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The Use of Classical Greek Philosophy in Early Lutheranism[1]

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Abstract

This article is an examination of the use of classical philosophy in the Lutheran tradition from Martin Luther through Johann Gerhard. It focuses particularly on the essentialist philosophies of both Plato and Aristotle as used and modified in these Lutheran writers. The claim made in this article is that though critical of Aristotelian thought on certain points, the first generations of Lutheran theologians also incorporated certain aspects of these philosophies in a positive manner within their theological systems. The goal of this article is to demonstrate that such positive evaluations of certain aspects of both Aristotle and Plato's philosophies can be found throughout these thinkers, as well as to demonstrate the usefulness of these categories in the contemporary church.

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1. Introduction

The Lutheran tradition has sometimes had a reputation for being opposed to philosophy, especially in view of the fondness for mystery over syllogistic reasoning that is apparent in Lutheran theological texts. It is well known that Martin Luther often spoke disparagingly about the abuses of Aristotelian thought in the medieval church. Today, there are hardly any influential Christian philosophers who identify as part of the Lutheran Reformation. This leads to a caricature of Lutheran thought which is opposed to reason and philosophy more generally. It is the argument of this paper, however, that this notion is mistaken. Though critical of Aristotelian philosophy on certain points, the early Lutheran writers were not opposed to philosophy as such, and often utilised ancient Greek metaphysical categories to explain their own thought.

This article addresses the question: did the Lutheran reformers use reason and Greek philosophy in a positive manner, or only engage in criticism of these thought forms? It is demonstrated that there is a strong tradition of a positive construction of essentialist philosophy which extends from Luther through the seventeenth-century scholastic tradition exemplified in Johann Gerhard. The paper is divided into three sections. First, Luther's relationship to both Aristotle and medieval Thomism is explained, and it is demonstrated that though he engages in critique, he also adopts reason and philosophy and useful secondary sources of authority. Second, Melanchthon is discussed in relation to his adoption of scholastic categories in the formulation of his own theological system. Third, the essentialist philosophies of both Plato and Aristotle are proven to have influenced Lutheran scholasticism through the writings of Martin Chemnitz and Johann Gerhard. Following this, a conclusion is included which explains and summarises the answer to the question posed in the beginning of this article.

2. Aristotle and Aquinas in Luther

Luther was not an overly philosophical thinker, as he generally sought to utilise biblical and theological, rather than philosophical, categories when explaining his thought on various subjects. One cannot, then, find any particular text wherein Luther explains his own metaphysical system or epistemological presuppositions. This is not to say, however, that Luther had no understanding of philosophy. His grasp of the philosophical discussions in the sixteenth century are apparent throughout his works, and

especially in his early writings. When determining Luther's view of Aristotle, reason, and related subjects then, one must glean insights from his occasional statements on the subject, rather than examining one particular treatise or set of works. Because of this, a determination of his exact philosophical foundations is somewhat difficult in contrast to the Lutheran scholastic writers who lay out their views on the topic in theological prolegomena texts.

2.1. Faith and reason in Luther's writings

Much of the debate surrounding Luther's relationship to philosophy concerns his nominalist training. The question of the relationship between Luther and nominalism is an often-discussed topic. Luther scholar and historical theologian Heiko Oberman popularised the thesis that Luther is greatly influenced by nominalist thought. Through his works such as *A Harvest of Medieval Theology* and various essays published together as *Dawn of the Reformation: Essays in Late Medieval and Early Reformation Thought*, Oberman contends that following his Reformation breakthrough, Luther retained several of the ideas taught to him by his nominalist teachers. In this view, while Luther distanced himself from Ockham and Biel in various ways, he retained their rejection of Thomistic realism as well as Ockham's emphasis on divine freedom. This stands in contrast to later theologians like Gerhard and Chemnitz, who do not write so favourably about the late medieval nominalist thinkers.

One example of Ockham's influence on Luther lies in the distinction made by the nominalist philosopher between the *potentia absoluta* (absolute power) and the *potentia ordinata* (ordained power) of God (Obermann 1983:473). This distinction itself precedes Ockham, as it is found in Thomas and other medieval thinkers, but the manner in which such a distinction functions radically differs in later medieval thought. For Aquinas, God's ordained laws are a reflection of his own divine nature. Lying, for example, is inherently wrong not simply because God decreed it as such, but because it is inconsistent with God's own being. For Ockham, however, God could just as easily have decreed (according to the *potentia ordinata*) that lying is a virtuous trait, and truth-telling a sin. This position, known as voluntarism, posits a radical freedom within the divine will and rejects an eternal standard of law and justice in accord with God's nature (Ockham 1990:xlix). In this system, God does not *need* his justice to be satisfied in any sense in order for God to forgive sin. Such could be the case if God ordained it in such a manner, but God might ordain that he would simply overlook sin without justice being satisfied whatsoever. Some scholars contend that this voluntarism lies at

the root of Luther's Reformation doctrine of justification (Howsare 2005:144). In this view, God can impute the sinner as righteous apart from any actual righteousness within the individual, simply because God decreed it as such according to the *potentia ordinata*.

There are several problems with the nominalist thesis, which has generally been rejected or at least modified in recent years. It is undeniable that Ockham had an impact on Luther, as he admits as much. However, Luther's own statements about his nominalist teachers are often quite critical. The theologians Luther cites most frequently in the medieval period are not scholastic at all— whether realist or nominalist—but mystics (see Hoffman 1976; Hoffman 1998). Bernard, Tauler, and the anonymous author of the *Theologia Germanica* are the most prominent influences upon his thought. These writers, especially in drawing from the works of St Augustine, utilise Neoplatonic language more so than either Thomistic Aristotelianism or Ockhamist nominalism. This is not to say, however, that Luther simply adopts the metaphysical convictions of any particular mystical writer either. Luther was rather eclectic in his influences; one might then wonder whether one should seek to find any consistent metaphysical system at all in Luther's writings. The present writer is not convinced that this is possible. In order to explain the relationship between Luther and Aristotle, then, the best method of proceeding is not to give an exposition of Luther's philosophical system, but to examine two particular topics which appear as themes throughout Luther's career. First are the continual negative comments directed toward Aristotle, and second is Luther's view of the relationship between faith and reason.

Luther's attacks on Aristotle (and Aquinas) are most prominent from the years 1517 to 1522. A large portion of his polemical statements about the relationship between philosophy and theology appear in this era, though such ideas continue to be explained throughout his career, such as in the 1535 Galatians commentary. The roots of Luther's view of Aristotle can be found in his 1517 *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* (Luther 1962). An examination of this text demonstrates that Luther's problem is not with Aristotle *as such*, but with the connection between Aristotle's ethics and a perceived neo-Pelagianism in the Middle Ages. The disputation begins as a defence of Augustinism and a rejection of Pelagius. Luther is concerned that the scholastics deny the impact of sin upon the will in favour of a pure libertarianism. It is important to note that Luther specifically cites Biel and Scotus as proponents of this false idea, rather than Aquinas (as in theses 10, 13, and 23). The thesis which is perhaps most relevant for the present discussion is 50, in which it is stated that

Aristotle's relation to theology is as 'darkness is to light' (Luther 1962:270). It is important, however, to note in what sense Luther rejects the work of the philosopher. The first sense in which Luther rejects Aristotle is in the utilisation of logical syllogism. For Luther, divine truth is to be accepted through revelation, rather than through logical argumentation. He notes, for example, that such a use of logic as expositor of divine truth would negate even the dogma of the Trinity as a teaching of faith, instead placing it within the realm of natural reason (thesis 49). The second reason why Luther rejects Aristotle is the use of his ethical writings. The reformer does not, however, reject Aristotle's ethical theory as such, but the imposition of virtue ethics into the category of justification *coram Deo* (thesis 40). While these ideas, if isolated from the rest of his writings, might imply a complete rejection of traditional Greek thought forms in Luther, there are two important considerations which negate such a conclusion. First, Luther's theology of faith and reason and the relationship between the two kingdoms demonstrates that logical categories are essential for the proper functioning of the human creature in society. Second, modern scholarship has demonstrated that the proposed gap between Luther and Aquinas is not quite as extensive as Luther himself seemed to think.

