish this effectively.

6.9. Proclamation furniture

Contemporary churches for the most part have kept the stage for performance, but have substituted the permanent fixture of the pulpit where the gospel is proclaimed and the scriptures are exposited, for a musical stand or some other object. The pulpit ought to make a statement up front about the primacy of scripture and its proclamation.[49]

6.10. Christ the vocal and focal foint

While the primacy of scripture should be creatively expressed in the church building, Christ needs to be both the vocal and focal point (1 Cor 2:1–5) in its architecture. Traditionally, a cross was placed above the platform,[50] but congregations might consider other creative options as well. Although I would encourage going back to the symbol of the cross.

6.11. Narrative

Consideration needs to be given to what story the architecture of the church communicates to people about who the Christian community is, what they believe and what they do.

6.12. Conclusion

In this discussion, ideas and principles were highlighted for further reflection on how Biblical ideologies might inform contemporary church architecture in a way that relates to society and the urban context as well as standing out as a building that is different from other secular buildings, and expresses 'otherness'. Such principles should be applied

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[49] cf. 1 Thess 2:13; 1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 3:16–4:5.
[50] Catholic churches have the crucifix and an altar where the mass is performed.

with great care and much creativity. The question remains, can spirituality lead to world-class design?

7. Conclusion

This paper explored the ideologies that inform the form, space and aesthetics of contemporary mega church architecture. I also considered the evangelistic objective of this type of church building. This led to a discussion on how the ideologies of many mega churches invert authentic Christian community. As an alternative, the biblical ideologies for Christian community were highlighted, which in turn provided an opportunity to discuss ideas on how these ideologies might help inform church architecture. I argue that much of contemporary mega church architecture promotes a pseudo-Christianity with an overemphasis on consumerist capitalism, which I believe is deeply concerning. Nevertheless, and despite my criticism, I agree with Keller when he writes,

> We must find a balance between the consumer mentality that seeks only to meet felt needs and our self-centred tendency to assume our own preferences are the only biblically right way to meet God. Instead, we can humbly learn from what the Bible teaches about worship while recognizing that God gives us great freedom in the particulars. As we fill in the blanks for our own worship, we must take into account what the Bible teaches, our own cultural and ecclesial setting, and our own personal temperament and preferences. In addition, we should intentionally create services in which both evangelism and edification can occur. The weekly worship service can be very effective in evangelism of non-Christians and in edification of Christians if it is gospel centred and in the vernacular of the community (2012:308).

Mohler aggress with Keller, saying, 'But, far above these concerns, I want my children to hear the preaching of the Word of God and to sing and pray among fellow believers. The content of Christian worship is infinitely more important than the architectural context' (2005:online). But let us, nevertheless, work towards an architecture that creatively and meaningfully expresses Biblical Christianity, its faith, theology and praxis.

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The Use of the Bible as a Source of Divine Guidance on Matters which it does not Directly Address: Is it Scriptural?[1]

Callie Joubert and Nick Maartens[2]

Abstract

Many Christians believe that the whole Bible is the inspired Word of God. In it, they believe, they can find God's authoritative will for their lives and that it can be used as a source of divine guidance concerning matters which are not directly addressed in it. This belief has led to a practice that must be questioned: the decontextualising of scripture in order to recontextualise it to say something it was not originally meant to say. The recontextualised meaning is then taken as a personal message from God and used to legitimise beliefs, decisions and actions. The most unfortunate result is that this practice has led to the assumption that such guidance is not to be questioned, since it is 'from the Lord'. This paper shows why both the practice and the actual and possible

assumptions underlying the practice are wrong. It then provides an alternative approach to the reading of scripture for ascertaining God's will concerning everyday decision-making matters. The alternative approach is based on better assumptions and is less open to spiritual deception.

1. Introduction

Many Christians believe that the Bible is not only the inspired Word of God, but also that it has authority for their daily lives (Nel 2017:6). Knowing the will of God is, therefore, of no little importance to them (Fee 2004; Friesen and Maxson 2004; Mumford 1971; Pritchard 2004; Robinson 1998; Sproul 2009; Weiss 1950). There are several texts in the Bible that explain this, but arguably none referred to or quoted more than Romans 12:2.

However, many Christians, especially those in the Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions, believe that scripture can be used as a source of divine guidance concerning matters which are not directly addressed in it, for example, whether to further their education after school, which career to pursue or which offer of employment to accept, who to marry, where to live, which car or house to buy and even whom or where to evangelise.[3] This belief has led to a practice that must be questioned.

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[3] French Arrington (1994:104), for example, states that Pentecostals, under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, 'allow the message of the text to speak to real problems of persons in their daily lives' and that this illumination is not restricted to the literal meaning of a text. Joyce Meyer (2003:39) writes that 'The Bible has an answer for every question we might ever ask… For example, the written Word of God, the *logos* Word, doesn't tell us when to buy a new car or what type of car to buy; we may need a spoken or revealed word (a *rhema*) from God concerning that'. She seems to mean that a text or a portion of it may be appropriated as a 'word from God' about the car when that text becomes 'illuminated' or 'made alive' for the reader, even

2. The Practice and its Problems

The way the Bible is appropriated as a source of divine guidance to ascertain God's will on matters which are not directly addressed in it is straightforward: a text is decontextualised and recontextualised. The result, in each instance, is exactly the same: it says something it was not originally meant to say. What is disconcerting about this practice is that the recontextualised meaning is then taken as a personal message from God and used to legitimise beliefs, decisions and actions of either oneself or those of others. The most unfortunate result is that this practice has led to the assumption that such guidance is not to be questioned, since it is 'from the Lord'. To understand the gravity of the problems this practice leads to, consider the following four real examples.

A woman, during time for testimony subsequent to a Sunday service, informed her fellow Christians that 'God had told her' during the past week that a Christian who buys milk, bread and a newspaper on Sundays sins against God. She then quoted Exodus 20:8−10. When her pastor corrected her understanding of the Sabbath using the teachings of the New Testament, she promptly left, never to return. In bitterness she 'joined' another church. If this incident is probed a little further, we will find that it is far from being an exception. However, on the one hand,

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if that is not what the author of the text means. One reason that may explain her questionable distinction between *logos* and *rhema* is her belief that God's answers to our everyday questions 'are hidden in the pages of his written Word' (ibid, p. 42). Priscilla Shirer (2009:5) says, 'I want God's specific revelation to flow through my heart… When I say I want to hear from God, I mean that I need to know what job He wants me to take. I need to know what spouse He wants me to marry. I need to know whether He's calling me into full-time ministry or if He wants me to stay in my full-time, corporate job … if I'm supposed to buy this house or that one … if I'm supposed to live in Chicago or Dallas. I need specifics. I'm looking for details'.

this sincere and devout woman strongly believed that what she did was 'spiritual' and that God had given, both her and her fellow Christians, a message to change their ways. But suppose her pastor and her fellow Christians had believed her, would it have made sense to conclude that they are mistaken, misguided or even deceived by the devil? On the other hand, she also, although ignorantly and unintentionally so, did something that is clearly not from the Lord, namely, to enslave Christians by reverting them to the keeping of Old Testament laws from which Christ has set them free (cf. Rom 14; 1 Cor 7:23; Gal 3−6; Col 2:8, 20−23). Is it, therefore, right to conclude that God had not spoken to her in the manner she claimed? If we are right in our deduction, what should we think about her utterance? Is it a case of using the name of the Lord in vain (Exod 20:7; Deut 5:11) and/or a case of uttering an 'idle word' for which she has to account for one day to our Lord (Matt 12:36)?

The next example pertains to the prayer meeting that was recently held on the farm Wilde Als outside Bloemfontein. When Angus Buchan was asked how many people he expected to turn up for the prayer meeting, he said 'the Lord gave me a clear word … that there will be a million people' (Hogg 2017a). What he did not say was what the source of that 'word' was. A few days later, during an interview with Alec Hogg on 21 April, Graham Power said that 'two weeks ago', on the day Buchan visited him in Cape Town, 'God gave me Isaiah 66 Verse 8, where it says a nation can be born in a day and I went to him and said to him, Angus, this is the word that I believe God has dropped in my spirit this morning for you … what I told him was, a 1 million mandate' (Hogg 2017b). In a personal letter addressed to Buchan, a few days before the meeting, he was asked to explain how he received his mandate from the Lord. A single-sentence response from an assistant made no mention of Power; it simply states that 'Mr Buchan received his mandate by

spending time with the Lord and reading the Word of God systematically on a daily basis'.[4] A quick reading of the context of Isaiah 66:8 shows that what Power felt 'God has dropped in his spirit' and what Buchan claimed to be his 'clear word' from the Lord cannot legitimately be applied to South Africans, let alone a prayer meeting and a million people. So was it a divine 'word from the Lord' that Power and Buchan received or not?[5]

The next example is closely related to the previous one. For many years, 'the Statement of Fundamental Truths of British Assemblies of God pointed to Isaiah 28:11 (KJV: "For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people") as scriptural support for the doctrine of the speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit' (Davies 2009a:226). Although Andrew Davies, Vice-Principal of Mattersey Hall Graduate School of theology in England, acknowledges that nothing in the context can justify the meaning predicated of it, he adds, 'However, for Pentecostals, this is a perfectly legitimate recontextualisation of a divine promise' (ibid). If that is a legitimate practice, what could prevent an individual or group from using any text in the Bible as a 'promise from God' or to authorise false beliefs, unwise decisions or bizarre actions of Christians? And who is to say that it is wrong? Furthermore, does recontextualisation imply or entail that the authority of the Word of God can be subjected to or be replaced by the authority of its readers? Most relevant to the

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[4] E-mail correspondence on file.
[5] Cindy Jacobs (1995:74), a recognised 'apostle' and 'prophet' in the New Apostolic Movement says, 'Sometimes wolves in sheep's clothing manipulate Scripture for their own purposes'. It is unfortunate that she does not say why she limits this practice to 'wolves'. Devout and sincere Christians do that all the time, as we will shortly see. For the use and abuse of scripture in what is known as the 'prosperity gospel' of the Faith movement, see DR McConnell (1988:170−183).

problem is the next question: If this kind of appropriation of a text is wrong, should leaders not be most circumspect in what they teach?

The next example relates to the practice of opening the Bible at random and to accept the first text on which the eyes focus as a 'word' from God insofar as it pertains to a specific question or problem. Haddon Robinson (1998:17, 18) indicates that this is widely practised by Christians and refers to it as 'biblical roulette'.[6] In a paper entitled 'Why Pentecostals read their Bibles poorly—and some suggested cures', one of the most respected Pentecostal leaders and Bible commentators, Gordon Fee, expresses his belief that God can take words in a text out of 'their original context and by the Holy Spirit cause us in our circumstances to hear them as words for us'. He also adds: 'I do indeed believe that that happens constantly' (Fee 2004:8). However, Fee states that while he, in the same breath, acknowledges that such a 'reading' is not a 'true reading' of scripture. Although there is such a thing as God bringing a text to a Christian's mind, as we will later see, the immediate problem is the origin of this practice and how this practice can be reconciled with the teachings of scripture.

These examples are the tip of the iceberg, but they suffice to indicate that the practice of decontextualising scripture to recontextualise it and then using it as an authoritative 'word from the Lord' to legitimise beliefs, decisions and actions of either oneself or those of others, has serious implications for the integrity of an individual Christian and the body of Christ. Furthermore, it creates confusion in the hearts and minds of both believers and unbelievers. We believe that the practice is

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[6] The first writer of this paper discovered a few weeks ago, during a counselling session with a Pentecostal Christian, that it is his regular practice, which is one of the main explanations for his recurrent personal problems.

based on a number of wrongful assumptions,[7] both actual and possible, which we will now consider.

3. Using a Text as a 'Word from the Lord': Wrongful Assumptions

3.1. The wrongful assumption that opening the Bible at random is a legitimate way to discern God's will

The plain truth is that the practice has a long history, is pagan in origin and is irreconcilable with the teachings of the Bible (Robinson 1998:15−19).

Over 200 years ago, in 1794, John Newton (1725−1807), pastor and writer of the well-known hymn 'Amazing Grace', wrote a short booklet on knowing God's will. In it he states that the practice of opening the Bible at random to discern God's will originated in Rome, in particular, with the reading of the writings of Virgil. Consulting it led to the expression *Sortes Virgiliana* (*sortes* being the Latin for 'divination'), which refers to 'the practice of divination by opening the writings of Virgil at random and accepting as divine guidance the first words the eye fell upon' (Chapel Library, n.d.:7). Newton's response to those who used the Bible to divine God's will in matters concerning which it does not directly address succinctly captures the problems and dangers to which it leads.

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[7] Our discussion is in many ways complementary to and an extension of Hugh Goosen and Christopher Peppler's (2015) paper on divine guidance for believers. We will, therefore, avoid any discussion of the traditional view of knowing God's will. Of immediate relevance to our purposes is what they have to say about the influence of assumptions on how Christians understand divine guidance, how wrong assumptions are formed based on listening to the experiences of others and the terminology that is used to describe the experiences (Goosen and Peppler 2015:4, 22).

He wrote that people who use a text and disregard the context or duly comparing it with the general tenor of the Word of God 'commit the greatest extravagances, expect the greatest impossibilities, and contradict the plainest dictates of common sense, while they think they have the Word of God on their side' (Newton 1794). He also made mention of those who claim to have received divine guidance when they experience a 'sudden strong impression of a text' upon themselves. But, he said, experience had taught him that those who claim 'impressions' or 'impulses' are 'unwarily misled into great evils and gross delusions [false beliefs]'. Noteworthy is his conclusion: 'There is no doubt but the enemy of our souls, if permitted, can furnish us with Scriptures in abundance in this way, and for these purposes' (p. 8).

The problem, as Newton correctly concluded, is that the devil does not hesitate to use and twist God's word to tempt people into wrong beliefs, decisions and actions; he quoted God's spoken word to Eve (Gen 3:1) and quoted the written Word of God when he tempted our Lord, the incarnate Word of God (Matt 4:4−10).

We conclude that the divining of God's will in this manner is an evil that must be uprooted at all cost, because it opens the door for all kinds of deception.

3.2. The wrongful assumption that reasoning leads to confusion and that understanding a biblical passage is not important

There are several reasons why Christians who claim to have a 'word from the Lord' resist being questioned about that 'word' by others. One of these is arguably a deep prejudice against the use of one's mind, reason or intellectual faculties (Nañex 2005).

Joyce Meyer (1995:82) is representative of those who believe that reasoning leads to confusion. According to her, 'When God speaks, through his Word or in our inner man, we are not to reason, debate or ask ourselves if what He has said is logical'. She uses two pieces of evidence in support of her assertion. First she quotes Proverbs 3:5 and then concludes that it means that 'reasoning opens the door for deception and brings much confusion'. The context, however, does not justify her conclusion. In fact, the whole book of Proverbs indicates exactly the opposite! She then follows this up with her personal 'word from the Lord', saying: 'I once asked the Lord why so many are confused, and He said to me, "Tell them to stop trying to figure everything out, and they will stop being confused"' (Meyer 1995:83). Part of the problem with this 'word from the Lord' is that Meyer's beliefs are based on a faulty understanding of biblical anthropology. For example, she refers to the human spirit as an 'organ', that it is 'more noble' and to be 'honoured above the mind' (ibid). Scripture does not teach that. God examines the minds (Jer 17:10) as well as the hearts of people (1 Thess 2:4); he expects Christians to cleanse themselves 'from all defilement of flesh and spirit' in their pursuit of 'holiness in the fear of God' (2 Cor 7:1); he expects followers of Jesus to 'purify their hearts' (Jas 4:8), have their minds prepared and ready for action, and to purify their souls from sinful passions (1 Pet 1:13, 22). In other words, God is interested in the whole person, and hence, that all faculties of a person are equally important to him.

The most amazing thing is that when she gave up reasoning about what God is saying to her in her spirit, she experienced 'withdrawal symptoms' (Meyer 1995:85). The problem is that the ignorant reader of her words would accept that as fact, whilst it is untrue. But her belief about God speaking to her spirit, leads to a further problem: she does not tell her readers how they can distinguish between a word from the

Holy Spirit, a word from an evil spirit and a self-generated word. We will refer to this point again, for many Christians assume that they have an 'inner voice' or 'inner witness' and that it would be a good thing to listen to it as a way to discern God's will on matters the Bible does not directly address.

Davies (2009a:220) is representative of those who believe that readers of the Bible 'do not have to understand all' they read. He seems to think that that it implies 'an attempt at grasping, containing and knowing the God it reveals'. There are at least three reasons why Davies' understanding of understanding the text of the Bible should be rejected. The first reason is because understanding what one reads in the Bible has nothing to do with an attempt to contain God, for he cannot be contained at all, and there is nothing suspect or wrong about reading scripture to comprehend the Person of God or deepening one's knowledge of him (cf. 2 Peter 3:17−18).

The second reason is because he commits a logical error. Simply put, before a person can explain anything, the person must know and understand certain facts about what is to be explained. As with skills, a person may have a greater or lesser understanding of a certain object. It can also be said that a person may possess a partial or incomplete mastery of the concept that is expressed by the use of a certain word.[8] Whereas the meaning of words involves knowing what they mean, concepts involve an understanding of their logical implications, compatibilities and incompatibilities. Take, for example, the meaning and the concept of love.[9] At the very least, to have a proper concept of

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[8] For a discussion of the idea that a biblical 'word cannot denote a concept', see Thomas (2003:33−34). Zuck (1984:127) states that the Holy Spirit 'would not teach concepts that failed to meet the tests of truth'.

[9] Although there are five words in Greek for the word 'love', each with a different nuance, the meaning of love in this paragraph refers to the love (*agapaō*) between

love is to understand that love is manifested in one and in one way only, and that is through touch and emotional expressions in gestures, words and sentences. It is also expressed through the actions of people. It is by observing these that knowledge of love is acquired. It is also important to understand that love has a focal point and usually focuses on a person, a place or an animal. It is to know and understand that it presupposes a capacity for love and to love; it involves feelings and it is to understand that the meaning of the word 'love' expresses a concept around which is clustered a variety of logically related extensions of it, such as care, understanding, encouragement, compassion, sympathy, kindness, respect and support (cf. 1 Cor 13). And it is also to understand that a person who rarely shows love is not a loving person. These are all conceptual truths which an explanation of the meaning and concept of love presupposes. In short, it is no coincidence that human abilities are bound to knowledge, understanding, learning and language. The criteria that indicate that a person has learnt and understands something consist in the person's ability to do certain things, such as answering questions, telling others where to search for an object and explaining how something works.

This leads to the third reason why Meyer's and Davies' wrongful assumption about reasoning and understanding ought to be rejected: it is clearly at odds with what the Bible teaches. A few examples will illustrate the point. In John 3, Jesus said certain things to Nicodemus about the new birth that led the latter to ask, 'How can these things be?' (v.9). Jesus' response to Nicodemus clearly reflects that he expected him to understand what he was talking about (v.10). When Jesus joined the travellers on the road to Emmaus, the Bible says that Jesus

husband and wife (Eph 5:25, 28, 33) and the love (*phileō*) describing affection among human beings (Matt 22:37).

'explained to them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures' (Luke 24:27; cf. Philip and the Ethiopian reader of Isaiah in Acts 8:29−35). Without knowing what the scriptures says and without understanding what is expressed through its words and sentences, Jesus would not have been able to explain anything. Likewise, when Priscilla and Aquila listened to Apollos, they realised that his knowledge and understanding of the way of God was incomplete. They, therefore, 'took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately' (Acts 18:24−26). It is obvious that their knowledge and understanding of the way of God allowed them to spot things that needed to be corrected.

The most sobering thought about understanding or of not understanding is found in the parables and it has a direct bearing on the teachings of Jesus. When Jesus explained the parable of the sower to his disciples, the first thing he said was, 'When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart' (Matt 13:19). In contrast, 'the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understand it' and bears fruit (v. 23). It is reasonable to infer that understanding is a protective covering against the powers of the devil. But it also points to the responsibility leaders have to handle 'accurately the word of truth' (2 Tim 2:15).

Finally, there is Jesus' exhortation or warning to us about listening to his teaching, which cannot be over emphasised. In Mark 4:24, he says: 'Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it shall be measured to you'. The Amplified Bible puts the text as follows: 'Be careful what you are hearing. The measure [of thought and study] you give [to the truth you hear] will be the measure [of virtue and knowledge] that comes back to you'. In other words, a reader cannot

expect to understand a lot, if anything at all, when he or she attaches little value to knowing or understanding what Jesus says through his teaching.

3.3. The wrongful assumption that a text can have more than one meaning

Evangelical scholars, such as Moisés Silva (1994:245), assert that 'the meaning of a text should not be identified with the author's intention *in an exclusive and absolute fashion*' (emphasis in the original). Grant Osborne (1991:290) shares this view, although he acknowledges that the 'Bible itself demands that we understand it on the basis of the author's intended meaning'. For Pentecostal communities that have taken 'a linguistic and postmodern turn' in the reading of scripture, less and less emphasis, if it all, has been placed on the intended meaning of the human author (Arrington 1994; Nel 2015:8). Davies (2009a:222) boldly declares that Pentecostals have 'little interest' in the 'surface [i.e., plain, literal] meaning of the text' and pay 'scant attention' to the 'original intention of the author'. Kenneth Archer (2015:329) states that the focus of meaning has shifted from 'the author's mind' to the meaning 'in the text' and the meaning of the reader. For Davies (2009a:225) all this means that we have to accept that the meaning a text has for you may not be the meaning it has for me. If that is so, then there can be no objections to decontextualising a text to recontextualise it and then making it say what it was not originally meant to say.

If we are to accept that a text has multiple meanings, then we are to accept that no text has an actual meaning, but this idea is easily refuted, for every Christian knows that John 3:16 has one and only one meaning. The notion of multiple meanings also leads to the idea that two conflicting or contradictory meanings can both be true at the same time. But then, if anyone is allowed to decontextualise and recontextualise a

text, then Jesus must have been wrong to have resisted the devil's temptations by quoting scripture in context.

We submit that a text can have more than one meaning, but only when its actual meaning has been poorly or wrongly understood, has been distorted or deliberately ignored by readers. We shall, therefore, proceed and show that a Christian, especially a leader, has the responsibility to avoid all conflicting or contradicting meanings of a text. This we shall illustrate by showing how Jesus used simple logic to achieve it.[10] We shall then argue that the meaning of a text is not determined by anyone's denomination or 'anointed prophets', which is contrary to what many Christians are made to believe. In fact, a whole community or denomination can be deceived. In short, we take sides with those Christians who, in the words of Walter Kaiser (1994:39), believe that 'it is the author's intended meaning that must be the starting point from which all *understanding* begins' (our emphasis; cf. Fee 1991; Friesen and Maxson 2004; Geisler and Roach 2012; Grudem 2005:19−56; Thomas 2001, 2004).

3.3.1. Avoid all contradictions

Paul's instruction to Timothy is to 'Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions [Gr. *antitheseis*] of what is falsely called knowledge' (1 Tim 6:20; NKJV). Whereas a contrast is a conflict between two possible things, a contradiction involves what is impossible. One of the laws of logic or laws of thought is known as the law of non-contradiction, which states that some assertion, statement or claim cannot be both true and false at

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[10] Zuck (1984:127) explains: 'The ministry of the Holy Spirit in Bible interpretation does not mean interpreters can ignore common sense and logic… The Holy Spirit does not guide into interpretations that contradict each other or fail to have logical, internal consistency'.

the same time in the same sense. Another law is known as the law of the excluded-middle, which states that something is either true or false. In regards to the latter, when two people make a conflicting claim about the same thing, then they can both be wrong but not both right; one has to be true and the other false.

Many people, for many years, have read Exodus 3:6— 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'—in the light of texts that refer to the burial of the bodies of those who 'breathed' their last on earth, and assumed that the persons referred to were deceased persons (cf. Gen 15:15, 25:8, 35:29, 49:33). The Sadducees were a category of people who based their beliefs on that assumption, but for two reasons were mistaken: a wrong understanding of scripture and an inadequate conception of the Creator (Matt 22:29). Jesus, therefore, corrected their mistaken assumption; He told them that the Creator 'is not the God of the dead, but of the living' (Matt 22:32). It is a claim that Jesus only could have made if Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were alive, if they had continued to exist after their bodily death on earth.

However, note that when the Sadducees asked him who, in the resurrection, will be the husband of a woman who had been married successively to seven brothers on earth, they thought that in reply Jesus had only three options open to answer their question. First, he could have denied the reality of the resurrection, and so accommodated himself to their view of reality. But he would then have contradicted himself because he already informed them of his own approaching death and resurrection from the dead (cf. Matt 12:38–42, 16:1–4). Second, Jesus could have accepted polygamy and adultery and pleaded ignorance as to whose wife she would be in heaven. But then he would have proved himself a charlatan to be ignored, for he would have

contradicted himself on what he had already taught them concerning marriage and adultery (Matt 5:27–32). Third, Jesus could have said she will be married to one brother alone, but with no grounds on which to base such a belief, thus undermining the foundation for him to say that he spoke the truth and that he came from the Father (John 8:14, 16, 18, 19, 27, 28, 29, 38, 42, 49, 54, 55). What did he do instead? He went to the essence of the matter: he corrected the false assumption that undergirded their belief, namely, that there is marriage in heaven; he backed up his statement by exposing their lack of understanding (Matt 22:29) and quoted scripture (Exod 3:6).

What can we learn from the interaction of Jesus with the Sadducees? Firstly, Jesus must have studied their theology to understand something about their beliefs. Secondly, he used his mental faculties in his debate and two simple rules of logic. And thirdly, Jesus did not decontextualise or recontextualise a text to give it a new meaning; he showed that a text has a single meaning which is none other than what it actually (literally) means.

3.3.2. The wrongful assumption that my community has authority to decide what a text means

According to Davies (2009b:309), a reader's 'Spirit-inspired message needs to resonate in a Spirit-filled community', the reason of which is to serve as a sort of preventative measure to 'misrepresentation of the meaning of a text'. Archer (2015:331) puts the same point thus: 'The Pentecostal communities must discern rightly what the Spirit is saying in and through the scriptures. The community must discern what the text means and how that meaning is to be lived out in the community'. What these writers are saying is quite correct. But what cannot be inferred is that a community has the authority to decide what a text means. The following example illustrates the gravity of the problem.

The so-called 'Shepherding/Discipleship' movement during the 1970s and 1980s under the leadership of five respected Bible-teachers ended on a note that should have sent a siren warning to Christians all over the world. One of these leaders, Bob Mumford, when he apologised for his role in that movement said: 'we were leading people into deception' which 'resulted in unhealthy submission' and 'perverse and unbiblical obedience to human leaders' (Buckingham 1990:46, 49). What makes his words so astounding is that he wrote a book in 1971 on divine guidance which he titled *Take another look at guidance: discerning the will of God*. Although the book has recently been reprinted, the question needs to be asked whether Mumford's book contains unbiblical guidance on divine guidance. What the reader of Mumford's book does not know is that it is based on the teachings of G Christian Weiss (1950) in *The perfect will of God*, which has also been recently reprinted. One of Weiss' beliefs appears on page 79 of his book. He asks: 'Is it safe to follow the leading of simply opening the Bible at random and allowing your eye to be fastened upon some certain verse or sentence?' To which Weiss answered: 'I believe the Holy Spirit can and does lead people in that way'. But not according to the Bible, John Newton and others (Friesen and Maxson 2004; Robinson 1998).

In retrospect we can see that their understanding of divine guidance on matters in which Christians are at liberty to exercise their own will brought shame on themselves and caused harm to thousands of Christians across the world. Mumford's book, it must be said, could not prevent these leaders from deceiving other leaders and they, in turn, their followers. Neither could the movement's official mouthpiece, *New Wine Magazine*, dated October 1985, do that. The 'attention-getters' on the front cover are most telling: 'Guidance: How can you discover God's will for your life'; 'Seven ways God guides us'; Successful decision-making'; and 'Counterfeit guidance or the real thing?'. It

brings us to the next unquestioned assumption intimately related to the teachings of this movement on divine guidance.

3.4. It pays to listen to your 'inner witness'

On page 13 of the *New Wine Magazine* referred to above, the reader will find an article by Don Basham (1985). He said in there that 'it pays to listen' to your 'inner witness' in order for divine guidance to be successful.[11] That this piece of advice had not worked for the leaders of the Shepherding/Discipleship movement is quite clear. But that has not deterred people from teaching it. Davies (2009b:309) makes the 'internal witness' of the Spirit with our spirit the ultimate adjudicator of the meaning of a text. In his words: '[T]he ultimate guarantor is the internal one, which', he says, 'cannot be faked or fabricated' and based this assertion on Romans 8:16.

In the first place, there is not a single text in the Bible that says that a Christian should listen to an 'inner voice' or 'inner witness' to decide in matters scripture does not directly address, let alone that the ultimate authority of the meaning of a text is an 'internal one'. It is simply misleading and nothing less than a misuse and abuse of scripture. In the second place, neither the text that he quotes nor the context makes any reference to receiving revelation or an 'internal witness' on the meaning of any text of the Bible (cf. DeWaay 2003:2−7; Moo 1996:503−504). The text simply states that 'The Spirit Himself bears witness with our Spirit that we are children of God'.

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[11] Many writers wrongly believe their 'inner voice' is the voice Jesus referred to in John 10:3−5, 27 (Shirer 2009:2−6). Jacobs (1995:76) states it thus: 'When the Lord is speaking to us, an answer from within our hearts will cry, "Yes, that is God speaking to me"… This is what I mean by a witness in your spirit'.

What should we say about those, such as Graham Power, as we saw earlier, who believes that God 'dropped' Isaiah 66:8 'in his spirit'? Firstly, it is true that the Holy Spirit does remind us of scripture. We are grateful for this. It is usually to illustrate, confirm, correct our understanding or remind us about something a text or passage speaks about. But it is not at all like praying for guidance concerning a matter not directly addressed in scripture and a text such as Isaiah 30:21 then flashing into our minds: 'This is the way, walk in it, whenever you turn to the right or to the left'. The second point is this: it is foolish not to heed what the Bible teaches about the deceptions of the heart and one's own spirit. Jeremiah 17:9 informs us the 'heart is more deceitful than all else' and Proverbs 4:23 provide the following piece of advice: 'Watch over your heart with all diligence'. We are reminded of this because God knows that his fallen human creatures have the ability to generate their own visions, dreams, inspirations, imaginings, impressions and messages and then claim them to be from him, when they are not (cf. Jer 23:16, 25−27; Ezek 13:1−10). So, how can someone distinguish between a meaning of a text generated in his or her own spirit and a meaning given by the Holy Spirit, or an evil spirit, when the deception of the heart is an ever-present reality? We submit that only scripture can adjudicate the correct meaning of a text. That is the norm against which all meanings are to be tested.

That leads to the final assumption we wish to address.

3.5. The wrongful assumption that a 'word from the Lord' is not open to scrutiny

It was noted at the beginning of this paper that some Christians assume that their 'word from the Lord' is not to be questioned by others; that they also think that neither their 'word' nor their claims should be explained when asked to do so. It is lamentable, because such an

attitude can in no way be legitimised by the teachings of Jesus and his apostles. Jesus warned us about false prophets and the very first thing he told his disciples when they asked him about the signs of the end-times was: 'See to it that no one misleads you' (Mark 13:5). It is a meaningless warning if Jesus did not expect that such things are possible. Writers, such as Ronald Enroth (1992), Hank Hanegraaf (1993; 1997) and DR McConnell (1988) have provided ample evidence to take Jesus' teachings seriously. We should, therefore, 'not believe every spirit', but test (1 John 4:1) their utterances, especially those in the form of subjective (self-generated) prophecies (1 Thess 5:20−22).

It is no surprise that intellectual maturity is referred to in 1 Corinthians 13:11 which appeared between two chapters dealing with spiritual gifts. Paul says, 'When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things'. He expresses what is both natural and important: growing up which is natural and which is part and parcel of human development. In the process of growing up it is imperative to move from a state of ignorance to a state of intellectual maturity. In the next chapter, Paul re-emphasises the same point: 'Brethren, do not be children in your thinking … in your thinking be mature' (1 Cor 14:20). Mature Christians are, according to the writer of Hebrews, those who have 'their senses trained to discern good and evil' through constant practice (Heb 5:12−14). Thus, if Paul expected prophecies to be judged by others (1 Cor 14:29), then it becomes unthinkable that those who decontextualise and recontextualise scripture and then claiming it as a 'word from the Lord' are in any way exempt from being evaluated or judged.

In the final analysis, it is true that Jesus said that 'I am with you always, even to the end of the age' (Matt 28:20), but nowhere has he stated that

his followers will be free from being deceived by the devil, false prophets or led into error by their fellow Christians (cf. Gal 2:11−14, 3:1).

We shall next present an alternative approach to scripture and how to ascertain God's will on matters the Bible does not directly address.

4. The Alternative View of Guidance

By 'alternative' we do not mean something new, as will become apparent in a moment. The approach and method rests on certain assumptions with three aims in mind. The three aims of the alternative approach are:

- To prevent a reader of scripture from decontextualising and recontextualising a text and then appropriating it as an authoritative 'word from the Lord' to legitimise beliefs, decisions and actions of either oneself or those of others.
- To help readers to avoid contradictions.
- To help them to distinguish between a spirit of error and truth.

4.1. The alternative: three aims

What the approach is aiming at is to prevent a reader of scripture from decontextualising and recontextualising a text and then appropriating it as an authoritative 'word from the Lord' to legitimise beliefs, decisions and actions of either oneself or those of others. Our approach is to help readers to avoid contradictions and to help them to distinguish between a spirit of error and truth.

4.2. Assumptions/presuppositions

4.2.1. The place of experience in reading

To suggest or expect that a Christian who is sincerely seeking understanding should read scripture without the guidance and interaction of the Holy Spirit or that Christians should ignore their personal experiences when reading scripture is to caricature scripture reading. It is a book, but it is more than a book. A God-centred reading motivated by the desire to understand scripture will lead to experiences of God. But such experiences should not be used as the standard against which the meaning of the biblical text is to be measured. Reading scripture is also not a game. Specifically, it is not playing hop-scotch; if a reader seeks out and listens only to those texts with which resonance is experienced, the reader will both distort the teachings of scripture and prevent it from challenging and correcting his or her experiences. Allowing scripture to interpret scripture is of utmost importance (2 Pet 1:19).

4.2.2. The purpose of scripture

Scripture is God's communication to us; it is written in human language and its purpose is to make God's will known and equip Christians for every good work (2 Tim 3:15−17)—not to create uncertainty (Luke 1:3−4). Its content can be understood, is to be believed and practised (James 1:23−25; 1 John 5:13). Paul wrote to the Corinthians: 'For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand' (2 Cor.1:13). Therefore, no person has the right to make it say what it was not intended to say. In the words of Milton Terry (1883:584), no reader of scripture 'has a right to foist into his expositions of Scripture his own dogmatic conceptions, or those of others, and then insist that these are an essential part of divine revelation'.

4.2.3. Common sense

Reading scripture presupposes a reliance on common sense to understand the plain meaning of a text, and it appeals to our rational faculties, which are enlightened by the new birth (Luke 24:45; Acts 16:14; 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 1:18; cf. Fee 1991:2ff.; Thomas 2007:16−18; Zuck 1984:127).

4.3. The method

It is wise to read a text in light of its immediate context,[12] then in the context of the chapter and book in which it appears and then it's still larger context of the whole Bible. The aims most consistent with our approach to scripture are threefold: (1) understand the author's purposes, actions, circumstances, the reasons he is saying what he says and his intended meaning;[13] (2) understand the situation of the author's addressees, their particular problems, mistakes and needs; and (3) understand the relevance of the author's message and how to apply it to one's own situation.

The method could be compared to a building; if the foundation is poorly laid, the whole building will be unstable.

4.4. Decision making: the way of freedom and wisdom

Gary Friesen and Robin Maxson (2004:15) summarise God's guidance according to the way of freedom and wisdom in four simple statements:

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[12] Robert Stein (2001:464, fn. 23) says, it 'is the immediate context provided by the author that ultimately determines the meaning of words, propositions, participles, etc'.
[13] Stein (2001:462−463) discuss several advantages of a single, author-oriented meaning. Two deserve mention: (1) it is the common sense approach to all communication; (2) it prevents a reader from seeking a different divine meaning in difficult texts.

(1) where God commands, we must obey; (2) where there is no command, God gives us freedom (and responsibility) to choose; (3) where there is no command, God gave us wisdom to choose; and (4) when we have chosen what is moral and wise, we must trust the sovereign God to work out all the details for our good. We deal briefly with each of these statements.

4.1.1. Where God commands, we obey

What needs to be obeyed is God's moral will as revealed in the whole of scripture (Rom 12:2). It means that God's 'moral will' or simply 'God's will' comprises all the commands, principles and promises God has revealed in his Word. Most importantly, it is not a will that is mysterious and to be searched for until it has been 'found'—it is not hidden at all. It only needs to be read, learned and obeyed. However, God's revealed will is not restricted to outward actions; it includes our motives, desires, attitudes, plans, passions, beliefs, and thinking (cf. Exod 20:17; Rom 12:9−21; Phil 4:8).

4.1.2. Where no is no command, we are free to make responsible decisions

Concerning matters on which God has not spoken, we are free to make our own choices and are accountable for them. In different words, God-given freedom is a God-given responsibility to decide for ourselves. This means three things. Firstly, there is no 'will of God' that one could possibly miss. Secondly, a decision maker cannot blame God for his or her bad decisions (Friesen and Maxson 2004:15−16). And thirdly, it is not a sin, when in doubt, to seek the advice of wise counsellors, even if they are unbelievers (Prov 11:14, 15:22, 20:18, 24:6).

4.1.3. Where there is no command, choose wisely

Where there is no command, our freedom is limited by guidance God gives through wisdom. In the words of Friesen and Maxson (2004:16), 'We are never free to be foolish, stupid or naïve'. We wish to define 'wisdom' as thinking, reasoning, reflecting, discerning, understanding and acting from Jesus' point of view (Matt 7:24−27).

4.1.4. Decide and trust the sovereignty of God

Our responsibility is to choose and decide what is morally right and good and our actions are motivated by love for God and our neighbour (Matt 22:36−40; Rom 12:9; 1 Cor 13). When we have decided on a given course of action, we can then trust our sovereign God to work all particulars for our good (Rom 8:28; Phil 2:13).

5. Conclusion

Divine guidance is a chronic problem among Christians. Claims about divine guidance have been and are questioned not only outside the church but inside it also. The problem we have sought to address is the practice of decontextualising scripture and recontextualising it to say something it was not originally meant to say and then using it as a 'word from the Lord' to legitimise beliefs, decisions and actions. We have shown that the practice rests on a number of interrelated wrongful assumptions that have to be eradicated if this practice is to be prevented from opening the door to actual or potential deception by the evil one. It is our contention that many of these assumptions are based on an uncritical acceptance of the testimony of others and the terminology they use to describe these experiences.

Our approach to and reading of scripture allow scripture to interpret scripture. Together with the biblical/divine author's meaning as the standard against which all meanings are to be tested it is less open to deception.

In the final analysis, we hope to have shown that Christians have been given freedom and responsibility by God to decide for themselves on matters which scripture does not directly address. For that, he provides us with wisdom and freedom of choice.

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Temple Christology in the Gospel According to John: A Survey of Scholarship in the Last Twenty Years (1996-2016)

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Abstract

There have been several different proposals advocated in the last couple of decades about the role of temple Christology in John's gospel. These proposals have moved Johannine scholarship significantly forward, based on the renewed appreciation of the Jewishness of the Gospel of John which has focused attention on the temple. The sheer volume of the contributions, however, demands that from time to time a concerted effort at surveying and summarising the new insights is in order. This article aims to summarise and analyse the different proposals suggested in the last twenty years (1996-2016). The contributions are categorised into four, namely, historical, Christological, soteriological and escha-tological perspectives. It is evident from this survey that Jesus in the Gospel of John is a promised true temple replacing the Jerusalem temple including its cultic activities. Therefore,

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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.

Jesus-believers no longer need a physical temple as new temple worship is in Spirit and truth.

1. Introduction

There is a frequent reference to the Jerusalem temple in the Gospel of John. These references appear to be strategically positioned in John's narrative. There are explicit references which occur 16 times (*hieron*, appears 11 times, *naos* appears 3 times and *hypēretēs* appears once). There are also implicit and alluded references to the temple in the Gospel of John. The implicit and alluded references to the temple are based on the use of *hieron* and *naos*. This article is interested in the use of *hieron* and *naos* in the Gospel of John. *Hieron* refers to the temple building, specifically, the Jerusalem temple which was destroyed in 70 CE. *Naos* refers to the temple as dwelling place of God where worship and cultic activities are performed.

The explicit references to the temple start very early in the gospel account. First, John 2:13–22 records Jesus' first public appearance in the Jerusalem temple during the Passover festival. While in the temple courts, Jesus clears it using the 'whip of cords' and calls it 'my Father's house'. Jesus in his dialogue with the Jews pointed to his death at their hands and His resurrection (vv.19–22). Importantly, it is only in John 2:13–22, where both *hieron* (vv. 14, 15) and *naos* (vv. 19, 20, 21) appear concurrently. It is also the only place where *naos* is explicitly used in the Gospel. In John, the temple clearing is placed very early in the narrative, is more vehement and involves Jesus professing his personal link with the temple. This is unlike the synoptics, where the temple clearing accounts are towards the end of the gospels (Matt. 21:12–16; Mark 11:15–18; Luke 19:45–47). While it is possible that there were two clearings, and thus the two accounts are separate, the

account in John nevertheless indicates that the fourth evangelist attached a significant importance to the temple.

Second, in John 4:19–21, Jesus during his private discourse with the Samaritan woman, deliberated about the right place of worship, either at mount Gerizim or Jerusalem (implying the Jerusalem temple). However, Jesus pronounced that the new worship is not location bound, it is in spirit and truth (vv.23–24). Third, in John 5–10, Jesus attended four Jewish festivals in which the temple played a central role: unnamed festival (John 5), Passover festival (John 6), feast of the Tabernacles (John 7–9) and festival of Dedication (John 10:22–42). Fourth, in John 11:55–56, while people were in Jerusalem in preparation for the Jewish Passover, they were looking for Jesus in the temple. However, Jesus was not in the temple as Jewish leaders were plotting to kill him (John 11:50–54). Fifth, in John 18:20, Jesus during his trial, testified that he always spoke openly to the people in synagogues and temple. All the explicit references to the temple indicate that the temple played an important role in the Gospel of John.

The implicit accounts of the temple are also evident in the Gospel of John. In the first instance, John 1:14–18 records the advent of Jesus, the incarnate *Logos* in the world amongst humanity, and alludes to the tabernacle which is associated with the temple. Specifically, the Evangelist draws from Exodus/Sinai tradition, stemmed from the use of *Logos*, *skēnoō*, *doxa* and the presence of Moses. Second, in John 1:51, Jesus alludes to Jacobs' dream (cf. Gen 28:10–22), particularly, Bethel, which means the house of God (cf. Gen 28:17). While Bethel was an extremely important cultic site, it was not precisely the same as the Jerusalem/Zion site which later became the place of the temple. However, there is some evidence that the Bethel tradition was later fused with the Zion tradition (cf. Davies 2005; Blenkinsopp 2003;

Gelander 2011:95–97; Habel 1972; Harrison 1988). Therefore, it may be fittingly suggested that there are allusive undertones of the Zion temple in John 1:51.

Third, in John 11:48, there is expression of anxiety by the Sanhedrin that the Romans might take away 'our place', which several commentators believe referred to the temple. Fourth, in John 14:2–3, 'Father's house' with many rooms is an allusion to the temple, specifically, eschatological temple. The implicit accounts may be debatable as to whether John intended to highlight the temple in the first place. But given the fourth evangelist's penchant for symbolism, it would be wise not to rule out implicit references to the temple in those passages. In any case the overall sense, when both the explicit and implicit passages are put together is that John gives pride of place to the temple of Jerusalem in his gospel account. The question is for what reasons and for what theological, socio-historical and pastoral purposes does the evangelist do that? This is the key focus of the current review article.

The purpose of this article is to summarise and dialogue with scholarly opinions on the role of the temple in the Gospel of John. While, the temple is closely associated with the references to Jewish festivals in John's gospel, and scholars have often examined the two together, the article's focus is the temple alone. It is also limited to major English publications that have appeared in the last twenty years (1996–2016). This delimitation has been necessitated not only by the sheer number of publications in the two decades, but also the significantly new insights which the recent revival of interest in the jewishness of the Gospel of John has yielded. The paper first sheds light on different perspectives that scholars espoused to delineate the role of the temple in John's

gospel. This is followed by a summary and reflections on their implications.