It is well known that Luther referred to reason as the 'devil's whore', among other pejorative terms. One might then come to the conclusion that Luther was an irrationalist or a fideist. It is said that John Wesley, though at one point quite impressed with Luther, termed him an enemy of reason after reading his 1535 Galatians commentary (Westerholm 2004:64). Such caricatures continue to be propagated, though it must be acknowledged that some of the blame is to be laid on Luther himself who was prone to overstatement. Yet, Luther did, at other times, praise reason as a great good. One might conclude then that Luther is simply inconsistent, and that one cannot put together any kind of coherent ideas of reason and faith in the reformer. However, an examination of Luther's understanding of the two kingdoms demonstrates that such is not the case, and that his seemingly contradictory statements on the topic are completely consistent within the framework of two realms.

Modern scholarship has generally acknowledged that the two kingdoms are the key to a proper understanding of Luther's thought on this topic. Though disagreeing on some particulars, Jerry Robbins, Steven A Hein, and Brian Gerrish all recognise this twofold framework as necessary to grasp Luther's view. For Luther, Christians live in the midst of two kingdoms. Though this has sometimes been described as the difference between the

church and the state, Luther never makes this identification. Instead, these two realms represent one's relation to God (the right -hand kingdom), and one's relation to others (the left-hand kingdom). The left-hand kingdom has reference to the state, culture, and vocation. The right-hand kingdom is connected with the church. Reason and philosophy, for Luther, are properly used in the left-hand kingdom, as a means to guide the state, relationships, ethics, and other aspects of external life. In relation to God, however, reason is to be surrendered to revelation which often speaks of truths which are opposed to bare reason. This is especially related to the chief article of justification, which, according to Luther, is at odds with human rationality, which reasons that reward is based on human obedience *coram Deo*, just as it is in the left-hand realm.

One of the problems in scholarship on this topic is that Luther's 1518 Heidelberg Disputation is viewed by many as central to gaining an understanding of the reformer's thought on the topic, and in particular, his distinction between the *theologia gloriae* and the *theologia crucis* (thesis 22). While this early work certainly contains themes which extend throughout his career, the late Luther never utilises such a distinction. The difference between a theology of the cross and a theology of glory, which modern Luther interpreters view as a theological paradigm which is perhaps as important as the distinction between law and gospel (Forde 1997), is never given prominence in Luther's own writings. Even in the great reformation writings of 1520, this distinction is never mentioned. The Lutheran scholastics hardly even note such a distinction, and certainly did not understand it to be somehow paradigmatic for Luther's thought. This idea was popularised by the publication of Walter von Loewenich's *Luthers Theologia Crucis* in 1929, and has since been studied by Gerhard Forde and Alister McGrath, among others. Jerry Robbins, in his essay, 'Luther on Reason: A Reappraisal' frames Luther's understanding of the topic through the *theologia crucis* in opposition to the *theologia gloriae*. While Robbins' conclusions generally agree with those of the present author, the prominence of the Heidelberg Disputation and lack of discussion of later writings lead Robbins to conclude that Luther 'rejected all natural theology', and that he held to 'contradictory propositions' (Robbins 1993:195, 203). These ideas would put Luther at odds with the previous scholastic tradition, and the idea that contradictory propositions can coexist does, essentially, make Luther an irrationalist.

Steven Hein's approach to Luther on faith and reason offers a more balanced perspective which leads to continuity with the preceding Christian tradition. One point which Hein notes, that is

particularly significant, is that even within the earthly kingdom, certain truths about God can be discovered by human reason. While the gospel, the Triunity of God, and other truths cannot be arrived at through reason alone, the existence of a good God can. Hein notes a distinction that Luther makes between a *general* and a *proper* knowledge of God (Hein 1972:140). A general knowledge of God is discovered through reason, and is evidenced through the predominance of worship in areas where the gospel has not been proclaimed. In other places, Luther can refer to this general idea of God as a 'legal knowledge', because it consists in knowledge of the moral law (Hein 1972:141). It is in this area that Luther can praise even pagan philosophers like Aristotle, whom he states, at times, had a better understanding of the law than many clergy in the church (Hein 1972:141). These facts demonstrate that Robbins is in error when he argues that there is no natural theology in Luther. While Luther certainly limits what can be known through natural revelation, he does not reject the concept altogether.

Where reason falls short, for Luther, is in its attempt to understand God's attitude toward sinners. If Aristotelian ethics are applied to one's place in the heavenly kingdom, one will conclude something akin to Pelagianism. In the earthly kingdom, one receives payment in accord with one's work. Such an arrangement, according to the law, does not apply to one's relation to God, and a confusion of these two kingdoms is what led to Rome's moralistic approach to justification. Hein notes that there are two basic problems which Luther had with Rome's utilisation of Aristotle: first, the righteousness of faith was replaced by one of works, and second, logic became a judge over revelation (Hein 1972:143). If Aristotle is used then, outside of these problematic areas, Luther's thought is not inherently in opposition to that of the philosopher. Luther himself argued that Aristotle's logic should be retained in university curriculums (Robbins 1993:196). The reformer's theology, then, is not irrational or anti-philosophical.

While it has been established that Luther views reason as a positive good within the left-hand realm, the question now arises whether there is any inherent connection then between the civil and heavenly kingdoms. Some authors have proposed that Luther's division between these two realms mirrors the later noumenal-phenomenal divide in Kantian philosophy. In this way, the two serve in a completely dichotomous relationship. Robbins states that in heavenly things, unlike in the civil realm, contradiction is possible (Robbins 1993:203). For him, the acceptance of contradictory propositions is part of Luther's *theologia crucis*. In this model of interpretation, one cannot view

Luther as anything other than an irrationalist when it comes to divine truths. Such a conclusion is not necessary for a read of Luther's own writings. While Luther often derides human reason for its misunderstanding of the truths of faith, nowhere does the reformer state that heavenly realities are in actuality contradictory to one another, or to civil realities. While Luther firmly holds onto paradox, his criticisms of Aristotle and of syllogistic reasoning do not imply that divine truths are opposed to reason *as such*, but to fallen human reason.

For Luther, reason does have a role to play even in theological discussions. While reason must not override that which is taught by revelation, it still holds a secondary function in defending theological matters. Luther's famous words at the Diet of Worms demonstrate this fact, with his insistence that his errors must be disproved by both Scripture and plain reason. Robbins notes that while Luther criticises human reason, in faith the sinful person's reason itself undergoes a change. This is called 'regenerate reason', which is used in service of divine truth (Robbins 1993:200). Robbins points out that reason is not absent when interpreting revelation, but is 'vital for pointing out logical weaknesses in destructive reasoning' (1993:196). Even in the mere reading and understanding of words on a page, one must utilise one's intellectual faculties. One example of this use of regenerate reason can be found in Luther's debates with Zwingli over Christ's presence in the sacrament. While the reformer founded his arguments first upon the text of scripture, he used categories derived from his nominalist training—especially in his differentiation between Christ's modes of presence (Osborne 2002:81). Thomas Osborne notes that philosophy is used, by Luther, only insofar as it supports the plain meaning of the biblical text (2002:82). For Luther, then, scriptural truths are to be accepted on the basis of revelation rather than human logic, but this does not negate the usefulness of reason and philosophy as a secondary source of authority, even in spiritual matters.

Luther's thought on the relationship between theology and philosophy can be summarised in three points. First, in the civil sphere, reason is an absolute necessity. It has the ability to interpret natural law, and even to determine the existence of God as well as his desire for worship and obedience. This is a general knowledge of God which cannot bring one unto salvation. Second, the truths of the gospel are inherently opposed to fallen human reason—especially the doctrine of justification. There are, thus, many truths which cannot be grasped other than through revelation. In the matters where God speaks, in the spiritual realm, reason must submit to God's word. Third, faith leads to a

new heart and a new reasoning faculty. The believer can, and should, use reason, though only in a secondary sense. Philosophy is only useful insofar as it submits itself to revealed theology.

2.2. Luther and Aquinas

In light of these conclusions, the relationship between Luther's thought and that of scholasticism can be defined. In particular, some conclusions can be drawn regarding the relationship between Luther and Thomas Aquinas, who sometimes bears the brunt of Luther's criticisms of the use of Aristotle. While older scholarship emphasised discontinuity between these two figures, ecumenical dialogues in the twentieth century brought about a renewed consideration of areas of agreement between the reformer and the angelic doctor. The author who has done the most extensive writing on the relationship between these two figures is Denis Janz, who has published two books and several articles on the topic. While Janz does not claim that these two figures had an identical theological method, he demonstrates that discontinuity has been overstated. With this being the case, it is demonstrable that the Lutheran scholastic method does not differ in any substantial way from the theological method of Luther, even though the presentation might be more akin to that of Aquinas and other medieval writers in certain particulars.

The argument that there are commonalities between Luther and Aquinas is demonstrated in two ways. First, it is argued that Luther misunderstood some fundamental aspects of Thomas' thought. Second, it is contended that just as Luther is not the irrationalist he is often characterised as, Aquinas is not the pure rationalist that nineteenth-century neo-scholastics portrayed. In *Luther on Thomas Aquinas* (1989), Janz evaluates all of Luther's references to the medieval theologian, and demonstrates Luther's familiarity with primary sources. In opposition to some other scholars who have argued that Luther only knew Thomas through secondary sources, Janz demonstrates that the reformer was well-acquainted with Thomas' own works. Luther's familiarity with Thomas does not, however, mean that Luther correctly understood him.

The Thomistic school continued to exist into the late Middle Ages, even with the rise of nominalism. Several prominent figures in Luther's own life considered themselves to be heirs of the angelic doctor, including Andreas Karlstadt and Cardinal Cajetan. As a continual critic of Luther, Cajetan's Thomism is particularly important for Luther's understanding of Aquinas. The cardinal vehemently opposed Luther's anthropology and view of grace, taking the position that morally good acts are possible without any

aid of any grace whatsoever (Janz 1983:135). This, for Luther, was at the heart of the errors of medieval scholasticism, as it promoted a neo-pelagianism and resulted in a denial of salvation *sola gratia*. Janz demonstrates that Cajetan misunderstood Thomas' position on the issue. For Janz, Aquinas' commentaries on the Pauline epistles demonstrate commonality between his anthropology and that of Luther (1983:138). When Luther criticised Aquinas, especially in relation to grace, it is likely that this is due largely to Cajetan's reading of Thomas, rather than the intentions of the author himself.

This leads, then, to an examination of the theological methods of Luther and Aquinas. Opponents of protestant scholasticism have often derided the seventeenth-century theological method as a reversion to Aquinas' system and rejection of Luther's purer theology. The contrast between Luther and medieval scholasticism is, then, emphasised to a great extent (such as in Paulson 2011). While critics of Aquinas have often accused him of imposing Greek philosophy on the biblical text, Janz notes that contemporary Thomas scholarship has recognised that, though certainly concerned with metaphysics, Aquinas was first and foremost a theologian rather than a philosopher (1998:3). One of the problems with older interpretations of Thomas is that he was often read through the lens of the enlightenment, as an apologist and philosopher in the modern sense who attempts to rationally prove the truths of Christianity through logical syllogism. As Janz states, one cannot read Aquinas in such a context, as the entire concept of autonomous reason is an enlightenment construct (1998:12). Instead, when Aquinas offers his five 'proofs' of the existence of God, he merely demonstrates the rationality and coherence of an acceptance of theism for the Christian. As Feser notes, Aquinas wrote his text for believers, and the Summa was not intended as an apologetic text (Feser 2009:63). In using these arguments, Aquinas does not imply that all truths of the Christian faith must, or even can, be rationally demonstrated. On these points, Luther does not fundamentally disagree, as he too argues that a general knowledge of God is rationally demonstrable. Similarly, as Luther notes that the proper knowledge of God is not discoverable through reason, Aquinas argues that the Trinity, incarnation, and other doctrines are believed through revelation alone, rather than logical deduction.

There are, certainly, points of departure from Aquinas in Luther. Paradox is a central theme in Luther's thought, while Aquinas has a greater concern for syllogistic reasoning. This is not to say, however, that Aquinas completely rejects the concept of paradox. Janz observes that in the majority of his answers to proposed

questions throughout the *Summa*, Aquinas usually answers with 'a simultaneous yes and no', which he labels a type of paradox (1998:15). He also notes that the centrality of the apophatic method in Aquinas' writing is opposed to rationalism. Theology ultimately leads one to mystery, and on some points, it cannot speak (1998:16). Janz points to some specific passages in Aquinas' writing where mystery is emphasised, and the great theologian acknowledges paradox (1998:19–20). These passages are, primarily, in relation to the mystery of the incarnation. While Aquinas was certainly not as fond of paradox as Luther, and was certainly much more concerned to exposit a logical system, he was not opposed to leaving his theology in the context of mystery when necessary.

Luther and Thomas are two very different thinkers whose theological concerns and presentation diverge greatly from one another. However, despite such differences, they share several areas of commonality. Both praise reason, and even Aristotle, in the civil sphere, and in relation to a natural knowledge of God. Both acknowledge that the truth of the gospel is known only through revelation. Both acknowledge that there are paradoxes in the Christian faith. What this demonstrates is that when the Lutheran scholastics borrow Aristotelian terminology from Aquinas, as well as his concern for natural theology, they are not diverging from Luther's own thought. Even the reformer's concern for paradox remains in those scholastics writing in his name throughout the next century. In this way, the scholastics retain Luther's theology and concerns while simultaneously utilising beneficial aspects of Aquinas' method.

3. Aristotle and the Scholastic Method in Melanchthon

Critics of scholasticism in seventeenth-century Lutheran thought often place the blame on Luther's student Melanchthon for deviating from the theology of his older contemporary. While Luther taught a pure gospel-centric theology, Melanchthon instead began to impose rationalistic philosophical categories onto reformation theology. The process that began with the theologian then continued throughout the scholastic era, as writers began to revert to a pre-reformation theological scheme.

The thesis of a great divide between Melanchthon and Luther gained prominence through Albrecht Ritschl and Adolf von Harnack, who both favoured the earlier reformer as a purer source of Christian truth. This contention continued to be promoted by scholars associated with the Luther renaissance begun by Karl Holl throughout the beginning of the twentieth century. Authors

such as Werner Elert and William Lazareth continued this trajectory as well, especially as they contended that Melanchthon was influenced by Calvin on the subject of the third use of the law, which greatly differentiated him from Luther (Murray 2001:27). In some ways, such a divide is not new, as the debates in post-Reformation Lutheranism which led to the writing of the Formula of Concord depended upon two opposing schools of thought, sometimes labelled as the Philipists and the Gnesio Lutherans (Gritsch 2002:92–95). Because of this, some second-generation reformers spoke ill of Melanchthon, often giving him the label of Crypto-Calvinist and Sacramentarian. There are generally two places of proposed discontinuity between the two authors: that of theology, and of method. For the present work, the second question is more essential as it relates to the relationship between theology and philosophy.

The theological method of Melanchthon is apparent in his *Loci Communes*, which was released in a number of different editions throughout his life. The first edition, released in 1521 when Melanchthon was just 24 years old, is sometimes viewed as the first systematic treatment of Protestant theology. The work itself, however, is not intended to be comprehensive. While later editions include treatments of the Trinity and other essential doctrines, the initial edition set forth the distinction between law and gospel, the sacraments, and other Lutheran distinctives. The form of treatment here is not that of Aquinas or other scholastic writers who use an extensive systematic format of: proposition, anticipated refutation, and then response. Instead, Melanchthon divides theology into various topics, or Loci, and treats them through an exposition of the doctrine with an establishment of that teaching from both scripture and the church fathers. Throughout the text, Melanchthon responds to those who disagrees with his perspective. This treatment is certainly systematic, and utilises both logic and rhetoric, though it differs from the obscure philosophical discussions which are prominent in other theological textbooks of the era.