2. Perspectives on the Temple in John's Scholarship

There are four perspectives that have been adopted, namely, historical, Christological, soteriological and eschatological perspectives. Scholars use either one or a combination of these approaches. This survey focuses on the predominant perspective adopted by different scholars.

2.1. Historical perspective

Historical perspective is an approach whereby the use of the temple in the Gospel of John is examined based on the historical reliability of the temple incident in John 2. And that its positioning is an interpretative key to ascertain temple symbolism throughout John's gospel in relation to Jesus. Specifically, this incident is linked with the destruction of Jerusalem temple in 70 CE, as well as the resurrected Jesus as the new and true temple, replacing the Jerusalem temple. In other words, scholars maintain that this incident was a prophetic prolepsis of the old temple's destruction and of its replacement with the true temple, Jesus. Some further postulate that this Johannine emphasis has socio-historical significance, as the gospel was written in response to the temple's destruction in 70 CE. The nuances of the works of three scholars who adopt this perspective are summarised below.

2.1.1. Jonathan Draper (1997)

Draper (1997) in his article examines the role of Jesus' temple clearing actions in the Gospel of John in order to address John's pastoral concerns post-70 CE. The Evangelist in response to the void the absence of the temple created, pointed Jesus-believers to Jesus who opened

entry to the heavenly temple to worship in God's presence. He (Draper1997:263–264) grounds his study on the centrality and historical reliability of Jesus' actions in the temple. He (1997:264) associates Jesus' actions in the temple with 'the peasant resistance movement', which is a 'breach of the public discourse'.

Draper (1997:265) argues that, 'the nature of John's use of the temple' is critical, in order 'to integrate this theme with the rest of the Gospel'. He (1997:265–66) centres his argument on 'John's rejection of the building in Jerusalem … and his elevation of the theme of the *skēnē* of the desert wanderings'. To him, the divine glory is experienced through the enfleshed *Logos* tenting amidst people. 'This theme is supplemented by a re-interpretation of the symbol of the temple in terms of *Merkabah* mysticism, that is in terms of ecstatic experience of the divine presence interpreted in terms of temple symbolism' (1997:266). Furthermore, the person of Jesus during his earthly ministry is the *skēnē* presence of God, and after his ascension establishes the heavenly temple. Jesus-believers are provided entry to this heavenly shrine.

Draper (1997:266–270) roots his study in the sociological categorisation of the Johannine community as 'an introversionist sect'. An Introver-sionist sect is a group of people who separated themselves from the world with specific focus on its sacredness and social relationships are kept within the sect. Draper (1997:270) posits that John's gospel is 'an introversionist response' based on the community's dire situation post-70 CE. John, in response to the national catastrophe integrates the effects of temple's destruction with shared contemporary ideas from the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Then, Draper (1997:271–275), based on detailed study of the second Temple Judaism Literature associated with God's promise, professes that John in John 1:14 was influenced by contemporary tradition to

portray Jesus as God's tented presence. Also, Draper (1997:275–279) posits that John was influenced by the *Merkabah* mysticism, associated with worship in the heavenly temple. Specifically, 'In John's Gospel, the concept of Jesus as the tented wilderness presence of God with his people on earth, is supplemented it seems with the idea of Jesus constituting or building the heavenly temple on his return to the Father' (1997:278). Consequently, 'He [Jesus] opens up the way for his disciples to gain mystic experience of the heavenly throne room by means of ascent and descent obtained through the worship of the community' (1997:278–279). Draper supports this claim by examining several texts from John (1:47–51; 2:12–22, 2:23–3:21; 4:1–42; 7:37–39; 10:3–5, 10:34–36; 12:28–30, 12:37–41; 14:1–6; 15:1–10). Importantly, to him, Jesus-believers are able to ascend and enter the new heavenly temple to worship in the Spirit and truth in God's presence.

Draper's association of Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension with the establishment of heavenly temple is significant. Specifically, in John 2:19–21 Jesus predicted this and he further emphasised this during the passion narrative (John 12–17). However, Draper's claim that, John's Gospel through mystical experience is an 'introversionist response' to the crisis emanated from the loss of the physical temple is unwarranted (cf. DeConick 2001:124; Köstenberger 2005:222). Particularly, Draper's argument associating the mysticism of Jesus-believers with *Merkabah* mysticism smacks of 'parralomania', the phenomenon of claiming spurious organic relationship between ancient ideas based on spurious and superficial parallels. DeConick (2001:124, his emphasis) claims that, 'The Johannine author is *not* stating that the ascent and visionary experience in God's new temple is available to believers *now*—but that this will be a future event which the community members long and hope for now'. In other words, to DeConick, Draper got it wrong in interpreting John 14 as speaking of

mystical ascent to heaven's temple instead of an expression of eschatological hope in Christ's return.

2.1.2. Andreas Köstenberger (2005)

Köstenberger (2005) in his article investigates the socio-historical and pastoral role of the temple in John's Gospel. He (2005:215, his emphasis) hypothesises that, '*the Fourth Gospel's emphasis on Jesus as the fulfillment of the symbolism surrounding various Jewish festivals and institutions—including the temple—can very plausibly be read against the backdrop of the then-recent destruction of the second temple as one possible element occasioning its composition*'. To him, John's Christological framework is developed within the milieu of the temple's destruction and its subsequent impact on the believers.

Köstenberger (2005:216–218) postulates that, the destruction of the temple provided an opportunity for Christian mission to Jews. Particularly, in the absence of the temple, Jews had to devise coping strategies due to the centrality of the temple within Jewish religious life (2005:220). To him (2005:220), 'It may be surmised that, likewise, after the initial shock had waned, Christian apologetic efforts toward Jews (such as John's) were being formulated that sought to address the Jews' need to fill the void left by the second temple's destruction'. To Köstenberger (2005:220–221), Jesus is the new and true temple replacing the Jerusalem temple including its cultic activities. Therefore, believing in Jesus was the only solution in order to fill the void created by temple's destruction.

On the one hand, the composition of John's gospel was strategic in that the evangelist framed his Christology in apologetic fashion (2005:221–223). On the other hand, the evangelist pointed to Jesus the Messiah as the solution in the absence of the temple (2005:223–227). Köstenberger

(2005:228–240) supports his claim that the destruction of the temple elicited the composition of John by examining several passages in John (i.e. John 1:14, 51; 2:12–22; 4:19–24; 5-12; 13–21). Importantly, throughout the gospel, Jesus, the enfleshed *Logos* as the new tabernacle/temple is portrayed as the fulfilment and replacement of the temple including Jewish institutions. Therefore, worship in the new messianic community is no longer bound to a physical temple, instead, it is in spirit and truth.

Köstenberger's claim that Jesus is portrayed as the new and true temple is well supported. Köstenberger and Draper agree that temple's destruction is historically important: however, Köstenberger does not support Draper's claim that John is 'an introversionist response' to this event. Instead, he claims that the temple Christology in John's gospel was triggered by this event. His other important contribution is the suggestion that the temple emphasis in the gospel had missionary and apologetic intention. While, there are other scholars (e.g. Coloe 2001; Kerr 2002; Walker 1996:161–199) who agree with Köstenberger's claim that John was occasioned by the temple incident, this claim is not persuasive. The main reason offered by Köstenberger to support John's preoccupation with the temple's destruction is that the Jerusalem temple was an important symbol for Jewish religious and national identity. This raises a question that needs answering: why a similar phenomenon does not occur in Matthew, especially given the likely high proportion of Jews in Matthew's community?

Given the central role that the temple must have played in Jesus' own life as an observant Jew living in Palestine, John's preoccupation with temple Christology cannot only be due to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. Instead, Judaism traditions contemporary to the gospel are the background to its composition (cf. Davies 1996:59). In

other words, the evangelist's interest in the temple more plausibly points to the essential Jewishness of John's gospel, rather than an attempt to address Jews of John's day *per se*. Hence, a plausible case can be made that John believed that the temple foreshadowed Jesus, as the true and ultimate eschatological temple (cf. Brown 2010; Wheaton 2009). Stated otherwise, Jesus is the final fulfilment of God's purpose, salvation of humanity and ultimately, the extension of his temple in all the earth (cf. Beale 2004; Lioy 2010).

2.1.3. Jennifer Glancy (2009)

Glancy (2009:102) in her article argues that the temple incident, specifically Jesus' use of a whip is a revelatory sign, pointing to his body as the replacement of the Jerusalem temple. Importantly, Glancy's main focus was the violent nature of Jesus' clearing of the temple in John's gospel. She posits that, the violent nature of Jesus' action in the temple is central in this temple account. This action points to Jesus' whipping and eventual death and resurrection.

To her (2009:116), 'the violence directed against Jesus' body that unfolds in the passion narrative is catalysed (on a narrative level) by Jesus' own physically enacted violence at the temple site'. In other words, she believes that Jesus' temple clearing action is an interpretive key to understanding his ministry, which involves conflicts with Jewish leaders and his eventual death through violence. Particularly, Jesus' actions were symbolic in that they pointed to the temple's destruction and his death through violence. Moreover, 'Jesus' appearance in the temple, whip in hand, functions as a violent epiphany, a moment of self-revelation akin to his self-revelation at Cana'. Therefore, the positioning of the temple incident is central to understanding John, specifically, the history of violence.

Glancy is correct that the description of the temple clearance in John is more violent, as it describes the making of the cords for clearing the animals. But the theological explanation she and others give for this is the problem. Since John is the only evangelist who mentions oxen among the animals in the temple, how else could Jesus have driven such large animals out without a cord? Therefore, it is justified to believe that the violence in John's account was necessitated by the narrative itself, and not that Jesus was violent. Glancy's scholarly programme has inordinately been focused on violence against human bodies in the NT; often in relation to slaves or women. So, in a way her focus in John is an extension of that programme, which tends to skew the primary data.

Some scholars (e.g. Alexis-Baker 2012; Bredin 2003; Croy 2009) argue that Jesus' actions in the temple were nonviolent. Bredin (2003) postulates that Jesus' actions in the temple were nonviolent, as the temple was a place of violence and exploitation. Specifically, Bredin (2003:44) argues that, 'it is possible to establish Jesus' demonstration as motivated by his perception that the temple is the center of violence'. The Jerusalem temple has failed to be God's dwelling place; it was the place of influential and prosperous people, exploiting the weak (2003:50). He argues that, Jesus' death at the hands of the powerful was in order 'to re-establish peace in society and with God'. Therefore, Jesus, the new Isaac, dies as a nonviolent Lamb, and in his resurrection as the new temple reveals the deceit of the Jerusalem temple (2003:45–46, 49–50). Glancy is familiar with Bredin's work, but, she rightly questions his conclusion (2009:107). Bredin has conflated what is meant by 'violent clearing of the temple' in order to make his argument. The problematic element in Glancy's work is failing to see the pragmatic nature of Jesus' need to whip in order to drive out large animals (cf. Croy 2009). Therefore, both scholars are over-theologising.

Another argument to support a nonviolence reading of the incident is that Jesus' actions did not disrupt the temple practices, which should have triggered reaction from the temple's authorities (cf. Goodwin 2014:54–55). This nonviolence reading of Jesus' actions in the temple is also not persuasive. The idea of 'violence' in the Johannine clearing of the temple is based purely on a comparison of the Johannine narrative with the synoptics. It is not claiming anything beyond Jesus' use of the cords. It seems that there is an exaggeration of the issue on both sides, that is, violence reading and nonviolence reading of John's clearing account. Scholars like Glancy make too much of this account without considering the Johannine narrative. Others at the other extreme react by denying that the use of the whip is an important issue needing explanation in the Johannine narrative.

2.2. Christological perspective

Christological perspective is an approach which focuses on the person of Jesus in relation to the Jerusalem temple. Scholars examine how the fourth evangelist wove the temple theme in his Christological framework in order to portray Jesus' identity, origin and authority. Jesus is the dwelling of God's glory amongst believers, which he achieves this through his death and resurrection. Therefore, he is the new and true temple replacing the old Jerusalem temple including its cultic activities and festivals. The works of two scholars are summarised below.

2.2.1. Mary Coloe (2001)

Coloe (2001) in her monograph aims 'to show that the temple functions in the narrative as the major Christological symbol that gradually shifts its symbolic meaning from the person of Jesus to the Johannine community in the post-resurrection era' (2001:3). She grounds her

argument on the fact that John's gospel was written post-70 CE in response to the crisis of the temple's destruction. In other words, the community's response after the incident was to look to Jesus as God's dwelling place (2001:20). To her (2001:21–23), the prologue is similar to the first six days of creation while John 1:19–19:30 like Genesis 2:1-3 is the seventh day, the climax of the Father's work fulfilled in Jesus' life and death. John 1:14 describes Jesus' advent into the world and tabernacling with humanity to fulfil the Father's work (2001:23–29, 63). She (2001:28) argues that, 'in the person of Jesus, the divine presence which Israel sought to see, to hear and to experience, came and dwelt in the midst of humanity'.

Then, Coloe examines how Jesus is depicted as the dwelling place of God in John's narrative. John 2:13–25 portrays Jesus' body as the dwelling place of God, the new temple (2001:84). To her, the disciples' remembrance (vv. 21–22) is an indication that Jesus continues to live amidst his community through the indwelling Spirit. Nonetheless, this passage does not provide sufficient details itself, and the subsequent passages provide further details. Therefore, John 4:1–45 portrays Jesus as the supplanter (far exceeds Jacob in greatness); he is the true source of eternal life and the founder of true worship (2001:85–113). In other words, Jesus is like the new temple, he gives eternal life to those who believe (i.e. true worshippers) the Father through faith in him.

Furthermore, Coloe (2001:115–145) argues, based on John 7:1–8:59, that Jesus is portrayed as the new temple amongst humanity, based on the images of water and light. In John 7:37–38, Jesus 'in his flesh (1:14) and body (2:21) He is the divine presence dwelling with us and the source of living water' (2001:133). In John 8:12, 'Jesus offers a light surpassing the wilderness cloud, for Jesus is the *Logos* who has already been described as a light and life for all people and a light that the

darkness could not extinguish (cf. 1:4–5)' (Coloe 2001:136). Therefore, Jesus is 'the very presence of Israel's God *egō eimi* (8:58)' (2001:143). Specifically, Jesus, the enfleshed *Logos* amidst humanity, is the source of water and light, which are associated with the temple. Hence, Jesus as the new temple fulfils and replaces the images of water and light.

Coloe (2001:145–155) in her examination of John 10:22–42 argues that, Jesus is the new temple. She grounds her argument in the tradition of the consecration of the temple; therefore, Jesus in reference to his consecration points to himself as the new temple. In other words, Jesus as the consecrated One who is sent by God is the very presence of God amongst the people. Thus, he is the fulfilment and the replacement of the temple. Coloe (2001:178), based on John 14:1–31, claims that, 'in the departure and Spirit-gift of Jesus, those of his own who receive him and keep his word (14:23) will become children of God (1:12) and as members of God's *oikia*, they will be the household of the Father, and where the Father, Jesus and Paraclete will make their *monēn* (14:23)'. John 18:1–19:42 is the fulfilment of Jesus' promise to his disciples (2001:179–211). Specifically, in Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension which signify the destruction of one temple and the raising of a new and true temple the new Passover Lamb, Jesus; those who believe in him become the new household of God, the new community.

Coloe's work and that of Kerr (2002) have become important works in Johannine scholarship. Particularly, Coloe's work is the first work that systematically and in detail examines the temple Christology of the Gospel of John. However, Coloe's work was not the first work to show the pervasiveness of temple Christology throughout John (cf. Kinzer 1998). Like in the case of Köstenberger (2005) described above, Coole's claim that John's gospel was occasioned by the temple's destruction is not persuasive. Coloe's claim that after Jesus' departure,

his believers, the new household of God became God's temple has been questioned. While, there is some truth in this claim, one problem not satisfactorily addressed is whether Jesus continues or ceases to be the temple after his departure?

In the first place, Jesus did promise his disciples that he would be with them through the indwelling of the Spirit of truth, who will be with them forever (John 14:15–21) and he fulfilled this when he breathed on them (John 20:22; cf. 7:39). Specifically, in John 14:23, Jesus promises those who love and obey him that God the Father will love them and the triune God will make his residence in them. In other words, Jesus-believers will be the triune God's dwelling place. Jesus-believers, like Jesus, are sanctified (John 16:17, 19; cf. 15:3) and have received God's glory (John 16:22; cf. 1:14). Also, they are commissioned to continue with Jesus' works in the world (John 16:18; 20:21, 23).

On the other hand, John does not refer to the new community of believers as the temple of God, nor does he explain whether Jesus continues as the temple after his departure. Yet, in John 2:19–22, it is evident that after Jesus' death and resurrection, he becomes the new temple. Hence, scholars like Schneiders (2013) claim that Jesus continues to be the new temple in the midst of the new community after his departure. Schneiders as summarised next, does not support Coloe's conclusion that the new community becomes God's temple after Jesus' departure.

2.2.2. Sandra Schneiders (2013)

Schneiders (2013:§4) focuses on John 20:19–20 in order to illuminate how Jesus is portrayed as the new temple in the Gospel of John. She professes that, 'He [Jesus] is the presence of God in their midst and the source of the life-giving water of the Spirit'. She reaches this claim

based on John 2:19 where Jesus pointed to his risen body that would be the new temple (Schneiders 2013:§3). Furthermore, she draws from John 7:37–39 with its allusion to Ezekiel 47:1–12 to posit that Jesus is depicted as a new temple, the source of life-giving water.

Lastly, to Schneiders (2013:§3), the flow of water and blood recorded in John 19:34–37 is central to her conclusion in John 20:19–20. Importantly, she associates this Christophany (John 20:19–20) based on the disciples' responses with 'new creation'. Schneiders achieves this by drawing from Isaiah 66:7–14 and also Jesus' promise in John 16:20–22. To her, through the works of Jesus and Spirit gift, new Israel is birthed and Jesus, the new temple, continues to be amongst the new community through the Holy Spirit. This community is commissioned to continue with Jesus' mission in the world. Specifically, she draws from John 20:21–23 to argue that believers are the new Israel continuing with Jesus' mission of forgiving sins, and holding fast those who had joined the community.

There is consensus that Jesus through his death and resurrection became the new temple. And that, Jesus' salvific work and the gift of the Spirit establishes the new community, which continues with Jesus' mission. However, unlike Coloe, Schneiders claims that Jesus continues as the new temple in the midst of the new community. Hence, these findings raise further questions that need answering: if it is true that John's interest in the temple was related to the fall of Jerusalem, what does that tell us about the Johannine community? How does that correlate with John's ecclesiology?

2.3. Soteriological perspective

Soteriological perspective is an approach whereby the temple in John is interpreted in relation to how Jesus fulfils the work of salvation. This is

based on Jesus' person and his works, ultimately, his death and resurrection ensuring that those who believe in him have eternal life. The work of one scholar is summarised.

2.3.1. Dan Lioy (2010)

Lioy (2010) argues that, 'the temple motif is a conceptual and linguistic framework for the fourth gospel's presentation of Jesus as the divine Messiah' (2010:67). Lioy's bedrock of his monograph is his specific perspective on humanity's 'brokenness' having emanated from the Garden of Eden account due to the sin of Adam and Eve. This Edenic account and Jesus' redemptive acts unfold throughout the biblical texts. To Lioy, John depicts Jesus as God Man, who tabernacled amidst humanity in the world with the mission to restore humanity in their relationship with God.

Lioy (2010:67) claims that, 'John's intent was to emphasise how the triune God, though above and beyond his creation, made himself known to the world through life, death, and resurrection of the Son'. Therefore, Jesus, the Son of God, in his dwelling with humanity came to fulfil God's redemptive plan while making him fully known (2010:67–69). Specifically, Jesus as the 'new and final sacrament'made it possible for humanity to be restored to their original status as 'a sacramental place' in order to worship and serve God (2010:68).

Regarding the temple's cleansing account (John 2:13–22), Lioy (2010:70–71) argues that Jesus, the Messiah, was not 'attacking the institution' or 'rejecting Israel', but instead, the corrupt activities and injustices of the authorities in the temple of God. Jesus' actions in the temple are interpretive keys to understanding the unfolding events in Jesus' ministry and ultimately his death and resurrection as the new temple. Specifically, Jesus through his death as the Paschal sacrifice,

replaced the old temple including cultic activities and festivals, and now God dwells in him as the house of the Father (2010:71–72). Lioy (2010:72–74) maintains that, Jesus' death and resurrection validated him as the divine Messiah, and having a legal right to cleanse the temple.

Furthermore, the cleansing of the temple was an indication of the advent of the day of the Lord resulting in judgement of his house (i.e. temple) and establishment of new and true temple of God (2010:73–74). Lioy (2010:73) claims that, 'With the advent of the Messiah as the final expression of God's Word (cf. 1:1, 14, 18), all the divine blessings anticipated under the old covenant were brought to fruition, including being cleansed from sin, experiencing the delight of salvation, and enjoying unbroken fellowship with the Lord (cf. Isa 25:6–9; 56:7; Jer 31:31–34; Rev 21:22)'. This new order is achieved through Jesus' death, resurrection and exaltation (2010:74). Based on John 4:20–24, Lioy (2010:75–76) argues that worship in this new eschatological epoch is not bound by the physical location of the temple, as Messiah is the locus of new worship, which is in spirit and truth.

Research on the temple from a soteriological perspective in the Gospel of John has been neglected. Lioy's work is an important contribution, as it lays a foundation for further research in this area. To Lioy, Jesus, the new and true temple, through his death, resurrection and exaltation, restored the original status of humankind as the sacrament of God. Therefore, in this eschatological era, believers have unrestricted fellowship with their God and Father. Importantly, Lioy follows the nonviolence reading of John 2:13–22. Also, he argues that this incident points to Jesus, who through his death and resurrection becomes the new temple replacing the old temple (cf. Bryan 2011). After Jesus' departure, the new order of worship is in spirit and truth. Nonetheless,

another question needs answering: granted that the Gospel of John portrays Jesus as the true eschatological temple and restores humanity's original status, what role does the ingestion language play in John's soteriology?

2.4. Eschatological (Fulfilment) perspective

Eschatological perspective is an approach whereby the temple in John is examined in order to ascertain how Jesus fulfils Jewish eschatological expectations. Particularly, the advent of Jesus, the new and true temple, ushers in the beginning of new order, the eschatological era. This new order is achieved through Jesus' death, resurrection and exaltation. Therefore, believers who are the new community live in this eschatological age. The works of three scholars are summarised.

2.4.1. Alan Kerr (2002)

Kerr (2002:2, 34) in his monograph argues that John was written in the aftermath of the temple's destruction in 70 CE, responding to the crisis that this event created. In other words, John was responding to questions about Jewish festivals and place of worship (2002:30–31). To him (2002:65–66), John adopted a quietist (i.e. not active) eschatology by painstakingly and nimbly pointing to Jesus as the new temple for the new family of faith. It is quietist eschatology in that God intervenes through the works of Jesus to address this crisis without the Johannine community resorting to holy war (2002:60). John points Jesus-believers to Jesus, the Messiah who is the eschatological temple fulfilling and replacing the Jerusalem temple. Hence, the advent of Jesus, the Messiah, meant the advent of the eschatological era.

Kerr (2002:70–101) drawing from both the immediate context (i.e. John 1:19–2:11 and 3:1–21) and wider context (John 5:19–30) argues that,

John 2:13–22 must be understood within the eschatological context, where the demise of the old temple foreshadows the raising of the new temple. In other words, the raising of the new temple means the arrival of new creation, the new order. On the one hand, John the Baptist's ministry as a herald (John 1:23; cf. Isa 40:3) to Jesus' ministry, his confession that Jesus is the 'Lamb of God' (John 1:29), Nathanael's testimony (Johnn 1:49) and Jesus' words (Johnn 1:51) support the advent of this new beginning (2002:72). On the other hand, John 5:19–30 depicts this new order, with the presence of both elements of realised eschatology (5:19–25) and future eschatology (5:26–30) (2002:73). To him (2002:101), John 2:21 is one of the interpretive keys to Jesus as the new temple throughout John.

Based on John 1:14–16, Kerr (2002:133) argues that Jesus in tabernacling with humanity became the new tent of meeting with God. To him, in the prologue 'Judaism is a signpost pointing to Jesus and finds fulfilment when it leads to Jesus'. What is central about this eschatological tenor is that many people may have life by believing that Jesus is the Messiah, Son of God (2002:134). Also, based on John 4:16–24, Kerr (2002:161–204) argues that, Jesus ushers in a new way of worship, which is in spirit and in truth, and Jesus is the focus as the Messiah and Son of God. To him (2002:203–204), Jesus as the new Torah, the revelatory word of God, replaces the temple and the Spirit testifies on his behalf.

Furthermore, Kerr (2002:207–255) argues that Jesus fulfils and replaces three festivals, namely, Passover, Tabernacles and Dedication in the Gospel of John. Lastly, Jesus through his works of salvation and judgement which he ultimately completed on the greater Sabbath (i.e. Sunday; cf. John 20:1) when he resurrected from death, transformed the Jewish Sabbath (John 19:31) into eschatological Sabbath (2002:255–

266). Importantly, Jesus through washing his disciples' feet (John 13) prepared them to enter this new eschatological era, and were incorporated as new members of the Father's house (John 14:2–3), the new family of God (2002:292–312). Consequently, all who believe in Jesus (cf. John 17:20) have a place in the Father's house (2002:312).

Kerr like Köstenberger and Coole posits that the Gospel of John was occasioned by the destruction of the temple; however, as already argued under Köstenberger's work above, this claim is not convincing. Also, Kerr like other scholars (e.g. Coloe 2001; Hoskins 2007; Lioy 2010; Schneiders 2013; Um 2006) states that believers through Jesus' death and resurrection live in the new eschatological epoch; to Kerr, this is an eschatological Sabbath. Specifically, Kerr claims that Jesus through his resurrection transformed the Jewish Sabbath into eschatological Sabbath. However, this claim needs further work. It is not clear from John's narrative how Jesus transforms the Jewish Sabbath. Furthermore, Kerr claims that there is no allusion to the temple in John 1:51, contrary to other scholars (e.g. Coloe 2001; Hoskins 2007; Köstenberger 2005). It seems that Kerr was too quick to reject the allusion to the temple in this passage. It has already been discussed under Section One above that the Bethel tradition was later in Jewish history fused with Zion tradition. Therefore, this strengthens the assertion that there is an allusion to the temple in John 1:51.

2.4.2. Stephen Um (2006)

Um's (2006:1) aim in his monograph is to examine the theme of temple Christology in John 4:4–26 'in the light of the early Jewish understanding of water and Spirit'. First, in his examination of the symbol of water, and based on the influence of early Jewish literature, Um argues that the symbol of water in John is best understood as life-giving. He (2006:133, 136) claims that, this was the common under-

standding of the symbol of water within early Jewish tradition. To him (2006:143), 'interestingly, the act of "giving" life-giving water (or life itself), a divine activity by a sovereign creator who had the authority to dispense life (cf. Isa 44.3a), is attributed to Jesus ("I [will] give him", John 4:13–14; cf. 4:10)'. To this, John in his Christology (cf. John 4:10, 14) includes Jesus in the unique identity of God as the creator of new creational eschatological life aligned with the Jewish understanding of God (2006:143–146).

Furthermore, to Um (2006:146), the symbol of water in early Jewish literature represented 'a garden/temple element supplying abundant life'. Importantly, the Jewish tradition associated the garden with the eschatological temple. Therefore, the eschatological temple was believed to be the source of the life-giving water. Then, Um (2006:146–151), based on his exegesis of several OT prophetic passages (Ezek 37:15–28; 47; Joel 4:18; Zech 14:8), concludes that, God in the end-time will pour out his abundant life-giving blessings through the messianic figure, the true temple. In other words, the presence of the true temple in the eschatological future will result in new creational eschatological life for the people and the land.

Um (2006:151) posits that, 'in the latter days, His [God] presence will escalate into a fuller expression of life in the messianic kingdom when the true temple will come to exercise His divine prerogative in dispensing eschatological "living water" for the spiritually thirsty'. Therefore, John in his development of the temple Christology was influenced by early Jewish tradition's understanding of the symbol of water and its association with a garden/temple theme (2006:151–166). Particularly, Jesus in John (John 4:10–14, 20–24; cf. 1:14; 2:19–21; 7:38–39) is the promised true temple, who is the source and provider of the eschatological life-giving water to the world.

Um's association of the symbol of water and the Spirit in the Gospel of John is remarkable. He has convincingly demonstrated that John was heavily influenced by early Jewish tradition (biblical and postbiblical) in his development of temple Christology. This reliance on Jewish tradition further points to the jewishness of the Gospel of John. However, there is a question waiting to be answered: how did the Baptist's testimony in John 1:32–34 contribute to John's depiction of Jesus, the promised eschatological temple as the source and provider of the Spirit?

2.4.3. Paul Hoskins (2007)

Hoskins (2007:2) in this monograph examines how Jesus is depicted as fulfilment and replacement of the temple in John. He (2007:103-106) grounds his study on the fact that both the tabernacle and the temple as dwelling places of God were limited. First, God abandoned these shrines due to people's sins. Second, God was able to be Israel's sanctuary while in exile with no temple. Third, the locus for God's presence and favour is his righteous people and not the temple. It is therefore unsurprising that an expectation of a new and eternal temple is expressed by some OT texts and extra-biblical Jewish literature (2007:107).

John drawing from this background portrays Jesus as the fulfilment and replacement of the temple (2007:108–146). In John 2:18–22, Jesus is depicted as the replacement (i.e. vv. 19, 21) of the Jerusalem temple (2007:116). In John 1:14, Jesus as 'the incarnate word fulfills an expectation whose fulfilment was expected to occur in the new temple' (2007:119; cf. 125). While, in John 1:51 (cf. Gen 28:12), 'the Son of Man [Jesus] is the true locus for the revelation of God to His people. As such, He is the fulfillment and replacement of those places where God revealed Himself to His people, including Bethel, the tabernacle, and

the temple.' (2007:126). Also, in John 4:20–24, Jesus is portrayed as the fulfilment and replacement of the obsolete temple as he is 'the locus of God's abundant provision for His people' (2007:145).

Hoskins (2007:147) also posits that Jesus' portrayal as the fulfilment and replacement of the temple is 'closely related to his death/resurrection/exaltation, namely, his fulfilment of Jewish feasts'. On the one hand, he argues that, the 'hour', 'lifting up' and 'glorification' in John independently and together are closely entwined with Jesus' climatic and intertwined themes of his death, resurrection and exaltation (2007:148–152). On the other hand, he examines the Isaianic background (particularly Isaiah 2 and 33, LXX) on the themes of lifting up and glorification and their associations with God's revelation of himself in judgement and salvation (2007:152–159). To him (2007:155) 'the pattern seems to be that God manifests his glory and his exalted nature first in acts of judgment; then, he manifests them in acts of salvation. As part of the acts of salvation, God displays his glory and exalted nature by glorifying and exalting his servant, the remnant, and the temple.'

Furthermore, Hoskins (2007:160–181) postulates that Jesus fulfils the Jewish feasts: Passover, Tabernacles and Dedication. This emanatesfrom the fact that the temple theme is closely intertwined with the festival theme, because Jesus marks the festivals by going to the temple. Therefore, Jesus during these festivals as the true and eternal temple is portrayed as the locus of God's abundant provision for his people in the world (2007:180). To Hoskins, Jesus greatly surpasses the temple including the new temple based on OT prophecies (i.e. Isaiah and Ezekiel) and the Jerusalem temple (2007:185, 193).

Hoskins like Um has shown that John was heavily influenced by Jewish tradition in presenting Jesus as the new and eternal temple. This further

affirms the Jewishness of the Gospel of John. However, Hoskins' work is distinctive in that Jesus is portrayed as temple antitype exceeding the Jewish expectations of a new temple. This raises a question that requires answering: if as Jesus confirmed that scriptures testify about him (John 5:39–40), what implications has Hoskins's conclusion that Jesus, the new temple exceeds the expectations of the Old Testament scriptures considering that Jesus is the fulfilment Old Testament scriptures? It does not seem that Hoskins has done justice to his conclusion, and hence there is a need for further enquiry. There is an agreement amongst scholars (e.g. Beutler 1996; Köstenberger 2007; Menken 2005; Loader 2005) that John extensively relied on the Old Testament scriptures in his Christological programme. Therefore, one implication of this heavy reliance on the Old Testament is that the fourth evangelist wanted to show how Jesus fulfils the Old Testament prophecies, in this case, the promised eschatological temple.

3. Summary and Reflections

The overall impression based on the summary of the scholarly works above is that the temple is central in John's Christological narrative programme. Specifically, John adopts temple symbolism in relation to Jesus, that is, temple Christology. Jesus, the enfleshed *Logos* is the new and true temple, and pioneered new temple worship which is in spirit and in truth with no need for a physical temple. Differently put, while scholars utilised different lenses in examining temple symbolism, there is harmony regarding the centrality of the temple in John's gospel, and that Jesus is the eschatological temple.

Furthermore, scholars agree that Jesus as the fulfilment of the Jerusalem temple, replaces it, including its cultic activities and festivals. The arguments provided for temple replacement include: obsolete due to its

temporality (e.g. Hoskins 2007; Kerr 2002), corruption and injustices of temple authorities (e.g. Lioy 2010), illegitimate (e.g. Draper 1997). However, some Johannine students (e.g. Brown 2010; Troost-Cramer 2016; Wheaton 2009) hold that Jesus does not replace the temple as it foreshadowed him. Instead, there is continuation between the old temple and Jesus, the new temple.

However, this writer agrees with Loader (2005:151) that 'replacement does not imply abandonment or disparagement. The Law remains. It was God's gift, but now that the true source of eternal life has come, to which the Law through its prescriptions as well as its predictions pointed, fulfilling its prescriptions may be left behind.' Jesus, the Messianic bridegroom must take the centre stage, as all OT types and OT texts remain in the background persistently pointing to Jesus, the promised true eschatological temple.

There is also agreement that Jesus through his death and resurrection ensures the creation of new order and new community of God. This new community no longer needs the physical temple, as Jesus the eschatological temple established new temple worship, which is in spirit and truth. Jesus is the locus of this new temple worship. Furthermore, there is an agreement that after Jesus' departure the new community continues with his mission. However, there is no agreement on what happened after Jesus' departure, specifically, in relation to the new temple. On the one hand, after Jesus' departure, the new community become the temple of God (e.g. Coloe 2001; Kerr 2002; cf. Hann 2008; Kasula 2016). On the other hand, after Jesus' departure, Jesus continues as the temple through Spirit-gift amidst the new community (e.g. Bryan 2005; Köstenberger 2005; Schneiders 2013; cf. Salier 2004; Troost-Cramer 2016).

Lastly and significantly, the pervasiveness of the temple theme underlines the jewishness of John's gospel. Specifically, the temple in John's gospel has played a focal role in revolutionising Johannine scholarship. On the one hand, the temple theme has helped to underline more the historical reliability of John's gospel, for one would expect the type of focus on the temple that John gives is a historically reliable account, as Jesus being a devout Jew would have been associated with the temple as much as John's Gospel indicates. Therefore, this further necessitates research on the contribution of this gospel in the historical Jesus' research. There is no longer a need to compare John's gospel against the synoptics, instead, scholarship should focus on the reliable and independent and complementary contribution of John's account.

On the other hand, there is theological meaning and implications from the association of Jesus with the temple. Particularly, the pointed emphasis in John on Jesus as eschatological temple is significant considering the role of the temple in Jewish history. Hence, considering the role and function of the temple, this depicts God's eternal salvific plan for humanity through Jesus, the enfleshed *Logos* as the dwelling presence of God's glory. Therefore, Jesus, the eschatological temple ensures that those who believe in him have eternal relationship with God. In other words, humanity cannot have fellowship with God except through the eschatological temple, Jesus. Accordingly, in order to enter and experience God's glory in the eschatological temple, belief in Jesus, the eschatological temple of God is the prerequisite.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to summarise and analyse the different proposals in the last twenty years about the role of temple Christology in John's gospel. It is evident based on this survey that there has been

heightened interest in John's temple. There are both agreements and disagreements on some aspects of John's temple Christology. Importantly, John's pre-occupation with temple Christology points to the centrality of the Jewish tradition within early Christianity, specifically, the Gospel of John. It can therefore be inferred that John's gospel was not written in response to the crisis caused by temple's destruction. This demands that John is approached from its Jewish milieu. Furthermore, it is evident that John has theological interest in presenting Jesus as eschatological temple. Particularly, the relationship between the Jerusalem temple and Jesus shows that the Jerusalem temple including its cultic activities foreshadowed Jesus as the dwelling presence of God's glory and the locus of worship.

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'Maame, You Are a Witch': An Inquiry into the Phenomenon of Witchcraft in Ghanaian Socio-Religious Life

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Abstract

This paper is an investigation into the phenomenon of witchcraft among Ghanaians. It approaches it from the perspective of Pentecostal prophetism. It argues that like in primal Akan belief Ghanaian Pentecostals attribute most evil to the activities of witchcraft. Considered as evil forces, witches are believed to possess destructive powers and are elusive in their operations to the ordinary person. Therefore, their activities cannot be ignored if people want to enjoy life to the fullest. This means it is important that believers engage in spiritual activities that help to break their powers over their human victims. This is where deliverance, an ambiguous spiritual activity, comes in.

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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.

1. Introduction

The question this paper will answer is: What are the characteristics, social impact and ways of coping with witchcraft in Ghanaian Pentecostal prophetism, and to what extent does the Akan primal worldview influence such understanding? As a phenomenon, prophetism continues to characterize Ghanaian socio-religious life. Prophetic services/meetings are reaching a crescendo louder than most other brands of Christianity. What is interesting is that similar phenomena are characterizing many non-Christian religious groups. Prophets, Christians and non-Christians, find the media (radio, television, bill-boards, posters, handbills, and the like) as the best means of advertising their prowess. A characteristic feature of prophetism is the place of witchcraft as causality of evil and suffering. In this paper we will inquire into the phenomenon of witchcraft from contemporary Pentecostal prophetism. Many Ghanaian Pentecostals believe that misfortune is closely connected to the activities of witchcraft, sorcery, bad medicine and activities of other evil entities, which always seek the ill of less powerful people. Many Pentecostal prophetic services are often characterized by witchcraft identification and accusation. The central place witchcraft continues to occupy in the minds of Pentecostals in particular and Ghanaians in general shows that its reality is not considered to be a savage superstition (cf. Bowie 2000:217–218).

2. Nature, Possession and Manifestation of Witchcraft

It appears among all the spiritual sources of evil and suffering witchcraft occupies the highest pedestal, though some prophets claim it is the smallest spiritual power. Yet because possessors are humans, it shows the most intimate knowledge of its victims, hence the fear and abhorrence of it. Witchcraft is considered by Ghanaians as an evil spirit

which inhabits and possesses people who carry out evil against people who are spiritually weaker than the possessors (see Onyinah 2012:57). Not being a learned art one cannot choose to understudy it. As the following story shows it is very selfish (Quayesi-Amakye 2013:64–66). A woman lost all her four children. Her mother confessed to be the causal witch because she did not want her sons-in-law to live overseas away from their wives. Witchcraft can be elusive. It is likened to a garment that may be put off and put on at the discretion of the possessor. Smart witches remove their witchcraft when about to enter church / prayer meetings (Elder Johnson Andoh, personal communication, 22 September, 2005).

By its nature and operations witchcraft is seen as a demonic manifestation. Hence, a discussion of it intertwines with demonic activities. It is believed by many Ghanaian Pentecostals that Satan indirectly attacks through his agents or servants, who work out his evil intentions and purposes in human affairs. These agents are evil forces such as witches, magicians, sorcerers, Muslim mystics, occultists, diviners and necromancers. In a world of wickedness one cannot be sure of one's enemies (see Adjei n.d:23–29). Not even one's Christian status insulates one from demonic attacks. In fact, wicked powers show no respect for Christian ministers, but attack them in the performance of their Christian duties (Elder Ati, personal communication, 6 August, 2009).

Witches are alleged to possess transformative power that enables them to assume animal form to attack victims or destroy victims' properties such as farms. Stories about evil spirits reveal them to be cunning. They use innocent and unassuming objects to disguise their schemes. Thus, in the view of some prophets, a nocturnal cockroach nuisance could actually be a demonic ploy to harass a person. Similarly, cobwebs may

become a spiritual network via which evil powers attack their victims. Human life can be susceptible to such craftiness. Lack of vigilance and spiritual alertness makes one prone to such demonic ploys. Hence, one may be demonized, that is come under demonic or witchcraft control through several channels. There are two kinds of such demonization. One is affliction from sicknesses, diseases, business setbacks, marital problems, educational failures, and so on. The other is actual possession by an evil force, whereby one could become a witch or demonic.

It is said that sometimes witches or evil forces intrude into less powerful people via ordinary consumables such as donated or purchased foods, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, water, clothing, and the like. Some people acquire witchcraft, suffer incurable diseases/sicknesses, or have their pregnancy aborted via these means. For example, according to Prophetess Georgina Grant Essilfie (personal communication, 15 September, 2009), a witch client acquired her witchcraft after eating mutton from her mother. Thereafter she began to see herself flying with her mother into witches' meetings. At the prophetess' Zion Prayer, Healing and Evangelistic Centre, Abowinmu, Enyan Denkyira in the Central Region was a photograph of a young boy purported to be a former wizard. He was alleged to be the cause of his parents' business setbacks. He was said to have acquired his witchcraft from food that his maternal grandmother had given him.

Witchcraft (and demonic) attacks may manifest through dreams or physical and visible signs. Among Ghanaian Pentecostal prophetic figures, dreams are embedded with deep meanings about evil forces' activities in people's lives. Often people's sleep can be disturbing. For example, business bankruptcy due to witchcraft machinations may reveal through dreams to the victim (Tabiri 2004: 42-44). Eating flesh, eating on a refuse dump, having breasts sucked by babies, taking a bath

in public, and similar, in one's dreams have spiritual connotations. The first two typify witchcraft initiation; the third cancer transfusion by witches and the fourth shame or disgrace in one's life.

Similarly, dreams about sexual activities connote spiritual marriages and afflictions. Such spiritual marriages are satanic weapons aimed at weakening victims sexually, causing setbacks and marital problems such as sterility, aborted and stunted pregnancies, separation and divorce. Consequently, dreams may offer interpretative tools for understanding uncertainties, mental and emotional confusions and social disconnections (Prior 2007:27). Psychological explanations may not be enough. Some evil incidents may actually be explained psychologically, but if they defy psychological solution then one may conclude they are more of spiritual causality than psychological.

Evidences of demonic works actualise in real life. Consider the following testimonies from Prophetess Georgina Grant Essilfie's ministry at Enyan Abonwinmu. Maggots dropped from a drunkard's ear after he had been prayed for by the prophetess. A brain tumour client woke up to find a *juju* herbal substance that had dropped from her head onto her pillow. Carcasses of two dead crickets dropped from an impotent man's genital organ after exorcism. The man's own father was the cause of his impotency. He had vowed to prevent his son's potency. A photograph showed a lady who was cured of a chronic migraine. After receiving healing, dead soldier ants dropped from her hair. Another photograph showed that a woman gave birth to two stones. Still another woman gave birth to a local vine sponge. There was also the preserved dead fish that dropped from an 11-year-old girl with a chronic heart problem.

Appreciating the operation of witchcraft/demonic forces is crucial. It helps to show their meanness and hatred towards humanity. For

example, cases of demonic marriages amply demonstrate the length to which evil forces will go to control people's lives. In spiritual marriages the human being is compulsorily joined in a unilateral nuptial relation with spirit beings. Often such spirits are believed to be marine spirits or family witches who prevent victims from entering into or/and enjoying natural nuptial relations. Some people end up not marrying at all. Others may suffer marital conflicts and divorces. Still others may suffer childlessness in marriage because they procreate for a malevolent spiritual spouse. In fact, deadly diseases like HIV/AIDS may be suffered, not necessarily because one is promiscuous or physically infected. It is with such understanding that witchcraft is seen as a tool of rendering people unfit for living.

3. Witchcraft and Misfits of Life: The Poor and the Sick

An appreciation of the badness of witchcraft for human existence in Pentecostal understanding is incomplete without an evaluation of the 'concept of the poor and the sick'. Therefore, the question is: what are the socioeconomic implications of witchcraft for the Ghanaian person? In Ghanaian Pentecostalism poverty and ill-health possess depreciating and depersonalising effects. They produce insignificance; they create hunger, thirst, non-existence, death and dearth. Poverty deprives people of their desirables (*ohia tua akōnnōdeē*). Poverty literally reduces an adult to the status of a child. And it is poverty which makes the elder serve the younger at the family levels. A poor person is brother to a fool. His / her word is not valuable in the family, community and society. Poverty is madness, but riches invite blood (life)! Whereas often wealthy people are accused of acquiring their wealth/money through medicine money (i.e. through occult means) nobody acquires poverty medicine, so goes a popular secular song. Poverty makes gossips out of

people who cast aspersions on the rich and wealthy, and often envy them without good reason.