Insights into Melanchthon's place as a scholastic are found in Lowell Green's essay, 'Melanchthon's Relation to Scholasticism'. In Green's view, all of the characteristic elements of later Lutheran scholasticism are present in Melanchthon. In particular, he notes Melanchthon's utilisation of classical dialectics and rhetoric (Truemann 2005:274). Like Luther, Melanchthon was critical of philosophy, and Aristotle in particular. However, despite his negative statements regarding the Greek philosopher, he continued to use, and teach, Aristotle's logic, rhetoric, and grammar. Green argues that Melanchthon's attitude toward

philosophy can be best understand by using a twofold definition of the term 'philosophy'. On the one hand, philosophy is identified with the liberal arts including both the *trivia* and *quadrivia* (277). Especially due to Melanchthon's humanism, the reformer defends the importance of these aspects of philosophy. The other definition of philosophy, however, is derided by Melanchthon. This includes metaphysics, and specifically as it is used by medieval theologians through their adoption of Aristotle. According to Green, Melanchthon wholeheartedly rejects both the metaphysics and ethics of Aristotle (281). Despite several harsh statements of Melanchthon, however, such a total rejection is inconsistent with some of his own statements.

In his argument that Melanchthon rejects Aristotle's ethics and metaphysics, Green cites two of Melanchthon's early writings: *Didymi Faventini adversus Thomam Placentinum pro Martino Luthero theologo oratio* (1521), and *Scholia in epistulam Pauli ad Colossenses* (1527). It is worth noting that these are two earlier works, and it is apparent that when Melanchthon writes the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, he has a largely positive view of Aristotle. Green notes that in his treatment of Colossians, Melanchthon makes a differentiation between spiritual life and bodily life. Philosophy (and ethics in particular) is relevant to the bodily rather than spiritual life. It is in this way that Melanchthon approves of Aristotle as an ethicist while simultaneously rejecting those ethics as being a foundation of the gospel. Like Luther, Melanchthon functions on the basis of the framework of the two kingdoms when formulating his views of faith and reason. More particularly, Melanchthon speaks of the relationship between faith and ethics within the framework of the two kinds of righteousness. Charles Arand argues that the two kinds of righteousness serve as the framework for Melanchthon's approach to faith and works in the Apology (Arand 2001). In this framework, the Christian lives in two fundamental relationships: to God, and to others. In relation to God, Aristotle is to be rejected, because salvation arises solely by faith in the gospel promise. In relation to others, however, Aristotle's ethics give a general guide as to how ethical living in the world functions. This is not due to any inspiration given to Aristotle, but instead due to Aristotle's adherence to natural law, which is largely discoverable by way of philosophy.

Though it is clear that Aristotle is used by Melanchthon in the realm of ethics, the question of metaphysics has not yet been addressed, as will be done here. Green notes that Melanchthon argues against the notion that theology is in any way determined by philosophy. This relates especially to metaphysical questions (Green 2005:281). Philosophy, instead, is a mere handmaiden to

theology, always submitting to the truths revealed in divine revelation. Melanchthon does not reject metaphysics as such, but its abuse in the late medieval era. Regarding the doctrine of God, Melanchthon is certainly willing to speak in a metaphysical manner regarding God's being. For example, he affirms the doctrine of divine simplicity—a hallmark of Aquinas' metaphysical system—in Article I of the Augsburg Confession, which refers to God as *impartibilis* (without parts). Melanchthon does not reject extensive discussion of God's nature and attributes, or even proofs of his existence, as these are all included within later editions of the *Loci Communes*. The reformer's primary concern here is to ground knowledge of God, not in speculation, but in the person of Christ. One does not reason unto the nature of God and then consequently determine theological conclusions. Instead, the Christian is called to look to Christ, and affirm who God shows himself to be through his Son.

It is following the work of Melanchthon where the influence of Aristotle upon Lutheran thought becomes more explicit. Debates among second generation reformers often utilised Aristotelian categories of substance and accident in discussions surrounding the nature of sin and of free will (FC SD I), as well as contentions regarding causation in the application of salvation (FC SD III). God was also often described through utilising Aquinas' concept of being in which there is no distinction between existence and essence within the divine nature. Aristotle's categories, particularly of causation, are used even more extensively in the period that Robert Preus labels 'high orthodoxy' (1970:45) than in the so-called 'golden age' of the Formula of Concord. Perhaps the most explicit Aristotelian of the era is Johann Gerhard, who is generally considered the most significant Lutheran thinker following Martin Chemnitz. Even in Gerhard, however, there was no explicit *ordo salutis*, which is often regarded as a high point in the development of Protestant scholastic thought. This belongs to the final age, which Preus refers to as the 'silver age', which includes Johannes Quenstedt, Abraham Calov, and David Hollaz as its three most significant representatives (1970:45). These authors make numerous distinctions on each topic which the modern reader might find tedious. They then follow every point with a proposed refutation and response. In this manner, then, the method of Aquinas and other medieval thinkers is followed rather closely. A more recent example of this method can be found in Conrad Lindberg's *Christian Dogmatics and Notes on the History of Dogma*, first published in English in 1922. Throughout this volume, on nearly every topic, Lindberg cites the formal, material, sufficient, primary, and secondary causes, all using traditional

Latin scholastic terms. The seed form of such ideas are already present in Melanchthon's own writings.

It has been explained thus far that both Luther and Melanchthon are critical of the abuses of philosophy in the medieval period, while also using philosophical categories in a modified form. Melanchthon used Aristotle heavily in describing ethics, especially in relation to the outward acts of the body involved in active righteousness. He is critical of the magisterial use of philosophy, but instead places this field of inquiry in a secondary position, always to be judged by the truths of theology as explained in scripture. Following this explanation of the relationship between faith and reason in these two theologians, essentialist metaphysics are demonstrated to be a consistent element of the Lutheran tradition from Luther through the development of Lutheran orthodoxy.

4. Essentialism in Lutheran Scholasticism

As inheritors of the medieval theological and philosophical tradition, the Lutheran reformers and scholastics interact with the philosophical convictions of those within the previous Christian tradition. This interaction extends from Luther through the scholastic revival of the nineteenth century. In this section, first, Luther's interaction with Platonic and Aristotelian essentialism is engaged in order to compare his own philosophical convictions with previous authors. Following this, the seventeenth-century Lutheran scholastics are examined in order to explain their metaphysical convictions. Most particularly, Johann Gerhard is discussed as an exemplar of this tradition. This is then compared to the scholastic revival of nineteenth and early twentieth century Lutheran theologians. Finally, a proposal is offered for an essentialist metaphysic which is consistent with Luther and the following tradition.

4.1. Essentialism in Luther

While Luther's relationship to Aristotle has already been discussed, some observations regarding his relationship to essentialist ontology are merited. While critics of essentialism in Luther are engaged in the following chapter, some preliminary remarks must be made on the subject. While Luther does not spend an extensive amount of space writing on his views of metaphysics, and the nature of essence in particular, there is one writing which does engage the ideas inherent in both Platonic and Aristotelian essentialism: the Heidelberg Disputation. Opponents of Lutheran scholasticism often utilise the Disputation as an anti-

scholastic document, especially in the theological theses (Forde 1997). However, Luther's remarks are not merely theological, but he engages specific metaphysical ideas in his philosophical theses, and not always in a negative manner. These ideas have simply not been engaged in the majority of works on the Heidelberg Disputation, and there are a couple significant reasons for this. First, the critical edition of Luther's works did not include the defence of Luther's philosophical theses until 1979. This simply did not allow for an in-depth treatment of the issue. Second, the English edition of Luther's Works still fails to contain a translation of these portions of writing. The most important part of the theses for the present work is his eighth point, in which he argues that Aristotle wrongly condemns Plato's theory of forms. Eric Parker provides a translation of the defence of the eighth proposition which is worth quoting at length:

That the philosophy of Plato is better than the philosophy of Aristotle appears from this, namely, that Plato always depends upon the divine and immortal, separate and eternal, insensible and intelligible, from whence he also recommends that singulars, individuals, and sensible things be abandoned because they cannot be known on account of their instability. Aristotle, being opposed to this in every way, ridicules the separable and intelligible things and brings in sensible things and singulars and thoroughly human and natural things. But, he does this most cunningly:

Firstly, because he cannot deny that the individual is transient [*fluxa*], he invents a form and different matter, and so the thing is not knowable as matter, but as form. Therefore, he says that the form is the cause of knowing [*causam sciendi*], and he calls this 'divine, good, desirable' and he assigns the intellect to this. And so he frustrates every mind, while he examines the same thing in two ways.

Secondly, this 'form' is a quiddity and the sum of his Metaphysics. So, he destroys all the ideas, putting in their place his own forms and quiddities conjoined to matter, ridiculing and denying [the existence of] the ideas separable from matter, as appears in many places, especially Metaphysics and [Nicomachean] Ethics. But, it is well known by way of blessed Augustine, Iamblichus and all the Platonic disputants that the ideas of Plato are separate [from matter]. And so it is well known that the philosophy of Aristotle crawls in the dregs [*reptat in faecibus*] of corporeal and sensible things, whereas Plato moves among things separable and spiritual (Luther 2013).

Luther's comments on these matters prove to be quite problematic for interpretations of the Reformer which place him at odds with

all traditional Greek thought-forms. He rejects Aristotle's metaphysics, not for its essentialism, but for his denial of the reality of forms existent in the mind of God. It should not be surprising that, as an Augustinian monk, Luther prefers the philosophical convictions of the bishop of Hippo over that of Thomism. The specifics of Luther's criticisms of Aristotle are dealt with below, in an attempt to formulate an essentialist approach which is both scholastic and consistent with Luther.

4.2. Philosophy in the Writings of Martin Chemnitz

Following the death of Martin Luther, the leadership of the Lutheran movement eventually fell into the hands of Martin Chemnitz, sometimes affectionately labelled 'the second Martin'. A more philosophical thinker than Luther, Chemnitz' writings demonstrate a strong adherence to a classic essentialist metaphysic. Through the second-generation reformer, Aristotelian metaphysical convictions are included within the Lutheran Confessional documents, and were then transmitted to the seventeenth- century scholastic tradition. Chemnitz' thought is complex enough, especially in his exposition of Christ's two natures, to merit a full-length study, but for the present purposes, it only must be demonstrated that he utilised classical Greek philosophical categories in his construction of Lutheran thought. Thus, here, some passages in the Formula of Concord, and Chemnitz' *Two Natures in Christ* are explored to demonstrate this point, and his comments are supplemented with passages from other scholastic writers, which affirm and reiterate such convictions.

Perhaps the most important metaphysical statement in the post-reformation era for the Lutheran tradition is made in Article I of the Formula of Concord, under Chemnitz' influence, in resolution to a debate surrounding the nature of sin upon the human creature (this history is catalogued in Preus 1978:115–117). The Philipists tended to speak more optimistically about the nature of the human will after the fall than the Gnesio-Lutherans. This led to a number of disputes between representatives of both schools of thought. At the height of this controversy, a public disputation was held as an attempt to arrive at a resolution on the subject. Victorin Strigel and Matthias Flacius met in 1560 to settle the question of the role of the human will in conversion. In the dispute, Strigel argued that sin was an accidental, rather than substantial, quality. As such, Strigel argued, there was goodness intact in the human person in regard to one's substance. Not having a strong understanding of Aristotelian categories Flacius rejected the idea that sin was an accidental quality, and instead retorted that it became the very

essence of the human creature in the post-lapsarian state. In spite of several calls to recant his statement, Flacius refused, and was eventually rejected by the other Gnesio-Lutherans for his latent Manicheanism. This debate led to a Confessional statement on the subject, which rejected the positions of both Strigel and Flacius.

In Article I, the authors make two basic contentions. First, the language that sin is 'accidental' does not mean that it is insignificant. The corruption of sin has a radical impact upon the person, placing one under God's wrath and devoid of spiritual freedom (FC SD I:1). It is a misunderstanding of Aristotle's language to assume that just because something is not a substantial property that it is as inconsequential as painting a wall a different colour. A more apt illustration might be of someone driving a car into a wall, cracking and bending it while leaving the wall itself slightly intact. The second contention of the Formula is that though the impacts of sin are devastating upon the human person, they do not negate one's humanity and essential value as a creation of God (FC SD I:26). This leads to a metaphysical discussion related to the value of utilising the Aristotelian categories of substance and accident. Were they opposed to essentialism (at least of the Aristotelian variety) the authors of the Formula had an opportunity to voice such criticisms here; yet, the opposite is the case. The metaphysical system of Aristotle, at least in some form, is adopted by the Formula.

In this discussion, the Formula notes approvingly that the church fathers often used metaphysical language, as such is sometimes necessary in academic dispute. It is argued that such language should not be used heavily in preaching for the sake of the unlearned; there is a proper place for such ideas to be expounded by theologians. A substance is defined as a 'self-existent essence', and an accident, in contrast, 'does not exist by itself essentially', but is separable from a substance (FC SD I:54). An essence is unchanging while the accidental properties of a thing are subject to continual change. This division is further described as an 'indisputable truth' (*immota veritas*) among all learned people (FC SD I:57). The Formula further attempts to demonstrate that Luther was not opposed to using such language, and at times did so himself (FC SD I:62). In light of the acceptance of such language, it is argued then that Flacius' position is mistaken, and that sin is an accidental property after the fall (FC SD I:61). These statements are highly significant because they do not represent the opinion of one individual theologian, but became a standard part of the Lutheran Confessional documents as published in the Book of Concord.

The metaphysical assumptions here played a significant role in the development of the anthropology of Lutheran scholasticism. In the scholastic texts, there are two primary topics of discussion under the topic *anthropology*: the *imago Dei* and original sin. Both concepts use Aristotelian metaphysics. The early-twentieth-century scholastic writer Adolf Hoenecke explains the doctrine of the divine image as explained by Lutheran orthodox theologians. He notes that the *imago Dei* is spoken of in two distinct senses. First, there is the image *late dicta* (in a general sense), which includes man's attributes such as freedom, intellect, and dominion (Hoenecke 2009 III:320). Lindberg refers to it as the 'formal image', which consists of mind, will, and emotion (Lindberg 1922:156). This broader sense of the image includes the entire nature of man, and is thus part of the human essence. This image is not lost in the fall, because if it were, then the human essence itself would be obliterated. The other manner of speaking about the *imago Dei* is the image *stricte dicta* (in a strict sense) which is identified with spiritual righteousness (Hoenecke 2009 III:320). Lindberg uses the title 'material image' (1922:156). The narrower sense of the image refers to an accidental quality, whereby one can lack spiritual righteousness and retain a genuinely human essence. Though Lutheran theologians differ on several points related to anthropology on topics such as the propagation of the soul, the distinction between soul and spirit, and the nature of the broad sense of the divine image, all of the Lutheran scholastics are committed to an Aristotelian essentialism which accepts that there are both essential properties of the human nature, and accidental ones which are lost in the fall.

Along with the utilisation of such language regarding the divine image, the Lutheran scholastics also follow the Formula in expositing sin as an accidental quality. In his compendium of Lutheran scholastic thought *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Heinrich Schmid summarises the position of the seventeenth-century writers on the topic of the relationship between sin and nature (1899:246–249). Like Chemnitz, the scholastics guard against two primary problems in relation to original sin. First is the Pelagian or Semi-Pelagian position wherein sin does not have a fundamental impact upon man's essence at all. This is what Quenstedt refers to as, 'a mere *accident*, lightly and externally attached' (Schmid 1899:247). This is not to say that sin is not an accidental property (as Quenstedt affirms the affirmations of Article I of the Formula), but that it also has a broader impact upon human nature as such, though without eliminating the human essence. He refers to original sin as 'internally and intimately inhering' (Schmid 1899:247). Though the human essence is impacted and corrupted by sin, Quentedt is

also quick to note that the essence of humanity remains even after the fall, in opposition to Flacius (Schmid 1899:248). Under each of these topics, the Lutheran scholastics affirm the basic Aristotelian definition of substantial and accidental qualities, and thus demonstrate the adequacy of such categories in theological formulation.