Diseases and sicknesses reduce one to a state of dependency, and that may be exploited by one's wicked enemies. The *Akan* say: *Sē obi benya wo a na efiri yadeē* (that means diseases/sicknesses make people susceptible to other people's manipulations and humiliations). The poor and sick accept things indiscriminately. They are vulnerable to the whims and caprices of the strong and powerful. Ill-health and poverty are close kith and kin. They have symbiotic effects on their victims and either can cause death. Hence *Wowō nkwa a na wowō adeē* (to have life is to have wealth). They deprive, bankrupt and impoverish their victims of their wealth, health and personhood. Both poverty and ill-health cause uncertainty, lack of direction, fatalism and defeatism.

However, wealth dominates, affirms, controls and commands respect. It is audacious, powerful, imposing, eloquent, and vociferous. It reshapes, reaffirms and personalises. It commands submission and audience, refines status, produces new identity and elicits fear. The rich and wealthy are adored and are served at their beck and call. Young or old, the wealthy command authority and power. Culturally, Ghanaians celebrate wealth. This cultural attitude underlines why judges, law enforcement agencies, physicians, departmental heads opt to serve the rich rather than the poor. The unbridled craving for wealth, often traceable to the Ghanaian cultural disposition, attaches significance to wealth possession and accumulation. Hence, driven by greed some people resort to all kinds of foul means to amass wealth at all cost. The prevalence of bribery, corruption, occult money and deception that characterize Ghanaian life underscore the narcissistic assumption of evil as a national culture. Thus societal inequity may be understood in the context of the cultural posture towards wealth. In this world of power,

the wealthy are the rulers; the poor have no place! It is with this reasoning that poverty and ill-health are considered distasteful, and therefore prayers are said for the restoration of lost identity and redefinition of life.

The 'concept of the poor and the sick' encompasses the great masses of disadvantaged individuals and communities in Ghana who are manipulated socially, abused physically, oppressed politically, dehumanised economically and despised culturally. By pinpointing 'the poor and the sick' Pentecostals invent a deep concept: a concept that includes all people, since normally people suffer from either or both enemies. 'The poor and the sick' becomes a religio-cultural, socio-economic, and political concept that requires Christological deflation. All such are assured of Christ's willingness to receive and welcome into a better life of abundance, redefinition, restructuring and 'remodi-fication'. Thus, Pentecostals believe that Christ offers the hope for the liberation of all who health-wise and wealth-wise are victimised. The poor and the sick must run to him for their deliverance.

In Ghanaian Pentecostalism 'the poor and the sick' provide satirical appraisal of life. Firstly, sometimes some Pentecostal songs and sermons are satirically couched to elicit conscientious response from the poor and the sick to Jesus' call. They tell how poverty has torn apart and humiliated the poor, and how ill-health has broken down, bruised and incapacitated the sick. Secondly, there is a sympathetic note in some songs and sermons. Sympathy is a deep inner quest and tool of poor and sick people in Ghana. Beggars master the art of sympathy inducement. All kinds of rationalisations, ranging from little homilies, Pentecostal songs and prayer are given to induce donations from potential donors. In this world of 'professional begging' 'God-talk' then plays a very important role. The Ghanaian religious cord must be

touched to 'defraud' the potential giver. Christ's salvation then has to do with deliverance from such debilitating enemies of humankind which create a cheat and a liar in people. Therefore, Pentecostals subtly and unconsciously proclaim that poverty and diseases reduce and undermine the full enjoyment of salvation in Christ. They must be rejected and this is achievable when the power of the controlling spirits is broken.

4. Destroying the Destroyer

The quest for making human beings fit for life means the overturning of the activities of evil forces including witchcraft. So we ask: in what ways do Ghanaian Pentecostals negate the influence and power of witches and demons in victims' lives? Embedded in this negotiation is the idea of warfare. In prophetic services this may be achieved through prophetic declarations/rituals and exorcism/deliverance. Exorcism can be quite muscular and tiresome both to the prophetic persons and the sufferer, who as the residence of the demonic presence will experience excruciating pains all over the body. The entire process is a real show of warfare with powerful spiritual forces. Proponents insist that deliverance is the act of liberating a person from the power, influence and bondage of an evil source through Spirit empowered prayer. Deliverance integrates exorcism which 'usually means casting out a demon from a person who is possessed. Deliverance is usually distinguished from exorcism and means freeing people from the influence or bondage of Satan and demons who are behind afflictions, sufferings, bad habits, curses and failures in life' (Onyinah 2008:219–220).

Consequently, deliverance aims at granting ultimate freedom to the human victim from the influence and control of a demonic force. It achieves this by means of exorcism. Therefore, unless the victim is

freed from the oppressive or possessive evil power deliverance is incomplete. It involves a minister laying his/her hands on the victim, and/or speaking a word of command, and sometimes applying anointing oil or water to evict the evil spirit. The eviction is balanced with an invitation to the Holy Spirit to take over the victim's life after he/she has accepted and committed him/herself to Christ. For success the deliverance minister's prayers must be effective enough to jettison the invading evil spirit. By its very nature and modus operandi deliverance sessions are conceived as 'surgery hours' when Christ destroys the destroyers in his people's lives. Victory is believed to be achieved by invoking Jesus' name, pleading his blood and enforcing the power of the Holy Spirit. Candidates display the success of their deliverance by vomiting, coughing, screaming, crying, wailing, shedding tears, galloping, jumping, slithering, falling asleep, collapsing and even appearing to be dead. Thus, deliverance is a real warfare fought on both the spiritual and physical planes. The results thereof manifest physically.

It must be stated that the idea of warfare is actually a reminder that the enjoyment of abundant life demands victory and success in one's endeavours. Consequently, there is no passive living in this world of evil. Indeed, to the Ghanaian Pentecostal Christian the idea of victory suggests at one point an already-won battle, yet it does not in any way mean there is no ongoing battle. Even in situations where people suffer educational backwardness the connection of such a mishap to spiritual causality and the need for negotiating it is often not to be taken for granted. Of course, one cannot rule out the thinness of such interpretation because it sometimes fails to recognize some students' irresponsible attitudes towards their academic work. Nonetheless there are palpable situations of educational setbacks which are due to family disasters or intermittent/or protracted illnesses those students suffer. True, Jesus has already won the battle giving the believer the assurance

that it is a done deal, yet there is warfare in every area of life. The battles of life leave in their trail serious pains, aches, hurts, disappointments, disillusionments, despair, confusion, among others. This is why Ghanaian Pentecostals would like to see in Jesus a once for all-time victory with far-reaching relevance and consequence. And this is the victory they seek to 'wave for all the nations to see'.

5. Primal Cosmological Insertion

Now we ask ourselves: How does the Akan primal religion impact on Ghanaian Pentecostals' approach to witchcraft? Indeed, the Ghanaian Pentecostal ascription of the causality of evil to witchcraft demonstrates how much the Akan traditional religion continues to impinge on their understanding and practice of Christianity. In fact, the Ghanaian Akan perception that witchcraft offers an explanatory tool for the existence of evil is akin to many claims and practices of Pentecostal common believers (Akrong 2005:12). In both religions the alleged malicious nature of witches makes them to be conceived as wicked satanic agents which must be avoided or eliminated. Their existence is inimical to human wellbeing. Both worldviews postulate that the activities of these forces harm the realization or fulfilment of destiny. Again the belief that witchcraft may be acquired through birth, inheritance, purchase or contact with certain objects is held by both common believers and Akan traditional religionists.

The theory of witchcraft inheritance in Pentecostal prophetism resonates with the Akan understanding of the human person (Busia 1951:1–4). Though the Akan person is matrilineal by inheritance a person is understood in tripartition. Persons inherit their *mogya* (blood) from the mother, the *okra* (*kra*) or soul from *Nyame* (God) and the *ntoro* (*toro/nton*) or spirit from the father. The *mogya* ensures the

maternal bond. The *ntoro*, 'patrilineal spirit' or *sunsum* provides the paternal bond and is under the aegis of a particular *bosom* or deity. It is by this that a person's personality and character are believed to be defined. It is believed to be transmitted through the father's *ho* or semen. The *ho* is translated 'being', 'self' or 'personality'. The child is linked to the father's *ntoro* division or spirit-washing or cleansing group. The *ntoro* as the spiritual heightening of the individual grants him/her spiritual immunity against spiritual attacks. This means that a weak *ntoro* exposes one to the activities of wicked spirits or persons. The *okra* reacts when faced with attacks from witches and evil spirits. In the words of Field:

> If the witches steal away a man's 'kra' and cut it up, he becomes mortally sick. If they then relent, reassemble the parts and restore him, he recovers. If, however, they have already eaten, say a leg and hence cannot restore it, he recovers except for a permanently useless leg. If the witches steal only that part of the 'kra' corresponding to the womb or the penis, the victim becomes either barren or impotent (1960:6).

Certain rituals are performed to restore the 'okra' to its proper functioning state when perceived to have been attacked. This ritual known as 'washing the soul' (o*kraguare*) is also for the purpose of thanksgiving for success. By this dual parental bond of *mogya* and *ntoro* the Akan becomes a biological-spiritual being. This is the logic behind Pentecostal prophetism's demand for a rupture with ancestral backgrounds (maternal and paternal) to afford divine release and freedom. Nonetheless, this rupture aimed at upward mobility and freedom, potentially disturbs social cohesion and the traditional Ghanaian communalism. Rather than mobilizing individual gifts and resources for social profit and development it becomes parochial individualism and puts strictures on communal freedom, especially among near and distant relatives and associates.

Meanwhile the theological bond is achieved through the possession of the *okra*. The *okra* is received directly from *Nyame* (God) and is the vital force or source of energy, a reservoir of strength and sustenance. Like the *Akamba veva* (Mbiti 1971:130) the *okra* is the undying spark of God in the individual and is linked closely to the *honhom* or breath. Hence, death is seen as the departure of *honhom* or the withdrawal of the soul. While the *okra* causes the breathing the *honhom* manifests the *okra*. Thus, the *okra* is the animation of *Nyame* that vitalizes the person. The *okra* is believed to obtain permission from God to come to the world and it obtains *nkrabea* loosely translated 'destiny'. Hence, the *okra* is the principle of life, embodiment and transmitter of the individual's destiny. *Nkrabea* is a predetermined detail of the person's life on earth, particularly the 'commission' a person has to fulfill in life (see Omenyo 2006:29). 'Through the concept of the *nkrabea* purpose or meaning is given to the individual life' (Asante 1999:79). This means that the individual has a God-given project in this life; hence, there is no such thing as purposeless or meaningless life.

It is obvious that the Akan interpretation of evil in physical and moral terms that sees physical evil as a resistance to a person's social achievement and advancement is critical in Pentecostal spirituality (Ackah 1988:10). In other words, there is an insertion of primal cosmology in Pentecostalism. The Akan belief that physical evil hinders a person from realizing his *nkrabea* or destiny is inherent in many Ghanaian Pentecostal believers' interpretation of evil. Though in Akan religion destiny is fixed prior to birth it may at times be interrupted by evil forces or through one's own carelessness (Sarpong 1965:4). Pentecostal prophetism maintains that through negatively influencing people's minds evil forces are able to manipulate/abort victims' destinies. Pentecostal prophets talk much about the manipulation of destiny by enemies, and so insist on dislodging enemies' strangleholds

in people's lives. When a Pentecostal prophet declares an enemy intends to stop someone from prospering or succeeding in life he/she invariably is referring to the 'twisting around' of the client's destiny by enemies.

In Africa, the existence of witchcraft is taken for granted. Not even the socio-economic status of people can neutralise this belief (Onyinah 2002:235). Indeed, many misfortunes and disasters that befall people are almost always attributed to witches. The fear of the ubiquity of witchcraft activities underpins the search for and patronage of traditional sources of protection and security among Africans. A research conducted by Field (1960: 110) in a shrine in Ghana revealed that farmers went to the shrines complaining of antelopes, grass-cutters and other pests destroying their farm crops. Witchcraft and bad medicine were the commonest cause of all the agricultural mishaps according to the shrine. Sometimes too, the farmer was told the land or a nearby stream required pacification in the form of *ētō* (mashed yam with oil). The research showed the belief in the potency of traditional priests to circumvent the activities of witches and misfortunes in the victims' lives. This same faith is what patrons of Pentecostal prophetism confer on their prophets.

The reality of witchcraft in Ghana is a disturbing fact considering the unapologetic belief in its destructiveness. Belief in it does not belong to antiquity. Though some may talk about good witchcraft, it is generally held that all witchcraft is evil and diabolic. It cannot be jettisoned as mere superstition of savagery and the result of the Akan people's 'reluctance to engage in mental labour, [because of] a hot climate [that] produces a corresponding inertness of thought and deficient energy of the will' (Ellis 1887:4; Agbeti 1986:166–167). Almost all Ghanaians believe in the existence of witchcraft.

Once a thirteen-year-old schoolgirl, Ama, claimed on the Sparks FM (a local radio station in Dunkwa-on-Offin) that her grandmother, one Akua Dansoaa, gave her witchcraft when she was only eight-years-old. Ama claimed she had taken her brother's intelligence and glory and given it to a male witch who asked her to collect it from her brother. She also alleged to have buried her mother's glory in their family house under a spiritual lock. She claimed to be able to change into an eagle during her nocturnal nefarious activities.

According to Onyinah, witches are believed to possess *ahoboa* or witch-spirit animals by which they carry out their reprehensible antisocial activities against other humans. The witch-spirit animals may be carried in bellies or genital organs or in material objects such as jewellery, girdles and stringed beads (Onyinah 2002:73). According to Hans W Debrunner witches meet on top of big trees. Witches work in secret, and witchcraft is thought to be evil. The traditional belief that there are two types of witchcraft: *bayiboro* or *bayikwasea* and *bayipa* (bad witch and good witch) is not upheld by Pentecostals though. This is because Pentecostals cannot conceive of a good witch who may help family members to succeed, prosper, protect them and even enable their children to excel in their education. For Pentecostals all witchcraft is *bayiboro* or *bayikwasea* which causes setbacks. It is difficult for Pentecostals to think of witchcraft as not possessing evil intent towards even their own children. The belief that witches may disrobe themselves of their witchcraft, or keep their coven pots containing human blood at the bottom of the trees is not peculiar to traditional religion (Debrunner 1961:24–26; Mbiti 1976:167). Neither is the belief that they may hold their meetings in schools, rivers, sea, lakes, and marketplaces and even in church buildings, uncommon to both. For instance, on Wednesday, November 2, 2009, one Elder Amofa in carrying out deliverance among the Mt. Ararat Assembly, COP, Kasoa,

hinted that witches met in the church building, which caused stagnation in the church's growth.

The Ghanaian Pentecostal rejection of poverty and ill-health may be gauged against the Akan cosmological conception of these evils as *mmusuo*. According to the primal worldview *Mmusuo* may result from acts of commission or omission. It appears to be a mystical or spiritual interpersonal force that comes upon or follows a person, family, or a whole village as the result of evil acts by a person or group of persons related to the larger community (Atiemo 1995:21). It is defined by Christaller (1933:22) as mischief, misfortune, disaster, misery, calamity, adversity or a thing that causes mischief. *Mmusuo*, therefore, is a kind of spiritual force that is released in response to a provocation of some spiritual powers due to the misdeed of a person or group of persons. It can also be the result of malicious desire, intent and act of an evildoer who incites the malevolent spiritual forces to harm less powerful persons. Witches and other spiritual entities are often the harbingers of *mmusuo.* In Akan religious cosmology it is a breach between a person and the gods, or between the ancestors and other spiritual entities that results in a person's undoing (Christaller 1933:22). As the forces are released they may cause series of misfortune or death unless special rites called *mmusuyie* are performed to speedily ward off such misfortune. Indeed, there are several explanations proffered for the incidence of *mmusuo*.

Finally, the idea of warfare as an important theme in Ghanaian Pentecostalism may be gauged against the backdrop of the general African approach to life. Among many African peoples' life's battles do not only involve how one deals with alien enemies of physical and impersonal forces such as systemic oppressions and suppressions, but may also assume a spiritual form due to the activities of witchcraft,

occult and magic (Akrong 2003: 40). In such a world even one's parent, spouse, child, friend and family relation is a potential devil. Thus, often when Ghanaians speak of the devil (*abonsam*) they invariably imply the witch or wizard, the sorcerer, the evil person who interferes in one's progress such as a marital rival, a swindler, a slanderer, an unfaithful spouse, a gossip among a host of others. This is why the battles of life are fought also in the areas of health (sickness, premature deaths, stigmatizing and terminal diseases), finances, marriages (barrenness, spousal and child mortality), marginalisation and alienation in relation to the socioeconomic and political strata. Below I draw conclusion from the discussions.

6. Conclusion

The paper set out to answer the question: What are the characteristics, social impact and ways of coping with witchcraft in Ghanaian Pentecostal prophetism and to what extent does the Akan primal worldview influence such understanding? We have described the characteristic nature of witchcraft and identified it as one of the demonic works that plague human existence. We have seen that because of its inimical nature Ghanaians in general abhor it. For the Pentecostal in prophetic circles deliverance and other prophetic rituals are necessities for breaking the hold of demonic control in general and witchcraft in particular. Because witchcraft is evil it leaves its effects on the social and physical dimensions of life, hence the misfits of life. Meanwhile a holistic appreciation of the phenomenon of witchcraft means we take the impingement of the Akan primal religion on the faith of Pentecostals seriously.

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Review of Dauermann, *Converging Destinies*

David B. Woods[1]

> Dauermann S 2017. *Converging Destinies: Jews, Christians, and the Mission of God*. Eugene: Cascade Books.

1. Background of the Author

Anyone familiar with the development of modern Messianic Judaism will be acquainted with the name of Stuart Dauermann. Founder of the Hashivenu think tank and early pioneer of Messianic Jewish worship, Dauermann is among small group of leaders who charted an unknown landscape—the theology and praxis of Jews who believe Jesus (or Yeshua, his Hebrew name, as Dauermann naturally calls him). Dauermann holds a PhD from Fuller Theological Seminary and has authored several books from a Messianic Jewish perspective.[2]

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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] Readers of this journal may not be aware of the distinction between Jewish Christians and Messianic Jews. Jewish Christians group comprise Jews who essentially convert to Christianity and adopt Christian tradition and identity in favour of Jewish tradition and identity. Messianic Jews are Jews who live out the Jewish life as a matter of covenantal faithfulness, whilst trusting completely and only in Jesus for salvation.

2. Purpose and Approach

The author sets out to call Jewish and Christian communities (with Messianic Jews among them) to help one-another serve their respective calling in the mission of God, who will eventually bring their destinies to convergence. Dauermann's thesis is that God's love for the people of Israel (the Jewish people, not another 'Israel') is everlasting. After spelling this out clearly in the first chapter, he reviews historical developments, first in Western Christian theology and then in Judaism, to establish 'how we got here.' This continues into an exploration of 'where we are going,' building on both Protestant and Catholic progress plus models of Jewish and Christian destinies, to propose a new model. The author then explores his model's missiological implications and concerns, and situates his proposal in relation to a bilateral ecclesiology. Finally, he provides advice and cautions for Messianic Jews working towards the convergence of Jewish and Christian destinies.

3. Structure

3.1. Prologue

The Prologue begins with Dauermann's conviction that each Jewish and Christian community has elements which God would affirm and others which he would rebuke. Therefore, the author promotes a relationship between these communities 'characterized by a proleptic openness to divine reassurance and rebuke'; despite historical conflict, they should be willing to serve together toward an eschatological vision of reconciliation and renewal (p. 1).

Dauermann presents himself as one who dwells in the margins; as a believer, he is somewhat unacceptable to his own Jewish community; as

a Messianic Jew who upholds Torah, he is frowned upon by many in the Christian tradition. Yet his ministry (and professional work) entails bringing Jews and Christians together for dialogue in an atmosphere of humility and vulnerability, each aware of his premise that God has both affirmation and correction to issue it. The Prologue also considers the critical subject of social location and groups—what makes you one of 'us' and others 'not us' but 'other.' Can Israel and the church each emerge from what 'the other' considers to be in the margins, especially concerning God's ultimate mission, such that they can discover and serve it together?

The Prologue continues to speak of the historical 'Hebrew Christian paradigm' and the more recent 'Jews for Jesus paradigm' before discussing various Messianic Jewish paradigms and that held by Hashivenu, the author's own brainchild.

3.2. Part one: What is our starting point?

Part One comprises just one chapter, which provides the foundation for the theological development to follow. The name of the chapter answers the question above: 'God's everlasting love for Israel.' Dauermann writes briefly on election, covenant and supersessionism, borrowing from Douglas Harink to contradict N.T. Wright on these topics.

3.3. Part two: Where have we been?

Part Two begins with an objection, in chapter two, against the tradition of 'Western Christian Theologizing,' which the author regards as 'skewed'. Christian tradition presents 'another Jesus,' 'another *ekklesia'* and 'another consummation' to what he sees in scripture. The Bible, rather, presents a *Jewish* Jesus—the Son of David; a *bilateral ekklesia* (comprising God's people of Israel and the nations); and an eschatology

marked by the hope of a *new creation* in which national distinctions are preserved (along the lines of Craig Blaising's outlook). In the next chapter (three), Dauermann provides readers several Jewish perspectives on their own mission (as part of God's mission) and on Christians (who are, for Jews, 'the other').

3.4. Part three: Where are we going?

In his fourth chapter, Dauermann sketches Protestant developments over the past century, primarily reflected in the World Council of Churches and in the Lausanne Movement, with special focus on their theology of the Jewish people as part of the *missio dei* (mission of God)—a theology constrained by supersessionist assumptions. Next is the author's treatment of Roman Catholic mission in relation to that of Israel. By contrast with Protestantism, Catholic theology on the Jewish people has proceeded significantly since the publication of *Nostra Aetate* (a product of Vatican II). However, it is still a work in progress. The same chapter (five) ends with four questions that frame the remainder of the volume.

With this background in place, Dauermann then outlines, in chapter six, a variety of models used by Jews and Christians to describe both their own role in the *missio dei* and the other's role. Dauermann then builds on the sixth (one put forward in Soulen's seminal *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* [1996]) to produce a model in which Jewish and Christian communities converge (hence, 'Converging Destinies'). This model is the author's concise and optimistic answer to the question, 'Where are we going?'

The subject of chapter seven refocuses on mission: What gospel should believers commend to 'all Israel?' This presents an appeal to Christians to reconsider biblical hope for the Jewish people, some problems with

the way the Gospel is often presented to them—as *bad* news insofar as Israel's election is concerned—and the obstacles caused by supersessionism, antinomianism, and spiritualised eschatology. Here, the author's Messianic Jewish perspective is quite apparent, as also in chapter eight, where he critiques Kinzer's bilateral ecclesiology as lacking a missiological dimension. Dauermann then offers what he believes is a 'robust postsupersessionist missiology.'

In the ninth and final chapter of Part Three, the author addresses his fellow Messianic Jews and, particularly, the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC). He calls them to a narrow way of covenant obedience so that they may fulfil God's purpose for them as a remnant of their people. Two 'seeds' are essential to this task: firstly, living proleptically as a sign, demonstration and catalyst of the (good) future in the present, and secondly, remembrance of Israel's 'holy past' to catalyse critically important elements of their covenant community. Four noxious 'weeds' are also described, after which the author discusses the role of the Messianic Jewish remnant, especially *vis-à-vis* its Jewish kin.

An epilogue serves to call Jewish and Christian communities to serve together in the mission of God, helping one-another to reach their destinies which, Dauermann believes, will ultimately converge.

4. Evaluation

4.1. Achievement

Dauermann is partially successful in his presentation of *Converging Destinies*. I anticipate that the concept will gather a large following as I believe it to be sound, but it will take time since the target audience is

so diverse—from Jewish to Protestant, Catholic and Messianic Jewish. The persuasion of the author's approach is somewhat compromised and his model of convergence lacks detail, but the call he makes is clear. Personally, I appreciate this new trig beacon in the literary landscape of Messianic Jewish theology and I commend the publisher for adding it to its growing offerings in postsupersessionist literature.[3] The remainder of this section combines praise with criticism.

4.2. General comments

Dauermann is ambitious in the range of his target audience but it was excellent to get a perspective on all of their theologies (especially their perceptions of one-another) from a single vantage point. It is a foregone conclusion that some of the author's presuppositions may not be accepted by all his readers, so consensus is evasive. Also, while the historical events and developments are hardly likely to be disputed, Christian readers may need further persuasion that they lead to the starting point for Dauermann's discussion. His summary of key literature on Israel's election may surprise Evangelical readers if they have not been primed by these writings.[4] In any case, he does well to challenge the church to remember God's everlasting love for Israel and that Israel 'is destined to be her [the church's] senior partner in the consummation of the mission of God' (p. 26). Dauermann can be blunt but his claims warrant careful inquiry.

In his presentation of various eschatological models regarding the destinies of Jews and Christians, I was relieved that Dauermann did not dismiss Soulen's 'complementarian' model but instead built on it.

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[3] Interested readers should refer to the *New Testament After Supersessionism* series: https://wipfandstock.com/catalog/series/view/id/57/.

[4] See, for example, Michael Wyschogrod's writings collected in Soulen 2006.

Likewise, despite criticism that Kinzer's bilateral ecclesiology has an underdeveloped missiology, Dauermann strives to complete that which is lacking rather than starting over. Unfortunately, scriptural support for theological positions taken is limited (though, in my view, correct). Dauermann provides some proof texts but tends to lean on the work of others whom he cites and frequently quotes at some length. Chapter one, for example, presents a long summary of Douglas Harink's refutation of the supersessionist stance taken by N.T. Wright. I found this re-presentation of others' writings helpful but some readers, looking for more original content, may be critical of it.

The most striking statement in my reading of *Converging Destinies* is made repeatedly, starting on page one: 'whenever God speaks to his people, his word is always a mixture of … reassurance and rebuke.' (Dauermann is speaking of both Jews and Christians as 'God's people'.) One only has to think of the prophets of Israel, or of the Christ's letters to the seven churches (Rev 2–3), to validate Dauermann's claim; it has increased my tolerance for a wider variety of religious traditions, both Jewish and Christian. I was looking for a way to do that but I was stuck on biblical texts that caused me to be offended by them. Dauermann's point has helped me greatly to understand that the divine perspective on every tradition, whether global or local in scale, is generally 'both-and' rather than 'either-or': the Lord has both affirmation and criticism for them all.

Dauermann's own critique of others varies in nature. At one point, he faults the UMJC for being too accepting of member congregations that fail to uphold its Definitional Statement, but he acknowledges that he was chairman of the UMJC's theological committee at the time. Thus, in issuing criticism, he humbly includes himself among those criticised. At other points, the author's critique of others seems unduly rough. My

particular concern was his treatment of Mark Kinzer's *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism* (2005) which has shaped a lot of my own thinking. While Dauermann acknowledges Kinzer's contribution as valid and beneficial, at other points he overemphasizes Kinzer's failure to articulate, prioritise and incorporate a missiological dimension. From my perspective, these two theologians have different foci and different strengths; it would have been better for Dauermann simply to state that he wishes to contribute what he views as vital to the foundation that Kinzer already laid. It is unrealistic to expect one person to have laid a complete foundation.

I found the history, from the World Missions Conference of 1910 to developments in the World Council of Churches and the Lausanne Movement, tremendously helpful in understanding how these latter groups view and act toward the children of Israel. It would have been valuable to relate John Stott's theology of Israel to that of the Lausanne Movement (in which Stott had a major influence). Dauermann also misses some key developments in the Evangelical, ecumenical and Roman Catholic camps—but I only discovered them thanks to the book's stimulation.[5] Many readers will benefit from Dauermann's summary of Protestant and Catholic mission in relation to Israel, both within their own tradition and in the other's.

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[5] For further investigation, consider the World Evangelical Alliance's position in the 1989 *Willowbank Declaration* and the 2008 *Berlin Declaration*; the Lausanne Consultation on World Evangelism's statements in *The Willowbank Report: Consultation on Gospel and Culture* (Lausanne Occasional Paper 2, 1978) and *Christian Witness to the Jewish People* (Lausanne Occasional Paper 7, 1980); the 2016 World Council of Churches' *Statement on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Peace Process;* and the brief but important article of Pope John XXIII, *Our eyes have been cloaked* (1963).

4.3. SATS

How does *Converging Destinies* align with the focus of SATS (the publisher of this journal)? SATS readers might well ask: Is it Bible-based, Christ-centred, and Spirit-led? I would argue that it is, and the chapter (four) that focuses on Protestant mission should be prescribed reading for our students. This does not mean it will (or should) be digested easily. As far as Israel's election is concerned, Dauermann writes in opposition to Christopher Wright, highly regarded among SATS faculty as a leading Evangelical scholar and contributor to the Cape Town Commitment. Dauermann also takes on other scholars popular among Evangelical readers, most notably the late John Stott and NT Wright (both for their supersessionism). On the other hand, Charles van Engen, a missiologist with SATS affiliation, has previously endorsed Dauermann's theological contributions in the same vein. Even though Dauermann comes from quite a different perspective from SATS' Evangelical Christian tradition, his book may be a useful resource for missiologists at SATS and other evangelical schools. In fact, the foreword is written by Calvin L. Smith, Principal of Kings Evangelical Divinity School in the UK.

4.4. Structure

One weakness was particularly notable to me: structural arrangement is unbalanced, with some chapters or sections being very long and others truncated. Several chapters could be published on their own; the sub-title could have been extended with to say, 'Essays on Jews, Christians and the Mission of God.' Much of the chapters on Protestant and Catholic developments would seem to fit better under Part Two (Where have we been?) than Part Three (Where are we going?) Chapter three ends with 'some conclusions' which I was not persuaded had been reached; rather, they seemed a summary of the author's model of

converging destinies yet to follow. I also found the progression confusing in places, e.g. chapter five, on Catholic theology, ends with four questions to orientate the reader for what lies ahead, but then proceeds to partially answer the questions—each one progressively more, ultimately presenting some discussion of Messianic Jewish theology.

Most surprisingly, the model of converging destinies of Jews and Christians only fills three pages. Chapter six (near the middle of the book), which the book's title suggests should be the climax, is disproportionally short. I had expected the topic of converging destinies to be fully fleshed out, and was left wondering, Is that all? There is more, here and there, but not enough for me to feel well-informed. Instead of the model's introduction leading to a chapter's discussion on it, the next chapter changes abruptly to a revised conference presentation on evangelism to Israel. I also felt the book needs a proper concluding chapter to review and wrap everything up. Instead, the epilogue brings in new data which cannot fully be discussed there.

4.5. Writing style

Dauermann does not attempt to present his missiology objectively, as though he has developed it as a merely rational exercise. He freely tells of his personal involvement and experiences on his journey of faith, and how these shaped his beliefs. I believe this is good—faith cannot be merely propositional—and certainly no-one can question the author's deep, personal investment in the work. In this regard, the Prologue, a 'missiological biography,' will surely become an important historical record in some future reconstruction of Messianic Jewish history.

Dauermann often writes in metaphors, uses imagery, and leaves the reader to fill in some blanks. This style suits his purpose—he is not

simply providing facts, but calling his readers to action. However, at times I was uncomfortable with informal writing (from blog posts) which seemed too casual for the purpose. The author also coins new terms (notably *synerjoy*, *cryptosupersessionist* / *cryptosupersessionism* and *inreach*) which may work for some readers but not all. Regardless, I found the definition he provides for cryptosupersessionism as helpful as the identification of it. Indeed, Christian theology often bears 'an unconscious cluster of presuppositions assuming the expiration, setting aside, or suspension of that status and those status markers formerly attached to the Jewish people' (p. 161).

Apart from structural issues, the book needs a careful eye to weed out minor errors and oversights which detract slightly from the overall impression.

5. Final Comments

Converging Destinies is a stimulating read and a valuable addition to several fields, including missiology, Jewish-Christian relations, postsupersessionism and Messianic Judaism. Dauermann prompts theological thought and praxis in his own idiosyncratic way, and he deserves to be read by the Evangelical audience targeted by this journal. Though the book has its flaws, they do not detract from the validity of the message itself—the convergence of Jews and Christians in the mission of God. May it come speedily and soon, and in our day!

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500 Year Anniversary of the Reformation: SATS Webinar Presentations

Foreword by Johannes Malherbe

Today–31 October 2017–it is exactly 500 years since Martin Luther's document with 95 theses was published in Wittenberg in Germany. It was an invitation to an academic disputation focusing on the selling of indulgences in the Catholic Church which was the dominant religious and political power in Europe at the time. The strong reaction from Catholic authorities indicates that this was experienced as a direct challenge to the Church and specifically also to the Pope. After a series of public disputations in which Luther refused to recant, he was excommunicated from the Church in 2021. By that time Luther was recognised as the leader of the Reformation movement in Germany. Though the movement had started even before his birth, and eventually spread to many other parts of Europe, this specific event of 31 October 1517 is usually seen as the spark of the Reformation that radically affected church and society in Europe and ultimately in most parts of the world. At the heart of this movement was a call back to the Bible and to salvation through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

On Thursday 21 September SATS hosted an online seminar entitled *Reformation 500—SATS reflections*. Six SATS academic presented papers dealing with aspects of the Reformation. These presentations appear as academic articles in the present edition of *Conspectus*.

Was Martin Luther a Charismatic Christian? A Method for Probing a Burning Question

Annang Asumang[1]

Abstract

The rapid growth and near dominance of the Charismatic movement world-wide has inevitably raised the question as to its organic relationship with the Protestant Reformation. Answering this question is important not only for assessing Martin Luther's five-hundred-years-old legacy, but even more so for defining the nature, and predicting the future direction, of the movement. After critically evaluating two common approaches that are adopted for answering the question, namely, the historical and theological approaches, this article argues for and defends an exegetical methodology which enables Luther's expositions of Bible passages that are foundational to the Charismatic movement to more precisely direct such an investigation. As a validating test-case, it further engages Luther's expositions of Romans 12:3–8 to establish the extent of continuity, if any, with the Charismatic renewal. Even though not fully conclusive, as it only focuses

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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.

on a single passage, the findings nevertheless demonstrate the significant advantages of the proposed method.

1. Introduction

Would Martin Luther feel perfectly at home in today's Charismatic pulpit or would he instead be issued with a twenty-first-century equivalent of the *Exsurge Domine[2]*? This hypothetical question has been put in an admittedly playful and perhaps frivolous manner, but the implications of its answer are no laughing matter. For a start, there is a clear indication that allowing even for a rigorous definition of the term (cf. Barrett 1988, 119–129)[3], the complexion of Global Christianity in the coming decades, if not already, will be Charismatic. As Hackett and colleagues (2011) have demonstrated, Charismatic Christianity, defined by Lugo and colleagues (2006:1) as characterized by 'lively, highly personal faiths, which emphasize such spiritually renewing "gifts of the Holy Spirit" as speaking in tongues, divine healing and prophesying', constitutes almost a third of the world's 2 billion Christians. In any case, it has the fastest rate of growth by far among the denominations, especially in the Global South where the 'centre of gravity' of the religion now resides (Jenkins 2011, 4; Johnson and Chung 2004, 166–181). Thus, the question goes to the heart of contemporary Christian self-expression. Would Martin Luther fit in?

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[2] *Exsurge Domine* (Latin for 'Arise O Lord') was the incipit of the papal bull issued by Pope Leo X on 15 June 1520 refuting Luther's 95 theses and threatening him with excommunication if he didn't recant. The bull itself was titled *Bulla contra errores Martini Lutheri et sequacium* (Bull against the errors of Martin Luther and his followers), but it has traditionally become known by its incipit.

[3] Despite minor criticisms as to the reliability of some of the data he employed and further subtle differences within sub-groups, Barrett's three wave taxonomy of the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement is nevertheless universally accepted by scholars as

The answer is even more pertinent given the significant trans-denominational influence of the movement leading to the transformation of all the major denominations, including the Roman Catholic Church (Botha 2007:295; Robeck Jr and Yong 2014; Synan 2012). This globalising phenomenon, which Fischer (2011:95; cf., Coleman 2000) labels as the 'charismatisation of worldwide Christianity', certainly raises the question of Luther's legacy. Is the Charismatic renewal a natural outcome, or even, as some have concluded, a progression of the Protestant Reformation? Or, as others by contrast have opined, is it a dangerous perversion of the Protestant Reformation, which will potentially undermine its gains and incipiently replace it with a pseudo-sacralised ritualistic religion not unlike the medieval Roman Catholic Church of Luther's time?

Neither is the answer merely hypothetical, for the question has played a major role in fuelling no small amount of disputations in some denominations. A case in point is the several decades of wrangle within the world-wide Lutheran federation as it agonized over how to handle its encounter with the Charismatic renewal (Berger 2012:45–50; Grislis 1981:3–25; Missouri Synod 1972; Riley 2013; Simojoki 2002:269–287; Vondey 2016:324–333; Wilson 2016a:25–32)[4]. Even more pressing in practical relevance are the concerns being expressed in the Global

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providing sound foundation for a pragmatic definition of a rather nebulous phenomenon (cf. Adogame 2010:498–518).

[4] The difficulties with Charismatic renewal within modern Lutheranism centres around three key foci, namely, (a) the mechanism of the Spirit's work in Christian experience, an issue which on the surface appears to some to hack back to Luther's arguments with the 'spiritualists', (b) the apparent contradiction between the perceived 'theology of glory' in some Charismatic circles and Luther's 'theology of the cross', and (c) whether in the light of the above it is possible to construct a Lutheran pneumatology which is compatible with Charismatic pneumatology. For a review of the history of this internal wrangle, see Wilson (2016b).

South regarding the potential links between the Charismatic renewal and the re-emergence of sacerdotalism and apparently Christianized magical practices in some Churches (Anderson 2002:167–184; Csordas 2007:295–314; Robbins 2009; Vásquez 2009:273–286). Even if the suggested links were tenuous, they nevertheless demonstrate that the question has profound practical implications, as it places the Charismatic movement in the dock. Would Martin Luther have embraced or would he have rejected the movement?

Nor is such an internal critique restricted to the Global South. Patterson and Rybarczyck (2007) have, for example, raised admittedly different sets of questions regarding the future of Pentecostalism in the United States, an issue which inevitably dovetails with the question of the denomination's organic relationship with the Protestant Reformation. Thus, this is a fair question to ask: after half a millennium of the Protestant reformation, would Martin Luther get on with today's Charismatised Christianity?

While not aiming to fully answer this question in a definitive manner, the present article seeks to make a contribution towards identifying a transparent methodology for its investigation. Using a selection of examples, I shall first of all critically evaluate two common methods of investigation that are adopted for answering the question, namely, the historical and theological approaches. I then set out and defend an exegetical approach which directly engages with Luther's expositions of passages that are foundational to the Charismatic movement. Particularly, I argue that this would have been Luther's preferred approach. I devote a final section to test this proposal by engaging with Luther's expositions of Romans 12:3–8, a passage which is foundational to the movement. Though not fully conclusive, as it

focuses on a single passage, the exercise nevertheless demonstrates the method's superiority.

2. The Historical Approach

It was inevitable that the Charismatic movement should be analysed in terms of its historical precedents, antecedents, and heritage, given its rapid transformation of the complexion of contemporary Christianity. What was equally predictable, considering the sometimes imprecise and anachronistic tendencies of historical enquiry, was for that approach to yield two conflicting judgements, namely, (a) Luther was proto-Charismatic, and, (b) Luther's opponents were proto-Charismatic.

2.1. Luther the proto-Charismatic

A common historical approach places Luther and Charismatics in the same pedigree by identifying parallels between them. Often, this argument goes that the aims, emphases and results of Luther's reformation boil down to restoring Christianity to its New Testament form and practice, and in that sense the Charismatic movement is fulfilling, or even upgrading Luther's programme to its logical conclusion. It is certainly in this sense that the Charismatic renewal has been labelled by some as 'the New Reformation' (Botha 2007:295), or the 'third Reformation' (Lindberg 1983) or even 'the New Pentecost' (Knitter 1991:32–41).

The genesis of this argument, however, goes far back to the very beginnings of the Pentecostal movement when its foundational leaders identified their heritage and self-understanding in Luther's mould, even though they rendered their arguments in different forms. Crawford (1906:1; cf., Jacobsen 2003:64), one of the pioneers of the Azusa Street

Revival [5] who went on to found *The Apostolic Faith Church* denomination, for example, argued that, what she called, 'Pentecostal baptism', was a natural progression of the historical restorationist movements going back to Luther:

> All along the ages men have been preaching a partial Gospel. A part of the Gospel remained when the world went into the Dark Ages. God has from time to time raised up men to bring back the truth to the church. He raised up Luther to bring back to the world the doctrine of justification by faith. He raised up another reformer in John Wesley to establish Bible holiness in the church. Then he raised up Dr Cullis who brought back to the world the wonderful doctrine of divine healing. Now he is bringing back the Pentecostal Baptism to the church.

The same sentiment is expressed by another Azusa Street Revival pioneer, McPherson (1919:396), who defined her devotees' experiences of rejection by the wider Church as following in the tradition of Luther. Interestingly, McPherson asserts that Luther received the doctrine of justification by faith through a vision. So, after recounting her own visionary experience in which she received Joel 1:4 and 2:25 as setting out a dispensational pattern for Church history, she proceeds to argue that Luther fulfilled the first part of that pattern (1919:395):

> Martin Luther one day was walking up the steps of the cathedral on his hands and knees over broken glass, endeavouring to do penance, thereby seeking to atone for his sins. As he was toiling painfully

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[5] The Azusa Street Revival, which began with a meeting in Los Angeles on 9th April 1906, is commonly identified as the inaugural session of the Charismatic renewal. A few scholars, however, assert an earlier beginning of the movement in the Bethel Bible School led by Charles Fox Parham in Topeka, Kansas on New Year's Eve 1900 (Synan 1971:101). For recent analyses of its place in the history of the Pentecostal movement, see Robeck (2017) and Liardon (2006).

and laboriously up the steps in this manner, blood trickling from his hands and knees, cut by the broken glass, he heard a voice from heaven saying: 'Martin Luther, the Just shall live by Faith'. At the words, a great light fell from Heaven. It banished the darkness and doubts, it illuminated the soul of Martin Luther, and revealed the finished work of Calvary and the blood that alone can atone for sin.

The veracity of this uncorroborated account is, at best, uncertain (cf., Wilson 2016b:76). Yet, it evidently served the rhetorical function of legitimating the movement by locating its self-understanding in the mainstream of Protestantism, certainly at the initial stages, when the movement was being rejected. All the same, the story illustrates the hermeneutics of some of the founding leaders of the Pentecostal movement. To them, and certainly within the earliest publications of the Pentecostal movement, Luther was the arch proto-Charismatic whose reforming programme was being naturally progressed through the renewal (Atter 1976; Dayton 1987). Coulter (2012:298–319) has also argued that this characterisation by pioneer Pentecostals as Luther's heirs was one of the main factors that ensured that Pentecostalism became trans-denominational, as it enabled the movement to form a pliable self-understanding.

Not all of today's Charismatics will repeat these claims of the Azusa Street pioneers, certainly not with as much confidence. Even so, the notion that Luther was proto-Charismatic continues to be advanced even if in nuanced ways. So, for example, Botha's (2007:295) claim that the Charismatic renewal 'is perhaps the most significant development in the Christian church since the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century and it certainly has changed the face of Christianity irrevocably' is deliberately evocative of this sentiment. Similarly, in his account of the earliest experiences of the Charismatic renewal within certain Episcopal Churches in the US, Christenson (2010; cf., Burgess

2011) draws a historical trajectory linking its beginnings with Luther's posting of the 95 theses. It is with an identical assumption also that Kay (2017:1–13) conducts a comparative study of Lutheran and Pentecostal spirituality with the aim of identifying commonalities between them. Thus, even those in this category who don't trace a direct lineage between the Charismatic movement and Luther nevertheless see a significant number of parallels for the reformer to serve as its forerunner.