Alongside his utilisation of Aristotelian categories in the debate with Flacius, Chemnitz also utilises such distinctions in his exposition of the two natures in Christ. In Luther's debate with Zwingli over the nature of the Lord's Supper, an extensive disagreement began with the two reform movements surrounding the humanity of Christ. Zwingli argued that Christ's human nature remained only at the right hand of God the Father in heaven, whereas Luther contended for Christ's omnipresence according to both natures. At the height of this debate following Luther's death, Martin Chemnitz wrote *The Two Natures in Christ*, in which he gives a detailed scriptural and theological exposition of the theme, focusing on the question of the communication of attributes in Christ. Throughout the book, Chemnitz uses scholastic categories, and thus the entire text could be examined to demonstrate all the particularities of his philosophical convictions. For the present purposes, however, only a small section in the beginning of the text is discussed, which carries the title, 'Definition of Certain Terms' (Chemnitz 1971:29–36). This first chapter of his work is a short prolegomenon of sorts, wherein Chemnitz outlines the use of various philosophical and theological terms in discussions about Christ's two natures. In this text, it is apparent that Chemnitz is an adherent of an essentialist metaphysic consistent with that of Aquinas.

This discussion begins by citing John of Damascus on terminology related to substance, in which Chemnitz purports that substance, nature, and form are used as interchangeable terms (Chemnitz 1971:29). These terms relate to that which is common to individual members of the same species. There are, thus, essential properties which make up various genera and species. Chemnitz further states that there are individual members of each species which are described through language of subsistence, hypostasis, or person. The individual thing 'subsists in itself', and it is defined by particular attributes (1971:29). These terms are then applied to the Trinity, wherein God is described as one essence which subsists in three persons. In light of this, Chemnitz explains that the eternal begetting of the Son and procession of the Spirit include a communication of the whole divine essence from the Father (p.30). Chemnitz makes further distinctions in relation to the incarnation of Christ. In the person of Christ, a self-subsistent

divine nature is united to the human nature which subsists not in itself, but in the divine nature (p.31). In describing Christ, there is a difference between the 'abstract', and 'concrete' manner of referring to him. Terms referring to natures as natures are 'abstract', because they deal with essence as such. However, when speaking of the person, he is spoken of 'concretely' (p. 31). It is important that the terms utilised in this section arise both from the church fathers and medieval scholastic thinkers. Chemnitz does not view himself as an innovator, but as an inheritor of the previous tradition, which is highly indebted to Greek philosophical concepts.

Among these scholastic terms, Chemnitz again returns to the substance-accident distinction. He divides all attributes into two categories: essential and accidental (1970:34). All created things have both of these categories of attributes. In God, however, there are no accidental qualities. Furthermore, there is an exact identification between God's essence and attributes, so that essential characteristics of the divine nature cannot be abstracted from substance. Chemnitz reasons that God is a perfectly simple essence, because if God were composed of essence and attributes, then such attributes would improve the divine nature and thus deny God's own perfection and self-sufficiency (1970:34). This is a clear reaffirmation of the Thomistic position regarding divine simplicity. Chemnitz then concludes his discussion by noting that Christ has accidental attributes according to his human nature, as is characteristic of all created natures. The essential properties of Jesus' divine nature are never transferred to the human as *essential* attributes, as such would result in a complete dissolution of the human nature itself. Rather, divine attributes are communicated to the human nature by grace, and are thus exercised through this nature, without an essential transformation of one into the other (p.35). Throughout his exposition of terminology, it is apparent that Chemnitz self-consciously utilises the metaphysical terminology of both Patristic authors and medieval scholastic thinkers. He is followed in this regard by the later Lutheran scholastics.

The most extensive metaphysical treatment of God among the scholastics is that of Johann Gerhard. In earlier authors, there was not a lengthy treatment of God's essence and attributes, as Melanchthon and Chemnitz emphasised Triunity. In his *Theological Commonplaces*, Gerhard devotes an entire volume to an exposition of God's essence and attributes, in which a Thomistic conception of deity is affirmed and defended. To understand his underlying philosophical convictions surrounding essence, his

thoughts on two subjects are explored: arguments for the existence of God, and divine simplicity.

For Gerhard, the existence of God is something which can be proved both by reason and by scripture. Apologetics, then, are an essential part of the theological task. Gerhard outlines three reasons why such an enterprise is important: first, to refute sceptics. Second, to strengthen the faith of believers. Third, it perfects one's natural knowledge of God (Gerhard 2007:56–57). The third point is important, as it establishes continuity between Gerhard and Aquinas. As addressed above, both Luther and Aquinas argue that certain truths about God are discoverable by reason alone, though God's Triunity, the incarnation, and other truths are accessible only by means of revelation. Gerhard speaks of natural knowledge of God as consisting in his being, will, power, and operation (p.57). God's unity and existence, for Gerhard, are known by way of natural reason, but God's Triunity is not. Like Luther, Gerhard also distinguishes between the knowledge of the law as natural and knowledge of the gospel as supernatural. Gerhard refers to the natural law as the 'legal will' of God which leads to external obedience on behalf of the heathen. Gerhard then uses 'grace perfects nature' type of language which is characteristic of Aquinas. He writes that natural knowledge of God is 'imperfect and weak, [and that therefore] we must surely strengthen, perfect, and complete it from the divinely revealed Word' (p.58). Gerhard's Thomistic leanings are clear here and are further demonstrated in his exposition of proofs for the existence of God.

Gerhard gives five proofs of the existence of God which are apparent by way of nature alone. First, Gerhard follows Aquinas in arguing for the necessity of an unmoved mover (2007:60). Everything that is moved is moved by another, because nothing can actualise its own potency. There cannot be an infinite progression of movers, because such would necessitate that there are only secondary causes, which is an impossibility. By definition, secondary causes are subsequent to a primary cause. Thus, there must be a primary cause, who Gerhard identifies as God. Gerhard affirms here some of Aristotle's most fundamental metaphysical claims—most particularly, the distinction between act and potency. Gerhard is so fond of Aristotle that he even, following Aquinas, gives him the affectionate title 'The Philosopher' (2007:60)! His second argument is similar to the first, as he contends that efficient causation necessitates a primary cause which is not caused by another or self-caused. Third, Gerhard uses an argument from Anselm, which is also echoed in Augustine, wherein the degrees of goodness in the world necessitates an ultimate goodness by which all things are

measured. It is in this context that Gerhard also speaks about things having either 'more being and less being'. This is significant because such a statement demonstrates that Gerhard does not rely *solely* on Aristotle's metaphysic, but he also draws from Augustinian Neoplatonism, in which being is described as participation in God, and of which there are gradations. Fourth, Gerhard returns to Aristotle and argues from final causation, that an intelligent source must be instrumental in directing things toward their particular ends (p.61). Finally, Gerhard argues from natural human instinct that God's existence is imprinted upon the human mind. In all of these proofs, it is clear that Gerhard argues from the perspective of classical metaphysics, drawing primarily from Aristotle, but also utilising aspects of Neoplatonism.

Gerhard's philosophical convictions are further seen in his treatment of that topic, 'What God Is', in which divine simplicity takes a central position (Gerhard 2011:92). The theologian defines God as 'sheer and purest act' (p.93). He defines actuality by use of the Aristotelian distinctions as filtered through Thomas. Gerhard notes that God is not composed of matter and form, genus and species, substance and accidents, act and potency, or individuated substance and nature (p.93). In using such distinctions, Gerhard confirms his commitment to the Aristotelian categories presented. Gerhard is thus a strong proponent of hylemorphism. He further distinguishes by active and passive potency, noting that God is devoid of passive potency. This distinction, which is prominent in Aquinas, distinguishes between the ability to have a potency which can be actuated by something outside of oneself (passive potency), and the ability to actuate the potency of something outside of oneself (active potency). God possesses the latter, but not the former. All of the basic elements of Aquinas' metaphysical system are affirmed by Gerhard, but he also utilises aspects of Neoplatonism through St Augustine.

From Luther to Gerhard, philosophical essentialism is affirmed by Lutheran theologians, as it was throughout the scholastic tradition even into the twentieth century. Chemnitz, the Formula of Concord, Gerhard, and later scholastics primarily utilise Aristotelian categories, especially as they relate to two topics: man's relationship to sin, and God's simplicity. It is in these two areas that a distinction between substance and accident is adopted, as well as distinctions between act and potency, and matter and form as they relate to the simplicity of God. A problem has arisen, however, in relation to Luther's own thought and that of later thinkers. Most of Luther's statements about Aristotle are rather negative, although positive affirmations about his ethics and logic can be found. Yet, Luther nowhere accepts his

metaphysical schema. In fact, in Luther's most supposed anti-philosophical phase he completely rejects Aristotle in favour of Plato. This leads then to the often-made conclusion that a philosophical chasm separates Luther from the scholastics. Is one then left simply to choose between the Platonism of Luther and the Aristotelianism of the Confessions? While such a decision might seem inevitable, there are ways in which these ideas can be synthesised. As noted, Gerhard does not avoid Platonic language, especially when derived from Augustine. Here, it is contended that a consistent Lutheran scholastic metaphysic utilises elements of both Aristotelianism and Platonism, as Aquinas himself did. Some conclusions can now be made.

5. Conclusion

This article began by posing the question: did the Lutheran reformers use reason and Greek philosophy in a positive manner, or only engage in criticism of these thought forms? This question has been answered in the affirmative. Several elements of Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy were utilised by Luther, Melanchthon, and later authors. The Lutheran relationship to classical philosophy is more complicated than can be summarised by either a dismissal or *complete* acceptance of any earlier philosophy. For these theologians, scripture always remained the primary source of authority. However, in a secondary manner, they believed that arguments of philosophy can and should be utilised by the theologian in order to explain various theological truths. This occurs in Luther, Melanchthon, and the Lutheran scholastic tradition.

Luther is the figure who is most outspoken in his opposition to both human reason and Aristotle's philosophy. It was demonstrated, however, that these statements are not to be understood in an absolute sense. In the context of the two kingdoms, Luther praises the benefits of reason in the left-hand realm. In theological truths, however, one is not to come to conclusions by way of syllogism but through revelation. Even here, however, Luther can at times use arguments from philosophy to bolster his scriptural arguments. One example cited above was his utilisation of nominalist categories to explain his approach to Christ's presence in the Supper. He also speaks of regenerate reason, which can be used positively in formulation of doctrinal positions. A final point to be noted about Luther's approach here is that he explicitly affirms Platonic essentialism in opposition to Aristotle's philosophy in the Heidelberg Disputation. In all of these ways, it is clear that though Luther is cautious about the benefits

of reason and philosophy, he also recognises their usefulness in the appropriate contexts. Melanchthon argues similarly.

Luther's student and friend, Philip Melanchthon, followed his older colleague by rejecting the abuses of Aristotelian logic which were used to defend a form of works-righteousness in the medieval period. Also, in line with Luther, he believed that philosophy could be used in a beneficial manner when expositing theological truths. Melanchthon was a more systematic thinker, and as such he has a stronger use of the fourfold definition of causation as developed by Aristotle, and proclaimed the benefits of Aristotle's ethical system. He also followed some of the basic metaphysical concepts at work in medieval theology such as divine simplicity in both the Augsburg Confession and its Apology. Like Luther, Melanchthon demonstrated a moderated adaptation of classical philosophy, though with a recognition of its limitations.

The scholastic authors do not significantly depart from Luther and Melanchthon regarding these basic assumptions. Chemnitz and Gerhard speak clearly of the benefits of philosophy and reason, while also cautioning against their abuses. Within this understanding, they do, however, use more philosophical language than do the earlier two authors. Chemnitz explains several Aristotelian distinctions in his writings on the two natures of Christ, such as the difference between substance and accidental qualities. These are also affirmed in the Formula of Concord. Johann Gerhard adopts Aristotle's hylemorphism in his treatment of the doctrine of God, and especially in his proofs of God's existence. It is clear then that essentialist philosophy is not inherently opposed to Lutheran thought.

The views of Luther, Melanchthon, Chemnitz, and Gerhard present a challenge for the Lutheran church today. While many Lutheran theologians present a doctrinal system, which is inherently opposed to Greek philosophy, such an approach is at odds with the earlier Lutheran tradition. In these earlier writers, the church today can receive guidance in using philosophy cautiously but beneficially in service to theology.

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Towards a Biblical Model of Funding African Missions: The Case of The Church of Pentecost in Ghana[1]

Nicholas Darko and Vincent Atterbury

Abstract

The objective of this study is to find out how the Church of Pentecost in Ghana, a missional African church, can improve the funding of its African missions. Based on a modified version of the Osmer model of practical theology, the study used literary, biblical analysis and qualitative approaches. The missions-funding praxis of the church was analysed against biblical guidelines, to formulate improved praxis relevant to Africa-to-Africa missions-funding. The study does not only suggest improvement to missions-funding praxis for the Church of Pentecost, but could be useful to other missional churches in Africa. It could also provide guidance for missiology and church administration students in African seminaries. The study is timely for missions-funding, given the emerging trend of Africa-to-Africa missions.

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1. Introduction

Africa as a force in mission is demonstrated in the new paradigm of African missional churches funding mission on the African continent (Africa-to-Africa missions). Funding missions naturally raises issues relating to generosity, giving and poverty (cf. Myers 2011:130; Franklin and Niemandt 2015:384–409; Tongoi 2015:1039–1050). Some scholars have broached aspects of the topic of missions-funding. Lederleitner (2010:838–928) discusses implications of accountability of money in missions. Others have also initiated discourses on funding missions (cf. Shant 2001:41–116; Stout 2008:15–43; Mawudor 2016:179–184). Nevertheless, Bate (2001:50) opines that little research has been undertaken regarding money and missions, and terms it 'academic neglect'. This seeming lack of adequate literature on missions-funding is confirmed in the praxis of some Pentecostal denominations which do not even have structures for funding missions (Oduro 2014:86). McGee (2012:207) also gives hints of similar missional tendencies among Pentecostal missionaries in the United States of America, in the early 20th century. This could probably have accounted for the seemingly limited literature on missions-funding.

This backdrop prompted this study's investigation into the missions-funding praxis of the Church of Pentecost in Ghana (CoP-Ghana). The CoP-Ghana has a presence in 100 countries, 43 of which are in Africa. CoP-Ghana originated from the United Kingdom, and later became an indigenous African church in 1953, when the founder, James McKeown, left the Apostolic Church-United Kingdom. Its missional praxis has since been marked by growth in numbers and funding without Western support. For example, CoP-Ghana has ventured into missions in Africa, through a structured missions-funding. Compared to some of the African Initiated Churches (AICs), CoP-Ghana in its present missions-funding, appears different. For example, there have been improvements in designated funding, unlike the early Pentecostal missions. Some of the AICs pride themselves on not having mission boards, a mission week or even designated funding (Oduro 2014:86). This AICs' approach could lead to dwindling missions-funding. However, it is proposed that CoP-Ghana has some lessons to learn from the missions-funding praxis of some of the early mainline denominations.

Ntumy (1998:10) attributes the financial strength of CoP-Ghana to the self-supporting policy of the church, inculcated by the founders of the church (The Church of Pentecost 2008; 2011:93). The church seems to mobilise and allocate its funds in an organised manner, towards its mission and other related ventures. It also appears to

be using the self-supporting approach. However, practices over the years bring out issues such as the lack of a clear definition of a specific missions-funding praxis, effectiveness of funding structures, and the African nations' expectations as against those of CoP-Ghana. Arising out of this problem, the following objectives were formulated for the study:

The main objective of this paper is to find out how CoP-Ghana can improve its praxis of funding African missions. The subsidiary objectives were as follows:

- to examine the issues of funding missions from pertinent theology literature;

- to discuss and examine biblical guidelines for funding missions;

- to describe, examine and assess the current practices used by CoP-Ghana to fund its African missions, and their implications for the church; and

- to formulate and construct an appropriate biblical model for CoP-Ghana to improve on funding missions.

The study adopted a modified version of the Osmer (2008) model of practical theology approach. The Osmer model states that practical theology research should first describe the current situation; interpret why the current situation is happening; outline a preferred situation; and formulate a response. The four stages of the Osmer model were modified into five stages, namely, exploratory task, normative task, descriptive-empirical task, interpretative task and pragmatic task. This modification confirms the higher level of literary and biblical analysis required in this study. Consideration was also given to the evangelical orientation of this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Historical survey

2.1.1. Mission

Verkuyl (1978:90) proposes a three-tier definition of missions as follows:

- To get people to believe in Christ as the saviour and confess his Lordship.

- The need to proclaim a Messianic message that would result in bringing together people to God.

- Resisting participation in evil deeds.