2.2. Luther's opponents as proto-Charismatics

In direct contradiction to the above self-understanding of some Charismatics are those of their critics who see the exact opposite, that in fact the more suited historical antecedents of Charismatic Christianity were Luther's 'other' opponents, namely, the spiritualists, 'enthusiasts' and particularly, the 'heavenly prophets' of Zwickau. The nature of the arcane debates between Luther and these particular reforming opponents has been so well researched (cf. Burnett 2014; Loewen 2015; Windhorst 1977:339–348) that revisiting it may hereby be dispensed with. What is of interest is the line of argument which postulates that these opponents directly anticipated the Charismatic movement. Luther, it is thus argued by some critics of Charismatics, would have denounced the Charismatic movement just as much as he denounced these 'heavenly prophets'.

Frequently, the parallels are claimed to boil down to their shared untrammelled emotionalism, which Luther deplored. But it is sometimes also argued that the two share similar theological outlooks. An example of this line of thinking is expressed, for example, by Berger (2012:47–48), who, while explaining why as a Lutheran cessationist he dissented from Pentecostalism, compares Pentecostals with Luther's opponents by asserting: 'Luther himself had serious disagreements with

the "spiritualists" (*Schwärmer*)[6] of his time, who evinced many of the characteristics associated with Pentecostalism'.

A more extensive example of this argument is offered by MacArthur (2013) in his broad-brush and somewhat intemperate denunciation of the Charismatic movement. After setting out an argument linking Charismatic worship with the unauthorized fire offered by Nadab and Abihu before the Lord in Leviticus 10, MacArthur argues for a historical lineage of the 'enthusiasts' of Luther's time through the post-reformation and modern era to the Charismatic movement. He states: 'the fanatical fringes of the reformation, in particular, shared a number of characteristics in common with the charismatics: including various ecstatic experiences, and an insistence that they were receiving new revelation from the Holy Spirit' (2013:79). Charismatic Christianity in his view therefore belongs to a succession of dangerous but failed expressions of perverted worship going back to Luther's opponents.[7]

Not all who associate Luther's opponents with the Charismatic movement, however, have expressed it with vituperative polemics as MacArthur does. While some, (e.g. Foller 2005, 333–351; Linberg 1983:109) accept that the similarities between Luther's opponents and the Charismatic movement are circumstantial, they nevertheless argue

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[6] The term *Schwärmer*, or 'enthusiast' was first used by Luther to characterize Karlstadt who had expressed the view that the Spirit sometimes spoke to the believer in the immediate situation without the believer having to hear God's word proclaimed. Luther's objection was that this view placed too much confidence in the human spirit which to him was too corrupt and unreliable to be a channel of God's direction.

[7] Videos of the *Strange Fire Conference*, which preceded the publication of MacArthur's book, offer similar arguments by Sproul (2013) and Lawson (2013). For a book-length rebuttal of MacArthur's arguments, see Brown (2015). See also Jungkuntz's (1977:166–167) argument that mistranslations of sections of Luther's *Smalcald Articles* have played no small part in fuelling the common equation of Charismatics with Luther's 'spiritualist' opponents.

that Luther would have disapproved of the Charismatic movement because like the 'heavenly prophets', the movement's emphasis on experiencing the Holy Spirit lacks Luther's stress on objectivity in relation to justification by faith.

2.3. Assessment of the historical approach

It is evident from the above that the historical approach delivers a sharply conflicting and irreconcilable verdict on the nature of the continuities or discontinuities between Luther and the Charismatic movement. The situation is, of course, not helped by the amorphous nature of the Charismatic movement itself, a fact which enables its defenders as well as detractors to pick and choose which bits of history suit their view. But even with a more rigorous definition, the historical method is bound to prove inadequate, as it is amenable to anachronisms and biases of investigators. History, as Malak (1989:182) has quipped, 'is in the eye of the beholder or projector: we do not have one history but histories'.

A more serious fault with the current historical approaches is their tendency to inadequately consider the effects of the socio-cultural and political contexts within which the historical anecdotes and especially Luther's debates with his opponents developed. An obvious example of this error is the simplistic equation of the 'enthusiasts' with modern Charismatics based on the presumption of shared pneumatology. [8]

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[8] Luther's (2000:8.3) definition of 'enthusiasm' was the attitude that one can 'have the Spirit apart from and before contact with the Word'. In accusing his opponents of being 'enthusiasts', therefore, Luther was making a precise theological point about the conditions under which the Spirit directs an individual believer. He argued that the Spirit's direction occurs only as the 'external' word of God was being proclaimed, while his opponents countered that the 'internal' word of God was also viable in guiding the believer. Clearly, this was a narrow and arcane debate which does not easily transfer to a modern dispute over pneumatology. This is not to say that the two

Indeed, as Linberg (1983:110) argues, Luther's opponents were 'not as obsessed with pneumatology but more concerned with the contrast between the "outer" and the "inner" Word'.

Moreover, Luther's own tendency to sometimes exaggerate the positions of his opponents, or even pass judgement on their presumed errors without adequately acquainting himself with the details of their arguments means that he is not an entirely reliable historical source for understanding the viewpoints of these opponents. Zahl (2010:341) has, for example, argued that Luther prematurely labelled the theological arguments of the enthusiasts as stemming from their naïve anthropology, a judgement which, if correct, undermines scholarly construction of the theological positions of the historical 'enthusiasts'.

These considerations jettison the conclusions that could be made through historical comparisons of Charismatics with Luther's opponents. A similar pitfall afflicts the superficial equation of Luther's reforming instincts with Charismatic Christianity, certainly, without due considerations for the precise nature of Luther's critique of the Church of his day. Clearly, the historical method is useful in adding colour and flavour to our understanding of the context of Luther's more considered judgements, especially in relation to the interpretation of passages foundational to the Charismatic renewal. On its own, however, the method is flawed by its proneness to subjectivism.

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parties were not as entrenched. All the same, the bone of contention is definitely different from the common impression that for Luther, 'enthusiasm' represented 'over-realized eschatology, civic disorder and subjectivistic theological error' (Zahl 2010:342).

3. The Theological Approach

The theological approach attempts to locate continuities or discontinuities between Luther's theology, as may be reliably constructed by contemporary theologians, on the one hand, and Pentecostalism on the other hand. Unsurprisingly, this approach often focuses on comparative pneumatology, after all, 'Pentecostalism is a movement of the Holy Spirit' (Asamoah-Gyadu 2008:9). However, as I shortly also show, there are significant continuities between Luther's apocalyptic demonology[9] and Charismatic Christianity.

3.1. Luther's pneumatology and Charismatic Christianity

After centuries of neglect, Luther's pneumatology has of late received substantial attention, undoubtedly in response to the Charismatic renewal's growing influence (Bloomquist 2008; Dabney 2000:511–524; Fischer 2011:95–111; Krueger 1974; Lugazia 2010; Mann 2007:111–116; Maseko 2015; Silcock 2014:394–309). Yet, several factors have turned this comparative enterprise into a tricky business. To start with, though there are widespread references to the Holy Spirit in Luther's writings and discourses, most of these ideas were framed in the service of his more pressing theological concerns, namely, the three *Solas: Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, and Sola Fides*. This sharply contrasts with the foregrounded pneumatology of Charismatics.

Furthermore, and perhaps apart from the mentions in his Catechisms, in those situations where Luther enunciated his applied pneumatology, these were articulated during his debates with the 'enthusiasts'.

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[9] Apart from pneumatology and demonology, a few scholars have also pointed to a significant discontinuity between Luther's theology of the Cross and what is perceived to be triumphalistic tendencies of the Charismatic movement's eschatology (see Courey 2016).

Accordingly, his contribution to these debates was limited to constricted and nuanced issues. By contrast Charismatic pneumatology is existentially framed.

Besides, though Luther insisted on mystical Christian experience from encounter with the objectively proclaimed word, he was, like many in medieval German enlightenment circles of his time; wary of 'subjective experiences' that may be wrongly attributed to the Spirit.[10] This again sharply contrasts with Charismatic experiential pneumatology which, much influenced by postmodernism, is mistrustful of overly cognitive and intellectual emphases, and certainly thrives in popular 'grassroots' circles (Johnson and Chung 2004; Johnson 2009:479–483; Johnson 2014: 265–288).

Given these apparent divergences of contexts, emphases, and practical applications, it was inevitable that some scholars would conclude that Luther's pneumatology was incompatible with Pentecostalism. But three phases of nuanced assessments of this incompatibility are discernible in the literature. One of the first[11] comprehensive and systematic theological assessments was by the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod 1972:29 cf., Bloch-Hoell 1964;

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[10] Luther's (1958:73) accusation that the 'heavenly prophets' wished to 'swallow the Holy Spirit feathers and all' is one example of his sometimes trivialising polemics betraying his caution.

[11] Even before then, some Charismatics had tended to put Lutherans on the defensive by their critique of the perceived 'coldness' of non-Charismatic worship and general ineffectiveness of witness by other Christians. The following statement by Bennett (1963:16), one of the pioneers of Episcopalian Charismatics, was not uncommonly expressed by some charismatics: 'The church is in a mess, organized Christianity a failure. Why? Because the Holy Spirit has not had a fair chance to work experientially in the church… It is time to stop relying on intellectual analyses and to start relying on spiritual experience. After all Christianity is not an intellectual matter at all. It is a purely personal and spiritual matter'. Thus the conclusions of non-compatibility were shaped by mutual polemics.

Krueger 1974:7; McDonnell 1980) in which it essentially concluded that the two pneumatologies were incompatible. Appealing to Luther's debate with the 'heavenly prophets', the report for example posits:

> The emphasis of our Lutheran heritage on the external Word as the instrument of the Holy Spirit helps prevent a subjectivism that seeks divine comfort and strength through an interior experience rather than in the objective word of the Gospel. To accent the former rather than the latter as the basis of Christian certainty can easily lead either to pride or despair instead of humble trust in the Gospel promises.

This view went through several revisions over the years to a second stage in the 1990s to 2000s in which some Lutheran scholars became less dismissive of Charismatic pneumatology. So, for example, the conclusion of the 2008 study by *The Lutheran World Federation* led by Bloomquist (2008) is more nuanced and dialogical to the point of agreeing that Lutheran pneumatology had a lot to learn from Charismatic pneumatology.[12] This dialogical approach is, however, not universally held, as some scholars (e.g. Berger 2012:45–50; Foller 2005:333–351; Petersen 2011:133) continue to maintain that the two pneumatologies were incompatible.

With the growing confidence of Pentecostal scholarship, a third phase seems to be emerging in recent years in which some Charismatic scholars are criticising Luther's pneumatology, thus turning the table somewhat on Luther. So Zahl (2010:341–363) for example asserts that

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[12] One way in which scholars have explored such dialectical intersections was to broaden the traditional understanding of Luther's pneumatology to include other considerations which logically dovetail with it. So, for example, it is evident that Luther's mysticism which is inevitably bound up with his pneumatology finds parallels with the Charismatic renewal, leading some scholars to posit far more closer intersections than previously envisaged (e.g. Courey 2016:148; Loewen 2015:166; McGinn 2015:50–65; Strier 2007:271–303).

Luther allowed his 'bleak anthropology'[13] to weaken and undermine his pneumatology as it over-shadowed and inhibited his understanding of the transforming effect of the Spirit on the human being's reception of the Spirit's inner direction. A related critique has also been made by Dabney (2001), who asserts that Luther sometimes expressed views of the Spirit which were more anthropological than fitting for the third Person of the Trinity.

How far this latest phase will go in reversing the gains of the second phase of rapprochement remains to be seen. All the same, it seems to me that given the generally different emphases of the two pneumatologies, the best result that could be achieved in the comparison between Luther's and Charismatic pneumatology is accommodation, and perhaps complementation. Wilson's (2016b) recent conclusion in her assessment of Luther's place in Global Pentecostalism is thus insightful in highlighting the nature of the intersections between the two: 'The encounter of Lutheran theology with Pentecostalism suggests that both sides need to develop more comprehensive accounts of Christian experience and its role in doctrine, piety, and church life'. It is certainly difficult to determine the degree of fit between the two without direct engagement of their respective interpretations of pneumatological passages.

3.2. Luther's demonology and Charismatic Christianity

A second example of the theological approach to assessing the compatibilities between Luther and Charismatic Christians focuses on

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[13] Luther's anthropology is receiving several critical evaluations, not only with regard to how it influenced his general theological outlook (Gaebler 2002:115–132) but also how it has shaped European civilization for the last half-millennia (Muhlhan 2012; Pedersen 2017:213–234). I am at present unable to adequately judge the anthropology of the Charismatic movement so as to be competent at comparing it with Luther's.

Luther's apocalypticism, and specifically his theological views and praxes on demonology and exorcism,[14] even though this area is not adequately explored by scholars. The fact is, on the face of it, Luther's writings evince features similar to Charismatic demonology that would have made him comfortable at a Charismatic deliverance service. The following statement was originally made by Luther in his commentary on Galatians (Cameron 2010:166), and evidently reflects not only his cosmology, but more specifically, his demonology. It might as well have been uttered from today's Charismatic pulpit:

> For it is undeniable that the devil lives, yes, rules, in all the world. Therefore witchcraft and sorcery are works of the devil, by which he not only injures people but sometimes, with God's permission, destroys them. But we are all subject to the devil, both according to our bodies and according to our material possessions. We are guests in the world, of which he is the ruler and the god. Therefore the bread we eat, the drinks we drink, the clothes we wear—in fact, the air and everything we live on in the flesh—are under his reign.

This demonology and its supporting cosmological framework are commonplace not just in his writings, but also in his theological praxes (Batka 2014:233–253; Cording 2003:474; Oberman 2006). In his *Table Talk* for example, Luther (1883:580) vividly describes, in a manner that indicates his belief in the reality of demonic and satanic influences in his world, how demons tormented a husband to murder his wife. He also expressed the view that his frequent ailments were attacks by devils, and in some situations acted in consonant with that belief. The famous incident in which Luther threw an inkwell at the devil while in

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[14] This is evocatively represented by his famous hymn, *A Mighty Fortress is our God* (German: *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*). For a recent examination of Luther's demonology in the light of Magic and Occult of his medieval times, see Edwards (2017).

seclusion at the Wartburg Castle is another example of how demonology permeated his theology and praxes (cf. Oberman 1990:75–79).

Luther's albeit extremely unfair characterization of his reformation opponents as demon-inspired is another evidence of his acute awareness of demonic activity against his work and ministry.[15] In his letter to Bernard Wurzelmann on 2nd November 1535, Luther employs his own exorcism ministry as example to encourage Wurzelmann:

> The first thing you and your congregation ought to do is this: Pray fervently and oppose Satan with your faith, no matter how stubbornly he resists. About ten years ago we had an experience in this neighbourhood with a very wicked demon, but we succeeded in subduing him by perseverance and by unceasing prayer and unquestioning faith. The same will happen among you if you continue in Christ*s name to despise that derisive and arrogant spirit and do not cease praying. By this means I have restrained many similar spirits in different places, for the prayer of the Church prevails at last.

These examples, together with the humorous self-report of Luther 'farting at the devil' (Allen 2010), might resonate well with many Charismatics who frequently 'rebuke' and even, like Luther himself,

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[15] He writes regarding the 'enthusiasts' in his *Smalcald Articles* (Luther 2000:VIII.5-6; 9–11): 'All this is the old devil and old serpent, who also converted Adam and Eve into enthusiasts, and led them from the outward Word of God to spiritualising and self-conceit, and nevertheless he accomplished this through other outward words... In a word, enthusiasm inheres in Adam and his children from the beginning [from the first fall] to the end of the world, [its poison] having been implanted and infused into them by the old dragon, and is the origin, power [life], and strength of all heresy, especially of that of the Papacy and Mahomed. Therefore, we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments. It is the devil himself whatsoever is extolled as Spirit without the Word and Sacraments'.

practise 'laughing at the devil' (LW 41.185; cf., Westhelle 2003, 1–27). To Luther, as would later be the case with today's Charismatics, practical Christian existence was a spiritual warfare in which the devil constantly seeks to frustrate the Christian.[16] The believer's response must be to claim the victory of Christ over these powers. That, Luther frequently did. And this would resonate reasonably well with Charismatics.

It is true that in this respect, Luther was really a son of his generation and reflects a cosmology that gave prominence to evil spirits in the world. In fact, this point is sometime invoked in attempts to tone down or effectively demythologize Luther of his demonology (e.g. Berger 2012; Edwards 2017). But it must be countered that even though Luther's demonology was admittedly influenced by the cosmology of his time, its pervasiveness in his theological discourse and praxes indicates his belief that he regarded such an outlook as compatible with Scripture and not just with his culture. As argued by Oberman (2006:104), Luther 'distinguished sharply between faith and superstition' of his time. Indeed, as is evident in his qualifications in *Table Talk*, Luther often dismissed some myths of his culture as fanciful and certainly different from the spiritual realities of evil spirits.

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[16] Luther (1883) records this account about his encounter with the devil in his letter to Jerome Weller in *Table Talk*: 'When I awoke last night, the devil came and wanted to debate with me; he rebuked and reproached me, arguing that I was a sinner. To this I replied: Tell me something new, devil! I already know that perfectly well; I have committed many a solid and real sin. Indeed, there must be good honest sins—not fabricated and invented ones—for God to forgive for His beloved Son's sake, who took all my sins upon Him so that now the sins I have committed are no longer mine but belong to Christ. This wonderful gift of God I am not prepared to deny [in my response to the devil], but want to acknowledge and confess'. On recent studies on Luther and the Reformers and Spiritual Warfare, see Edwards (2017), Loewen (2015) and Ristau (2010).

Accordingly, attempts to expunge Luther of his demonology merely yield not the historical Luther, but a twenty-first-century European Liberal theologian. Luther's demonology played such an important role in his theology and praxes that no theological assessment is complete without due consideration of this element. As Oberman (2006:105) astutely puts it, 'There is no way to grasp Luther's milieu of experience and faith unless one has an acute sense of his view of Christian existence between God and the devil: without a recognition of Satan's power, belief in Christ is reduced to an idea about Christ'. These examples would suggest the potential for significant commonalities between Luther's and Charismatic demonology.

The matter is, however, not helped by the vestigial nature of Charismatic demonology (Collins 2009; Csordas 1997; Haustein 2011:534–552). Thus for now, the comparison can only remain at the superficial levels. All the same, even after accounting for differences in socio-cultural contexts spanning the 500 years between them, one can readily detect several areas of potential convergences. For instance, both Luther and Charismatics take Satan and demonic attacks against Christians seriously. They both emphasise spiritual warfare as a reality in the believer's daily life, even though Luther's concerns focused more on the devil's schemes to undermine scripture, while for many Charismatics today, demonology is framed in existential terms. And they both underline the victory of Christ's death over the evil powers, even if, as noted earlier, some sections of Charismatic Christianity exhibit features of triumphalistic over-realised eschatology that would be incompatible with Luther's theology of the cross.

3.3. Assessment of the theological method

Compared with the historical method, the theological method inheres less glaring deficiencies. Even so there are important weaknesses. To

begin with, because much of Luther's pneumatology is constructed by historical theologians without adequately precise recourse to his exegetical practices, the conclusions tend to mirror the theological leanings of the writers. It is thus unsurprising that scholars of liberal persuasion tend to read Luther's pneumatology in overly intellectual terms stripped of ideas that might emphasise the experiential aspects of the Spirit's work.[17] Such studies inevitably yield outcomes which find significant discontinuities between Luther's and Charismatic pneumatology.

Furthermore, even those theologians who consider the experiential aspects of the Spirit's work tend to sometimes do so in a negative fashion by linking such ideas to the 'enthusiasts'. This results in skewing the evidence to the extent that it is difficult to compare with Charismatic Christianity. It is thus evident that the same contextual exigencies which shaped some of Luther's specific pneumatology in his debate with the 'enthusiasts' are reflected in some contemporary Lutheran assessments of Pentecostal pneumatology.

As argued above, examination of the intersections between Charismatic and Luther's demonology is likely to yield significant fruit in both directions. Even so this will prove inadequate for answering the questions about their compatibilities without precise examination of their exegetical and hermeneutical practices. Put together then, it must

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[17] The notion that Luther disavowed experiential religion is a complete figment of the modern liberal imagination, for if Luther achieved anything at all it was his resolute insistence upon an 'intensely personal understanding of religion' (Thompson 2008:25), an emphasis which he framed in direct opposition to late medieval Christianity. Luther of course was right in insisting that the affective experience of the Spirit must be validated by the external Word of God, a doctrine that many Charismatics today would affirm. Even so, the indirect critique of Charismatic Christianity by recourse to the argument that Luther would have rejected their emphasis on experience is incorrect.

be concluded that what the theological method gains on the one hand, it loses on the other. I next argue for a method which lacks these disadvantages.

4. The Exegetical Method

Given the deficiencies of the historical and theological methods, I propose an exegetical method which is guided by Luther's own expositions on passages which are foundational to the Charismatic movement. This method involves three steps, namely, (a) cataloguing bible passages that are foundational to the Charismatic movement, (b) close analyses of Luther's expositions of these passages, and (c) evaluation of the compatibilities between Luther's expositions of the passage with the Charismatic perspective.

The advantages of this method are evident. For a start, it lacks the inherent biases of the historical and theological approaches, as it is grounded by specific passages which have received Luther's close and in some cases, extended attention. Secondly, it limits the effects of the socio-cultural contextual exigencies which sometimes skewed Luther's theological debates with his opponents. This advantage is not completely without fault, for it cannot be claimed that Luther's expositions were without due consideration of the socio-cultural exigencies of his time. As we shall see, his expositions do reflect his dogged commitment to relating scripture to real life experiences. All the same, the expositions on biblical passages tend to lack the intense diatribes and polemics against opponents. They are accordingly more likely to reflect Luther's balanced views on the subjects.

Thirdly, the seamless intersection of Luther's bibliology with his pneumatology makes it imperative that the two subjects be examined

together. In other words, because Luther believed not only that the Spirit is the supreme interpreter of the Word, but conversely that the Spirit is given through the ministry of the Word, any investigation of one will have to be dependent on Luther's formulation of the role of the other. Indeed, it has been argued (e.g. Minto 2005:256–272; Nel 2015:1–21) that this close combination of bibliology with pneumatology is one of the commonalities between Luther and Charismatics.[18] Thus the best way to compare their pneumatologies is to examine how they both exposited particular pneumatological passages.

But by far, the most important advantage of the exegetical method is that Luther himself would have preferred this method for assessing a Christian movement as flexible as the Charismatic renewal. For, there is no doubt that for Luther, scripture, and specifically plain exegesis of Scripture, must be the foundation of the Christian life in its entirety. So, for example, when he was confronted by the question of marriage vis-à-vis celibacy, Luther instinctively performed an exegetical commentary of 1 Corinthians 7 for the answer. So also, on the shocking death of the Elector in August 1532, Luther resorted to a series of seventeen exegetical sermons on 1 Corinthians 15 to help address the question of the Christian and death. It is evident that for Luther, the answer to

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[18] Even though they were uttered by Luther, the following statements as catalogued by Wood (1969:160) might as well emanate from a Charismatic pulpit: 'God gives His Word and the interpretation through the Holy Spirit'. 'The Spirit is none other than the Interpreter Spirit' [LW 13.16]. 'Without the Spirit, there is no revelation or any interpretation' [LW 7.112]. 'The Holy Spirit must be the Teacher and Guide' [LW 13.87]. It was 'the work of the Holy Spirit alone' to illuminate the heart of Joseph so as to be able to explain Pharaoh's dreams: it is His function to expound the Scriptures [7.150]. The disclosures of God 'require the Holy Spirit as an interpreter'. Scripture's 'divine and heavenly doctrines' of 'repentance, sin, grace, justification, worship to God' cannot enter a man's heart 'unless they be taught by the great Spirit' [LW 12.203].

practical and non-practical questions related to Christian existence can only be found through careful exegesis of relevant passages of scripture.

It was, in fact, by no accident of history that three days after his doctorate in October 1512, Luther was appointed as '*Lectura Biblia*, (Lecturer in Biblical Studies) in the University of Wittenberg, a post in which he remained until he died' (Tomlin 2012:24). He wrote in the *Table Talk* (1531:6): 'I have grounded my preaching upon the literal word; he that pleases may follow me; he that will not may stay. I call upon St Peter, St Paul, Moses, and all the Saints, to say whether they ever fundamentally comprehended one single word of God, without studying it over and over and over again'. His whole life experience was built upon this principle.[19]

This attitude towards God's word also governed how Luther assessed the patristic tradition inherited from the past, the dogmatic rulings of the papacy and Church Councils, and his own Christian existence and praxes. He asserted, 'When anything contrary to scripture is decreed in a council, we ought to believe scripture rather than the council. Scripture is our court of appeal and bulwark; with it we can resist even an angel from heaven - as St. Paul commands in Galatians 1:8—let alone a pope and a council' (LW. 32.81; Quoted in Wood 1939:126). If

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[19] As assessed by Wood (1969:7): 'Luther's essential contribution lay in the realm of faith. He was the instrument of God in recalling the Church to the truth of the gospel. It is as the progenitor of the Protestant Reformation that he is to be assessed today. And it is recognised that the renewal he initiated was in the first instance theological rather than either ecclesiastical or political. It arose, moreover, from his own encounter with God in the Scriptures. It was because he thus experienced divine grace in Christ, through the medium of the written Word, that henceforward the Bible was to be central in the Reformation. Throughout his career as a remodeller of the Church, Luther occupied the chair of biblical exegesis at the University of Wittenberg. As he himself often explained, it was simply as he fulfilled his academic function of expounding the Word of God that the Reformation was effected. The title he most cherished was Doctor of Sacred Scripture'.

Luther were therefore to attend a Charismatic Church today, his immediate reaction would be to open his Bible to see if what was being done and said accorded with his interpretation of scripture. We can do no other.

This proposition is built upon two assumptions which have the potential to undo it. In the first place, it assumes that the phenomenon of the Charismatic renewal could be reduced to a set of foundational Scriptural passages, something that may prove elusive. The fact is, the movement is rather amorphous, varied, rapidly self-transforming and sometimes internally contradictory. The hermeneutical practices of some of its sections are also not always grounded on scripture.

Indeed, some may argue that to speak of a 'canon' of passages fundamental to the Charismatic renewal is a caricature, as the movement, at least at its historical inception, was founded upon, and continues to thrive on a hermeneutic which is more praxes-based than primarily scripture-derived. This charge harbours a large element of truth even though it is noteworthy that contemporary Charismatic scholars are redressing the balance even if the enterprise is hampered by the amorphous nature of the movement leading to mixtures of hermeneutics (cf. Keener 2011; Martin 2013; Oliverio 2012). Even so, it would appear that a few Bible passages are foundational to the movement's theology and can provide strong basis for implementing the exegetical method. I am here thinking of passages such as Acts 2, Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12–14, and Joel 2.

The second assumption is that Luther extensively expounded all the passages that are foundational to the Charismatic renewal. This is far from the case and thus somewhat poses as a delimiting factor. However, careful consideration of Luther's general approach to evaluating social phenomena in the light of scripture should serve as guide. Luther's

exegetical test of any phenomena, as demonstrated in his arguments with the Anabaptists and the radicals, was inclusivism rather than exclusivism (cf. Tomlin 2012:136–137). In other words, Luther was much more generous and willing to grant the validity of a theologically sound external phenomenon if the scriptures did not explicitly denounce it. By contrast, it was the radicals who objected to phenomena or practice if they were not explicitly sanctioned by scripture, even if that phenomenon appeared theologically sound. This general factor must be considered in assessing Charismatic teachings that are based on passages for which Luther did not provide significant expositions.

5. Exegetical Engagement with Luther on Romans 12:3–8

To test the viability of the exegetical method, I hereby engage Luther's expositions of Romans 12:3-8. The passage has been chosen for this purpose for two main reasons. First of all, it addresses one of the distinctive features of the Charismatic renewal, namely, that God continues to grace his Church with the *charismata* of the Holy Spirit so as to edify its members and empower them for his service. Examining it goes, therefore, to the foundations of the movement. As Dunn (1988:720) astutely puts it, in Romans 12:3–8, 'Paul speaks as a charismatic to charismatics'. The passage in particular gives prominence to the gift of prophesying, a *charism* which receives significant attention among Charismatics. How do Luther's expositions of the passage compare with the Charismatic perspective?

Secondly, the passage is located in one of Luther's most important and enduring theological outputs, namely his lectures on Romans. Having been converted through studying that epistle, Luther certainly viewed his work on Romans as centrepiece of the 'purity of the doctrine' (1531) and complained that interest in that letter had previously been missing

even among the Church Fathers. He thus commended his work to be closely studied. Luther would therefore likely approve of the choice of Romans 12:3–8 as test case.

Thankfully, there are at least two occasions in his works in which Luther extensively exposits Romans 12:3–8, namely, (a) in his Lectures on Romans from Spring of 1515 to Autumn of 1516 (Pauck 1961)[20] and (b) his two sermons on Romans 12:1–16 on the first and second Sundays after Epiphany (Lenker 1988). Luther also very briefly comments on Romans 12 in his later *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans* in 1546 where he uses a paragraph to generally set out his understanding of the role of the *charismata* in demonstrating Christian conduct that is 'governed by the Spirit' (1966 [1546]). While that paragraph does not offer much in terms of detailed exegetical explanations, it nevertheless gives a flavour of Luther's mature thoughts on the passage coming as it does three decades after his lectures.[21]

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[20] It is surprising that unlike the Psalms and Galatians, Luther did not return to write a full commentary on Romans, having written these lecture notes quite early in his professorial career even though admittedly the notes were extremely elaborate and certainly treasured by him. Pauck (1961:xxi) speculates that one possible reason for this apparent omission might be that a couple of years after completing the lectures, 'Philip Melanchthon established the tradition of lecturing on this book of Scripture' in the same university, benefitting no doubt from Luther's notes. This is plausible because due to his excellent abilities in the Greek language, Luther allocated most of the lectures on the New Testament in the University to his friend Melanchthon (Herrmann 2017:1). Luther might have judged therefore that updating the lectures into a commentary was redundant.

[21] The paragraph reads: 'In chapter 12, St. Paul teaches the true liturgy and makes all Christians priests, so that they may offer, not money or cattle, as priests do in the Law, but their own bodies, by putting their desires to death. Next he describes the outward conduct of Christians whose lives are governed by the Spirit; he tells how they *teach, preach, rule, serve, give*, suffer, love, live and act toward friend, foe and everyone. These are the works that a Christian does, for, as I have said, faith is not idle' (added emphases). Of interest is Luther's omission of direct reference to prophecy in the list

Moreover, the passage shares extensive cross-references with 1 Corinthians 12–14 and even though Luther does not intensely exegete 1 Corinthians 12–14, the cross-references enable an assessment of his general attitude to the operations of the *charismata*. These sources provide ample opportunities for an engagement with Luther's views on an issue central to Charismatic Christianity.

As Luther himself acknowledged in his lectures,[22] the passage lends itself to be sub-divided into three, namely, (a) Paul appeals for sober self-judgement—Romans 12:3, (b) Paul employs the body imagery to underscore unity in diversity of the Church—Romans 12:4–5, and (c) Paul cites seven *charismata* as examples of this diversity and appeals for appropriate attitude in their exercise for the benefit of the Church— Romans 12:6-8. I shall now examine how Luther explicates the passage and reflect on its intersections with the Charismatic perspective. But prior to that, a brief comment on Luther's translation of Romans 12:3–8 is in order.

5.1. Engaging Luther's translation of Romans 12:3–8

Luther's translation practice has become an area of intense research interest, as it reflects the complexities of his internal hermeneutical and theological wrestling with the text, his external conflict with the Church

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of the seven *charismata*, but this might be of little significance as he also omits a few other gifts in the list and mentions preaching as one of the gifts.

[22] He indeed berated the framers of the lectionary readings for arbitrarily and wrongly dividing Rom 12:1–16 into Rom 12:1–6 and Rom 12:6–16. He begins his sermon on Rom 12:6–16 thus: 'This lesson begins in a way that would seem to call for a portion properly belonging to the epistle for the preceding Sunday, and terminates short of its full connection. Evidently it was arranged by some unlearned and thoughtless individual, with a view simply to making convenient reading in the churches and not to its explanation to the people'.

authorities and also the linguistic influences of his translation on the subsequent development of the German language. As Methuen (2017:146) asserts, 'Luther was indeed concerned to produce a fluent and coherent German translation of the biblical text, but that he wished also to produce one that was theologically unambiguous. Not only linguistic considerations, but also Luther's theological priorities, and his definition of theological unambiguity, determined his definition of a good translation'. This assessment is borne out in Luther's *Open Letter on Translation* (1530) in which he underlines his self-consciousness and reflective methodology during translation.

Yet, it must be noted that, for the most part, Luther used the 1509 Basel Edition of the Vulgate for his Lectures on Romans (Pauck 1961:xix). Any assessment of his translation, therefore, needs to take account of possible influences of the Vulgate translation. Even so, and with reticence, some useful conclusions regarding Luther's hermeneutics and theology may emerge from analysis of his translation (Francis 2000:75–94; Hasty 2009:457–468; Methuen 2017:146–163; Noya 2017:47–55).

Table 1: Comparative translations of Romans 12:3c

Greek NT	Vulgate	Luther's German
ἑκάστῳ ὡς ὁ Θεὸς ἐμέρισε μέτρον πίστεως to each according as God divided measure of faith	*unicuique sicut Deus divisit mensuram fidei* to each according to God divided measure of faith	*ein jeglicher, nach dem Gott ausgeteilt hat das Maß des Glaubens* any man according to which God hath divided the measure of faith

Table 2: *Comparative translations of Romans 12:6b*

Greek NT	Vulgate	Luther's German
εἴτε προφητείαν, κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως whether prophesy according to the proportion of faith	*est nobis differentes sive prophetiam secundum rationem fidei* Whether prophecy, in proportion to faith	*Hat jemand Weissagung, so sei sie dem Glauben gemäß.* If any man has prophecy, let it be according to faith.

Thankfully, Luther's translation of our passage is straightforward and largely non-controversial. All the same, two points are worth noting about the translation in Luther's German Bible.[23] In the first place, Luther's translation of Romans 12:3c, a clause which is in any case fraught with interpretive difficulties, results in what would initially appear to be a reduced emphasis on the universality of the *charismata*. As table 1 above shows, he opts to translate *unicuique* (each) as *ein jeglicher* which has an ambiguous range of meanings from 'any one' through 'everyone' to 'each one'. It is tempting to surmise that this is of theological or hermeneutical importance. As will be seen, however, Luther's comments on the verse suggest otherwise.

Secondly, Luther's translation of Romans 12:6b (table 2 above) drops the equivalent of *rationem* (proportion), thus simply rendering Paul's point to be that prophesying must be 'according to faith'. As will shortly be addressed, the clause itself, with its evident linkage with Romans 12:3c is difficult to comprehend. Even so Luther's omission in the translations raises four possibilities which can only be resolved after closer examination of his expositions.[24]

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[23] Citations of Luther's German Bible are taken from (Luther 2002 [1534]). Unless otherwise stated, English translations of the Greek NT are from the NRSV.

[24] Firstly, did Luther find the clause to be an unnecessary repetition of the concept of *Maß des Glaubens* (measure of faith) which the Apostle refers to in 12:3c? Secondly, was Luther seeking to balance Rom 12:6a *mancherlei Gaben nach der Gnade* (various gifts [given] according to grace) with Rom 12:6b—*dem Glauben gemäß* (according to faith)? Thirdly, was he seeking to balance the phrasing of 12:6b with Paul's rendering of the manner in which the other charismata were to be exercised in 12:7–8? And fourthly, did Luther have a complex theological understanding of the operation of the charismata which is reflected by this omission?

5.2. Engaging Luther's expositions on Romans 12:3

In Romans 12:3, Paul begins what is an apparent transition, from his general exhortation to the Romans to offer themselves as spiritual sacrifices to God in response to his grace (12:1–2), to setting out specific instructions on their conduct towards one another in the household of God (12:9–15:33). He devotes this transition to explicate the 'unity in diversity' of the Church as 'one body' and the individuals in it as members of that body. As Bruce (1987:214) insightfully puts it, 'Diversity, not uniformity, is the mark of God's handiwork. It is so in nature; it is equally so in grace, and nowhere more so than in the Christian community'. This imagery and the potent ideas it connotes no doubt lays a solid foundation for the rest of the letter.

The transition is itself couched as an authoritative instruction, from the one who has been graced with the *charism* of apostleship, to believers each of whom have also received *charismata* to function appropriately within the body. Dunn (1988:719; cf. Fee 1994:604; Moo 1996:759; Osborne 2010:322) is therefore right in describing Romans 12:3 as placing the exhortation in the context of 'the mutuality of charismatic ministry within the body of Christ'. Certainly, the repeated stress on individual believers being uniquely gifted in the first half of our passage [25] matches the fundamental emphasis by contemporary Charismatics on the indispensability of the *charismata* for the spiritual growth of Christians within the corporate Church.

Paul emphasises that the *charismata* must be exercised within a code of practice of 'sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith

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[25] Mainly, παντὶ τῷ ὄντι ἐν ὑμῖν (12:3a, everyone among you), ἑκάστῳ ὡς (12:3c, to each as), μέλη πάντα οὐ (12:4b, not all members), and εἷς ἀλλήλων μέλη (12:5b, individually one another members).

(μέτρον πίστεως) that God has assigned'. The hortatory element of the passage is certainly reflected in the manner in which Paul proceeds to list seven *charismata* evidently as illustrations of how individual believers contribute to the unity in diversity of the fellowship through exercise of the gifts God has given each believer.

As intimated above, the interpretation of μέτρον πίστεως (measure of faith) is fraught with difficulties. Two possibilities are mooted by commentators. The first takes this phrase as expressing the divine standard of faith that God has set so believers would measure themselves by. In Moo's (1996:761) words, it refers to 'shared faith as the standard by which Christians are to regard themselves'. Or as Osborne (2010:323) puts it, 'we look at ourselves on the basis of that common faith God's grace has allotted to each of us'. The second view takes μέτρον πίστεως as referring to each individual believer receiving his or her own specific measure of faith so as to function appropriately in the gift to which they have been called. In Bruce's words (1987:215; cf. Dunn 1988:721), 'it denotes the spiritual power given to each Christian for the discharge of his or her special responsibility'.

Even though I lean towards the latter view, and I assume that most charismatics also do, it seems to me that a binary choice between the two options is generally unnecessary. It is true that the context suggests that Paul naturally had the second view in mind. All the same, it is impossible to imagine him rejecting the first view and so patently asserting that God has no universally applicable standard by which believers were to exercise the *charismata*. The whole passage in any case blends the two concepts of the uniqueness of the individual believer within a corporate outlook of the Church. Thus it could be said that God's standard of faith is gifted to the whole Church. But according to Romans 12:3, this universal standard finds its unique

expression in each believer in the manner in which God apportions the *charismata*. It will be interesting to now see how Luther approaches this verse.

Indeed, in his lecture notes on the passage, Luther naturally focuses on explaining the difficult *Maß des Glaubens* (measure of faith) phrase.[26] Admitting its difficulty, he rejects the first option of interpretation above, arguing that 'the apostle plainly states that different gifts are given according to this measure'. For Luther, the diversity of the gifts means that the 'measure of faith', which forms the basis of God's gifts, is also varied. This would seem to equate the gift of faith with the *charismata*, but as Luther clarifies, faith in itself is God's gift and so co-terminus with the *charismata*. The Apostle's explicit link between faith and the exercise of the gifts is crucial to Luther, for, as he argues, one cannot operate without the other:

> [F]aith is nothing else than the obedience of the spirit. But there are different degrees of the obedience of the spirit. For one of us exercises his obedience and faith here and another there, yet, we are all of one faith. Just so there prevails in a town one obedience to the prince, yet there are diverse ways of practising this obedience; nobody can presume to adopt someone else's way and neglect his own responsibility, for then confusion, sedition, and rebellion would develop in the commonwealth.

A similar interpretation is adopted in his sermon on the passage on the first Sunday after Epiphany, even though unlike in his earlier lectures, Luther also gives attention to other elements of the verse. So for example, he asserts that the passage lays the grounds for humble

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[26] In his lectures, Luther separated his comments on each verse into two parts; the *Gloss* was essentially translations of the text and occasional textual comments, and the *Scholia* in which Luther focused on particular phrases or clauses of relevance for extended commentary.

expression of the gifts as they are to be exercised within what he calls 'limits of faith':

> The believer should not esteem himself above others, nor attach to the gifts conferred upon himself greater value than he accords those conferred upon another. Otherwise he will be inclined to despise the lesser gifts and emphasize the more exalted ones, and to influence others to the same practice… every man should estimate his own goodness by his faith. Faith is something all Christians have, though not in equal measure, some possessing more and others less.[27]

Luther's expositions of Romans 12:3 therefore throw up no new surprises, certainly to the contemporary Charismatic Christian. He evidently believed in the universal distribution of the gifts of the Spirit, and also asserted the primacy of their operation within the bounds of faith. Regardless of the interpretation of the difficult clause 'measure of faith',[28] Luther underlines, as Paul does, that the gifts must be exercised in sober self-judgement induced by faith, which is itself God's gift.

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[27] Luther repeats this idea later in his Second Sunday after Epiphany Sermon: 'Paul's peculiar choice of words here, referring to all gifts as the grace of God and the measure of faith, is meant to teach that no man may regard his individual gift as a peculiar instance in that respect, as do they who are not of the common faith'.

[28] In a further comment in his Second Sunday after Epiphany sermon, Luther resists an overly anthropological interpretation of this difficult clause by asserting how the faith so referred to has nothing to do with the human will or merit: '"Measure of faith" may be understood as implying that God imparts to some more of faith itself; and to others, less. But I presume Paul's thought in employing the expression is that faith brings gifts, which are its chief blessing. These are said to be according to the measure of our faith, and not to the measure of our will or our merit. We have not merited our gifts. Where faith exists, God honours it with certain gifts, apportioned, or committed, according to his will'.

5.3. Engaging Luther's expositions on Romans 12:4–5

In Romans 12:4–5, Paul employs the imagery of the body[29] to illustrate the concept of unity in diversity of the Christian community undergirded by proper operation of the gifts of the Spirit. In adducing this imagery, Paul is insisting that individual believers who are consecrated to God in response to his grace ought to function appropriately with the correct humble self-judgement of the gifts, so as to maintain this unity in diversity. The body imagery of Romans 12:4–5 therefore lays a strong foundation for explaining the operation of the gifts. This resonates well with the Charismatic ethos of egalitarian ecclesiology which pays attention to the indispensability of each believer in the Christian community.

In his lectures on Romans, Luther takes the lessons of the body imagery as self-evident, and so does not dwell much on its source. Instead, he criticizes the lack of interest in humility and piety within the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the time as counter to the spirit of this passage. After censuring the inordinate focus on external activities such as Church properties and ostentatious displays of wealth by priests and monks, Luther asserts: 'We practise all our piety in activities of this kind and are not a whit concerned about what the apostle here

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[29] Some interpreters are preoccupied with identifying the source for this imagery in Pauline discourse (e.g. Engberg-Pedersen 2010; Gupta 2010:518–536; Miller 2014; Sandnes 2002). However, the parallels that Paul adduces are so self-evident that if even he borrowed from a specific usage, the source would not have exerted any significant influence in his explication of the concept of unity in diversity in Christ's Church. This is not to dismiss the theological relevance of the imagery as Paul himself draws attention to it by his exhortation in Rom 12:1 to παραστῆσαι τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν θυσίαν ζῶσαν (present your bodies as living sacrifices). Even so his subsequent reference in Rom 12:5 to οἱ πολλοὶ ἓν σῶμά ἐσμεν ἐν Χριστῷ (we who are many are one body in Christ) indicates it is the referent of the imagery which concerns him more than the source.

commands. And I have not even mentioned the monstrous display of pride, ostentation, greed, dissipation, and ambition that is connected with all these enterprises'.

The body imagery received far more extensive attention in his Second Sunday after Epiphany sermon calling it, 'an apt and beautiful simile, one [Paul] makes use of frequently… It teaches directly and clearly the equality of all Christians; that one common faith should satisfy all; that gifts are not to be regarded as making one better, happier and more righteous than another, in the eyes of God'. The body simile, Luther argues, demonstrates how immensely interdependent believers are:

> The eye has not attained its place because of its power of seeing — not because it has merited its office as an organ of sight for the body. In the very beginning it derived its existence and its peculiar function of sight from the body. It cannot, therefore, boast in the slightest degree that by its independent power of seeing it has deserved its place as an eye. It has the honour and right of its position solely through its birth, not because of any effort on its part. Similarly, no Christian can boast that his own efforts have made him a member of Christ, with other Christians, in the common faith. Nor can he by any work constitute himself a Christian.

Luther interacts with 1 Corinthians 12 to further argue that the body imagery underlines the mutual service that members ought to render to each other. This discourse leads him in a sort of digressive criticism against 'good works' but one that is crucial for his subsequent explication of the passage. Moreover, evidently conditioned by increased divisions among Christians at this time, Luther asserts that lack of understanding of the body imagery is a major contributory factor for the divisions. Those who assume self-importance because of their spiritual gifts are not only undermining the Gospel of grace,

claiming for themselves that which only comes from God and functions as God grants grace. But they also pervert the teaching of the Gospel in order to suit their own ambitions thus fomenting divisions. By contrast, what Paul teaches with the imagery of the body is the equality of all believers: 'It grants all members equal participation in the body. Likewise, all Christians, whether strong in faith or weak, perfect or defective, share equally in Christ and are equal in Christendom'.

As with Romans 12:3, Luther's exposition of 12:4–5 does not contradict an average charismatic ecclesiology, especially in its egalitarianism and emphases on the *charismata* as the bases of this egalitarianism. However, it is worth reflecting on Luther's criticism of those of his contemporaries who do not heed the evident lessons of the body imagery. This has important corrective to some sections of the Charismatic movement who are inordinately succumbing to hierarchical sacerdotal impulses, and glory in the possession and practice of the spiritual gifts. Osborne's (2010:324) warning should be well taken by Charismatic Christians: 'The tendency to arrogance is especially seen in the area of spiritual gifts, for they bring attention to the individual and can lead to false pride'.

5.4. Engaging Luther's expositions of Romans 12:6–8

Paul proceeds to concretise his exhortations by citing seven *charismata* in sequence. On each occasion, he further applies his earlier injunction that believers must function within the Church with correct sober self-judgement. In other words, the list of *charismata* in Romans 12:6–8 serves two epistolary purposes. They firstly demonstrate the diversity of membership and their functions in the unity of the church fellowship. And secondly Paul uses it to exhort them on the proper exercise of these *charismata* in the spirit of humble self-judgement.

Three issues raised by these verses are of particular interest to Charismatic Christians. First of all, it is instructive that Paul chose to highlight the *charisms* as the prime expression of the diversity in unity of the Church as body (Fee 1994). He could after all have chosen other expressions of this diversity, for example the different ethnicities in the Church, or the genders or classes, something which he admittedly does in passages such as Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 2:14, and Colossians 3:11, and is indeed reflected in his greetings to the Roman Church itself (Rom 16). This is even more remarkable as there is no suggestion that the gifts were being abused in the Church in Rome.

Paul's focus on the *charismata* as the marker of the diversity in the unity of the Church indicates that they play a fundamental function in his ecclesiology. This attention shows that the Church is essentially charismatic by nature, at least in Paul's conceptualisation. Dunn (1988:725) is therefore correct to assert: 'That Paul's description of his vision or "in principle" ideal of the body of Christ as charismatic community has prescriptive force is no doubt the case'. In other words, the Christian community cannot but be charismatic, in the sense that it needs the *charismata* in order to function as one body of Christ and so fulfil the mission of God in the world.

The second issue of relevance to Charismatics relates to the meaning and contemporary applicability of Romans 12:6b: εἴτε προφητείαν, κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως (12:6b; whether prophesying, according to the proportion to faith). Two questions in particular are raised, namely, what is the exact nature of prophecy in today's church, and secondly what does it mean to prophesy in 'proportion to faith' (ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως)?

With regard to the first question, it is traditional for writers to categorise two types of prophecies, forth-telling (proclamation) and foretelling

(prediction). Non-charismatic writers (e.g. Grover 2015; MacArthur 2013; McDougall 2003:177–213), including some who believe that most of the other gifts are still operational today, postulate that the predictive element of prophecy in the post-canonical period is, at best problematic, as this might potentially be practised in exclusion or even contradiction to scripture.

By contrast, charismatics (e.g. De Arteaga 2015; De Klerk 2013:1–8; Elbert 2004:181–215; Haslam 2012; Huckle 2009:72–86; Löfstedt 2013:126–138) routinely take it that Paul had both predictive and proclamatory elements of prophecy in mind in Romans 12:6b, and so they see no reason why any aspect of this *charism* would have ceased. They also take it that while prophesying may involve spontaneous extempore speech, it may also involve carefully rehearsed speech. However, among charismatics, there is disagreement over their expectations of the relative proportions of either element of prophecy today. Some, but not all charismatics view the predictive element of prophecy as extremely rare, even though they regard it as not having completely ceased to be operational in the Church. It will be interesting to see what Luther thinks about this particular dispute.

The second question regarding the interpretation of the phrase, ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως (proportion to faith), raises several problems, not the least of which is its possible relationship with μέτρον πίστεως (measure of faith) in 12:3c (see Fee 1994:607-610 for a thorough discussion). The interpretation that ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως of 12:6b basically repeats the idea of μέτρον πίστεως in 12:3c appears to me to be the most straightforward option and so to be preferred. In other words, prophesying 'in proportion to faith', means prophesying based on the gift of faith that God has apportioned the believer (cf., Dunn 1988:728; Moo 1996:766). However, and as with Romans 12:3c, the

interpretation of the clause as referring to 'prophesying in agreement with the Gospel or Christian teaching', in other words in an objective manner, is patently correct in the general sense. Most Charismatics today would certainly subscribe to the view that the gift of prophecy is to be exercised by faith that is gifted by God, but only under the remit and in subjection to the authority of scripture.

What does Luther say with regard to this important passage? Well, in his lectures on Romans, Luther takes Paul's exhortation in Romans 12:6b regarding prophesying as 'according to the rule of faith'. However, he interprets it as polemically intended to condemn false prophets 'who prophesy on the basis of human thought or according to conjectures of probability derived from actions and signs of the creature, as, for example, by people who foretell God's plan by the stars or some other guess of probability that they may have'. In other words, Luther takes the clause as laying down a marker for true prophecy—it is false if it is not exercised according to the 'rule of faith'. In this sense even 'true prophets became false precisely when they forgot to prophesy "according to the rule of faith"'.

Luther stresses the importance of faith again and again, opting for the interpretation suggested above, that prophecy must not be dependent on one's intellect or human experience but on faith as gifted by God: 'one may prophesy something new but, in doing so, one must not transcend the characteristic nature of faith. In other words: what one prophesies must not be provable by experience; it must only be a token of things that are in no way apparent either by signs or other indications'.[30]

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[30] There is little evidence to support the notion that this polemical reading was Paul's primary intension, as no such abuses were known in the Roman congregations of the time, even though it is possible that Paul's anxieties while writing Romans in Corinth could have conditioned him to think of abuses of the prophetic gift. Even so Luther's interpretation is essentially correct, for Paul's qualifying exhortation indicates that any

Luther's understanding of prophecy in his early lectures thus does not dismiss operation of predictive prophecy in general, but only that which operates without subjection to the 'rule of faith'.

However, in his later Second Sunday of Epiphany Sermon on the passage, Luther is at best ambivalent about the predictive aspects of prophecy. In the first place, he exclusively focuses on prophecy in his time as proclamation, that is, explanation of scripture. So he defines prophecy in this sermon as being of two kinds 'One is the foretelling of future events, a gift or power possessed by all the prophets under the Old Testament dispensation, and by the apostles; the other is the explanation of the Scriptures'. Whether Luther regarded this definition as his final word is hard to say, as it manifestly omits predictive prophecy by non-apostles during the New Testament dispensation (e.g. Agabus in Acts 11:28; 21:10–11, the Antiochian prophets Acts 13:1, and Judas and Silas Acts 15:32).

Be that as it may, in a subsequent paragraph Luther indicates his wariness of predictive prophecies, underlining their rarity, but even so noteworthy that he does not suggest their cessation:

> Now, the Gospel being the last prophetic message to be delivered previous to the time of the judgment, and to predict the events of that period, I presume Paul has reference here simply to that form of prophecy he mentions in the fourteenth of 1 Corinthians— explanation

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prophecy not so exercised in the spirit or 'proportion to faith' would be false. Luther further writes: 'To faith everything must bow. By faith must all doctrine be judged and held. You see whom Paul would constitute doctors of the Holy Scriptures—men of faith and no others. These should be the judges and deciders of all doctrines. Their decision should prevail, even though it conflict with that of the Pope, of the councils, of the whole world. Faith is and must be lord and God over all teachers'.

of the Scriptures. [31] This form is common, ever prevails, and is profitable to Christians; the other form is rare. That reference is to this form, Paul implies in his words, "Let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith." Doubtless he means the Christian faith then arising. No other faith, no other doctrine, is to be introduced. Now, when he says prophecy must be according to the proportion of faith, it is plain enough he does not refer to the foretelling of future events.

Exactly what Luther means by the Gospel 'being the last prophetic message' is not clear. It will certainly be premature to label him as a cessationist, for he proceeds in his sermon to acknowledge that there were some predictive prophets around whose output he viewed with suspicion, even though he accepted that 'this form of prophecy may be regarded as among the least of God's gifts'. [32] Indeed there are historical indications that Luther himself, and certainly his colleague Melanchthon, believed in some predictive prophecies (cf. Hoppmann

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[31] Luther's appeal to 1 Cor 14 in support of this interpretation is clearly problematic as that passage speaks in general about extempore prophecy and not only 'explanation of the Scriptures'.

[32] The full quote: 'Paul, you will observe, does not attach so much importance to the prediction of future events; for instance, the prophecies of Lichtenberger, Joachim and others in these latter times. Such predictions, though they may gratify the curiosity of men concerning the fate of kings, princes and others of prominence in the world, are unnecessary prophecies under the New Testament dispensation. They neither teach the Christian faith nor contribute to its strength. Hence this form of prophecy may be regarded as among the least of God's gifts. More, it sometimes proceeds from the devil. But the ability to explain the scriptures is the noblest, the best, prophetic gift'. In direct reference to Lichtenberger's prophetic 'art', Luther (Warburg 1920:19) writes: 'What are we then saying about Lichtenberger and his like? This is what I say. Firstly, I consider the rational basis of his celestial art as right, while the art itself is uncertain. That is, the signs in heaven and on earth do not fail. They are the work of God and the angels, sent to warn us, and it is nothing to make an art out of it and to attribute such connections to the stars. Secondly next to this it nevertheless might be that God or his angels have moved him [Lichtenberger] to make many forecasts which have come true, but to let him understand that the art is uncertain God has let him fail many times'.

1997:49–59). In other words, Luther was not categorically opposed to predictive prophetic *charismata,* even though he regarded them to be inferior to proclamatory prophecy and certainly prone to abuses.

It may be reasonable to surmise therefore that Luther regarded predictive prophecy with wary scepticism rather than keen embrace. While this view may appear to cut against contemporary grassroots Charismatic notions of prophecy, my hunch is that most theologically-trained Charismatics would share Luther's wariness towards predictive prophecy, as determining its direct relationship with Scripture is sometimes problematic.

However, the validity of my impression will need to be tested. A study conducted among some European charismatic fellowships by Huckle (2009:72) found that 'a large proportion of Pentecostal and charismatic fellowships use prophecy for general edification (89.5%) and a reasonable proportion (65.8%) for general guidance'. Luther may perhaps therefore feel perfectly at home with the 34.2% of fellowships in this particular cohort who do not use prophecy for general guidance, though will approve of the majority who use prophecy for general edification.

5.5. Luther and Charismatics on Romans 12:3–8: an assessment

While some uncertainties will remain, the above engagement with Luther's expositions on Romans 12:3–8 has unveiled a number of convergences and a potential point of difference between Luther and contemporary Charismatics. It is in the first place evident that Luther and Charismatics treasure this passage as reflecting a fundamental aspect of Christian doctrine and ecclesial existence. Secondly they both understand the *charismata* as indispensable to the existence, growth and function of the Church. Thirdly, they both underline the supernatural

nature of these gifts, Luther in particular stressing the role of faith as God's gift to enable their operation, whereas Charismatics may emphasize the pneumatological underpinnings of the *charismata*. Fourthly they both underscore the diversity of these gifts as serving to strengthen the unity of the Church, even though Luther may well disapprove of the perceived schismatic tendencies of some Charismatics.

And finally, Luther and Charismatics both understand the *charismata* as continuing in their operation today, even though Luther was wary of predictive prophecy and certainly alert to its potential to be exercised in contradiction to scripture. The above analyses have therefore demonstrated that the exegetical method is able to identify the nuances in the continuities and discontinuities between the two parties and thus generate a more fruitful dialogue between Luther and Charismatics.

6. Conclusion

This study posed the question as to the potential continuities between Martin Luther and Charismatic Christianity. It has argued that whereas the historical approach to addressing this question, supplies relevant anecdotal accounts to clarify the context of Luther's expositions of Scripture, it fails to generate an adequate answer, as it is prone to several of the biases of historical enquiry. The theological method in this respect has better advantages, especially when Luther's apocalyptic demonology is compared with contemporary Charismatic demonology. However, this area is not as well developed and certainly hampered by the vast contrast in the socio-cultural contexts between Luther and Charismatics.

The exegetical method circumvents these drawbacks, and as has been shown, generates a far more complex, textured and realistic answer to

the question. Based on the results of the exegetical engagement with Luther's expositions on Romans 12:3–8 above, one may hazard the following answer to the question posed as title of the present article: Martin Luther was a 'Charismatic-like' Christian. He certainly would have comfortably fitted into some Charismatic pulpits today, but not all of them.

The current study is, however, based on a single text and will need further validation with the other passages that are foundational to the Charismatic renewal. Even so, it will be right to conclude that Luther's legacy will likely remain strong in the hands of Charismatic Christianity in the coming decades.

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The Dignity Code of Jesus and the Reformation

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Abstract

The Reformers, through their renewed and inspired reading of Scripture, rediscovered and applied, to their time, the teaching and practice of Jesus, including Jesus's own code of dignity. Not that they declared that they recognised such a code or even gave it a name—rather it was a case of what Thomas à Kempis called 'the imitation of Christ' (1418–1427)—doing what Jesus did.

Following the Gospel accounts, Jesus expressed his respect for the worthiness (Gk. worth ἄξιος) of all people in both his teaching and his practice, and it informed his vision of the Reign of God. This deep awareness of what we today term 'human dignity' enabled Jesus to challenge the hegemonic[2] code of honour and shame. which dominated the first-century Roman world, including the Jewish colonies of Judaea and Galilee. A millennium and a half later, as the Reformers filled their minds with Scripture (*sola scriptura*) and meditated upon the praxis of Jesus, they bore fruit which led *inter alia*

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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] See Bates 1975 for a full discussion of the term hegemony.

to the education of ordinary children (created *in imago deo*) and a re-evaluation of Christian forms of leadership (priesthood of all believers). But it was the inherent idea of human worthiness (dignity), which remains to this day one of the great gifts of the Reformation, and ultimately, I will argue, harks back, at least in part, to Jesus' personal dignity code.

1. Introduction

In the Gospel of Matthew there is a wonderful parable about the Lord of the Vineyard (Matt 20:1–15). The story is deceptively simple, and one may easily overlook the great truth found here – namely, the sense of affirmation of the individual workers. The chapter begins by connecting the parable with the Kingdom of God (v. 1). Jesus describes the lord (κύριος)[3] of the vineyard going out to find 'day-labourers' to assist with the work—presumably the harvesting of the grapes. Making his way into the marketplace early in the morning (about 6 a.m.) the landowner found a group of workers, and after negotiating terms and wages (one denarius—the usual day's wages), he took the labourers to work in the vineyard (v. 2). At 9 a.m., he went back to the marketplace and hired more workers, but without negotiating terms, and again, three hours later. The pattern was repeated at 3 p.m. (v. 3). An hour before sunset (about 5 p.m.) and the usual end of the day, the landowner made a final visit to the marketplace, and meeting some labourers, who had been standing there the whole day, for lack of work, he employed them also (vs. 6–7).

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[3] A title frequently applied to God in the LXX and both God and Jesus in the New Testament, especially in the post-resurrection narratives (John 20:28 and 21:7) and throughout the letters of Paul.

After the working day ended, the lord called his overseer to pay the workers their wages, starting with the last group (v. 8). Each group, in turn received one denarius (v. 9), but it was only when the 6 a.m. group received their wages that a protest was raised about the length of time and heat of day during which they had worked (vs. 10–12). The Lord reminded the workers of their initial agreement and of his right to be generous with his own money (vs. 13–15). At its simplest level, the parable is about a generous farmer who paid all the workers that day the same wage regardless of the number of hours worked. While some commentators (e.g. Albright and Mann, 1971: 236–238) relate the parable to the debate about God's election of the Jews, I question whether that would have been a concern of the historical Jesus. Rather, I suggest this parable is about Jesus' understanding of worthiness (ἄξιος) as in his statement— 'the labourer is worthy of his/her wages' (Matt 10:10; Luke 10:7 in the sending out of the apostles). The parable is part of Jesus' reaction against the prevailing values of his time,[4] and specifically the honour code of Greco-Roman culture, and is one of the clearest statements on the individual worth of all people—what I would like to call 'The Dignity Code of Jesus'.

While the later secular philosophy of Humanism[5] championed the elevation of human worth, specifically the human mind, Christ's dignity code had a far more radical end in view, namely the cause of the

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[4] Oakman (2012:43) writes 'The political aims of Jesus were deeply influenced by a concern about agrarian taxation leveraged by commerce, and the social situation developing in Herodian Galilee around the turn of the years, and must, rather, be seen within this maelstrom of social change and distorted traditional peasant values'.

[5] Interestingly, as opposed to the later secular form, Christian Humanism of the time of the Reformation was all about the actual text of Scripture, rejecting the Latin Vulgate in favour of the original Greek and Hebrew (McGraw 2013:86, 115). Secular humanism owes its origin to George Voigt who in 1856 applied it to the Renaissance movement that flourished in Italy at that time.

marginalised and the dispossessed. What Waetjen (1989) would describe as 'a reordering of power'.

2. Values of the Reformation

The Reformation, among other interests, focused attention on the reading of Scripture (summed up in the phrase *sola scriptura*) and the doctrine of grace as personal salvation (as personified in the dual notion of creation—*in imago deo* and the abundance of God's grace).

Yet the reformation was more than a revision of Church doctrine. McGraw writes that 'The Reformation movement was complex and heterogeneous and its agenda went far beyond the reform of the doctrine of the church' (2011:44). He adds, 'It addressed fundamental social, political and economic issues' (2011:44), but he chooses not to elaborate. In this article, I suggest one of the treasures of the Reformation lies in the rediscovery of the worth and dignity of ordinary people through reflection on the life and teaching of Christ. The Reformers, through their renewed and inspired reading of scripture (*sola scriptura*), rediscovered and applied, to their time, the idea of human dignity (Schweitzer 2016:1–2). I suggest that, more specifically, they drew inspiration from the teaching and practice of Jesus, including Jesus' own code of dignity. Not that they gave this code a name—rather it was a case of what Thomas à Kempis, just a century before, called 'the imitation of Christ' (1418–1427)—simply doing what Jesus did. It meant 'having the mind of Christ' (The Imitation of Christ 1:2) and seeing people as Jesus did. He describes two ways of looking at people, one outward and the other inward:

> We demand how much a man has done; but from how much virtue
> he acted, is not so narrowly considered. We ask if he be strong, rich,

handsome, clever, whether he is a good writer, good singer, good workman; but how poor he may be in spirit, how patient and gentle, how devout and meditative, on these things many are silent. *Nature looks upon the outward appearance of a man, grace turns its thought to the heart.* The former frequently judges amiss; the latter trusts in God, that it may not be deceived. (The Imitation of Christ 31:5 [italics mine]).

In contemporary responses to Reformation 500, the idea of human dignity is mentioned several times, especially in connection with the general education of children (Schweitzer 2016) and the place of women in Church leadership (Green 1979). However, we should note that while some Reformation voices take central stage, these two aspects are only present as voices from the margins. This was not the mainstream thrust of the Reformation teaching, but the significance of these two areas, for church and society today, is only now being appreciated.

3. The Education of Children

One of the goals of the Reformation was to enable ordinary Christians to read the Scriptures in their own language. This fuelled both the printing press and a host of Biblical translations. In addition, it created the need for schools, where young people could be trained to read. All of this is well known, but what is not so well known is the link the reformers saw between Scripture and human dignity. Schweitzer writes(2016:1):

In recent times in Germany where I am working, the Protestant Church has strongly emphasised the Christian roots of human dignity as a human right, even viewing the Christian understanding

of human dignity as the core of the Protestant contribution not only
to German society but also to basic European values on the whole.

Schweitzer (2016:2) draws our attention to 'a minority tradition that has
made the likeness of God the basis of education' referring to
Melanchthon and Comenius among others. For Schweitzer, 'dignity is
the special gift from God who created the humans as special beings in
God's own likeness' (2016:2). While most reformers considered
education as a necessary part of the combatting of the Fall of Adam and
Eve, Melanchthon saw a connection with creation (Gen 1:26; 1989:81
quoted by Schweitzer 2016:3), and 'adds a different perspective to his
educational thinking by making the likeness of God an ultimate
guideline for education' (1989:81 quoted by Schweitzer 2016:3).

Johann Amos Comenius (17th century) is another example, adduced by
Schweitzer (2016:3–4), who made creation in the likeness of God 'the
starting point for his whole understanding of education' (2016:3), as is
clear from his writings in the Pampaedia (only published in 1965).
Education, then, was a critical part of God's creative plan (1965:24) and
this was irrespective of social levels. 'In brief, where God did not
discriminate (*discrimen non posuit*), no one should discriminate'
(Comenius 1965:30, quoted by Schweitzer 2016:3) As Schweitzer
(2016:3) makes clear, 'education should include each and everyone
(*omnes*) – this is the pedagogical creed of all of Comenius' writings'.

Reflecting on the Gospel narratives, we are reminded of several
instances of children in the ministry of Jesus. For example, Jesus'
disciples were urged to emulate children, since the path to honour, in
the eyes of God, was that instinctively taken by a child (Matt 18:3). In
his response to the shame and honour culture of his time, Jesus chose to
challenge his disciples by placing a child in the middle of the group
(Mark 9:33–37; Matt 18:1–5 and Luke 9:40–48). The three Synoptic

Gospels each give the incident a slightly different flavour, but clearly shades of honour/shame form a backdrop to each account. I will consider each account in turn.

In Mark 9, at the end of the journey from the Mount of the Transfiguration to Capernaum, Jesus asked what the disciples were arguing about on the road (v. 33). The disciples were too embarrassed to admit that they had been discussing which of them was the greatest (in the sense of most honourable) and did not reply (v. 34). Jesus sat down (the typical posture for teaching) and addressed the twelve disciples saying, 'Whoever wants to be first must place himself last of all and be the servant of all (v. 35)'. Then, he took a child παιδίος (v. 36), placed his arms around him (a detail peculiar to Mark), and told the disciples that welcoming children in his name was the same as welcoming Jesus and God (the one who sent him) (v.37).

In Matthew 18, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?' (v. 1). Jesus responded by calling a child and making him stand in front of them (v. 2). He then assured his disciples that they needed to change and to become like children to enter the Kingdom (v. 3). In answer to their question (in v.1), Jesus added 'The greatest in the Kingdom of heaven is the one who is humble[6] and becomes like this child' (v.4). The pericope ends with Jesus saying, 'Whoever welcomes in my name one such child as this, welcomes me' (v. 5).

In Luke 9, there was an argument among the disciples as to which of them was the greatest (v. 46). Jesus knowing what was happening took a child and stood him by his side (v. 47). He spoke about receiving a

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[6] The Greek text uses the form 'humbles himself', addressing the male-centred honour game, but its sense is beyond the masculine domain.

child in his name and so receiving also the one who sent him [Jesus] (v. 48a) and then added 'for the one who is least among you all is the greatest'[7] (v. 48b).

In all three accounts, Jesus' words reminded the disciples that their attachment to the prevailing code of honour and shame, was intrinsically incompatible with God's standards for the kingdom of God. In giving honour to young children, Jesus challenged the male-centred honour system practised in the Roman world.

Jesus valued children and their faith at the highest level. Following on Matthew's account mentioned above, Jesus stated that, 'If anyone causes one of these little ones (ἕνα τῶν μικρῶν τούτων) to lose their faith (Gk. σκανδαλίσῃ) it would be better [than meeting the justice of God] if they were tied to a millstone and drowned in the sea' (Matt 18:6), which for Jewish people meant they would be denied eternal life, since they would lack a proper burial. On another occasion, Jesus welcomed and blessed little children (παιδία), castigating the male disciples who had refused the mothers access to him (Mark 10:13–16; Matt 19:13–15 and Luke 18:15–17). On this occasion, following Mark's version, Jesus stated that 'The Kingdom of God belongs to such as these (v. 14)' and 'I assure you that whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child (ὡς παιδίον) will never enter it' (v. 15). He then placed his hands on the children and blessed them (v. 16). In giving dignity to children, Jesus gave dignity to all society.

4. Women in Church Leadership

One of the great emphases of the Reformation was based on 1 Peter 2:9, which describes the followers of Christ as γένος ἐκλεκτόν, βασίλειον

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[7] The idea of greatness is resonant with overtones of honour, power and prestige.

ἱεράτευμα, ἔθνος ἅγιον λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν, translated as 'a chosen generation (or kin); a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a purchased people'.[8] What captured the imagination of the Reformers, in the context of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church of the time, was the phrase 'royal priesthood'. In time, this would become known as the doctrine of the 'priesthood of all believers'. In 1520, Martin Luther challenged the medieval understanding of Christians as either 'secular' or 'spiritual' in a work known as 'To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation'.[9] Here he argued for a single category in which all baptised Christians were to be considered as priests and so spiritual in the eyes of God. The actual interpretation of this phrase was less radical than its literal translation would suggest. However, Luther challenged the claims of some priests to be 'more spiritual' and deserving of salvation than the ordinary followers of Christ to be found in the congregations.[10] However, the Reformers, in their zeal to promote the reading of Scripture, did encourage the education of children, including girl children and this, in turn, impacted the history of the Reformation.

With reference to the education of girl students, Green (1979:101) writes,

> Women's education had always taken place, even at times when it was available only for a select few and given only by private tutors to daughters of the nobility or the wealthy. After the Reformation, however, schooling for girls became more and more widely diffused, until at length it was placed within the grasp of most females in the west. In the transition which took place, one may detect a gradual evolution in concepts concerning the role of

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[8] My own translation. A similar idea may be found in Revelation 5:10 'priests and kings'.

[9] Martin Luther, *Weimar Ausgabe*, vol. 6, p. 407, lines 19–25.

[10] Martin Luther, *Weimar Ausgabe*, vol. 6, p. 407, lines 19–25.

> women in society and of the education or training appropriate to their social position.

Michael Wiltshire (2015) draws attention to several key women of the Reformation era whom he believed responded to Luther's doctrine of the 'priesthood of all believers' insofar as their respective denominations allowed. Preaching, writing books and pamphlets and the advocacy of Protestantism were just some of the roles taken on by Christian women. The list of such women includes Katherine Schutz Zell (1497–1562 writing prophetically from 1524–1558). She saw herself in the line of Mary Magdalene, who 'with no thought of being an apostle, came to tell the disciples that she had encountered the risen Lord (Pierce et al. 2005:34). Argula von Stauff (1492–1554) rose to the defence of Martin Luther in 1523 at the Diet of Nürnberg, and in response in a personal letter he described her as a singular instrument of Christ' (Matheson 2008). St Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) is well known today as one of the great mystics of the Church, who was canonised in 1622 and later given the title of 'Doctor of the Church' by Pope John Paul VI. In addition, we should include also Marguerite de Navarre (1492–1549), Marie Dentière (c.1495–1561), Argula von Grumbach (1492–c.1554), Olympia Morata (1526–1555) and Jeanne d'Albret (1528–1572). The contribution of these women has been significant, and as Katherine Schutz Zell makes clear, they modelled themselves on the women of the Bible, not least those like Mary Magdalene, who followed Jesus.

Ben Witherington III completed his doctorate under the late Professor Kingsley Barrett at Durham University (UK) looking at Jesus and his interaction with women (Witherington 1984). He subsequently extended his work to include Paul and the early church (Witherington 1988), and linked the two earlier works in a study on 'Women and the

Genesis of Christianity' (1990). Witherington shows convincingly that the historical Jesus affirmed women as disciples and followers, reaching out even across the borders of Judaism to minister to gentiles, even widows in distress, (as had Elijah and Elisha before him – a point which Jesus makes in his sermon at Nazareth–Luke 3:25–27). When Mary chose to listen to his teaching prior to supper, he defends her choice to Martha with the words, 'One thing is needed and Mary has chosen this better thing and it will not be taken from her' (Luke 10:42; see Witherington 1990:99–102). Rarely does one read such a spirited defence of the rights of women to learn, and given rabbinic condemnation of such practice, this would have raised many an eyebrow at that time. Yet, I believe, this is part-and-parcel of Jesus' code of human dignity, even though it meant pushing against the culture of the time. In his interaction with women, even those who were quite spirited (Mark 7:24–30; see Hatton, 2015), the gospel records indicate that Jesus accorded each of them the full dignity they deserved.

5. Shame and Honour and the Teaching of Jesus

Shame and Honour found place within the ancient Near East, forming the principle values of the peoples who inhabited that region, not least of the peoples of Israel and Judah. The teaching of scripture, especially within the Wisdom material[11] like Proverbs and Psalms, appeals time and again to the pursuit of honour and the avoidance of shame. The same is true of the New Testament world[12] where the study of honour and shame in the Mediterranean region, both present and in antiquity is

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[11] See for example DeSilva, 2008: 287–300.

[12] Malina and Rohrbaugh, 1998 offer a detailed study of shame and honour in the Gospel of John.

a well-researched area.[13] Both Jesus and Paul lived under the power of the Roman Empire (what post-colonial scholarship has termed the 'push-and-pull of Empire').[14] At times, Paul accepted cultural constructs, like praying for civic leaders in recognition of their role in society and at other times he fights back, as in his frequent use of imperial titles for Jesus, like Lord (κύριος) and his deliberate characterisation of Jesus as the slave of God, who empties himself (Phil 2:7–11)—a reversal of the conventional honour values[15] so prized by Jew and Greek alike in the first century AD. Jesus, like Paul, responded to the push-and-pull of Empire, both embracing certain values and challenging others. Several times, Jesus explicitly rejected the pursuit of honour, offering instead the notion of 'servanthood', by describing his own mission as one who came to serve (διακονέω) (Mark 10:45) and to be the servant (δοῦλος) of all (Mark 10:44). Unlike the gentiles who love to 'lord' it over their subjects, the disciples are invited to assume the position of servants (Matt 20:25–27).

As we read Jesus in the context of Empire, as some postcolonial studies do today,[16] we would be led to take note of the manner in which he reacted against the 'pull' of the empire, by 'pushing' back in his own life and teaching. One of the ways in which Jesus did this was in his critique of contemporary culture—the hegemonic value system of the Empire. Jesus targeted the prevailing shame/honour culture by 'pushing' against the power of the empire and its puppet rulers (Herod and the Sadducees). He did this as much by what he said as by what he did.

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[13] See for example Busatta, 2006:75–78.

[14] See Segovia and Sugirtharajah 2009 for a detailed application of the Post-Colonial methodology to the books of the New Testament.

[15] See Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998:305.

[16] See the various articles in Winn (2016) which focuses on the theme of Empire and New Testament responses,

I have already mentioned how Jesus challenged the desire for honour found among his disciples, using a child to epitomise entrance into God's Kingdom (Matt 18:1–5). In addition, when Jesus witnessed the competition for honour displayed at a banquet, he offered a striking alternative to the order of the time (Luke 14:7–11). He challenged his disciples for seeking positions of honour among themselves (Mark 9:33–37). By his very life-style, Jesus epitomised a way of living which pushed back[17] against the Roman Empire's glorification of honour. This mode of living is part-and-parcel of what Horsley (2016) describes as Jesus' 'renewal of the covenant community' in defiance of the pull of the Empire. [18] Horsley (2016:65–67) speaks of the 'Jesus-in-Movement'. In essence, Jesus gave form and presence to, what I have come to understand as, a revolutionary 'Dignity Code'.

6. Worthy of Dignity

In a singular article on Human Dignity in the Bible, Vogt (2010) notes that while the term dignity is not found in the Bible, the sense of human dignity, lost and found, is a constantly recurring idea. He views dignity as God's original intention for humankind, as described in the garden of Eden, and expressed in the first couple's unique relationship with God (Vogt 2010:422). The path back into that relationship, and the full experience of dignity for oneself and in one's community, is first spelled out in the decalogue and reinforced by the prophets (Vogt 2010:422). The social vision of the Hebrew Bible, as spelled out by Pleins (2001), would point to the ultimate restoration of the Reign of God, heralded by Jesus (Goldingay 2003). I would add 'and to the

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[17] On the push and pull of empire, see the various articles in Winn (2016).

[18] See Anderson (1998) for a social archaeological spelling out of the impact of Empire on the regions of Judaea and Galilee.

restoration of human dignity' within the context of that Reign. For the Reformers, creation in the image of God was the ultimate expression of such human dignity. I believe that, for Jesus, his code of human dignity was drawn from the pages of the Hebrew Bible. The code informed his response to the culture of shame and honour as imposed on the people of Palestine by the Roman Imperial forces. To fully comprehend the code of Jesus, in relation to honour and shame, we need to take a brief journey into the values of the modern USA.

In his contemporary study of the values of various states in the United States of America, the social psychologist Ryan P Brown, (*Honor Bound* 2016), discusses in detail the ways in which shame and honour impact the lives of millions of Americans. In his concluding pages (2016:180–189), he considers the questions of options to shame and honour, namely what he calls the dignity code. He had been challenged to find an alternative to the prevailing codes of shame and honour, and was unable to do so for some time. Eventually he found the solution in what he now terms 'the dignity code' (2016:184). Where shame and honour demanded constant defence and maintenance, the code of dignity, as defined by Brown simply affirmed the worth of all human beings regardless of their social status. Where the honour code demands constant defence and maintenance on the part of the individual, a dignity code assumes a certain intrinsic value for each individual (2016:184).

Brown writes of the dignity culture, 'Social worth is assumed by default. People in a dignity culture are more likely to grant respect to others simply by virtue of their being human' (2016:184). The term 'dignity' itself comes from the Latin *'dignitas'* carrying the sense of dignity, worth and status (Cassels 1966:190). Although related to the notion of honour (which is common in both Greek and Hebrew literature), and

allowing for a certain overlap of meaning, the two terms (dignity and honour) are not identical. In Brown's understanding based on his contemporary studies of the USA, the code of honour is quite different to the code of dignity (2016:184).

Dignity is not a Biblical term, although the concept is familiar (see Vogt 2010), so I prefer to use the Greek term for worth (ἄξιος) used in the Greek New Testament (see Foerster 1961:379–380): in the Gospels (e.g. Matt 10:10 and Luke 10:7 [worker worthy of wage]) and by Paul (e.g. Rom 16:2 [worthy of the saints] and Phil 1:27 [worthy of the Gospel]). Jesus' dignity code, I believe, would have been expressed in the Greek form as 'human worth'. This notion may be vividly illustrated from the texts of the four Gospels. Jesus affirmed the simple worthiness (dignity) of human individuals, beyond the status conferred upon them by the levels of shame and honour.

Jesus consistently interacted with people who would have been considered dishonourable in his time, In each of these interactions, regardless of the gospel writer, Jesus comes across as granting dignity to the person. He recognised their human needs and responded to them as human beings deserving of the bequest of human dignity. For example, as a host or principal guest, Jesus was seen to eat with people of all ranks (Luke 5:29, 7:34). including tax-collectors, women of dubious reputation, and foreigners. He revelled in the comments of his opponents, taking upon himself their insulting descriptions (Matt 11:18–19), but not letting this interfere with his granting of dignity to the marginalised of his society. He openly welcomed the idea that he 'was the friend of tax-collectors and sinners' (Matt 11:19).

In his practice, Jesus reached out to widows, regardless of race, commended their faith (Mark 7:25–30), and healed their children (Luke 7:12–15). He affirmed the faith and love of women, including some of

dubious reputation (Luke 7:36–50; John 4, and see Witherington 1984 and 1990 for more examples). He welcomed people who were ritually unclean (the woman with the bleeding disorder—Mark 5:25–34 and similar instances), and even touched the lepers (Matt 8:3)—what greater affirmation of dignity could there be. He counted among his followers several women, who used their personal wealth to pay for his food (Luke 8:1–3).

In Jesus' teaching, he consistently advocated human worth. The classic parable is that of the workers (Matt 20:1–16 discussed above) and in addition there are the Beatitudes (Matt 5:1–12). Reading contextually the first four beatitudes, we find that Jesus gives dignity to those who are poor, and broken in spirit (Matt 5:3);[19] those who mourn, like the relatives of the people massacred in Sephoris[20] (Matt 5:4); those who have been oppressed and lost their land[21] (Matt 5:5 and see Evans 2012:106) and those who hunger and thirst for justice[22] in a world[23]

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[19] See Luz 2007:185-189, who in contrast to many other commentaries on Matthew (e.g. Betz and Collins 1995) takes poverty and other tribulations in the Beatitudes literally and not just spiritually. The underlying Hebrew of Ps 37:11 uses the root ענה which may be rendered either as humble or poor. See Wegner 2007 and Domeris 2007 for different understandings of its semantic domain.

[20] A city very close to Nazareth, which was destroyed by the Romans in 6AD and many of its inhabitants crucified. This was just one example of Roman violence in the time of Jesus (see further, Horsley 1987 and 1995).

[21] Using Ps 37:11 as the basis of Matthew 5:5: Aside from the complexity of translating the subject (anayim – the oppressed or the humble), there are several other linguistic challenges present in the Hebrew text of Psalm 37:11. The normal verb for inherit is the Hebrew נחל, but in Psalm 37:11 we have the verb ירש (yerash) which means 'to possess', 'to occupy', 'to forcibly dispossess' and by extension 'to inherit' (Lohfink 1990:377). Wright sees the primary meaning of the verb as (1997:547). Yrs I q. 'to take or gain possession of' and in the hiphal 'to drive out, destroy, dispossess'. See further Domeris, 2016:131–149.

[22] The Greek term δικαιοσύνη corresponds to the Hebrew term צדקה (righteousness or justice), which occurs regularly (157 times) in the Hebrew Bible, especially the

where those things have been denied. Luz (2007:189) makes this very point when he writes:

> A part of the salvation promised to the poor, the hungry, and those who mourn is already a reality in Jesus' acceptance of the dispossessed, in his common meals with them, and in the joy over God's love experienced in the present. Jesus' beatitudes are not empty promises of something that will happen in the future; they are 'a language act that makes the coming kingdom of God a present event'.

In terms of Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God, we see further evidence of the dignity code of Jesus in the upside-down valuation of people. Jesus ministered to foreigners (Mark 7:24–30: Luke 7:1–10 and 7:11–15) and commended Samaritans as neighbours (Luke 10:30–37). The dignity offered by God has no boundaries. In Matthew 21:32, Jesus informed the priests and elders, gathered to accuse him in the courts of the Temple, that the tax-collectors and prostitutes chose to believe the message of John the Baptist, but they did not. So indeed, this is a world where the first are last and the last are first (Matt 19:30, 20:16 and Mark 9:35 and 10:31). I suggest that all this was in accord with Jesus' vision

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wisdom section (Psalms, Proverbs) and in the prophets (Isaiah and Ezekiel). Often the forensic element is clearly to the fore (2 Sam 8:15; 1 Kings 10:9; 1 Chron 18:14; 2 Chron 9:8; Job 37:23; Ps 99:4; Isa 9:7[6]; 59:14; Ezek 18:5,19, 21; Ezek 45:9), and 'justice' rather than 'righteousness' is more appropriate. This is especially so in instances where צדקה is the object of the verb to do (עשׂה) (Deut 33:21; Jer 22:15; Isa 56:1; Prov 21:3; Ezek 33:14,19). In such instances, the translation of 'doing justice' seems more in keeping with the sense of the text, and this is particularly so when the wider social context informs the reading. The King James version of Matthew 5:5 (1611) opted for righteousness, whereas the Catholic Douai Rheims (1609) chose justice.

[23] See Freyne 2014, for a detailed understanding of Jesus' social and political context.

of the Reign of God, and his creation of a new community, where ordinary people might find dignity and wholeness.[24]

7. Conclusion

In so many ways, Jesus found reason to affirm the worth and dignity of ordinary people. In pushing back against the prevailing culture of the time, Jesus found place even for the outcasts and those who were considered unclean in terms of the purity rules, but Jesus proclaimed them the 'pure in heart' (Matt 5:8). In placing the honour and faith of the poor and humbled in the foreground,[25] Jesus challenged the pyramid of honour. In inviting women to walk with him and share ministry with him, Jesus challenged the male-based honour hierarchy. In affirming the dignity of children, Jesus affirmed the dignity of the whole of society.

By reading the scriptures, with new eyes, the reformers revelled in the practice of Jesus and through new translations into the language of the people, gave space for these people to find themselves in the deeds and words of Jesus. The Reformation touched the lives of ordinary Christians, and over time, women and children of all classes. Like those of Jesus' ministry, ordinary people found new dignity and new worth as members of the Kingdom of God. I will leave the last word for Thomas à Kempis, who said it better than I could:

> [Jesus'] teaching surpasses all teaching of holy men, and such as have His Spirit find therein the hidden manna. But there are many who, though they frequently hear the Gospel, yet feel but little

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[24] See the insights of Horsley, Jesus-in-Movement, 65-67.

[25] I use the term 'humbled' deliberately to encompass both those who choose the path of humility and those who find themselves oppressed.

longing after it, because they have not the mind of Christ. He, therefore, that will fully and with true wisdom understand the words of Christ, let him strive to conform his whole life to that mind of Christ. (1:2).

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Crux Sola est Nostra Theologia: Luther's Theology of Atonement and its Development in Recent Theology on the Cross of Christ

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Abstract

This paper aims to demonstrate the relationship between Luther's atonement theology and the work of recent theologians who have in one way or another fostered and development his theology on the cross of Christ. I argue that Luther's theology has shaped much of recent atonement theology. His theology was grounded in the earlier theological traditions as well as in scripture, and yet it was informed by specific spiritual, historical, theological and sacramental contexts. Some theologians have identified the *Christus Victor* motif as Luther's theology of atonement, without consideration for the other themes. Others, on the other hand, have focused on *satisfactio*[2] or/and *penal*[3]

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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] All references to satisfaction are in Latin *(satisfactio),* when direct reference is made to Anselm or Luther's theology and is not in quotation.

[3] I put *penal* in 'penal substitution' in italics when mentioned in relation to Luther's theology, because while we see some aspect of it in primitive form in his work, the

substitution as Luther's major theme, neglecting the *Christus Victor* motif altogether. However, it is argued that the development of Luther's atonement theology is far more variegated and inclusive of the various themes. Luther made the cross the very centre of his theology, evident in his 1518 Heidelberg Disputation. But his theology of atonement is really more fully articulated in his commentary on Galatians 3:13 and in both his small and large catechisms. It is then demonstrated how in some recent theologians' work, the themes of atonement have become far more varied and composite than they have since Luther. It is not unreasonable to view Luther as a significant influence on recent atonement theology. Beginning with Gustaf Aulén, the discussion explores ways in which Luther's atonement theology has shaped today's theology on the cross of Christ.

1. Introduction

The Magisterial Reformer, Martin Luther, saw all his theology through the lens of the cross. One might say that his new sola was, *crux sola est nostra theologia* – 'the *cross alone* is our theology'. Evidently, 'Luther summoned not just theologians but theology itself to the cross' (McKnight 2007:52–53). This paper aims to demonstrate the relationship between Luther's atonement theology and the work of recent theologians who have fostered and development his theology on the cross of Christ. Luther's theology of the atonement has, therefore, shaped much of recent atonement theology. To begin with, I will examine the origin or context of Luther's understanding of the

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penal substitutionary theory was only developed later in detail. Luther's theology here is more clearly 'substitutionary' than it is 'penal substitutionary'.

atonement, which will in turn bring us to its development, exploring the atonement in four of his written works. In the last discussion, six theologians were selected, five of which are contemporary, all of whom I believe have fostered Luther's atonement tradition, making significant contributions to recent atonement theology.

2. Origin of Luther's Atonement Theology

2.1. Introduction

Luther's theology of atonement was distinct in its day, even though it remained grounded in the earlier theological traditions. While grounded firstly in Scripture, as one would expect, his theology on the atonement was also birthed from specific spiritual,[4] historical, theological and sacramental contexts which were foundational to his understanding.

2.2. Spiritual

Initially, while being a monk, Luther felt the agony and burden of his sense of sin. Shaw and Edwards explain that from the time he became a monk in 1505, Luther had a long hard struggle with a belief that he was never worthy to stand in the presence of God. In an effort to relieve himself from the extreme sense of guilt and condemnation, he did all he could that the Roman Catholic Church had to offer (2011:77). These attempts in prayers, fasting, vigils and good works, meant to satisfy God and offer relief form such condemnation, were in vain. George, comments that upon noting Luther's extreme religious behaviour, his spiritual advisor and confessor, Johannes von Staupitz, directed him towards 'the wounds of the most sweet Saviour', in an attempt to save

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[4] *Anfechtungen* is the German word for Luther's spiritual struggle and dark nights of the soul which was especially formative of his teaching and ministry.

him from despair. It was 'by pointing Luther to the cross, that Staupitz had "started the doctrine"' (2004:265), the doctrine of atonement, and justification that so fired the reformation.

2.3. Historical

In his recent book, Wright points out that the greatest Reformers, Luther as well as Calvin drew from scripture and the writings of the Patristics, in order 'to develop fresh ways of speaking about Jesus's death'. This, Wright believes, Luther and Calvin had in common with Anselm's theology (Wright 2016:27). In this way, Luther, not only drew theology from scripture, but also from the Patristics,[5] which demonstrates the historical nature of the origin of Luther's theology of the atonement. There was, however, according to Green and Baker, a shift in the legal framework that 'signals the main difference between Anselm's *satisfactio* model and the penal substitution model'. They believe this was evident in Luther as well as Calvin. Neither, however, developed in detail a comprehensive theology of *penal* substitutionary atonement, but made use of other atonement motifs. Many of which seem to be rooted in the social-cultural context of Luther (and Calvin). An example, as Aulén (1931) claims, is that Luther put greater emphasis on the *Christus Victor* motif than on a substitutionary model[6] (2000:142), having been influenced by the social-cultural milieu of the German medieval period—a fear of spirits and devils.

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[5] Aulén highlights this as well when he wrote that, for Luther, the atonement, 'is the patristic view that has returned; but it has returned with greater depth and force than before' (1931:108).

[6] Whether Luther put greater emphasis on the *Christus Victor* motif than on a *penal* substitutionary model, is up for debate.

2.4. Theological

While developing a theology that remained grounded in the earlier theological traditions, Tillich observed how Luther's method of theology was quite different from that of the Fathers of the Church. For him Christology was central (1967:249). Aulén picked up on how Luther's atonement theology can be 'understood[7] as a revival of the old classic theme of the Atonement as taught by the Fathers,[8] but with a greater depth of treatment' (1931:102). Not too dissimilar from the Patristics, Luther employs violent and grotesque imagery, and realistic picture language to describe Christ's conflict with the devil[9] (Aulén 1931:103). Yet, as Aulén explains, the significance of Luther's theology on the atonement is not so much in its imagery, but rather in the following; (1) he expresses himself with tremendous care and precision, clearly evident in the Catechisms, but always returns to the dramatic view.[10] (2) He offers profound clearness in his 'statements of the meaning of the atonement in dramatic terms give the very essence of the Christian faith; they are *capitalia nostrae theologiae'* (the capital of

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[7] Unfortunately, Aulén seems to make this exclusive by stating that, 'Luther's teaching can *only be rightly* understood as a revival of the old classic theme of the Atonement as taught by the Fathers' (emphasis mine). But nevertheless, the old classic theme of the atonement is a significant part of Luther's atonement theology, but it is by no means the only part.

[8] By 'the old classic theme of the Atonement as taught by the Fathers', Aulén means the *Christus Victor* motif.

[9] Aulén offers an example, showing how Luther, 'describes how it was the Lord of glory, not a mere man, who was crucified; but God concealed this fact from the devil, or he would never have dared assault him. God acts like fisherman, who binds a line to a fishing-rod, attaches a sharp hook, fixes on it a worm, and casts it into the water. The fish comes, sees the worm but not the hook, and bites, thinking that he has taken a good morsel; but the hook is fixed firm in his gills and he is caught. So God does; Christ must become man; God sends him from high heaven into the world, where the devil finds him (p. 103) like "a worm and no man" (Ps. xxii.6), and swallows him up' (Aulén 1931:103–104).

[10] a.k.a the *Christus Victor* motif.

our theology). (3) Perhaps most significantly, this 'dramatic view of the work of Christ stands in organic relation with his theological outlook as a whole' (Aulén 1931:104). It is anomalous that Aulén identifies the classic theme as Luther's almost singular theme of the atonement, neglecting other striking themes that play a role in Luther's theology. For example, there is also revision and development from Anselm's *satisfactio* theology. Shaw and Edwards (2011:80) explain that, where 'Anselm had argued that the choice for God was punishment or satisfaction', Luther taught that in Christ's death, he bears the punishment for sin, 'and because punishment is paid, justice is satisfied'.[11]

2.5. Sacramental

In Luther's day, *satisfactio* was related to the medieval *sacramentum paenitentiae,* 'sacrament of penance'. He felt that this sacrament belonged to the legal profession, and had wished for it to be abolished from Christian theology altogether. For him (and this is where he differs with Anselm, and despite his revision and development of his *satisfactio* theology) the whole concept of *satisfactio* was very much a part of the penitential system that he scorned because he believed that it obscured the Gospel (Luther's Works vol.30:29; Aulén 1931:118, 120–121; George 2004:273; McDonald 1985:183). This contributed towards Luther's revision on Anselm's *satisfactio* theory.

2.6. Conclusion

Luther's atonement theology was by no means developed in a void without relationship to particular contexts, namely, (1) his own spiritual experiences, (2) grounding his theology in the Patristics, and earlier

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[11] cf. Falconer 2013.

theologians, (3) while still drawing from earlier theological traditions, he allows his theology to have its one distinct flavour, and (4) his sacramental concerns. In the discussion which follows, the development of Luther's atonement theology will be examined.

3. Development of Luther's Atonement Theology

3.1. Introduction

Theologians in the past have identified the *Christus Victor* motif as Luther's atonement theology, without consideration of other themes, others on the other hand have focused on *satisfactio* or *penal* substitution as Luther's major theme, neglecting the *Christus Victor* motif altogether. However, the development of Luther's theology is far more variegated and inclusive of various themes. From the start, Luther made the cross the very centre of theology, evident in his 1518 Heidelberg Disputation. Although his theology of atonement was more fully articulated in his commentary on Galatians 3:13 and in his small and large catechisms.

3.2. Heidelberg Disputation, 1518

Luther was called upon to explain and defend his 'new theology'. This defence took the form of the Heidelberg Disputation at the lecture hall of the Augustinian Order in 1518, a year after nailing the 95 Thesis to the Wittenberg church door. In these days such a defence included public debate and discussion (Forde 1997:19).

Although the Heidelberg Disputation does not develop an atonement theology *per se*, George explains that it begins to articulate Luther's 'new and deeper understanding of the cross' which was the heart of his theology, a *theologia crucis*. Nevertheless, Luther's theology and more

specifically his atonement theology was shaped by contrasting the theologian of glory and the theologian of the cross, evident in Theses 19-21 of the Heidelberg Disputation (2004:265).[12]

In his short book, Forde (1997:9, 12, 15) offers helpful commentary, he writes of how Luther argued that 'a theology of glory always leaves the will in control', seeking 'to make its theology attractive to the supposed "free will"'. On the other hand, for the theologian of the cross, 'the will is bound and must be set free'.[13] Accordingly, 'Theologians of the cross attacked the way of glory, the way of law, human works, and free will, because the way of glory simply operates as a defence mechanism'. Conversely, the theologian of glory considers 'curing addiction by optimistic exhortation' and 'the theologian of the cross knows that the curse is much more drastic'[14], says Forde.

The cross of Christ for Luther is firstly 'God's attack of human sin', and secondly (and ultimately) salvation from sin. But we must see this as God's 'strange attack—to suffer and die at our hands'. Luther called this an 'alien work'. For the theologian of the cross, God works directly through the 'horror of the cross'. This alien work of the cross reflects back on us, exposing our own lives that we might become humble, rather than prideful (Forde 1997:1, 35).

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[12] Theses 19–21 of the Heidelberg Disputation reads as follows:
19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the 'invisible' things of God as though they were clearly 'perceptible in those things which have actually happened' (Rom 1:20; cf. 1 Cor 1:21–25),
20. he deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.
21. A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is (Luther 1518: online).
[13] cf. Luther's, *The Bondage of the Will.*
[14] cf. Luther's commentary on Galatians 3:13.

3.3. Commentary on Galatians 3:13

Luther begins his attack on the theology of glory in 1516–1517, lecturing on Paul's letter to the Galatians. His work was revised in 1535. The commentary on Galatians 3:13 develops a detailed atonement theology, even before the Heidelberg Disputation. According to George, this is 'a key passage in his most important biblical commentary' and many of his chief ideas of Christ's atoning work find expression here (2004:264, 269). Rutledge is correct, it is erroneous to limit Luther's atonement theology to one theme (2015:482).[15] His Commentary on Galatians 3 makes this quite clear, especially verse 13, where we see substitutionary[16] and *Christus Victor* themes at play. Although Luther handles several atonement themes, I argue that substitution and the *Christus Victor* motif are foremost in his theology. These two themes seem to be the fruit of deep consideration of the theology found in the Patristics and to some extent Anselm's theology (Shaw and Edwards 2011:78).[17]

George notes how many Luther scholars have found Aulén's attempt to impose a rigid typology, namely the *Christus Victor* motif, on Luther's theology unconvincing (George 2004:268). As we will see, Luther does

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[15] contra. Aulén (1931).

[16] Arguably even a primitive version of *penal* substitution. Wright (2016:240) offers an interesting approach when he says, 'The passage, then, declares that the "exile" is over–because the "curse" has fallen on the Messiah himself, the single representative of Israel, and has thereby been exhausted. To use traditional language for a moment, this is undoubtedly "penal" (you can't get more "penal" than the Deuteronomic curse), and it is undoubtedly "substitutionary" (the Messiah's accursed death means that others are no longer under the curse). But this form of "penal substitution" has little or nothing to do with the narrative in which that theory is normally found. That narrative says the oblique language of the scripture passage being quoted is just a roundabout way of saying, "We sinned, God punished Jesus, and we are all right again"'.

[17] Remembering that 'Luther's way of theologizing about the atonement is very different from that of Anselm' (George 2004:270).

advocate a *Christus Victor* motif in his commentary on Galatians 3:13, but he does this with a robust theology of substitutionary atonement as well. Luther writes,

'Paul does not say that Christ was made a curse for Himself. The accent is on the two words *"for us" (für uns)*. Christ is personally innocent. Personally, He did not deserve to be hanged for any crime of His own doing. But because Christ took the place of others who were sinners'[18] (Luther 1539[19]:114; emphasis mine).

Luther continues to explain, *'Des Todes und der ewigen Verdammnis schuldig',* 'we are guilty of death and eternal condemnation' (my translation).[20] However, he continues to proclaim that Jesus took our sins and then died on the cross for them, in this way he bore the sins of many [21] and was numbered among the transgressors [22] (Luther 1539:114).

Since Jesus was now a transgressor, the *Fluch des Gesetzes,* 'curse of the law' struck him. Luther explains how Jesus was not only in the company of sinners, but that 'he had gone so far as to invest Himself

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[18] This is most clearly stated in Luther's *Galaterbrief-Auslegung von 1531, „Der ganze Nachdruck liegt auf dem Wörtchen „für uns". Christus ist, was seine Person angeht, unschuldig. Folglich mußte er nicht am Holze hangen, aber, weil jeder Räuber nach dem Gesetz ans Holz gehörte, darum mußte Christus nach dem Gesetz des Mose ans Holz gehängt werden, weil er die Person des Sünders und Räuber, nicht einers Einzelnen, sondern aller Sünder und Räuber vertreten hat"* (Luther 1980:168).

[19] Although Luther's Commentary on Galatians 3:13 was revised in 1535, according to *The Christian Classics Ethereal Library,* the translation by Justus Menius appeared in the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's writings, and published in 1539. I will therefore use 1539 as the date of publication in my citations and Reference list.

[20] The official English translation reads, 'The sentence of death and everlasting damnation had long been pronounced over us' (Luther 1539:114).

[21] cf. Luther cited in McDonald 1985:183.

[22] cf. Is 53:12

with the flesh and blood of sinners. So the Law judged and hanged Him for a sinner' (Luther 1539:114–115). For Luther, the atoning work of Christ as sin-bearer was so complete that he 'actually became "the greatest thief, murderer, adulterer, robber, desecrator, blasphemer, etc, there has ever been anywhere in the world"'[23] (Shaw and Edwards 2011:79). In other words, as Luther proclaims, Jesus substituted himself, taking all the sins of the world upon himself, utterly defiling his sinlessness. All sins that were committed and will be committed become Christ's sins, as if he himself had committed them. If Christ did not take our place by owning our sins, we would perish forever (Luther 1539:115). As a result, the law destroys Christ and we go free (Luther 1539:116).

The idea of merit was abhorrent to Luther, seeing the tremendous blessings that come from Christ's sufficient work on the cross (McDonald 1985:183). This is evident when Luther, with magnificent proclamation writes, 'When we hear that Christ was made a curse for us *(Christus war für uns ein Fluch gemacht),* let us believe it with joy and assurance. By faith Christ changes places with us. He gets our sins, we get His holiness'. And in the very next sentence, Luther weaves in the *Christus Victor* motif, as if the two belong together, saying, 'if you believe that sin, death, and the curse are void, they are null, zero. Whenever sin and death make you nervous write it down as an illusion of the devil. There is no sin now, no curse, no death, no devil because Christ has done away with them'[24] (Luther 1539:118). It is evident then

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[23] Again, Luther's *Galaterbrief-Auslegung von 1531* is striking, *„Daß der zukünftige Christus der größte Räuber, Mörder, Ehebrecher, Dieb, Tempelschänder, Lästerer etc. Sein würde, der durch keinen Verbrecher in der Welt je übertroffen wird"* (Luther 1980:168).

[24] The German reads, *„Wenn du glaubst, daß Sünde, Tod und Fluch abgetan sind, sind sie abgetan; Christus hat diese Mächte in sich selbst überwunden und abgetan, und er will, daß wir glauben, daß, wie in seiner Person hinfort keine Gestalt des*

that Luther's *Christus Victor* motif which is so celebrated by Aulén, was accompanied by *penal* substitutionary notions (Boersma 2004:159). But be that as it may, the *Christus Victor* motif in Luther's atonement theology is *still* very much significant and powerful. Indeed, Rutledge (2015:482) observes,

> In much of Protestantism the *Christus Victor* theme that was so prominent in Luther was reduced in importance, with greater emphasis being put on justification by faith and imputed righteousness. Aulén succeeded in redirecting attention to Luther's robust proclamations: "Christ's victory … the overcoming of the Law, of Sin, our flesh, the world, the devil, death, hell, and all evils; and this victory has given to us." In his preface to the New Testament Epistles, Luther writes, "In these books [John, 1 Peter, and Paul's Epistles] you will find a masterly account of how faith in Christ conquers Sin, Death, and Hell; and gives life, righteousness, and salvation. *This is the true essence of the gospel.*"

In Luther's commentary on Galatians 3:13, employing vivid imagery, he recounts how 'sin is a mighty tyrant who subdues all men' and that 'this tyrant pounces on Christ', but the righteousness of Christ is unconquerable, resulting in the utter defeat of sin whereby 'righteousness triumphs and reigns forever'. Death is dealt the same blow. While death is the destroyer of life, 'Christ has immortal life, and life immortal gained the victory over death'. Death cannot destroy those who hide in Christ, for he is the 'Death of death'. Sin, death, the wrath of God, hell, and the devil are thus mortified in Christ (Luther 1539:116). Towards the end of his commentary on Galatians 3:13, Luther joins the concept of *Christus Victor* together with an element of Anselm's *satisfactio* theory found in his *Cur Deus Homo*. He explains

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Sünders mehr ist, keine Spur des Todes, so ist auch in unserer Person nichts mehr davon, da er alles für uns vollbracht hat etc." (Luther 1980:171).

that 'to overcome the sin of a whole world, and death, and the wrath of God was no work for any creature'. Only a greater power could break the power of sin and death. 'God alone could abolish sin, destroy death, and take away the curse of the Law. God alone could bring righteousness, life, and mercy to light. In attributing these achievements to Christ the Scriptures pronounce Christ to be God forever' (Luther 1539:117).

3.4. The Small and Large Catechisms

Luther wrote two catechisms. The Small Catechism, *Der kleine Katechismus,* for the training of children, and the Large Catechism, *Der große Katechismus,* was for the clergymen, specifically to help them teach their congregations. These are divided into five parts, (1) the Ten Commandments, (2) the Apostles' Creed, (3) the Lord's Prayer, (4) Baptism, and (5) the Eucharist.[25] In the discussion which follows I will highlight Luther's atonement theology in both catechisms.

As one might expect, Luther emphasises a kind of spiritual struggle with the devil, but that Christ has purchased his people and has won the victory, delivering them from all sins. This *Christus Victor* motif, is evident in the second article of the Apostle's Creed in the *Small Catechism* when he says, Jesus Christ,

> my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won [delivered] me from all sins,[26] from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy,

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[25] The Small Catechism includes 'Confession' as an additional part. Both catechisms were published in 1529. cf. Luther 1983.

[26] For Luther, by the divine love of Christ sin was laid upon him (Luther's Works vol. 26:279).

precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, in order that I may be [wholly] His own.[27]

The *Larger Catechism* develops this further, explaining that Christ had, 'redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death, and all evil' *(Daß er mich erlöst hat von der Sünde, vom teufel, vom Tod und allem Unglück;* Luther 1983:95). But that before we were captive to the devil's power and 'condemned to death'. For though we had been created by God and had received good, the devil deceived man 'and led us into disobedience, sin, death, and all evil' and as a result we bear the wrath[28] and displeasure of God and are 'doomed to eternal damnation, as we had merited and deserved'.[29] But central to the article is Jesus 'who has brought us from Satan to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness, and who preserves us in the same'. The motif, however, changes soon after to that of *satisfactio* where Luther writes that Christ suffered, died and was buried, in order that he would make satisfaction[30] for us (our sins[31]) and pay what we owe by means of his

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[27] The second article of *Der kleine Katechismus,* reads as follows, *„Sei mein Herr, der mich verlornen und verdammten Menschen erlöset hat, erworben, gewonnen von allen Sünden, vom Tode und von der Gewalt des Teufels; nicht mit Gold oder Silber, sondern mit seinem heiligen, teuren Blut und mit seinem unschuldigen Leiden und Sterben; auf daß ich sein eigen sei".*

[28] Wright notes that, 'Luther's protest of 1517 thus kept the medieval picture of God's wrath, but insisted that this wrath was quenched by God's love through the death of Jesus' (2016:30).

[29] In the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer in the *Small Catechism,* 'And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us' (cf. Matt 6:9–6:13; Luke 11:2–11:4.), Luther writes, *„ … denn wir täglich viel sündigen und wohl eitel Strafe verdienen"* (Luther 1983:139).

[30] According to George (2004:727), in order to 'distance Luther from the Latin view of the atonement, Aulén played down the concept of satisfaction in Luther's understanding of the cross' (cf. McDonald 1985:183).

[31] '"He has and bears all the sins of all men in his body–not in the sense that he has committed them but in the sense that he took these sins, committed by us, upon his

own blood. He did this not for himself but for us (one might say as a substitution). Although Anselm taught that God either inflicted *poenae,* 'penalty' or provided a *satisfactio,* Luther on the other hand argued that God chooses both, that Christ in his death 'bears all the sins of all men in his body' and bearing our *poenae* makes 'satisfaction for them with his own blood'. It is nevertheless true that Luther on several accounts criticises the word *satisfactio*, because of its connotation to the medieval sacrament of penance' (George 2004:273). Punishment is paid and his justice is satisfied! (Luther's Works vol.26:277; Falconer 2013:52). Luther then orientates his reader to the *Christus Victor* once again, proclaiming,

> And after that he rose again from the dead, swallowed up and devoured death, and finally ascended into heaven and assumed the government at the Father's right hand, so that the devil and all powers must be subject to him and lie at his feet, until finally, at the last day, he will completely part and separate us from the wicked world, the devil, death, sin, etc.[32]

Boersma notes that Aulén has pointed out how Luther was intensely aware of the spiritual battle that was fought in Christ's life and death and that the battle continues to be fought today in the lives of Christians (2004:193). This is laid out graphically by Luther here, especially in the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer in the *Larger Catechism,* when he says that the devil comes, 'inciting and provoking in all directions', and that, 'These are indeed snares and nets, yea, real fiery darts which are

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own body, in order to make satisfaction for them with his own blood"' (Luther quoted in George 2004:273).

[32] The German reads, *„Darnach ist er wieder auferstanden, hat den Tod verschlungen und vertilgt, und ist zuletzt gen Himmel gefahren und hat die Herrschaft zur Rechten des Vaters übernommen. Nun muß ihm der Teufel und alle Gewalt untertan sein und zu Füßen liegen, so lange, bis er uns schließen am Jüngsten Tag ganz von der bösen Welt, von Teufel, Tod, Sünde usw"* (Luther 1983:96).

shot most venomously into the heart, not by flesh and blood, but by the devil'. But as the *Small Catechism* so patently says, 'though we be assailed by them, that still we may finally overcome and gain the victory'. We have victory only because Christ is the Victor.[33] George explains that this is likely Luther's main contribution to the theology of atonement, bringing together *satisfactio* and *penal* substitution, as well as the cross of Christ being 'the scene of Satan's definitive defeat and the object basis of justification by faith alone' (2004:275).

3.5. Conclusion

Having explored Luther's atonement theology in the 1518 Heidelberg Disputation, his exposition on Galatians 3:13 and the Small and Large Catechisms, perhaps Rutledge (2015:483) says it best when she wrote that Luther, 'typically refers to the "combat" that Christ undertook against Sin, the Law, Death, and the devil.' However, Luther's reflections on this 'combat suggests that *the way that Christ became the Victor was through his death on our behalf and in our place'*.

It is no doubt evident then, that Luther developed a theology shaped by the cross, [34] *crux sola est nostra theologia* (McKnight 2007:61), however, it is argued by McKnight that it is deficient. Rightly, he wishes to add the resurrection and Pentecost. Rather than *crux sola,* Knight argues for a *crux et,* the cross, the resurrection *and* Pentecost, and these he believes should be 'set into the incarnation and the manifestation of God in the ecclesial community' (2007:53). Moltmann on the other hand sees Luther's *theologia crucis* as 'a radical

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[33] This work of victory, as Shaw and Edwards (2011:82) reminds us, 'is only possible if Christ's work is one of propitiation'.
[34] cf. Moltmann 1993:72, 212.

development of the doctrine of the incarnation with a soteriological intent'[35] (Moltmann 1993:212).

Luther did not have only one theory of the atonement, but developed an atonement theology that encompasses as many biblical themes as were available to him, especially *penal* substitution and the *Christus Victor* motif, and even to some extent, Anselm's *satisfactio* theory (George 2004:277). Boersma (2004:159) notes how subsequent theologians have worked at combining various atoning themes, especially, Luther's *Christus Victor* motif, celebrated by Aulén, and synthesised with substitutionary concepts.[36] This leads us to the next discussion, where we will explore briefly the impact of Luther's atonement theology on contemporary theologians' understanding of the cross of Christ.

4. Recent Theology of the Cross of Christ

4.1. Introduction

Boersma (2004:182–183) mentions that Luther had studied the works of Gregory the Great and recovered the concept of *Christus Victor*. Luther's successor, Melanchthon, however, taking a juridical approach, developed the '*penal* substitutionary view of the atonement that has been characteristic of Protestantism ever since'. And as Boersma has pointed out this is changing. The themes of atonement have become far more varied and composite. Having looked at Luther's theology it is not unreasonable to view him as the influence of recent atonement theology. Beginning with Gustaf Aulén, this discussion will explore ways in which Luther's atonement theology has shaped recent theology on the cross of Christ.

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[35] cf. Luther's Works 128:36
[36] This is evident in my own work (cf. Falconer 2013).

4.2. Gustaf Aulén

It is fair to say that Luther's theology of the atonement really begins shaping contemporary theology on the cross of Christ some years after the publication of Aulén's little book, *Christus Victor: an historical study of the three main types of the idea of atonement,* published in 1931. Rutledge correctly says that, 'Aulén's contribution has been massive'. He placed Luther's 'robust reaffirmation of the biblical and patristic *Christus Victor'* motif at the centre of Luther's atonement theology. Rutledge understands Aulén's account of Luther's atonement theology as having particular features of apocalyptic theology, namely, (1) 'God as the acting subject', (2) 'the cosmic and universal nature of the apocalyptic drama', (3) 'the presence of hostile Powers that must be defeated', (4) 'the conclusive defeat of the enemy by God's messianic agent', (5) 'the arrival of something altogether new' (2015:362).

Aulén called the *Christus Victor* motif, the classical idea, having been taught by the patristics[37], and the satisfaction theme (later developed as penal substitution) he called the Latin idea or the objective view, and Abelard's atonement theme of moral influence was the subjective theory. From Aulén's writings, he seemed to suggest that Luther's focus was only on the classic idea, or at least this is very much primary, almost to the exclusion of other atoning themes. He also understood the classical idea as 'that which is most genuinely Christian' (Aulén 1931:158).

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[37] Stott highlights that the Western Fathers believed in the *Christus Victor* motif together with the Eastern Fathers, but usually alongside the 'objective' view, these included Ambrose and Augustine, and Popes Leo the Great and Gregory the Great. However, it is argued that the *Christus Victor* motif lost some traction by medieval Catholic scholasticism, but Luther had revived it and that later 'Protestant scholasticism lost it again and reverted to the Anselmian notion of satisfaction' (Stott 1989:266).

Aulén was very critical of Anselm's teaching of *satisfactio,* calling it, 'juridical' (a concern of Luther's as well). He dismissed it scornfully as merely a deviation or 'sidetrack in the history of Christian dogma' (Stott 1989:266).[38] Notwithstanding, Aulén's significant contribution was drawing the attention of the church towards the cross as victory, demonstrating that the cross was not only about sin and guilt, but also death and the evil powers (Stott 1989:267).[39]

Aulén was persuaded that no Christian teaching will have any future if it does not take seriously 'the reality of the evil in the world, and go to meet the evil with a battle-song of triumph'. For this reason, he believed that the classic view, the *Christus Victor* motif, would make a comeback, but added that if this view 'ever again resumes a leading place in Christian theology, it is not likely that it will revert to precisely the same forms of expression that it has used in the past' (Aulén 1931:158–159). As we will discover in the work of the following theologians, Aulén's predictions have come true, though perhaps not quite as he might have envisioned.

4.3. Gregory Boyd

Gregory Boyd, is arguably the theologian who has most developed Aulén's emphasis of the *Christus Victor* motif for many years, but now, in 2017 his theology finds full expression in his *magnum opus,* titled, *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God.* Sounding almost like Luther's, *Crux Sola est Nostra Theologia,* Boyd writes how 'Jesus is the centre and the circumference of the Bible while the cross is the centre and circumference of Jesus' (Boyd 2017:227). Further, for him, the cross of

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[38] (cf. Aulén 1931:31)

[39] No doubt for Aulén such a theme was relevant 'in a century torn apart from two World Wars and in a European culture aware of demonic forces' (Stott 1989:267).

Christ 'is the revelation of God's judgment'. He argues that when we think about how God judges, how he loves or how he does anything, we must begin with the cross. The cross of Christ is therefore 'the supreme revelation of God' (Boyd 2017:online).

When asked in an interview whether the cross, the supreme revelation of God, subordinates the life, ministry, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, Boyd reaffirmed the cross as the centre of the Kerygma and that rather than opposing Jesus' life, ministry, resurrection and ascension, it weaves it all together into a 'thematic thread' (Boyd 2017:online). He calls this a 'the cruciform (or cruci-centric) hermeneutic'. Focusing on the *Christus Victor* motif, Boyd (1997:240), in an earlier publication maintains that,

> The anthropological significance of Christ's death and resurrection is rooted in something more fundamental and broad that God was aiming at: defeat once and for all his cosmic archenemy, Satan, along with the other evil powers under his dominion, and thereby to establish Christ as the legitimate ruler of the cosmos, and human beings as his legitimate viceroys upon the earth.

Similar to Wright's atonement theology as we shall see, Boyd acknowledges Jesus' substitutionary death for sinful humanity as central to an understanding of what he did for us on the cross, but that this element of Christ's atoning work is only made possible precisely because of the cosmic victory that Christ had won on the cross (1997:241). In other words, the work of the cross is, therefore, 'about dethroning a cruel, illegitimate ruler and reinstating a loving, legitimate one: Jesus Christ … we are saved because he is victorious'. Salvation is then the direct consequence of Jesus through the cross having overcome the powers of evil, and this cosmic victory is our personal salvation (Boyd 1997:246, 250).

4.4. Hans Boersma

Boersma offers a fascinating account of the atonement where he explores the questions that surround 'hospitality reconciliation' in Christ and his atoning work. For Boersma, atonement theology is about an 'expression of God's hospitality toward us' (Boersma 2004:15–16). More than anything else, it is in the cross that 'we see the face of the divine host: the true love of God'. As Boersma himself says, his work on the atonement is all about the face of God and 'his hospitality towards us in giving himself in Christ' (Boersma 2004:16).

Boersma affirms Traditional atonement theology, a theology that includes the satisfaction theory, penal substitution and the *Christus Victor* motif and even the moral influence theory of Abelard. He argues that this theology ought not be abandoned because of its divine violence, but that 'the paradox of redemptive violence in order to retain the vision of eschatological unconditional hospitality' ought to be affirmed (Boersma 2004:17).

The renewal of the *Christus Victor* motif, Boersma believes, is a positive contribution to the recent developments of atonement theology (Boersma 2004:199). Yet, he argues that the atonement models are not independent of each other, nevertheless, victory is the purpose of the atonement, satisfaction and the moral influence models are 'the means by which God ultimately defeats evil and upholds his eternal and unconditional hospitality'.[40] The *Christus Victor* motif, therefore, offers enough reason as 'warrant of divine hospitality' (Boersma 2004:201).

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[40] I have said this differently, 'penal substitution is the means of atonement, and *Christus Victor* is its purpose' (Colossians 1:12–14; 2:12–15; 3:18–22; Falconer 2015:148).

4.5. NT Wright

The New Testament scholar, NT Wright understands the cross as central to the Christian message, as well as Christian life and mission. It is at this moment of crucifixion, in which on the behalf of others, sins would be forgiven and evil would be robbed of its power and people would be redeemed making them 'worshippers and stewards, celebrating the powerful victory of God in his Messiah and so gaining the Spirit's power to make his kingdom effective in the world'. Wright urges his readers to 'forget the "works contract," with its angry, legalistic divinity. Forget the false either/or that plays different "theories of atonement" against one another'. But that we are to instead embrace the 'covenant of vocation', 'reflect the image of God and to celebrate that the power of love has overcome the love of power' (Wright 2016:416).[41]

Although Wright encourages his readers to leave behind the false either/or of the various atonement theories, he himself is compelled to accept the *Christus Victor* motif as the overarching theory[42] that carried him further than the other theories into the heart of the Christian message of atonement. He argues that, once the *Christus Victor* motif is put in place 'the other theories come in to play their respective parts'. Yet, as he notes, for Paul, Jesus' death also includes a '*judicial* or *penal* element' (Wright 2006:94–95).

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[41] This love of power is presumably Wright's equivalent of evil which he addresses in his 2006 book publication, *Evil and the justice of God.* He describes evil as, 'The force of anti-creation, anti-life, the force which opposes and seeks to deface and destroy God's good world of space, time and matter, and above all God's image-bearing human creatures. That is why death, as Paul saw so graphically in
1 Corinthians 15:26, is the final great enemy' (Wright 2006:89).
[42] Wright does note, however, that the *Christus Victor* motif is not a single theory to trump all others atonement themes (Wright 2006:95; cf. 114).

Wright correctly understands penal substitution as both biblical[43] and patristic, but nonetheless, a conception that was revived by the Reformer's rejection of purgatory with a *new spin*. He points out that it began to focus 'not on God's kingdom coming on earth as in heaven, but on *my* sin, *my* heavenly (that is, nonworldly) salvation, and of course *my* Saviour' (Wright 2016:30, 35). However, it concerns Wright that penal substitution has contributed towards a 'paganized vision of an angry God looming over the world and bent upon blood'. Instead, he argues, Paul gave us a Jewish perspective of the 'loving, generous creator God, who gives his own very self for the life of the world' (Wright 2016:349). Contrary to Luther though, Wright sees the work of the atonement in light of Israel and its exile,[44] but this would require extended discussion.

4.6. Scot McKnight

Similar to Wright, McKnight is persuaded that the penal substitutionary theory be immersed 'into the redemptive grace of God' (McKnight 2007:43). That is to say that penal substitution is by no means the only atonement theory, but that it sits in relationship to other themes. McKnight lists five chief metaphors of atonement, (1) recapitulation (incorporation into Christ, who recapitulated Adam's life), (2) ransom or liberation, (3) satisfaction, (4) moral influence, and (5) penal substitution,[45] and asks which one we should choose? He affirms that we do need to choose an appropriate atonement theme, and then develops his own golfing metaphor. Each spot on the golf course, he says is different, and we need to take the appropriate golf club from the

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[43] cf. Wright's commentary on Rom 8:1–4 in Wright 2016:286–287.

[44] cf. Wright 1996 and 2017.

[45] One wonders why McKnight had not included the *Christus Victor* motif. But be that as it may, the *Christus Victor* motif is a development from the ransom theory.

bag[46] and use it (McKnight 2007:48). In other words, each socio-cultural context may call for an appropriate emphasis of a particular theme of atonement. So, like Luther[47] and others, there is a variety of biblical atonement theories, and we should embrace them all.

McKnight seeks to deconstruct the typical single-sided, simplistic and individualist theories of the atonement, and yet also demonstrates that the cross of Christ is indeed inseparable from Jesus' incarnation, resurrection, Pentecost and the church. Yet, the atonement he believes, is designed to resolve the cosmic problem of evil and sin (McKnight 2007:61).

Contrary to Luther, and even Boyd, McKnight (2007:60) argues that the *'crux sola* theory of atonement is inadequate', not because the cross itself is insufficient, but as he explains,

> The atonement begins in the *perichoresis* of God, that eternal communion of interpersonal love, and that *perischoresis* becomes incarnate in the Son of God, the *Logos,* Christ Jesus, who assumes– hence the cross–what we are (cracked Eikons) in order to draw us into that *perischoresis.* And it is the entire life of Jesus (not to mention yet Pentecost) that creates atonement is incarnational as it sets the stage now for what happens in the cross'.

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[46] cf. McKnight 2007:108.

[47] However, McKnight does bemoan that the 'Lutheran confession framed the gospel in terms of salvation. It would not be inaccurate to say that the gospel "story became soteriology," or the Story of Israel/Bible/Jesus become the System of Salvation' … 'not that the Reformation created that sort of Gospel, but that the Reformation's reshaping of the gospel story has made it a pale shadow of what it ought to be' (McKnight 2011:72–73).

While McKnight raises a pertinent point, perhaps Boyd is still right, the cross is what weaves all the different elements together into a glorious tapestry.

4.7. Fleming Rutledge

Rutledge, an Episcopal priest, like Luther handles in detail a variety of atonement motifs, including satisfaction, sacrifice, ransom, *Christus Victor,* substitution and recapitulation. Nevertheless, she considers two categories when taken together encompass the various biblical imageries of what took place on the cross of Christ. The first category is *'God's definitive action in making vicarious atonement for sin:* the cross is understood as sacrifice, sin offering, guilt offering, expiation, and substitution. Related motifs are the scapegoat, the Lamb of God, and the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53'. The second category is described as, *'God's decisive victory over the alien Powers of Sin and Death:* the cross is understood as victory over the Powers and deliverance from bondage, slavery, and oppression. Related themes are the exodus, the harrowing of hell, and *Christus Victor'.* Rutledge does, however, caution us to be wary of sticking too strictly to the categories, and to allow for some overlap and blending. She also warns against developing atonement theories that are overly realistic, forcing 'the pictorial, poetic, and narrative structures of the Bible into restrictive categories' (2015:209, 211).

Nevertheless, in light of the two categories, Rutledge correctly argues that, (1) 'There is sin and guilt for which atonement needs to be made', and (2) 'There is *slavery, bondage, and oppression* from which humankind needs *to be delivered'* (2015:216).

Similar to Luther, if one too strictly focuses their atonement theology on a law court typology, the gospel is likely to find its way into a

moralistic emphasis (Rutledge 2015:320). And it is for this reason that she, along with others already mentioned, broadens the scope of the atonement, this is evident when she writes,

> The imagery of rescue and victory places the themes of reconciliation and forgiveness into another context altogether, where they are brought in under the heading of *God acting to make right what has been wrong* (rectification). Then, and only then, can the whole complex of ideas and images be located where it belongs, on the battlefield of Christ against the Powers. This is the overarching panorama against which to place the imagery of the Great Assize, or last Judgment (Rutledge 2015:347).[48]

She continues how it would be erroneous to interpret punishment only in terms of the wrathful image, but that we ought to relook at the idea of immunity, that is, the 'exemption from punishment', while still retaining punishment, or penalty (2015:503). Rutledge (2015:506) nevertheless criticises the penal aspect of penal substitutionary atonement,[49] and suggests that we rethink the substitution motif without eliminating it.

4.8. Conclusion

Although all the theologians mentioned offer their own unique contribution, they reflect a continuation from Luther's variegated atonement theology. Aulén emphasised the *Christus Victor* motif, over other themes, and other theologians embraced in one way or another the substitution theme, along with others. Contemporary atonement

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[48] cf. Rutledge 2015:238.

[49] Rutledge offers numerous and detailed objections to the penal substitution model (cf. 2015:489–506). I remain unconvinced by most of these objections and consider this perhaps the main weakness of her otherwise brilliant book.

theology is no doubt indebted to Luther's theology and thus is to be celebrated.

5. Conclusion

Luther offers a theology where the cross of Christ alone is our theology and then develops the atoning work of Christ, summoning theologians and their theology to the cross. The paper examined the origin or context of Luther's atonement theology, as well as its development, exploring the atonement in four of his written works: The 1518 Heidelberg Disputation, his commentary on Galatians 3:13, and his small and large catechisms. I then explored six theologians who have fostered Luther's atonement tradition and have made significant contributions to recent atonement theology. Here it was demonstrated that Luther's atonement theology undergirds the theology of recent theologians who have fostered and development his theology on the cross of Christ. It was evident, that Luther's theology of the atonement has shaped much of recent atonement theology from 1931 in Aulén's work to the present.

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Part One: Offering Praise to God: A Literary and Descriptive Analysis of Psalm 148

Dan Lioy[1]

Abstract

This journal article is the first in a two-part series that adopts as its rationale the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. The current essay undertakes a literary and descriptive analysis of Psalm 148, using as its incentive the first two of five well-known *solas* arising from the 95 theses Martin Luther (1483–1546) published in Wittenburg, Germany, in 1517. The first in the pentad emphasizes that glory alone belongs to God (in Latin, *soli Deo gloria*). The second in the pentad draws attention to Scripture as the fountainhead of divine revelation (in Latin, *sola Scriptura*). When the structure and content of Psalm 148 are examined (i.e. *sola Scriptura*), attentive readers discern that the major theme is giving heartfelt praise to God (i.e. *soli Deo gloria*).

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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.

1. Introduction

The year 2017 commemorates the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.[2] In 1517, Martin Luther published his 95 Theses in Wittenburg, Germany.[3] In turn, these eventually gave rise to the following five well-known *solas* (in Latin) that ministers of the Gospel have used as guidelines in their interpretation and application of scripture:[4]

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[2] Church historians generally regard Protestant reformers such as Zwingli, Melanchthon, and Calvin to be figures of the early modern era. In contrast, Martin Luther is primarily considered to be a late medieval figure. For instance, whereas the former studied Renaissance humanism within various university contexts, Luther trained to be an Augustinian monk. For an incisive overview of Luther's life and times, cf. Bainton (2013); Hendrix (2015); Kolb (2009); Marty (2008); Oberman (2006). Also, for a representative, substantive treatment of other major luminaries, as well as prominent theological issues, of the Reformation, cf. Barrett (2017); George (2013); Hillerbrand (2004); Linberg (2009); MacCulloch (2005); Matheson (2010); Nichols (2007); Payton (2010); Reeves (2010); Steinmetz (2001).

[3] Luther was a prodigious writer. Aside from his German translation of the Bible, the Weimar edition includes all his writings, along with his oral statements, in Latin and German (cf. Luther 2010). The American edition includes only about a third of Luther's works. One of the most pivotal subsets of his writings, which formed the kernel of his Reformation theology, can be found in volume 31 (cf. Luther 1957). Noteworthy, seminal entries include the following: 'Disputation against scholastic theology', 'Ninety-five theses', the 'Heidelberg disputation', 'Two kinds of righteousness', 'the Leipzig debate', and 'the freedom of a Christian'. These help readers more fully appreciate Luther's emerging disagreement with the soteriology of the late medieval Roman Catholic Church, the thinking behind his theology of the cross (in contrast to Church's theology of glory), and the rationale behind his emphasis on the centrality of scripture (rather than the edicts of popes and councils) in the ministry of the Gospel.

[4] There is no scholarly consensus regarding the prioritisation in numbering of the five *solas*. For the sake of expediency, the sequencing adopted in this essay is regarded by the author as a suitable arrangement to match the research agenda set forth in section 1.0. For a comprehensive overview of the five *solas* of the Reformation, cf. Barrett (2016); Schreiner (2015); Trueman (2017); VanDrunen (2015); Wellum (2017). For a compendium of Luther's writings centred around the 5 *solas*, cf. Kilcrease and Lutzer

1. *Soli Deo gloria*: to God alone be glory
2. *Sola Scriptura*: Scripture alone
3. *Solus Christus*: Christ alone
4. *Sola fide*: faith alone
5. *Sola gratia*: grace alone

The first in the pentad reminds believers that to God alone is the glory. The second in the pentad focuses on the primacy of scripture. The premise is that while there are a variety of important ecclesiastical and scientific sources of information that merit critical engagement when studying the Judeo-Christian canon, pride of place rests with God's Word. After all, it is the fountainhead of revelation for obtaining a theological understanding of matters involving the Creator and the entire universe He brought into existence, including humankind.

The preceding observations motivate a literary and descriptive analysis of Psalm 148.[5] Specifically, an examination of this ode serves as a showcase for the above two *solas*.[6] In particular, people of faith are

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(2017). The anthology includes an explanation of the historical context and theological significance of each writing to the Reformation.

[5] There is no scholarly agreement concerning the presumed redactional history of Psalm 148. This journal article makes no effort to reconstruct the editorial activity and source materials that led to the present canonical form of the sacred song; instead, it is analysed as a self-contained, cohesive written unit. Also, a literary and descriptive analysis of the poem aligns with a text-centred, inner-canonical, and integrative hermeneutic. The latter entails engaging pertinent Judeo-Christian Scriptures in their literary, historical, and theological settings. The result is that the multiplex, revelatory import of God's Word is more fully appreciated by twenty-first-century believers.

[6] The second journal article in the two-part series undertakes a literary and descriptive analysis of Psalm 104. The corresponding focus is on the second and third of the five well-known *solas*. Due to space limitations, the remaining *solas* in the pentad are not dealt with in either journal article, their undisputed historical importance notwithstanding. Also, the decision to deal with Psalm 104 after 148 is due to the research priorities set forth in section 1.0.

summoned to offer the Creator unending praise (i.e. *soli Deo gloria*). Also, the warrant for doing so is a thoughtful and informed examination of what the songwriter communicated in his awe-inspiring hymn (i.e. *sola Scriptura*). What follows, then, is a literary and descriptive analysis of the psalm.[7]

2. Background Considerations

2.1. Psalm 148 and the Hebrew Psalter[8]

Psalm 148 is grouped with the final five songs in the Hebrew Psalter.[9] Most likely, each 'hymn of descriptive praise' (VanGemeren 1991:864)[10] was written by a Jewish musician (or team of musicians) who had recently returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon.[11] This supposition is due, in part, to the Septuagint (LXX) version of Psalms

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[7] The following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the literary and descriptive analysis of Psalm 148: Allen (1983); Anderson (1983); Bratcher and Reyburn (1991); Brüning (1996); Bullock (2001); Calvin (1949b); Cohen, Oratz, and Shahar (1992); deClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner (2014); Delitzsch (1982); Estes (2014); Goldingay (2008); Grogan (2001); Harman (2011); Hilber (2009); Hillers (1978); Hossfeld and Zenger (2011); Kidner (1975); Kraus (1992; 1993); Leupold (1969); Luther (1837); Mays (1994); McCann (1996); Perowne (1989); Prinsloo (1992); Terrien (2003); VanGemeren (1991); Warden (1993); Wesselschmidt (2007); Westermann (1981).

[8] For an animated outline and explanation of the Psalter, cf. Mackie (2015).

[9] Psalm 148 profoundly shaped the text for 'All Creatures of Our God and King'. Saint Francis of Assisi first penned the words of the hymn in 1225. Then, between 1899 to 1919, William Draper rendered and reworked the canticle into English, along with setting the words to music (cf. Plantiga 2007a).

[10] Alternatively, Luther (1837:384) classifies Psalm 148 as a hymn of 'thanksgiving'.

[11] Sometime after 538 BCE; cf. Ps 147:2.

145 through 148,[12] which associates these with the sixth-century BCE postexilic prophets, Haggai and Zechariah.[13]

Given this historical backdrop, even though the future was hopeful, the sorrows of exile were fresh in the hymnist's mind. Also, the ruins of Jerusalem surrounded him.[14] Despite such a sombre backdrop, the lyricist began and ended his psalm with a universal summons to give God praise (vv. 1, 14). The totality of creation is personified as expressing adoration to the Lord because of his providential oversight of the entire spiritual and material realms. This includes both the heavens (vv. 1–6) and the earth (vv. 7–14).

2.2. The meaning of 'hallelujah'

Of particular interest is the Hebrew verb *hâlal*, which is used in Psalm 148:1 and 14. The term literally means 'to boast' or 'to praise' (Allen 1997). The primary sense is to commend the virtues of the object being extolled (Westermann 1997). The Israelites joined the noun, *Yah*, which is a shortened form of *Yahweh*,[15] to the verb *hâlal*. The combined phrase basically meant 'Praise the Lord!'

Some form of the Hebrew phrase *hâlal Yah* appears 23 times in the Psalter alone.[16] Likewise, some form of the verb *hâlal* appears 12 times in Psalm 148. Moreover, every time the phrase *hâlal Yah* appears in the

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[12] Psalms 146 through 148 in the MT correspond to Psalms 145 through 148 in the LXX, in which 146 and 147 together are the equivalent of 147 in the MT.

[13] In the LXX version, each of the first lines of Psalms 145 through 148, respectively, reads as follows: Αλληλουια, Αγγαιου καὶ Ζαχαριου ('Hallelujah, Haggai and Zechariah'; Rahlfs 1979).

[14] Hereafter, the human author of Psalm 148 is presumed to be a male.

[15] Freedman (1986) refers to *Yahweh* as the 'tetragrammaton' for the Lord's covenant 'name'; cf. the corresponding lexical discussion of God's names in section 4.2.

[16] For an examination of the function of the 'hallelujahs' in the Psalter, cf. Hossfeld and Zenger (2011:39–41).

Old Testament of our English Bibles, it is usually translated. This stands in contrast with the New Testament, where the equivalent Greek interjection is transliterated as 'hallelujah'. It occurs only 4 times, all in the first 6 verses of Revelation 19. This explains why this chapter of the New Testament has been called the 'Hallelujah Chorus'.[17]

2.3. Parallelism in Hebrew poetry

An examination of the Hebrew poetry in Psalm 148 indicates a distinguishing characteristic called parallelism.[18] This term simply means that two (or sometimes three) lines of the poetry are, in one way or another, similar in meaning. Parallelism takes many different forms. The type found in this song is called equivalent (or synonymous) parallelism, because the second line essentially repeats and advances the thought of the first.

3. A literary analysis of Psalm 148

Psalm 148:1 begins and verse 14 ends with the summons to 'praise the Lord'. In a manner of speaking, the invitation is comparable to a conductor who leads worshippers through the entrance into the psalm, as well as the exit from the ode. Prinsloo (1992:56) offers the analogy of two 'choirs'—one from above and the other from below—that extol the Creator.

In particular, verses 1b–4 focus the gaze of readers upward to the heavens. The angels and celestial bodies in the starry night sky are

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[17] Bratcher and Reyburn (1991) note that Psalm 148 has also been called a 'hallelujah chorus'.

[18] For an overview of different types of parallelism in Hebrew poetry, cf. Berlin (1992:156–60); Bullock (1988:32–38); Harrison (2009:89–92); LeMon and Strawn (2008:510–12).

enjoined to lead the chorus of tribute to the Lord. Verses 5–6 offer the reason for doing so, namely, that God has created every one of these entities. Next, verses 7–12 shift the readers' focus downward to the earth.[19] All the creatures on the planet are directed to band together with their celestial counterparts in heartfelt praise to the Creator.[20] Verses 13–14 put forward the rationale for honouring God in this way. Worthy of mention are the Lord's splendour and his care for the people of Israel.[21]

The above literary analysis indicates that the sacred song is divided into roughly two equal halves, that is, verses 1–6 and 7–14. In a metaphorical sense, the heavens and the earth are comparable two halves of a choir that alternate (i.e. antiphonally) in extolling God. This observation is reinforced by the repetition of the directive, 'Let them praise the name of the Lord,' both in verses 5 and 13.[22] The repeated emphasis on praise in these two interior verses, along with the opening and closing verses (respectively), reminds worshippers to extol the Creator openly for who he is and what he has done.

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[19] Hossfeld and Zenger (2011:631) explicate that the references in Psalm 148 to the 'heavens' (שָׁמַיִם; v. 1) and the 'earth' (אֶרֶץ; v. 7) is a figure of speech called a merism that the lyricist used to refer to the totality of the cosmos joining together to extol to the Lord.

[20] Prinsloo (1992:50, 53, 59) indicates that the Hebrew noun rendered 'all' (כֹּל) occurs 9 times in Psalm 148 to emphasise that every entity in heaven and on earth exists to extol the Creator.

[21] According to Luther (1837:385), the resounding chorus was to be made with 'thousands of tongues'. Likewise, the participants were to 'celebrate' the Lord's 'infinite goodness', along with his 'countless and unspeakable mercies'. Estes (2014:32) observes that while Psalm 148 commences with a broad, sweeping 'focus' on all creation, the hymnist 'progressively' concentrates the readers' attention in verse 14 on 'Israel' and its inhabitants. Warden (1993:107) states that ultimately 'God is not the recipient of praise, but its dispenser'. Expressed differently, the ability of the redeemed to offer the Creator 'praise' originates with him and is based on his gracious superintendence of the redeemed.

[22] cf. the corresponding lexical discussion of God's names in section 4.2.

Based on the preceding analysis, the proposed literary structure of Psalm 148 is as follows:[23]

- The opening refrain to praise God: v. 1a
  - The summons to offer praise in the heavens: vv. 1b–4
    - The reason for doing so: vv. 5–6
      - An emphasis on praising God's name: v. 5a
  - The summons to offer praise on the earth: vv. 7–12
    - The reason for doing so: vv. 13–14a
      - An emphasis on praising God's name: v. 13a
- The closing refrain to praise God: v. 14b

In this arrangement, the opening and closing refrains (vv. 1a and 14b, respectively) establish the main theme of the psalm, namely, for God to be praised. The interior verses develop this theme further by being configured in a dual, inwardly advancing pattern. There are corresponding summons to offer praise (vv. 1b–4 and 7–12, respectively) and reasons for doing so (vv. 5–6 and 13–14a, respectively). The parallelism between the two sections, along with the conceptual link with the main theme of the ode, is further reinforced by the admonition in both verses 5a and 13a to praise God's name.[24]

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[23] For a deliberation of the structure and cohesion of Psalm 148, cf. Prinsloo (1992). The author considers data related to the 'morphological, syntactical, stylistic, and semantic' (46) aspects of the hymn. For additional proposals concerning the hymn's structure, cf. Allen (1983:313–5).

[24] cf. the corresponding lexical discussion of God's names in section 4.2.

4. A Descriptive Analysis of Psalm 148

4.1. Angelic hosts versus idols

As noted earlier, Psalm 148:1b–4 exhort various aspects of the creation above (both animate and inanimate objects) to exalt the Lord. 'Angels' renders a Hebrew noun that can also be translated 'messengers' or 'envoys' (Noll 1997). These beings form a celestial entourage that surround God's heavenly throne and whom he dispatches to do his bidding.

The Hebrew noun rendered 'hosts' (v. 2) can also be translated as 'armies' and refers to a vast cohort of military personnel (Koehler 2000). In this case, the Lord is the supreme Commander of heaven's forces. Alternately, the noun could refer to celestial bodies that are visible in the night sky (Longman 1997). Here the emphasis is on the Creator's total control of entities venerated by Israel's pagan neighbors.

The lyricist's monotheistic portrayal of God is radically different from polytheistic ancient Near Eastern conceptions of deity. In particular, the foremost idols of Aram (or Syria) included Hadad (a storm-god), Mot (the god of death), Anath (a fierce goddess of war and love), and Rimmon (a god of thunder). Eshmun (a fertility god) was the chief deity of Sidon. Chemosh (a savage war-god) was the foremost idol of Moab. Molech (or Milcom, an astral deity) was the chief god of the Ammonites. Dagon (a grain deity) and Baal-Zebub (a god of health and divination) were the foremost idols of the Philistines.[25]

Centuries later, during Paul's brief visit to Athens, his spirit became deeply unsettled by the sight of all the 'idols' (Acts 17:16) present

wherever he ventured. Then, when the apostle addressed the resident and visiting philosophers of the city, he declared that God made the world and everything in it, as well as gave life and breath to all creatures (vv. 24–25). Paul made it clear that this powerful Creator determines the various eras of history and the limits of each nation's territory (v. 26). The apostle also revealed that this great God gives every person the ability to live, move about, and become responsible citizens in his or her communities (v. 28).

4.2. Extolling the Creator

Psalm 148:3 summons a diverse collection of astral bodies, including the sun, moon, and constellation of stars, to join ranks in extolling their Creator. Verse 4 adds the heights of heaven,[26] along with its stratospheric rain clouds. Hilber (2009:442) points out that the lyricist was rhetorically addressing these inanimate objects in a personified manner, a literary technique that specialists have identified as the poetic device known as apostrophe.

The preceding observations reflect a three-tiered view of reality encompassing what is above, below, and on the earth. Accordingly, an immense body of water was thought to be located beyond the overarching sky as well as underneath the surface of the planet.[27] Hebrew writings of the day also subdivided the heavens into three or more layers.[28] If it is assumed that the first heaven is the sky and the

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[25] For a cogent treatment of polytheistic ancient Near Eastern conceptions of deity, cf. Barrett (2012); Hadley (1997); Huey (2009); Hunt (2003).

[26] The Hebrew of Psalm 148:4 is literally translated, 'heavens of the heavens' (הַשָּׁמָיִם שְׁמֵי).

[27] cf. Gen 1:6–7; Ps 104:3.

[28] cf. Ps 148:4; 2 Cor. 12:2, 4.

second heaven the more distant stars and planets, then the third heaven would be the place where God dwells.[29]

All these entities were to laud God's sacred name (v. 5). According to Kraus (1992:21), it signifies the 'self-manifestation and the self-expression of God among his people'.[30] Also, as an extension of what was said in sections 2.2 and 3, the divine names unveil key truths about the Lord's character, such as his honour and reputation (Ross 1997).[31] For instance, *Yahweh*, and its shortened form, *Yah*, emphasize God's eternality (Freedman 1986).[32] He shows himself to be actively involved in human history (Fretheim 1997b). *Elohim* portrays the Lord as the one, true, and unique God (Ringgren 1977). He alone is the source of all things and the fountain of all life (Fretheim 1997a).[33]

4.3. Giving God praise

The last point in section 4.2 is spotlighted in Psalm 148:5, which states that everything was created at the Lord's decree. This verse uses the

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[29] cf. Neh 9:6; T. Levi 2:7–10. For an analysis of Israelites' distinctive worldview, especially against the wider backdrop of the ancient Near East in the first millennium BCE, cf. Stadelmann (1970).

[30] cf. Deut 12:11; 28:58; 2 Sam 6:2; 1 Chron 22:19; Ps 20:1, 7; Isa 30:27–28; Joel 2:32.

[31] For a concise discussion about the import of the divine name in the Hebrew sacred writings, including the Psalms, cf. deClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner (2014:848–9).

[32] cf. Exod 3:14–15. Noteworthy is the fact that Waltke and Yu (2007:11), throughout their treatment of Old Testament theology, consistently render the tetragrammaton in uppercase italics as '*I AM*'. Comparably, Goldingay (2016:20) draws a sharp 'contrast' between Yahweh as the 'living God' and the 'lifeless gods and images' venerated by Israel's pagan neighbors.

[33] cf. Gen 1:1. According to Waltke and Yu (2007:371), *elohim* 'signifies the quintessence of all divine, transcendent, or heavenly powers'. Correspondingly, Schmidt (1997) maintains that *elohim* 'aided the Israelites to understand and proclaim the God of their own history as the God of the world'.

same Hebrew verb appearing in Genesis 1:1, 21, and 27, which reveal that at the dawn of time, God brought the entire universe into existence.[34] Also, as the remainder of the chapter reveals, he used his efficacious command to accomplish his will.[35]

Psalm 148:6 adds another reason for the heavens and whatever it contains to give God praise. Specifically, he alone established the sun, moon, stars, and planets. Bratcher and Reyburn (1991) clarify that during the first millennium BCE, 'all planets and stars were thought to occupy a fixed place in the sky'. Likewise, the Lord ensured that his mandate for their continued existence would never be overturned by any entity. For instance, none of the idols venerated by Israel's pagan neighbours could destabilise the universe God controlled.

4.4. Sources of idolatry

As noted earlier, Psalm 148:7–14 shifts the call to praise from the heavens to the earth, beginning with the aquatic life in the oceans. These included the largest sea creatures found in the deepest chasms of the planet, including whales, squid, sharks, and so on. According to pagan myths rampant throughout the ancient Near East, serpent-like monsters roamed the watery abyss of earth's seas and threatened to undo the created order. In contrast, the poet declared that Israel's God

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[34] The Hebrew verb is בָּרָא. For an overview of the stylistic, lexical, and thematic correspondences between Psalm 148 and Genesis 1:1–2:4, along with Psalms 103 and 104, cf. Prinsloo (1992). The author maintains that the hymnist of Psalm 148 'dealt with his material creatively and independently' (56), resulting in a 'coherent, meaningful text'.

[35] cf. Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29; Pss 33:6–9; 104:5–9; Prov 8:29. Brown (1997) clarifies that the 'emphasis' is 'on the life-infusing power of the divine word'. What the Creator declared was neither an 'empty pronouncement' nor merely an 'expression of wish or goodwill'; instead, the Lord decreed 'actualizes and enables' what he brings into existence.

reigned supreme over all these oceanic forms of life. Also, he alone enabled the entire created order to remain stable and enjoy functional integrity.

Furthermore, Israel's pagan neighbours made idols out the world's naturally-occurring phenomena, including lightning, hail, snow, frost, hurricane-force winds, and so on (v. 8). The Gentiles also venerated the hills and mountains, along with the groves of fruit trees and forests of cedar that grew on them. According to Bratcher and Reyburn (1991), the entities highlighted in verse 9 stood for all 'cultivated' and 'uncultivated plants', respectively. Even pagan rituals and lewd acts were performed at these various locales.

Moreover, the creatures that lived on the earth became the idolatrous focus of people inhabiting the Fertile Crescent. The lyricist mentioned wild and tame animals, along with reptiles and birds (v. 10); yet, in doing so, he enjoined the planet's various land-based entities to offer praise to the one, true, and living God.[36] This exhortation complements Romans 1:21–25, where centuries later Paul reprimanded unsaved humanity for worshipping and serving created entities, rather than the Creator.

4.5. A summons to praise

It is against the preceding theological backdrop that Psalm 148:11–12 summons all human beings—the pinnacle of God's creation—

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[36] Concerning Psalm 148:10, Estes (2014:35) asserts that even though people might regard the sounds uttered by creatures in the wild as a 'cacophony of roars, grunts, squeals, and chirps', to the Sovereign of the universe these noises are a resonant 'symphony exalting Him'.

throughout the globe to participate in the refrain of praise.[37] The poet drew attention to monarchs and high-ranking officials, as well as any other leaders over the nations of the earth. The lyricist also included men and women, regardless of their age and socio-economic status. No person in every locale across the planet was excluded from the injunction.

4.6. Reasons to praise

Psalm 148:13–14 explain why all individuals should laud the Creator's name. Specifically, no other entity was as transcendent as the Lord. Similarly, no creature in heaven or on earth was comparable in either majesty or splendour to Israel's God. He alone, not the powerless and lifeless idols touted by the unsaved, enabled his chosen people to conquer and settle the Promised Land.

Moreover, in fulfilment of God's covenant with Abraham,[38] he literally 'raised up a horn for his people' (v. 14). The hymnist possibly had in mind the horn of a ram or a bull, which in Israelite culture were symbols of power and strength.[39] In a military sense, the Creator gave

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[37] cf. Gen 1:26–27. These verses reveal that men and women, as God's image bearers, reflect his spiritual and moral likeness. The Lord put them on earth to serve as his ruling representatives. Psalm 8 makes the preceding point even clearer. The One who made the heavens, moon, and stars (v. 3) also crowned humankind with glory and honour (v. 5). The Lord gave men and women dominion over his wonderful works. He graciously put them in charge of his expansive and marvellous creation (v. 6), which includes tame and wild animals (v. 7), birds, and sea creatures (v. 8). Such a great God was worthy of devotion and praise from his people (v. 9).

[38] cf. Gen 12:1–3; Deut 7:7–12. Kraus (1992:53) elucidates that whenever the Psalter refers to the 'people of God', the 'emphasis is always on the thoroughly distinctive nature of their role'. Grogan (2001:81) advances the discourse with his dual emphasis on Israel's 'election and covenant'. Put differently, God not only 'chose' the Israelites, but also 'entered into a special relationship with them'.

[39] cf. Pss 5:19; 89:17; 92:10; 112:9.

his faithful children victory over their adversaries, especially as seen in their exodus from Egypt. The upright, in turn, enjoyed a close, personal relationship with the Lord. So, only he was worthy of their praise.[40]

Hilber (2009:429) thinks the reference to a 'horn' might also point to a monarch (such as David), who enabled the redeemed to triumph over their foes despite overwhelming circumstances.[41] Luke 1:69, which is part of Zechariah's prophetic ode, sharpens the theological focus. The backdrop is the birth of John the Baptist and his ministry as the forerunner of the Messiah. Zechariah declared that the Lord had 'raised up a horn of salvation' for his people, specifically a ruler belonging to the 'house' (or dynasty) of God's 'servant David'. Through the Messiah's atoning sacrifice at Calvary and subsequent resurrection, he triumphed over Satan, sin, and death, thereby providing a second (or new) exodus for those who trust in him for eternal life.

5. Conclusion

This essay began with a historical reference to the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Of particular note were the first two of five well-known *solas* arising from the 95 theses Martin Luther published in Wittenburg, Germany, in 1517. The first in the series emphasizes that glory alone belongs to God (in Latin, *soli Deo gloria*). The second in

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[40] Luther (1837:384) fittingly asserted that the Creator summoned the 'children of Israel', to whom belonged the 'word and worship of God', to extol him.

[41] cf. Ps 132:17. For an in-depth consideration of the imagery and identity of the 'horn' in Psalm 148:4, cf. Schmutzer and Gauthier (2009). The authors separate 'commentators' (183) into two main groups: (1) 'literary-metaphorical' and (2) 'historical-literal'. Based on their analysis of the relevant data, they affirm the presence of 'elements common' to both categories, in which a 'militaristic theme' forms the broader conceptual backdrop. The authors conclude that the 'horn' pointed to the 'judgment of Israel's enemies', along with the heralding of 'Israel's restored reputation on an international scale'.

the pentad draws attention to Scripture as the fountainhead of divine revelation (in Latin, *sola Scriptura*).

The above statements incentivized undertaking a literary and descriptive analysis of Psalm 148. Additional motivation can be found in the first of three foundational principles affirmed by SATS, namely, that the 'Bible is the only written revelation of and from God' and 'therefore all we need for faith and life'.[42] When the structure and content of the sacred song are examined (i.e. *sola Scriptura*), attentive readers discern that the major theme is giving heartfelt praise to God (i.e. *soli Deo gloria*).

For instance, verses 1a and 14b serve as metaphorical bookends, or an inclusio, summoning worshippers to praise the Creator. Similarly, the repeated appearance of some form of the Hebrew verb rendered 'praise' throughout the psalm,[43] along with the covenantal form of the Lord's name in verses 5 and 13, reinforce the imperative for the redeemed to honour God through individual and corporate worship.

To develop the preceding thought further, it is worth noting that, according to Psalm 150:3–5, God is to be praised with music and dancing. The eight items mentioned in these verses include wind, stringed, and percussion instruments. Some were used only in corporate worship services, while others were used in everyday celebrations. The implication seems to be that God's people should use whatever means that are appropriate to exalt the Lord.

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[42] The full text of the three foundational principles affirmed by SATS can be found at the following: https://www.sats.edu.za/about-us/statement-faith/.
[43] cf. Ps 148:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 13, 14.

Colossians 3:16 also encourages the redeemed to make music a regular part of their corporate worship experience. [44] The 'psalms' were probably the canticles found in the Old Testament Psalter. 'Hymns' most likely were lyrics composed by Christians to honour God. 'Songs' may have been called 'spiritual' either to distinguish them from similar compositions by non-Christians or because they referred to spontaneous singing in the Spirit.

The idea is that the words in our worship songs are meant to express the compassion and truth of the Saviour. These hymns can either be taken from the Old Testament psalms or be newly-written lyrics of praise. Whatever the type of music, the Spirit should guide the words, the music, and the singer. Furthermore, we are to praise the Father and the Son in song with not just with our lips, but more importantly with all our heart—that is, our whole being.

Colossians 3:17 reminds believers to do everything in Jesus' name.[45] Put differently, the Messiah's supreme authority and character govern the way Christians think, behave, and minister. Since the Lord has claimed them with his atoning blood, they belong to and are dependent on him. Accordingly, his name should be stamped on all that believers do and say as his representatives to the unsaved. This includes expressing our gratitude through the Son to the Father.

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[44] cf. Eph 5:19.
[45] cf. Eph 5:20.

Part Two: Affirming God's Majesty in Creation: A Literary and Descriptive Analysis of Psalm 104

Dan Lioy

Abstract

This journal article is the second in a two-part series that adopts as its rationale the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. The current essay undertakes a literary and descriptive analysis of Psalm 104, using as its incentive the second two of five well-known *solas* arising from the 95 theses Martin Luther (1483–1546) published in Wittenburg, Germany, in 1517. The second in the pentad emphasizes that Scripture is the fountainhead of divine revelation (in Latin, *sola Scriptura*). To that end, when the structure and content of Psalm 104 are examined, attentive readers discern several possible intertextual connections of a Christological nature between the ode and the New Testament. In turn, this realization draws attention to the third *sola* in the pentad, namely, the centrality of the Son in the Father's redemptive plan (in Latin, *solus Christus*).

1. Introduction

As noted in the preceding journal article dealing with Psalm 148,[1] the year 2017 commemorates the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. In 1517, Martin Luther published his 95 Theses in Wittenburg, Germany.[2] In turn, these eventually gave rise to the following five well-known *solas* (in Latin) that ministers of the Gospel have used as guidelines in their interpretation of Scripture:

1. *Soli Deo gloria*: to God alone be glory
2. *Sola Scriptura*: Scripture alone
3. *Solus Christus*: Christ alone
4. *Sola fide*: faith alone
5. *Sola gratia*: grace alone

The second in the pentad draws attention to the primacy of scripture. On the one hand, the Reformers affirmed that when studying scripture,

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[1] The first journal article in the two-part series undertakes a literary and descriptive analysis of Psalm 148. The decision to deal with this hymn before Psalm 104 is due to the research priorities set forth in section 1 of each respective essay.

[2] Wiersma (2017:4) observes that, in contrast to a generation ago, 'today' there is an increased interest in 'Luther's anti-Jewish writings and attitudes'. Admittedly, in a 1523 essay titled, *That Jesus Christ was born a Jew*, the Reformer 'showed great favour toward Medieval Europe's Jewish population'. Twenty years later, though, in 1543, Luther penned a verbose rant titled, *Concerning the Jews and their lies*. Wiersma states that 'even Luther's own colleagues and supporters were dismayed' by the violent tone and content of the 'screed'. There is no consensus explanation among scholars for Luther's 'awful words about his Jewish neighbours'. Even so, Wiersma identifies 'two main factors', as follows: (1) Luther's 'simmering disappointment with the rabbis' failure to recognize Jesus as Messiah'; and, (2) Luther's 'desire to avoid divine punishment for failing to speak out against rumoured Jewish blasphemies concerning Jesus and Mary'. Wiersma's is correct in maintaining that 'Luther's anti-Jewish sentiments represent the deepest flaws of a deeply gifted man'. Even the Reformer's legendary efforts to herald the 'crucified and risen' Messiah do not excuse Luther's 'errant words' against God's chosen people.

there is value in engaging various secondary sources of knowledge from the metaphysical and physical realms of existence; on the other hand, God's Word is given the foremost position of importance in the theological enterprise.

The third *sola* in the pentad spotlights the centrality of the Son in the Father's redemptive plan. This emphasis is borne out in a literary and descriptive analysis of Psalm 104.[3] Specifically, attentive readers discern several possible intertextual connections of a Christological nature between the ode and the New Testament. By way of comparison, the number exceeds the single connection noted in the journal article dealing with Psalm 148.[4]

The above statements serve as an incentive to undertake a literary and descriptive analysis of Psalm 104.[5] In particular, an examination of this sacred song affirms the wisdom of giving the Judeo-Christian canon pride of place in all aspects of exegetical theology (i.e. *sola Scriptura*). Moreover, a Spirit-filled and discerning consideration of what the poet conveyed in his ode points the readers' gaze to the coming Messiah,

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[3] There is no scholarly agreement concerning the presumed redactional history of Psalm 104. This journal article makes no effort to reconstruct the editorial activity and source materials that led to the present canonical form of the sacred song; instead, it is analyzed as a self-contained, cohesive literary unit.

[4] The journal article dealing with Psalm 148 mentions the reference to a 'horn' in verse 14 and Zechariah's corresponding declaration in Luke 1:69 that that the Lord had 'raised up a horn of salvation' for his people', which refers to Israel's Messiah.

[5] The following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the literary and descriptive analysis of Psalm 104: Allen (1983); Anderson (1983); Barker (1986); Berlin (2005); Bratcher and Reyburn (1991); Bullock (2001); Calvin (1949a); Cohen, Oratz, and Shahar (1992); deClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner (2014); Delitzsch (1982); Dion (1991); Fullerton (1921); Gandiya (2012); Goldingay (2008); Gottlieb (2016); Grogan (2001); Harman (2011); Hilber (2009); Hossfeld and Zenger (2011); Kidner (1975); Kraus (1992; 1993); Leupold (1969); Levenson (1988); Luther (1837); Mays (1994); McCann (1996); Perowne (1989); Terrien (2003); VanGemeren (1991); Wesselschmidt (2007); Westermann (1981).

whose advent looms large on the writer's prophetic horizon (i.e. *solus Christus*). Accordingly, the sections that follow put forward a literary and descriptive analysis of the hymn.

2. A Literary Analysis of Psalm 104

Psalm 104—along with Job 38 and Psalms 8 and 29—produces a magnificent poetic and musical commentary on the creation. [6] Brueggemann (1997:155) considers Psalm 104 as the 'fullest rendition of creation faith' in the Tanakh. Even the structure of the song draws praise in that it is modelled quite closely on the day-by-day creation events recorded in Genesis 1:1–2:3.[7] Indeed, as the psalmist described in grandiose detail the daily acts of creation, he seemed to proclaim in glowing terms that what the divine Architect and Artisan created on each day is reason enough to praise him.[8]

On the one hand, the psalmist used the various stages of creation as his starting points for praise; yet, on the other hand, as he developed each creation-day theme, there is a constant anticipation of more, especially

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[6] Psalm 104 profoundly shaped the text for 'O worship the king'. William Kethe penned an early version of the hymn in 1561. Then, between 1833 to 1835, Robert Grant reworked the canticle into its present form (cf. Plantiga 2007b).

[7] Mays (1994:331) differentiates between 'contemporary people', who discourse about reality through 'scientific, economic, aesthetic, [and] recreational' lenses, versus Psalm 104, which presents a 'view and language appropriate to faith'. Admittedly, Old Testament texts (such as Psalm 104) dealing with creation themes make use of the ancient Near Eastern cognitive environment of the second to first millenniums BCE. The intent (at least in part) was to reveal deep theological truths about God and his relationship to humankind, not to provide a precise scientific treatise concerning the process God used to bring the cosmos into existence. For a biblical and theological analysis of the old Adamic creation in Genesis 1–3, cf. Lioy (2016:13–53).

[8] Luther (1837:273) noted that 'by recounting the works of creation', the hymnist confirmed that 'all the creatures', whether celestial, terrestrial, or oceanic, were 'monuments' to the 'goodness of God'.

for the later days of the creation. In general, the songwriter was cognizant of the day-by-day creation events recorded in Genesis 1; nonetheless, he also allowed himself some poetic licence.[9] For the most part, though, he kept to the structure set out in Genesis, as the following chart shows:

Day God Created . . .	Genesis 1	Psalm 104
1–Light	3–5	1–2
2–The heavens and the waters	6–8	2–4
3–Land and vegetation	9–13	5–18
4–The sun, moon, and stars	14–19	19–23
5–Fish and birds	20–23	24–26
6–Animals, people, and food to sustain them	24–31	21–24, 27–30

Along with the preceding observations, an examination of the content of Psalm 104 results in the following proposed literary structure:[10]

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[9] For a consideration of the interrelationship between Psalm 104 and Genesis 1, cf. Berlin (2005:76); Goldingay (2008:197–8); Levenson (1988:55–8).

[10] For a comparable literary arrangement of Psalm 148, cf. the 10-strophe chiastic structure proposed by Alden (1978:201). Alternatively, Terrien (2003:710) proposes a 7-strophe structure that harmonises with the 7 creation days in Genesis 1. For additional proposals concerning the hymn's structure, cf. Allen (1983:28–9).

- An opening refrain to praise God: v. 1a
  - God's entitlement to praise: v. 1b
    - God's glorious presence throughout the heavens: vv. 2–4
      - God's formation of the land and seas: vv. 5–9
      - God's provision of water, food, and shelter: vv. 10–18
      - God's establishment of the night-and-day cycle: vv. 19–23
      - God's creative genius: vv. 24–26
      - God's control over life and death: vv. 27–30
    - God's glorious presence throughout the earth: vv. 31–32
  - God's reception of praise: vv. 33–35a
- A closing refrain to praise God: v. 35b

In this arrangement, a concentric pattern is discernible. Specifically, the opening and closing refrains (vv. 1a and 35b, respectively) parallel one another. Similarly, God's entitlement to praise and reception of praise (vv. 1b and 33–35a, respectively) complement each other and advance the poetic movement of the hymn. God's glorious presence both throughout the heavens and the earth (vv. 2–4 and 31–32, respectively) parallel one another, move forward the writer's thought, and frame the extended central portion of the psalm. Verses 5–30 comprise this section, which not only describe God's oversight of his creation, but also emphasise his superlative insight and skill in doing so (particularly, v. 24).

3. A Descriptive Analysis of Psalm 104

3.1. Worshipping the Creator

Psalm 104 begins with the singer's call for his soul—or entire being—to extol God in praise (v. 1). Indeed, the totality of the hymn is a summons for the upright to worship the Creator. The Hebrew verb used here is *bārak* (בָּרַךְ), where the emphasis is on worshippers acclaiming the Lord for who he is and what he does, particularly his 'goodness, faithfulness, power, or grace' (Brown 1997). The same verb appears again in verse 35, along with *hāllăl* (הָלַל), where the focus is on exalting God for his supreme 'greatness or excellence' (Swanson 2001).[11] The Lord's grandeur is evident by the fact that he has clothed himself with majestic splendour as a powerful monarch would wear a royal robe (v. 1).

Admittedly, there were other ancient Near Eastern creation hymns that existed prior to the time when this psalm was written, possibly by or for David, based on the title in the Septuagint (LXX) and Dead Sea Scroll (DSS) versions.[12] Some of the pagan odes, like the Egyptian

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[11] cf. section 2.2 of the journal article dealing with Psalm 148, in which the meaning of 'hallelujah' is discussed.

[12] The LXX numbers Psalm 104 as Psalm 103. Bratcher and Reyburn (1991) point out that both hymns in the MT are 'similar in style', which leads to the supposition that they were 'composed by the same person'. Also noteworthy is that both songs begin and end with the same call to praise. Other possible linkages are detailed in Hossfeld and Zenger (2011:37, 57–9). DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner (2014:774) think the 'central witness of Psalm 103' concerns the goodness of the 'Creator'. In contrast, the 'driving witness of Psalm 104' centres on the Lord's greatness. The LXX opening line of Psalm 103 reads, Τῷ Δαυιδ, or 'pertaining to David' (Rahlfs 1979). In the DSS (11Q5 Psalmsᵃ), the opening line of Psalm 104 reads, לדויד (Penner and Meyer 2016). As Goldingay (2008:754) indicates, the provenance of the association with David remains unclear and the exact nature of its

Akhenaten's 'Hymn to Aten', which was written around the fourteenth century BCE, described the formation of the day and night, along with the earth's creatures absolute dependence on the sun.[13] Psalm 104, however, contrasts with this idolatrous hymn in that the poet makes a clear distinction between venerating the sun and worshipping the Creator of the sun.[14]

In this magnificent sacred song, all that is in heaven and on the earth points to the Lord, the one true and living God. He alone put on 'light' (v. 2) as a dazzling vestment. Also, he unfurled the expanse of the sky as nomads in the ancient Near East would unroll and pitch their tent curtains; yet, as VanGemeren (1991:658) relates, the difference is that the Creator accomplished his task with ease.

John 1:4 equates 'light' with the Messiah.[15] The Word, who is 'life' itself, likewise is the 'light' of all people.[16] The emphasis in the Fourth

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attribution to Israel's king is open to debate. At least, the statement could point to a Jewish tradition that affirmed a preexilic date for the hymn.

[13] For an English rendering of the text of the Egyptian hymn, cf. Wilson (2011).

[14] cf. Ps 104:19. Gandiya (2012:109) clarifies that out of 7 potential 'parallels', there are just 2 that involve unambiguous correspondences between Psalm 104:24–26 and lines 52–54 and 74 in the 'Egyptian hymn', as follows: (1) the 'similarity between the expressions of awe over the wondrous creative acts', along with the 'effectiveness of the designs of both deities'; and (2) the 'mention of creatures and ships in the sea'. Barker (1986:80) maintains that whatever 'links' are conjectured between Psalm 104 and various writings found throughout the Fertile Crescent can be explained by a 'common pool of imagery for describing a sovereign deity and the natural order' in creation, along with the hymnist's intent that his song be a 'polemic against foreign deities' competing for the Israelites' 'allegiance'. It is beyond the scope of this journal article to undertake a comparative analysis between the Egyptian hymn and Psalm 104. For a variety of approaches, cf. Allen (1983:28–30); Craigie (1974); Dion (1991); Hilber (2009:409); Hossfeld and Zenger (2011:54–6); Kraus (1993:302); Levenson (1988:58–65); Nagel 1950:395–403); Terrien (2003:715–6).

[15] In the Judeo-Christian canon, light represents what is good, true, and just, while darkness symbolises what is evil, counterfeit, and immoral. Iniquity and injustice are

Gospel is on the Son being 'the light of the world' (8:12), that is, the glorious presence of God, who extends the promise of eternal life to all who are willing to receive it (1:12). The Messiah is the One who 'shines in the darkness' (v. 5). Indeed, the Son's radiant presence never ceases to pierce through the darkness. The idea is that the Messiah's mission included overcoming what is characterized by error and falsehood.

The association of 'light' (Ps 104:2) with the Creator is also found in 1 Timothy 6. Beginning in verse 14, Paul drew attention to the second advent of the Saviour, whom the Father would unveil at the appointed 'time' (v. 15). Evidently, the idea of the Father bringing about the consummation of the ages moved Paul to write a doxology of praise comparable to Psalm 104:1. The apostle referred to God as the 'blessed and only Sovereign' (1 Tim 6:15).

In Revelation 17:14 and 19:16 some variant of the Greek phrase rendered 'King of kings and Lord of lords' is applied to the Son, especially in connection with his second advent; yet, in 1 Timothy 6:15 the reference is to the Father, whom Paul declared to be 'immortal' (v. 16). The apostle also stated that the eternal Creator dwelt in 'unapproachable light'. Because his glorious luminescence is so 'intense and dazzling' (Arichea and Hatton 1995), not even the redeemed can directly approach or look upon him; instead, believers must turn to the risen and exalted Son to reveal the Father.[17]

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linked to darkness, whereas holiness and purity are associated with light; cf. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman (1998:509–12); Sæbø (1997); Selman (1997). An ongoing emphasis in the fourth gospel is that Jesus' disciples live in the light, while Satan's followers abide in the darkness; cf. Ritt (1990); Silva (2014); Spicq (1994).

[16] cf. 2 Cor 4:6.

[17] cf. John 1:18; 12:45; 14:9; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3.

3.2. God's control of the elements

Psalm 104:3 depicts God's abode as a celestial dome.[18] Also, it is on the rain clouds that the exalted Monarch of the cosmos laid the rafters that supported the rooms of his palace. In an analogous way, Amos 9:6 pictures the Lord placing the spacious chambers of his sanctuary in the most distant realm of heaven. As well, he makes earth the foundational structure to support his throne room.

In keeping with the observations made by Kraus (1993:51, 299), the divine Warrior uses the storm 'clouds' (Ps. 104:3) in the sky as his 'chariot'.[19] Furthermore, he travels along the current generated by the 'wind', with no would-be foe to halt his advance (such as the pagan deities venerated throughout the ancient Near East).[20] He even makes these same 'winds' (v. 4) his envoys. He also appoints lightning flashes as his stewards. Elsewhere, in the Old Testament such entities are understood to be angels.[21]

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[18] For a summary of the ancient Israelite three-tiered view of reality, cf. section 4.2 of the journal article dealing with Psalm 148.

[19] According to Hiebert (1992:877), the broad conceptual context within the Old Testament is that of a 'conflict between Israel's God and the forces of chaos in the universe as a whole'. There is an underlying assurance that despite the age-old battle between good and evil, the remnant is 'preserved from all threats against it'. Indeed, as Brueggemann (1997:241) posits, at the eschatological consummation of history, the Lord would 'defeat all the illicit claimants against public power'. For a sampling of differing exegetical and descriptive treatments of the divine warrior motif in Scripture, cf. Ames (2012); Emery (2003); Hiebert (1992); Kelle (2008); Klassen (1992); Lind 1980; Longman (2009); Longman and Reid (1995); Miller (2006); Neufeld (1997).

[20] cf. Deut 33:26; Pss 18:10; 68:4; Isa 19:1. It is beyond the scope of this journal article to undertake a comparative analysis of Psalm 104 and the mythological imagery widespread among Israel's pagan neighbours. For a concise, informative correlation, cf. Hilber (2009:409–12).

[21] cf. Pss 29:1; 82:1; 103:20.

Noteworthy regarding the above observation is Hebrews 1:7, which cites the Septuagint version of Psalm 104:4 to describe the character of angels.[22] The surrounding context for the quote in Hebrews 1:7 is the writer's argument for the superiority of the Son to angels. On the one hand, the original Hebrew version describes the wind and lightning of a storm as God's servants; on the other hand, the Septuagint version identifies angels as God's servants. This variation in the text aligned with the theological point the writer of Hebrews wanted to make, namely, that angels are much lower in existence than the royal Son of David, who is enthroned in the heavens as the eternal Creator and King.[23]

3.3. God's rule over creation

In Psalm 104:5, the lyricist portrayed the divine Architect and Artisan of all creation, at the dawn of time, placing the world firmly on its base. This ensured the planet would never be overturned. In addition, God draped the oceans over the planet like a robe. Initially, it was a scene of chaos, in which the oceans exceeded the mountain ranges in height (v. 6). This tumultuous situation, however, did not last indefinitely, for the waters are depicted as scurrying away in fear when the Lord shouted (v. 7).

An awareness of verse 7 clarifies the theological meaning of the episode recounted in the Synoptic Gospels in which Jesus used a stern

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[22] In the LXX, the text appears in Psalm 103:4 as ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα καὶ τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πῦρ φλέγον ('who makes his angels spirits [or winds] and his servants [or ministers] a flame of fire'; Rahlfs 1979). Also, cf. fn 12 above. For a detailed correlation between Hebrews 1:7 and the LXX of Psalm 103:4 (104:4), cf. Swinson (2007). The author holds that the LXX version 'probably exhibits a truer sense of the Hebrew original than an initial impression might suggest'.
[23] cf. Heb 1:10–12.

command to calm an intense storm occurring on the Sea of Galilee.[24] His absolute authority over the elements of nature so inundated his disciples with fear that they wondered about the exact nature of his identity. This miracle should have convinced Jesus' followers that he is God, for in the Old Testament the Creator is described as the one who controls the natural world and the sea.[25]

The preceding mindset is manifest in Psalm 104:8, in which even the grandest 'mountains' and stateliest 'valleys' are portrayed as doing God's bidding, whether it be rising up or sinking down. Furthermore, as his voice thundered across the heavens, stampeding torrents rushed away. At first, they coursed from one mountain to the next. Then, the waters drained through the plains and ended up at their divinely-appointed spot. The Creator established a 'boundary' (v. 9) that the world's oceans could never breach, and this prevented them from inundating the earth.[26]

3.4. God's nurture of creation

God not only rules over creation, but also nurtures it. By way of example, the poet observed that from the lofty rooms of God's celestial palace, he poured rain on the 'mountains' (Ps. 104:13). As a result, tributaries formed to journey through the ravines and hillsides (v. 10). In this way, the Lord made plenty of water available for thirsty creatures inhabiting the lowlands, such as untamed animals and birds (vv. 11–12). Likewise, the Creator enabled all sorts of plant and animal life to thrive on the peaks and slopes of the highlands (v. 13).

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[24] cf. Matt 8:18, 23–27; Mark 4:35–41; Luke 8:22–25.
[25] cf. Pss 65:7; 89:9; 93:3–4; 107:28–30; Isa 51:10; Hab 3:8–10.
[26] Barker (1986:57) correlates Psalm 104:6–9 with the 'catastrophic tectonic activities associated with the Genesis flood' recounted in chapters 6–9.

Moreover, due to the Lord's gracious provision, every region of the planet flourished and experienced unimaginable abundance. For instance, livestock had plenty of green pasture for grazing, and farmers harvested bountiful yields of crops from fertile soil (v. 14). Consequently, there was no lack of grapes to produce 'wine' (v. 15), olive 'oil' as a lotion to clean and moisturise sun- and wind-damaged skin, and 'bread' to satisfy people's hunger. God even ensured that verdant forests provided safe nesting for birds (vv. 16–17) and the lofty peaks offered shelter for large and small animals, whether clean or unclean (v. 18).

Jesus' statements in Matthew 6:28–30 possibly had Psalm 104:10–18 as their inspirational backdrop. Jesus asked his followers why they worried about having clothes to wear. Perhaps as he gestured to some lilies growing in the nearby fields, he asked his audience to consider how such delicate flowers grew. These plants did not exert any effort to obtain protective covering; rather, the Creator graciously supplied their vibrant colour and texture (Matt 6:28). Jesus noted that the lilies carpeting the fields of Palestine were more gloriously dressed than King Solomon ever was (v. 29).

Jesus next directed the attention of his followers to the native grass filling the countryside (v. 30). The life span of such vegetation was short, and small plants were of little value. For example, people in Jesus' day would use grass as a cheap and abundant source of fuel to heat their clay ovens; yet, God so decorated these seemingly insignificant plants with beautiful flowers. Jesus used a rhetorical question to remind his disciples that they were of greater value to their

Father in heaven.[27] After all, he would provide them with food, clothing, and shelter.

3.5. God's regulation of life's rhythms

The hymnwriter noted that life on earth was characterized by predictable regularity. This was due to God choreographing the ebb and flow of temporal existence around the globe. Indeed, it seemed so consistent that in the first millennium BCE, the Israelites could use the movement of the 'moon' (Ps 104:19) across the nighttime sky to determine the beginning and ending of each month in their lunar calendar. Similarly, the predictability of the sun's daily ascent and descent enabled wildlife to hunt for prey and people to synchronise their work and rest cycle (vv. 20–23).

3.6. God's boundless power and artistry

As the poet of Psalm 104 considered the world around him, he marvelled at the diversity of wildlife God made (v. 24). Every aspect of his creation was a testimony to his 'wisdom'. The underlying Hebrew noun draws attention to the incisive skill, foresight, and precision evident in the Lord's handiwork (Müller 1980).[28] This sentiment reflects the mindset of the Hebrew wisdom writers, who looked at the world with reverence, because it reflected the glory of its Creator.[29]

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[27] One form of Jewish argumentation in the first century CE involved establishing the factuality of a lesser truth to convince an audience (whether orally or in writing) to accept a greater truth.

[28] cf. Exod 31:3, 6; 35:31; 1 Kings 7:14; Prov 3:19; 8:22–31; Jer 10:12; 51:15.

[29] Goldingay (2008:191) likens the planet to a 'magnificent quilt' wherein 'every thread contributes' to the layers of stitched fabric, all of which are 'woven by a supremely skilled craftworker'.

In verses 25–26, the writer focused on the immense seas with their many forms of aquatic life. The rich variety found throughout the depth and breadth of the world's oceans was a vivid reminder of God's boundless power and artistry. His craftsmanship was especially seen in humankind, whom the Lord made in his image.[30]

People have abilities and aptitudes that far exceed those of other creatures. For instance, humankind has made abundant use of the world's oceans. This includes nations and people building all kinds of sailing vessels to travel over the waters. The poet especially noted the presence of 'Leviathan' (v. 26), which deClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner (2014:777) explain was a dreaded beast in ancient Near Eastern pagan mythologies. This contrasts with the view of the songwriter, who was referring to one of the immense aquatic denizens God made to splash about playfully in the sea.[31]

Centuries later, Paul also wrote about God's creative genius, especially in connection with the Saviour. For example, in Ephesians 2, the apostle taught that while the believers' good 'works' (v. 9) did not bring about their salvation, their regenerate status was intended to result in 'good works' (v. 10). The Greek verb rendered 'walk' is the same word translated 'walked' in verse 2. In each case, the term meant to 'journey about'.

The theological point is that while the unsaved trudged through life wallowing in evil, the earthly sojourn of believers was characterized by

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[30] cf. Gen 1:26–27; 5:1; 9:6; Jas 3:9. Down through the centuries, specialists have debated what it exactly means to be made in God's image. For a concise synopsis of the issue, cf. Lioy (2016:27–28).

[31] cf. Job 3:8; 41:1; Ps 74:13–14; Isa 27:1. Levenson (1988:54) remarks that the reputed 'terrifying monster' is portrayed as being 'emasculated into a toy', a mere

worthwhile deeds. Along the way, through the power of God's grace, they became his 'workmanship' (v. 10) or living masterpieces. Paul revealed that the Father was creating believers anew in union with the Son to the eternal praise of the triune God.

3.7. God's abundant provision

The hymnist of Psalm 104 observed that every lifeform was absolutely dependent on the Creator for its health and vigour. The Lord provided sunshine, rain, and air so that the plants, birds, and animals he so wondrously made could thrive. In keeping with what was noted earlier in verses 19, 22, and 23, God's benevolent provision of food occurred at the right times and in the proper seasons (v. 27).

Furthermore, as an expression of the Creator's 'common grace' (VanGemeren 1991:663),[32] he enabled people to plant crops and reap an ample supply of food from it. In a manner of speaking, the Lord generously opened his hand to supply the inhabitants of the earth with other beneficial resources for their wellness (such as minerals, precious metals, building materials, and so forth; v. 28). Clearly, this was not the work of impersonal, mechanical forces, but rather the provision of the Sovereign who made the highest heavens his magnificent domicile.[33]

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creature that has 'always only delighted and never opposed its designer, maker, and owner'.

[32] Luther (1837:274) appropriately asked, 'What philosopher or sage could even open or utter the extent of the use and blessings of common light, which we live?' For a lexical overview of the biblical concept of grace, cf. Lo (2014). For a theological overview, cf. Erickson (2013:265–6). For a comparison between God's common grace and special grace, cf. Hughes (2001:519–20).

[33] cf. Ps 104:2–3. Goldingay (2016:140) aptly notes that the Creator 'did not merely set the world' in motion 'like someone winding up a clock', only then to abandon it to run on its own.

In Matthew 5:44–45, Jesus also drew attention to God's common grace. The Messiah revealed that Christian love is to reflect God's own love. The motive Jesus gave for obeying these principles was that his followers would be acting like their Father in heaven, who showered his kindness and blessings on all people regardless of who they were. This was the language of evidence. Believers were to act toward their enemies as the Father in heaven had acted toward all humankind.

3.8. God's determination of life on earth

In Psalm 104:29, the writer described what life was like when the Lord hid his face, or withheld his gracious care and help.[34] For instance, when God allowed severe drought or devastating storms to occur, humankind was horrified. This means people were overwhelmed by the disastrous turn of events. Eventually, they turned to their Creator and implored him to bring them relief from their calamity.

As Kraus (1992:163) indicates, the redeemed discern that both life and death are in the hands of almighty God. Consider that in time, the breath of life, which the Lord graciously imparts to every person, is removed by him. It is then that humans perish and their lifeless bodies decompose.[35] This is a sobering reminder of how mortal humans truly are and how utterly dependent people are on the Sustainer of the entire universe.

God is not only the master of death, but also the one who bestows life. The psalmist depicted the Lord as sending his animating breath and in this way bringing all entities into existence by his supreme act (v. 30). He also sustains life. After all, if it were not for the nurturing hand of

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[34] cf. Num 6:24–26; Pss 27:9; 13:1; 22:24; 30:7; 44:24; 69:17; 88:14; 102:2; 143:7.
[35] cf. Gen 2:7, 19; 3:19; 6:17; Ps 146:4; Eccles 3:18-21; 12:7.

the Lord, all living things would wither and die. With each passing season and successive generation, he renews the face of the earth, which Beale (2011:560) regards as evidence of a 'continual creative process'.[36] None of this happens haphazardly or in its own strength, but is the result of God's gracious intervention.

From a New Testament perspective, the Son is the Lord of life. For instance, in John 5:21, Jesus declared that he gives life to whomever he wishes. This included temporal and eternal existence. In fact, as Martha learned in 11:25, Jesus alone is the 'resurrection' and the 'life'. Later, in 17:3, the apostle revealed that eternal life is much more than unending existence. It is being in a close, personal relationship with the Father, the only true God, and his Son, Jesus the Messiah, whom he sent to earth to secure redemption for the lost.

Contrary to the prevailing Greek thought of the day, the divine-incarnate Word was not an impersonal, rational force that remained detached from life within the universe; instead, the Evangelist revealed in 1:4 that the Son, as the Creator of the world, is the giver and source of life. Correspondingly, in 5:26, Jesus asserted that the Father, who had life in himself, had granted that the Son likewise have life in himself. Only Jesus could rightfully claim in 14:6 that he is the way, the truth, and the life, and that it is only through faith in him that people receive access to the Father.

3.9. God's majestic splendour

In Psalm 104:31, the poet expressed his desire that the Creator's majestic splendour would last for all eternity. His guardianship of

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[36] Significant is the fact that the Hebrew verb translated 'created' in Psalm 104:30 (בָּרָא) is the same term used in Genesis 1:1, 21, and 27 for God bringing the entire cosmos into existence at the dawn of time.

everything he made would bring him unending honour. Just as the Lord took great delight in what he originally created at the dawn of time,[37] so too the psalmist prayed that God would continue to enjoy and rejoice in his handiwork.

The poet asserted that God is so powerful that one direct glance at the earth causes it to quake in fear (v. 32). He is so awesome that one slight touch of some lofty volcano causes it to smoulder and spew out smoke. These observations serve as a reminder of God's infinite majesty and his unmatched ability to blot out whatever he graciously brings into existence.

The mention of the earth shaking and mountains smouldering would recall for the members of the preexilic Israelite community a similar scene centuries earlier as their predecessors gathered at the base of Mount Sinai. Exodus 19:16 draws attention to the theophanic presence of 'thunder and lightning', along with a dense 'cloud' descending on the 'mountain'. Deuteronomy 5:22 additionally notes the divine manifestation of 'fire' and intense 'darkness' during the episode unfolding at Mount Sinai.[38]

Hebrews 12:18–24 discloses that with the advent of the Messiah, the mountain of terror is replaced by the mountain of joy. Previously, the

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[37] As noted in Lioy (2016:30), there are several places during the creation week in which the divine Artisan declared his work to be 'good' (Heb. טוֹב; Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). Then, at the end, the Creator-King reflected upon what he had brought into existence and concluded that it was 'very good' (Heb. מְאֹד טוֹב; v. 31). As Psalm 104 poetically depicts, all that was necessary for life to flourish—in the totality of its rich array and diversity—was in place.

[38] cf. Gandiya (2012) for a 'correlation of storm theophanic imagery with the motifs of creation, wisdom and judgement in the depiction of Yahweh as creator-king and judge' (107), both in connection with Psalm 104 and Job 9:4–10; 26:7–14; 38; Jer 10:1–16; 25:30–32; 51:15–19; Amos 1:2, 14; 4:12–13; 5:8-9; 9:5–6, respectively (108).

members of the covenant community in the Old Testament era went to Mount Sinai. In contrast, new covenant believers, in baptismal union with the Son, have journeyed to Mount Zion. In biblical thought, Zion was the place where the Lord resided and presided. This explains why Hebrews 12:22 refers to Mount Zion as the 'heavenly Jerusalem' and the 'city of the living God'.[39] Moses was the mediator of the old covenant by receiving the law from God and delivering it to the Israelites. Similarly, the Son mediated the 'new covenant' (v. 24) by teaching about faith and dying so that sinners can be reconciled with the Father.[40]

3.10. God, the object of praise

As the poet arrived at the apex of his praise, he reflected on his worshipful contemplation of God's work in nature. The writer declared that throughout his life he would sing in exultation to the Lord (Ps 104:33). The hymnist also wanted his thoughts, as seen in his praise hymn, to honour the Lord and be acceptable to him (v. 34).

Attentive readers today recognize that the Creator did not have to make the world and all the life within it. He was never lonely, bored, or in need of a challenge. He sustains life on earth so that all creatures might be the recipients of his benevolent care. He especially wants the redeemed to take note of his abundant provisions and timely help. As they ponder all that the Lord does for them, they should be filled with awe and be eager to extol his name.[41]

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[39] cf. Heb 11:10, 13-16; 13:14.
[40] cf. Rom 5:9–11; 2 Cor 5:18–21; Heb 8:6.
[41] cf. the lexical discussion of God's names in section 4.2 of the journal article dealing with Psalm 148.

Peter, in his first letter, echoed the preceding sentiments. For example, in 2:9, the apostle stated that the recipients of his epistle were a 'holy nation'. By this he meant that God had established and set apart the church for his distinctive use.[42] This includes believers openly praising the Father for the wonderful things he has done for the redeemed through his Son.[43] Peter specifically mentioned the Lord's calling the apostle's readers out of spiritual 'darkness' into the marvellous 'light' of salvation won by the Messiah at the cross.[44]

3.11. God, the source of mercy and justice

On one level, God delights to see his children trust in and revere him. After all, he is glorified when people rejoice in his goodness and greatness. It would be one humble way they could express their infinite debt of gratitude to him; yet, on another level, the poet of Psalm 104 realized how easy it is for people to use the intellect God has given them for corrupt and evil undertakings (v. 35).[45]

The psalmist revealed that God has been merciful to let his fallen human creation live on. Still, the songwriter longed for the day when the rebellious were cut off from the earth, and the curse of their iniquities was forever erased. In the meantime, the poet reiterated what

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[42] During the Old Testament era, the Lord declared that Israel was a 'holy nation' (Exod 19:6). One view is that the church is the new Israel of God and replaces Israel in his redemptive plan. A contrasting view is that Israel and the church remain distinct entities with separate roles in God's programme.

[43] This portion of 1 Peter 2:9 seems to be an amalgam of ideas and quotes extracted from Exodus 19:5–6, Isaiah 43:20–21, Malachi 3:17, and the LXX version of Exodus 23:22.

[44] cf. Acts 26:18.

[45] The ingrained, sinful propensities of people impelled Luther (1837:277) to opine, 'Let those that would fear God, then, remember what is required of them!'

he declared in verse 1, namely, that he would continually praise God with every aspect of his being (v. 35).[46]

The New Testament affirms the hymnist's sentiment that those entrenched in sin would be banished from the planet and that the godless would not have any inheritance in God's kingdom. For example, in the new Jerusalem of the eternal state, the triune God would be worshipped face-to-face. Indeed, the domicile would be a cosmopolitan place, where redeemed humanity in all its cultural diversity would dwell together in peace. Moreover, the risen and exalted Saviour would vindicate the faith of his spiritual children by forbidding anything immoral or wicked to enter the holy city (Rev 21:22–27).[47] Also, while eternal joy would be the heritage of the righteous, the Son would ensure that unending sorrow was the lot of reprobates (22:14–15).

4. Conclusion

Like the preceding journal article dealing with Psalm 148, the historical anchor-point for the present essay is the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Arising from the latter, particularly the 95 theses penned by Martin Luther, are a pentad of *solas*.

The second in the series highlights the Judeo-Christian canon being the wellspring for God's revelation to humankind (in Latin, *sola Scriptura*).

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[46] cf. the discussion in 3.1 about the usage of two different Hebrew verbs for praise in Psalm 104:35, namely, *bārak* (בָּרַךְ) and *hāllăl* (הָלַל), and their respective meanings. The LXX places the Greek equivalent of the interjection rendered 'praise the LORD' (Αλληλουια) at the beginning of the next psalm. In contrast, the DSS version (11Q5 Psalmsᵃ) of the Hebrew interjection (הללויה) appears at the end of Psalm 104:35 (which corresponds to the MT).

[47] cf. Isa 35:8; 52:1; Joel 3:17; Zech 14:21.

This serves as a motivation for undertaking a literary and descriptive analysis of Psalm 104. Doing so, in turn, surfaces various intertextual connections between the hymn and the New Testament. These especially include possible Christological aspects of Psalm 104. The consequence is that the third *sola* in the pentad garners attention, namely, the centrality of the Son in the Father's redemptive plan (in Latin, *solus Christus*).

As noted in section 2, the creation events recorded in Genesis 1:1–2:3 form the backdrop for Psalm 104. God is not only presented as the sovereign Monarch of the universe, but also the divine Architect and Artisan of the metaphysical and physical realms. What he brought into existence, regardless of whether it is the heavens above or the earth below, become the basis for offering him praise.

Indeed, the opening and closing refrains (vv. 1a and 35b, respectively), along with an affirmation of God's entitlement to and reception of praise (vv. 1b and 33–35a), form an *enclusio* to stress the importance of extolling the Creator. Verses 2–4 and 31–32 accentuate his glorious presence throughout the heavens and the earth. Also, the placement of these respective sets of verses around the central section of the psalm—namely, verses 5–30—indicates that every aspect of creation owes its existence to God. For this reason, they are to participate in offering him praise.

In addition to what has been noted above concerning *solus Christus*, there is the second of three foundational principles affirmed by SATS, namely, the 'lordship and centrality of Jesus Christ'.[48] This emphasis is borne out in the descriptive analysis of Psalm 104. For instance, the

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[48] The full text of the three foundational principles affirmed by SATS can be found at the following: https://www.sats.edu.za/about-us/statement-faith/.

association of 'light' (v. 2) with the Creator is also found in John 1:4–5. The Evangelist revealed that both before and after Jesus' incarnation, his light continued to shine so that the lost might move from unbelief (darkness) to belief.[49] Even death itself could not snuff out the light of the Word, for he conquered death through his bodily resurrection.[50]

In Hebrews 1:7, the writer uses the LXX version of Psalm 104:4 to support his argument for the superiority of the Son over angels. They are subservient creatures over whom the divine-human Messiah reigns. Furthermore, a correlation between verse 7 and Jesus' use of a stern command to still a raging tempest confirmed his identity as the Sovereign over all creation.[51] Jesus' control of the temporal realm is one reason why it is appropriate to associate Matthew 6:28–30 with Psalm 104:10–18. He ensures that life flourishes all throughout the globe. He especially provides for his spiritual children with whatever they need to serve him faithfully.

Throughout the world God brought into existence, his boundless power and artistry bear witness to his 'wisdom' (v. 24). The Father's creative genius is even more on display in believers, whom he has made his living masterpieces in baptismal union with the Son (Eph 2:10). The more believers conform to the image of Christ, the more they reflect the glory of the Creator, who gives them new life because of the Saviour's atoning sacrifice at Calvary.

The provision of God's common grace among all humankind enables them to flourish in their daily activities (Ps 104:27–28). In turn, the Creator's generous beneficence is the basis for the Messiah directing his

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[49] cf. John 12:46.
[50] cf. John 20:1–9.
[51] All three Synoptic Gospels record the miracle; cf. fn 24.

followers to be unconditional in showing compassion and kindness to others, including their adversaries. Admittedly, Jesus' disciples cannot bring this about on their own; instead, as reborn children of God, they must operate in the power of the Spirit to do what otherwise seems humanly impossible.[52]

The poet of Psalm 104 recognised that ultimately life and death rest with the Creator (vv. 29–30). In the fourth gospel, the evangelist repeatedly linked the preceding truth to the Messiah. For example, he is the source of life (1:4; 5:21, 26), the resurrection incarnate (11:25), and the reason why believers can live in a close, personal relationship with the Father (17:3). The Son, due to his sacrificial death on the cross, transfers believers from the mountain of terror described in Exodus 19:16 and Deuteronomy 5:22—and hinted at in Psalm 104:32—to the mountain of joy (Heb 12:22).

In unison with the poet's declaration in Psalm 104:33–34, Peter enjoined his readers to declare God's 'praises' (1 Pet 2:9), especially the eternal blessings they experience through faith in the Messiah. The songwriter was grateful that God would banish miscreants from his future kingdom (Ps 104:25). Likewise, the last book of scripture declares that no form of moral impurity would exist in the eternal state (Rev 21:27; 22:15). Such a stark reality also serves as a vindication of the faith the redeemed have placed in the Saviour. In turn, it is yet another reason to join with the poet in offering praise to the triune God (Ps 104:1, 35; Heb 12:28).

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[52] cf. Zech 4:6. The emphasis here on the importance of the Spirit in the lives of believers draws attention to the third of the foundational principles affirmed by SATS, namely, the imperative to 'trust and obey God the Holy Spirit'.

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The Left Wing of the Reformation and their Understanding of Church in Relation to the State

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Abstract

The time of the Reformation has determined today's relationship between state and church. This is true, even though the society has gone through several stages of development and an individual's relation in a democratic context has also changed toward both, the state and the church. The article raises the question of on how especially early Anabaptists have positioned themselves in their relation to the state, calling for a clear separation between church and state. For centuries, this has resulted in persecutions of this group. Today, most of their positions on the separation of church and state are lived reality. In praxis and even in today's democratic contexts, this is difficult, as the case from the warzone of south-east Ukraine shows.

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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.

1. Introduction: Anabaptist Movement in Time (from Reformation to present)

While the Christian world celebrates 500 years of Reformation, the Anabaptists started this year with a 'Decade of Renewal'. An international group of Anabaptists met in February in Augsburg, a symbolic place, and initiated a set of activities spread over 10 years ('Renewal Decade' 2017). By 2027, after they will have met at different locations of the Anabaptist movement, like Zürich and other places, they will return to Augsburg. In 1527, Augsburg hosted the so-called Martyr's synod. This Anabaptist synod was held 3 years prior to the pronouncement of the Augsburg confession (*Confessio Augustana*) 4 articles of which spoke out against the Anabaptists ('Augsburg Confession (1530) – GAMEO'). The Augsburg Martyr's synod has received its name because most members of the 50 teams of those who went out from the Synod to preach the Gospel were killed before Luther gathered those who formulated the Augsburg Confession in 1530. One of them was an Anabaptist leader from Strasbourg, Michael Sattler (Winter 1991:55). The original document which ordered his killing was signed by Martin Luther personally, even though friends of Luther, reformers from Strasbourg, tried to stop Luther doing it.

So the 'Decade of Renewal' for the present Anabaptist churches and groups means to remember the efforts of the early radical Reformation movement, and invites them to reconnect to the present discussion on the relationship of church and state. It also means to recognize some positive achievements as well as some mistakes in the area of understanding Scripture, church and society. Anabaptists have suffered much, and often were victims. But victims are not always without fault, and a balanced study is still needed. Sometimes Anabaptists have

provoked by their behaviour a different and better understanding of church and society (Schuurman 2007:245), sometimes they were persecuted because they were in the wrong. This paper will touch on the Anabaptist understanding of the church in relation to the state, with an attempt to contribute to the present discussion and to relate it to a particular current situation in Ukraine. The first three sections of this article are focused on the past and on the historical understanding, and the last two on present interpretations.

2. The Schleitheim Confession and its Understanding of Church and State

The Schleitheim confession was formulated by the radical Reformers as they gathered in Schleitheim, Switzerland in 1527, just before the abovementioned Martyr's Synod in Augsburg. It is not a long text, but important in defining some issues related to church and state. The text of the confession includes seven articles (Schleitheim Confession 1985):

1. Baptism
2. The ban (excommunication)
3. Breaking of bread
4. Separation from the abomination
5. Pastors in the Church
6. The sword
7. The oath

While the first five articles address issues of inner church order, the last two articles speak about the relationship to the world outside the church.

The text of the Confession and the seven articles define a clear separation between church and state. The church is considered an alternative community. The Anabaptists confess that they are not going to be active participants in the government by saying that they will not take up the 'sword' and will not participate in killings and war in the name of governments that come and go.[2] They will also not take an 'oath' in the way society requires it in order to make sure that truth is stated. Instead, an Anabaptist Christian's 'yes' is a 'yes' and a 'no' is a 'no', because truthfulness and moral ethics are central to a person who has been transformed by Christ.[3] Niebuhr, therefore, in his models of

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[2] Article VI: 'We are agreed as follows concerning the sword: The sword is ordained of God outside the perfection of Christ. It punishes and puts to death the wicked, and guards and protects the good. In the Law the sword was ordained for the punishment of the wicked and for their death, and the same (sword) is (now) ordained to be used by the worldly magistrates. In the perfection of Christ, however, only the ban is used for a warning and for the excommunication of the one who has sinned, without putting the flesh to death—simply the warning and the command to sin no more. The government magistracy is according to the flesh, but the Christian's is according to the Spirit; their houses and dwelling remain in this world, but the Christian's are in heaven; their citizenship is in this world, but the Christian's citizenship is in heaven; the weapons of their conflict and war are carnal and against the flesh only, but the Christian's weapons are spiritual, against the fortification of the devil. The worldlings are armed with steel and iron, but the Christians are armed with the armour of God, with truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and the Word of God. In brief, as in the mind of God toward us, so shall the mind of the members of the body of Christ be through Him in all things, that there may be no schism in the body through which it would be destroyed. For every kingdom divided against itself will be destroyed. Now since Christ is as it is written of Him, His members must also be the same, that His body may remain complete and united to its own advancement and upbuilding.' (Schleitheim Confession 1985)

[3] Article VII: 'We are agreed as follows concerning the oath: The oath is a confirmation among those who are quarreling or making promises. In the Law it is commanded to be performed in God's Name, but only in truth, not falsely. Christ, who

Christ in relation to culture would place Anabaptists into the 'Christ against culture' model (Niebuhr 2001). But Anabaptists always felt that their way of expressing their beliefs rather fit, speaking in Niebuhr's terms, into the 'Christ transforming culture' model. There is an aspect of separation and there is also a transformative role for and by the church in society (Biesecker-Mast 2006:24). It is sometimes claimed or assumed that the Anabaptists distanced themselves from the powers of state and became pacifists in response to the violent uprisings in the German city of Münster that 'destroyed the reputation of virtually all Anabaptist groups for decades to come' (Geraerts 2012:8). This argument often misses the fact that the Schleitheim confession was formulated several years before the devastating Münster events were organized by a particular radical reformers' group.

The transformation of both individuals and the community, in the Anabaptist view happened first of all in the church. A person joins the church through baptism and is transformed by Christ (Johnson 1994:23). Anabaptists have always underlined that Christ is not just their Saviour and Redeemer, but also a defining model for living in faith while the church community is a place of discipleship (Bush 1993:31 and Colwell 1987:120). The person who wants to join the community of believers through baptism is then expected to demonstrate a commitment to follow Christ and imitate Christ in their life. The unity of the church is a central point, and 'by baptism into one body of Christ which is the church of God and whose Head is Christ' believers are one, sharing in this unity in one Spirit the bread as 'remembrance of the broken body of Christ, and [the] … one drink as a remembrance of the shed blood of Christ'. This defines them as a

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teaches the perfection of the Law, prohibits all swearing to his (followers), whether true or false…' (Schleitheim Confession 1985).

unified community separated from the world outside. The church, therefore, becomes an alternative community (Wilkinson 2014:209–211). Being baptised and belonging to the body of Christ while participating in the breaking of bread draws a line between the church and the world. The 4th Article on the separation adds to this definition by emphasizing that a follower of Christ lives according to the teachings of Christ, and through forgiveness and freedom in Christ stays away from a sinful life (Wilkinson 2014:203). The pastors are called to lead the local community according to the Scriptures and by implementing the Anabaptist understanding of it (Colwell 1987:123). The Schleitheim confession touches only briefly on the issue on local church leadership and does not say much, for example, on possible church hierarchy. The church structure is, therefore, flat and allows each member of the community to be directly involved and to minister (Winter 1991:61).

The overall impression of the Schleitheim confession is that it discusses issues of the faith community and the state that were disputed between the Anabaptists and controversial among the magisterial Reformation and the radical Reformers in the wider European context at that time. Schleitheim positions, representing the view of the radical Reformation, were then also picked up and criticised in the *Confessio Augustana* by reformers like Luther and Melanchton. But both documents, the *Confessio Augustana* and the Schleitheim confession, respond to the world in which they find themselves and both need to be re-interpreted with their different times and governmental and societal structures in mind. The interpretation key is, how would Reformers and the Radical Reformers see the church in relationship to the state of today? It may be

that they would find much more mutuality today than in their day during the Reformation.[4]

3. The Church Practising Life

There are many key people who are known as leaders of the Anabaptist movement. Many have not survived very long after embracing the movement, such as Michael Sattler, Felix Manz, Conrad Grebel, Georg Blaurock among others. This article will specifically focus on and evaluate two persons, also well known among the Anabaptists: Balthasar Hubmaier and Menno Simons. Balthasar Hubmaier has often been claimed by Baptists as their Anabaptist patron, and Menno Simons initiated a particular direction inside the Anabaptist movement called Mennonites. Both were not part of the Schleitheim meeting and the Augsburg Synod, but they represent some of the diversity of the radical Reformation. Hubmaier had missed the gathering and about a year after Schleitheim on March 10, 1528 was burned at the stake just outside Vienna (Funk 2006:37). In this way he represents an early, controversial and somewhat experiential Anabaptist branch. Menno Simons represents one of the major movements of Anabaptists that had

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[4] The *Confessio Augustana* comments in 'Article XVI.—Of Civil Affairs: Concerning civil affairs, they teach that such civil ordinances as are lawful are good works of God; that Christians may lawfully bear civil office, sit in judgments, determine matters by the imperial laws, and other laws in present force, appoint just punishments, engage in just war, act as soldiers, make legal bargains and contracts, hold property, take an oath when the magistrates require it, marry a wife, or be given in marriage. They condemn the Anabaptists who forbid Christians these civil offices. They condemn also those that place the perfection of the Gospel, not in the fear of God and in faith, but in forsaking civil offices, inasmuch as the Gospel teacheth an everlasting righteousness of the heart.' ('Augsburg Confession (1530)—GAMEO' n.d.). Some of the issues have changed in the present Lutheran and Reformed churches, some were also overstated in the Schleitheim Confession.

developed after Schleitheim. He also was an eyewitness of the devastating Anabaptist experiments, like in Münster and Erfurt, and his perspective on the relationship between church and state followed closely the Schleitheim Swiss Anabaptist understanding (Geraerts 2012:10).

Balthasar Hubmaier was early on involved in the Reformation in Zurich. After he separated from Zwingli,[5] he moved further eastwards to Nickelsburg, today's Mikulov in the Czech Republic, a city close to the Austrian border.(McClendon 1991:28) Schleitheim took place after he left Switzerland. For a short time, he felt safe from governmental threats, as it was busy with the Ottoman troops closing down on Vienna (Stayer 2002:82). In Nickelsburg, he baptized several thousand people, including the Lord of Lichtenstein. This may partially explain his very different view of the state (Funk 2006:43). When the Ottoman threat to the Austrian empire subsided, the government forced the Lord of Lichtenstein to denounce his faith, captured Hubmaier and his wife Elisabeth, took them for trial to Vienna and, after one year of imprisonment, burned him at the stake while drowning her in the Danube. Balthasar Hubmaier had tried to bring change to the city of Mikulov, which was then the capital of Bohemia, and this way to affect the political and general society. Even today there is evidence of the historical presence of Anabaptists in the city and its Schloss. It seems that as Hubmaier was disconnected from the Swiss Anabaptists, he missed the continuing conversation and the further sharpening of ideas. Therefore, it may be true when McClendon, calling him a 'catholic Baptist', identifies his theology as still strongly rooted in the Catholic Church and theology. This included his understanding of the relations

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[5] In Zurich Hubmaier was tortured and then banned by Zwingli, so he continued his way to the East (McClendon 1991:28).

of church and state, with their two swords, and the continuation of the idea of Christendom (McClendon 1991:32).

Hubmaier is known as the first one who spoke out on religious tolerance. The powerful Ottoman Empire stood during his lifetime close to Vienna and, more than today in Europe, there was great fear that Muslims would overrun Europe and conquer it, as they had done before in the Middle East by occupying the territory of the Church of the East. Hubmaier in his writings sounds almost like a modern missiologist when calling for witnessing to the Turks, as he comments in his *Concerning Heretics and those Who Burn Them*, written during the time of his imprisonment in Vienna: 'A Turk or a heretic is not convinced by our act, either with the sword or with fire, but only with patience and prayer' (Janz 2008:202). This may today be read in different ways, as his statements on religious freedom and tolerance also may be interpreted differently (Bart 2016). The call to show patience and to pray seems to be a way of encouraging witness in dialogue, keeping the door open for discussion and respect, even for those who may decide not to follow Anabaptist or other Christian convictions.

Menno Simons became an Anabaptist leader after Schleitheim and also after the Münster events. He was involved with the children of the radical Reformation in the north of Europe, in today's Northern Germany, Netherlands and Belgium, and was close to the ideas of Erasmus, who originated from the region (see specifically ch. 10 in Friesen 2015). The scattered Anabaptists were under heavy persecution, and Menno Simons tried to gather them in small church groups (Geraerts 2012:45–46). Often these small communities would meet as a church on a boat in the many canals and rivers of the region. It was a place where they prayed together and read the Bible without being

detected and threatened by their persecutors (Krahn & Dyck 2017). The picture of a boat, not the classical Catholic or Protestant ship, called church, helps to illustrate the vulnerable small groups as well as Menno Simons' role in saving many persecuted Anabaptists from certain drowning (Loewen 1999).

The Radical Reformers, whom Menno Simons represents, have been, similar to the Hutterites, formed by the convictions of the Schleitheim Confession.[6] Menno's focus in his writings and practice as well as his ecclesiology are, therefore, much more strongly oriented toward the small local communities who are separated from the ill-will of the persecuting surrounding world. The world and its princes represent in Menno's view the old world order and the old kingdom, while the church stands for the new Kingdom led by the Prince of peace (Colwell 1987:131). Each of the church communities was in itself an autonomous church, connected to others through the fellowship and exchange of the elders and pastors. Engaging and seeking cooperation with society was practically and theologically difficult in this particular time. But Anabaptists continued to speak out for religious freedom (Johnson 1994:19). Soon the group was called Mennonites, and this large group of radical Reformers in Northern Europe continued the Schleitheim narrative, focusing on peace witness and rejecting any involvement within politics and, especially, the wars of the powerful (Colwell 1987:137). They were known as 'die Stillen im Lande' (Huxman 2014:240), partially losing their enthusiasm for preaching the Gospel to those outside their communities and witnessing primarily by their deeds. The Dordrecht Confession (1632/1725), still echoing

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[6] That the Schleitheim Confession was written earlier and in the southern, rather than in the northern part of Europe, was not important. In Menno's time, it was considered a unifying document (Loewen 1983:270).

Schleitheim, reflects the time after Menno and how his followers understood their relation to the state (Loewen 1983:269).

4. Anabaptists on the Move

The story of the radical Reformation is impressive, in the sense that, in spite of heavy persecution right from its beginnings, the Anabaptists did not disappear. Some of them remained in the region for the entire 500 years, such as Täufer in Switzerland (Hofer 2000) or Mennonites in Southern Germany or the Doopsgezinde in the Netherlands (Geraerts 2012:45). In some areas of Switzerland Anabaptists were allowed to settle and practise their faith in places rather difficult and undesirable for others; but in this way they could at least remain in their homeland. The option in Switzerland was to settle 1500 metres above sea level, in the mountains. Holland, for some time, had offered freedom to Anabaptists with the restriction that they couldn't own land and only work as farmhands. Southern Germany offered this possibility as well, and so they served with their gifts as farmers, and were able to have space for their gatherings for prayer and Bible reading.

The three major movements of Anabaptists that are known internationally, such as Mennonites, Hutterites and Amish, have most of the time been on the move to places of religious freedom. Instead of fighting back when they faced persecution because of their faith, they preferred to leave everything behind and find new places to live that would be more sympathetic and allow them to express their faith in the way they understood it. In their journeys to the West or East, for many Anabaptists the new lands, such as North America (Smucker 2010), Australia, later also Mexico and Latin America, have become their new homes, places that have also attracted others persecuted for religious convictions since the Reformation and until now. Most of the Amish

moved to North America in the mid-eighteenth century. Sometime later also the Hutterites, after their refugee journey through the lands of present Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania[7] up to Western Ukraine, left Europe and settled in North America and Australia. Even though many Mennonites also chose to leave Europe, some stayed in their original regions or moved to places as far as Eastern Europe, Siberia and Central Asia (Belk 2000).

When first persecuted in Northern Europe many Mennonites moved from Holland to Eastern Prussia, today's Poland, as they were offered freedom of religion and promised an exception for their sons from general conscription. Even though no Mennonites live in Poland today, the landscape still testifies to their past presence (Suchodolski 1986:72 and Stolberg 2015:37). They took along skills gained in Holland, and developed similar canal and farming systems in Eastern Prussia. When the Prussian king changed his mind and insisted on Mennonite young men joining his army, they looked for alternatives (Bahlcke 2008:71–94 and Urry 2006:34–38). Some remained, even up to the time of World War 2, others took a chance to emigrate to North America. Quite a large group responded in 1789 to the invitation of Katharina the Great from Russia and settled in today's southeast Ukraine on lands that the Russian Empire had just won after a victory over the Ottoman Empire. These were offered to the Mennonites together with the freedom to practise their faith. Again, it was their impressive abilities in farming that caused the Tsaritsa of Russia to invite them, and the land made them very wealthy (Kroeker 2005).

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[7] The listed names describe present states, which partly had different names at the times of the Anabaptists. See about Moravia (Williams 1995:1063–1078). See also on Hutterites, H. Roth [2008], and Hutterites in Transsylvania (Bahlcke 2008:335–344).

Less than 150 years later, the freedoms changed due to the outbreak of the First World War and the threats of the Russian socialist movement (Friesen 2006). Many Mennonites again chose the road to North America and several waves of emigration followed, before, during and after the First World War as well as during the Second World War. It seems like a story of running away from danger and from confrontation about their faith, as the Mennonite understanding was that Christians should not take up arms to fight for their rights (Penner 2006:195-210).[8] Evangelicals in the Soviet Union were formed partially by this pacifistic view, which was enforced even more by the persecution by the Soviet government. Especially the non-registered Baptists and Pentecostals would refuse to take an oath, refuse to serve in the army and rather go to prison, or serve in army sections where arms were not necessarily needed, such as construction or medical battalions (Sawatsky 1981). Together with other Christian denominations the Mennonites went through Soviet persecution, and were also well integrated with various evangelical groups, such as Baptists and Pentecostals, in one Union of Evangelical Christians and Baptist of the Soviet Union (Prokhorov 2014:158). Many of them took the opportunity, agreed upon between the Soviet and German governments, for family reunion and moved to Western Germany starting in the mid-1970s and continuing till the 1990s.

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[8] There are discussions about the practices of Mennonites when, during the time of the 1917 revolution, they partially aligned themselves with the White army against the Bolshevik Red army, and also when they developed self-defence structures (*Selbstschutz*) in order to protect first their wealth and then their families' lives.

5. Neo-Anabaptist Materials and Anabaptist-Evangelical Relations

In terms of its population, the main weight of Anabaptist and Mennonite groups has in the 80s moved to the majority world, and so Anabaptist theology is also shifting due to this emphasis. In the West, Anabaptist groups can be identified primarily in the USA, Canada and in the German-speaking European countries. This is also where since the Second World War and up until the 90s most Anabaptist theology has been defined. One of the well-known Anabaptist historians and theologians of that period is John Howard Yoder who has influenced and engaged others to think in ways of the radical Reformation. Many scholars, such as James W. McClendon (McClendon 2016), William R Estep (Tillman 1994), Glen Harold Stassen (Gushee & Stassen 2003), Arnold C Snyder (Snyder 1991) and many others who are identified with various evangelical traditions, studied and developed Anabaptist/radical reformation theology. [9] As an example of an Anabaptist theologian of the second half of the 20th century, John Howard Yoder's ideas will be summarised, as he was probably the most outspoken and controversial representative of the Third way of theology.

John Howard Yoder was, especially in the 70s and 80s, one of the formative Anabaptist-Mennonite theologians who have challenged and provoked Anabaptists as well as theologians outside the Mennonite background to engage with radical Reformation theology and to rethink for the 20th century their ecclesiology (Janzen 2011), christology (Yoder 2002) and hermeneutics (Hershberger 2015), dialogue and mission

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[9] Sometimes it has also been called 'the left wing of Reformation' or 'the Third way'.

(Yoder, Koontz, Alexis-Baker, Fassett & Hagenberg 2014) and many other issues. One of the key topics that he propounded was the Christian peace witness that is characteristic of the Anabaptist-Mennonite theology and praxis (Hershberger 2015:549). But his approach was often different to the classic Mennonite way of witnessing by deeds, denying the sword and not engaging with society and powers. He has challenged Anabaptists to engage society and stand up against abuses of power and militarism through peace actions and demonstrations. On the other side, the Christian witness through social action and relief for the poor and needy has been demonstrated through organisations such as the Mennonite Central Committee who became widely involved in helping marginalised, abused and poor (Yoder 1971).

Schuurman rightfully comments that 'today nearly all Roman Catholic and Protestant groups agree with the Anabaptists in their opposition to state-coerced Christianity. Aside from some of the most extreme right-wing fundamentalist groups and theonomists, nearly everyone rejects compulsory Christendom' (Schuurman 2007:261). Anabaptist and Mennonite church tradition and identity has historically majored in these issues defining in this way parts of their relationship between church and state. Yoder acknowledges this development, but also calls for a different understanding of church and society while reflecting on the present stage of the church in the world as being a diaspora community, similar to the Jewish diaspora of the time of early Christianity (Yoder 1973:279–309). This still includes a clear differentiation from society and state, that today in the West is democratic, which allows a variety of participation in it while, at the same time, affirming that the church continues to remain an alternative society (Yoder 2003:27–28). This very different thinking will surface clearly again in the final part of the discussion.

6. Struggle for Anabaptist Understandings in the 21st Century

Former Soviet Evangelicals have been strongly affected by a number of Anabaptist-Mennonite views, because of their close proximity and similar influences during revivals and impressive evangelical growth during the 19th century in present Ukraine. Even today, the largest evangelical groups of the former Soviet Union are found in Ukraine. Many Russian Germans—returning to Germany after their ancestors some hundred years ago took the journey to the East leaving their homeland behind in order to find a place of freedom and peace - have left their Mennonite understanding of a Christian community in Ukraine (Löwen 2014:20–22). As the two world wars scattered Mennonites all over the former Soviet Union, only a few of them return to Germany from Ukraine.

But for many Mennonites, Ukraine has been a formative location for their faith, and to leave behind a region, that for about 150 years was their home, without witness seemed not to be possible. The southeast of present Ukraine is again experiencing a growth of Mennonite churches. Many Mennonites from Canada and Germany continue to return to Ukraine, especially in the midst of the war in eastern Ukraine, in order to plant churches and to establish a peace witness to people who now live in houses and villages which they had once built, but had had to leave, and in which they had not been allowed to resettle by the Soviets ('Ukraine MB Mission' 2017). Their role in this area of turmoil and suffering, similar to what they had experienced in the past, is to offer clothes and shelter as well as to mourn and weep with the suffering population, without positioning themselves on any side of the war. The warzone has become a place that demonstrates that there is no justice in

war, as the powerful give out commands, and soldiers and, even more, the population suffer. The role of the Mennonite-Anabaptist faith here is to respond to the needs and to remain faithful to the teaching they have acquired and maintained over a period of 500 years since the Reformation (Bell 2017).

Historical churches on both sides of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine still operate with some 'just war' concepts and an understanding of a Christendom model that has been formed by the Orthodox context (Elliott 2014). In the midst of this, the Evangelical communities, claiming their history, some of which is connected to the Reformation and Radical Reformation, try to make sense of the war tragedies in Ukraine (Lunkin). Especially, Ukraine is rightfully proud that they celebrate the 500 years of Reformation as a whole nation. But then, which theology is right and pragmatically more useful in the situation of a conflict which is understood by Ukrainians to be an aggression by their Russian neighbour? Many Ukrainian evangelicals share this perspective on the war. Other neighbours, like Russians, Belorussians, Central Asians and other Evangelicals, seem to be reading the situation differently (Westrate 2016). How is the church to be connected to society and state, and how should the church respond to war and injustice? Which side of the Reformation offers the best model to engage and to influence the society and state of Ukraine, which is a democracy?

Some prominent Evangelicals were very active at Maidan and other places, and have clearly expressed their Christian convictions and their solidarity with the people (Cherenkov 2017). On the positive, much has been achieved by the evangelicals in Ukraine as they have gained a respected position as a Christian church in the Ukrainian society, and are increasingly visible in public. Can there be then a clear position in

the relationship of church and state in favour of one or the other Christian positions after the Reformation? As always, history will tell (Searle and Cherenkov 2014:100–135). It is much easier to draw lines and positions when analysing past history and looking at generations that have passed. But theology needs to reflect and respond to a messy present, not just the past, in order to prove its authenticity and relevance. For Ukraine, an evaluation of right and wrong of present theology and practice will probably happen only in the future. Recognising this, it helps to be more understanding, compassionate and forgiving on all sides when reading the 500 years since the beginning and unfolding of the Reformation (Cherenkov 2017).

7. Conclusion: The Radical Reformation—How to be Relevant in the 21st Century?

Through trial and error, the early Anabaptist movement has established values and beliefs that are still important and formative for today's Christian churches and for society. Realising the difficulties and dangers as well as experiencing in their own life the precarious hazards of a unity of state and church, they separated the two in their theology (Johnson 1994:18). Today, especially in the post-Christendom West, it seems quite natural. But whenever society faces difficulties, like, for example, the danger that it may be transformed or challenged by Islam, it still often returns to the Christendom model of thinking, and calls the state to action on behalf of the Christian church, or at least on behalf of the western post-Christian society culturally formed by Christian values (Schuurman 2007:261).

With Yoder, the Anabaptists have identified the church's role as a prophetic voice that speaks into and challenges different earthly powers.

At the same time, the church as a community of disciples does not have all truths in itself, but is learning while walking with Christ, similar to the disciples who walked the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. The church does not have all answers, but they have Jesus in order to learn in his community and from him (Yoder 1984). This way, the slogan of the Reformation: *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* points to a way (Hershberger 2015:550) how learned truths need to be applied, depending on the context and new knowledge. This calls for humility, openness to correction and for a continuing learning and applying of the learnt in the hermeneutical interrelation between church, society and Scripture with a mind of a disciple. 500 years of Reformation, therefore, mean not only a look back to the achievements, but offer a call to follow the often bumpy road of living up to the example of Christ and correcting one's views according to the scriptural witness and the model of Christ for his followers.

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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.
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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.

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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