It could be deduced from Verkuyl's definition that it spans both the Old and New Testaments, and particularly, alludes to the proclamation to draw people from evil to God. Haar (2016:85) recently, however, ties money to mission in the contemporary world. She maintains the appropriate use of money in Christian mission is 'the responsibility towards the outside world of Christian churches and groups'. This could imply missions have other facets, including use of money and other resources. Haar (2016:85) evidently extends Verkuyl's definition, by including the use of money in missions. Bosch (2011:9–11), however, challenges the *status quo,* and maintains that 'mission remains undefinable'. He therefore sees his definition of mission as an interim one. From Bosch's plethora of discussions of mission, what attracts this study is that: mission (singular) enunciates the good news that God is a God-for-people (*Mission Dei*). He accordingly distinguishes missions (plural) as the missionary ventures of the Church (the *mission ecclesiae*) from mission (singular). This means missions (plural) is participation in the *Mission Dei*. This could include funding missions, which involves participation in the mission venture through funding. It is with this understanding that the current study employs the plural term 'missions' at appropriate sections of this study. However, the terms 'mission', 'funding missions', 'missions-funding' and other related terms are then applied throughout this study with these understandings. From this background, the study discusses the historical development of funding missions from the 19th to 21st century.

2.1.2. Funding of missions in the 19th-21st century

The key participants in missions-funding in the 19th century were from the Western World. It was a situation, where the Western World had become the 'haves' – meaning having the resources, and the majority world branded the 'have nots'– meaning they did not have the resources. Specifically, the principal actors were the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and a few others, such as the Baptist Convention of England, and the Church Missionary Society from England. For example, in terms of a model of funding missions, while the SBC was practising designated funding by individual churches (McClellan 1985:14–23), the ABCFM controlled missions-funding from the ABCFM headquarters, through people who were willing to go on missions, including seminary students (Showalter 2012:1-7).

Nevertheless, there were some challenges. The SBC was challenged by inadequate funding, while the ABCFM was

challenged by defining which missionary qualified for missions-funding. What this meant for the ABCFM was that if one was not in frontline evangelism, one could not be sponsored. However, by the 20th century, realities on the ground had helped both the SBC and the ABCFM to solve their challenges in missions-funding.

In the 20th and 21st centuries, Africa had its taste of missions. This happened more in the 20th century, when some African countries ventured into missions. This was particularly among the Pentecostals and other AICs. This African initiative was characterised by a spontaneous move into missions without planned financial support, but relying on the Holy Spirit as recounted by Oduro (2014:86). There were a few who had some planned support from countries such as Nigeria and Ghana. For example, Ezemadu (2012:12) informs of the Glory Tabernacle, whose members were mobilising US$ 25,000 every year to support 200 missionaries. Ezemadu (2006:4) in another instance recounts how the Gospel Missionaries, Missions Supporters and the CoP-Ghana, have created structures to support missions in the 21st century. Clark (2005:143–161) analyses mission efforts of the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Assemblies of God in Southern Africa, and confirms their financial investments in some African nations. This confirms that Africans have not been left out in missions-funding in Africa. Arising out of the various missions-funding approaches, and the challenges they handled, there have been contemporary missions-funding models, which have emerged from practices in the 19th and 20th centuries.

2.2. Contemporary models of funding missions

Pocock, Van Rheenen and McConnell (2011:5389–5756) describe the self-supporting model as one of three 'selfs': self-propagating, self-governing and self-supporting. Self-propagating implies the missions church's ability to carry on the great commission (Tippet 1973); and self-governing implying the church being effective in governance. Bush (1990:15) defined the self-supporting model as missions-funded churches, depending on their own local economy. Although the self-supporting model had been introduced by early missions thinkers, such as William Carey (1761–1834), in China, and later in Korea, it appears to have been mostly credited to Henry Venn (1796–1873) of the CMS and Rufus Anderson (1796–1834) of the ABCFM (Shenk 1981:170). This could probably be due to the efforts of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson. He explains that Henry Venn's view of self-supporting comes from a rather humanitarian and evangelisation concern. This humanitarian concern could have probably been borrowed from slave trade abolitionists, such as William Wilberforce and David Livingstone.

However, some missiologists intended a purely theological basis for the self-supporting model (cf. Nevius 1899:7–18; Allen 1927:51–66). These were probably considering the spirituality of the indigenous people in missions. The implication could be that self-supporting, as a missions-funding model, has different interpretations in different contexts. The model appears to have been challenged by some contemporary scholars, suggesting that if it is not used in the right context it can breed dependency in missions (Schwartz 1999:593; Van Rheenen 2001:5).

The introduction of other models may have been related to the challenges. These include the post-colonial model (Reese 2008:309), the indigenous model (Pocock, Van Rheenen and McConnell 2011:5389–5756), partnership model (Ma and Ma 2010:128–131), and indigenous-partnership Pocock *et al.* (2011:5389–5756). Nevertheless, these other models appear to be variants of the self-supporting model. It is therefore not the name of the model, but the reality of its practice in a particular context that counts. For example, the partnership model may not necessarily be an equal partnership, because of inequality in the distribution of global wealth.

2.3. Poverty and the funding of African missions

Myers (2011:130) explains that the complexity of poverty involves the limitation of physical, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual needs of humankind. Any missions-funding model which does not consider poverty may not be sustainable. This is because poverty reduces people to looking to other people constantly for their needs. When these needs are not satisfied, they blame the donors (Tongoi 2015:1039–1050). Tongoi further opines that in the midst of poverty, people develop a low esteem of themselves. Some scholars have confirmed in their writings from different parts of Africa that corruption, both in the church and society entrenches poverty (Gathogo 2011:133–151; Mwambazambi 2012:1–6; Lang 2014:132–144).

Dealing with poverty should therefore consider the complexity of poverty in Africa. The physical, psychological, and socio-political limitations should be investigated and minimised accordingly. The church has a role to play, as well as the governments of Africa. In dealing with poverty in Africa, Roots and Fairbanks (2005:1–19) suggest there should be a mutual commitment model that has the characteristics of:

- Discipleship
- Life-changing

- Transforming
- Thankfulness

There should be collaboration between the church and civil society to work tenaciously against corruption and apathy so as to alleviate poverty, which has taken over almost every facet of African society. Tongoi's (2015:1039–1050) analysis of the state of poverty, involving low esteem and the blame game, could be further researched on methods to facilitate the lessening of poverty.

3. Biblical Guidelines for Missions Funding

3.1. Old Testament

It was God's desire for his people to worship him. That was part of the reason for which God wanted his people to leave Egypt (Exod 5:1; 7:16; 8:1; 9:1). God wanted them to build a tabernacle and gave specific instructions. First, Moses was to collect items from people who had willing hearts (Exod 25:3–7). Second, they were to give a variety of items. Third, they were to work according to God's specification (Exod 25:8-9).

Deuteronomy 14:22–29 also offers some useful guidelines for funding missions, but in another context. The context is God setting standards for how the needy could benefit from the tithes. God considers the Levites, widows, the fatherless and foreigners. This confirms how God cares for the needy, by utilising the funds that were raised. The Old Testament directs the manner in which God raises the funds and how the money is to be distributed, with particular reference to the needy. It also provides guidelines for structures to be used in missions-funding. These imply missions-funding in contemporary times should not deviate from the expectations of God.

3.2. New Testament

The New Testament also provides insights into the way Jesus funded his ministry, through those who benefitted from the ministry. It shows the nature of an appeal that has Christological motivation.

We see the approach Jesus took to fund his ministry, in Luke 8:3. Some women followed Jesus and met the needs of the ministry. It is important to know that the women were part of the ministry, moving from village to village with Jesus. That could have given them insights into Jesus' ministry. Capper (2008:113) mentions that Jesus' team had their money in common. The money was

therefore used for the needs of the team (John 13:29). They also used it to minister to the needy people (Mark 14:4–6), and it appears that provision for the poor was paramount.

The early church's way of funding was by the free will giving of the people. Also, the church had a way of resolving issues regarding resources (Acts 6:1–7).

In 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9, the Apostle Paul's appeal for funding was based on love for Jesus and his sacrificial death. It is important to note the grace that led the Macedonian churches to fund the famine project promoted by Paul. The grace-giving notwithstanding, Paul found suitable structures to manage the funds (2 Cor 8:20–21). Bruce (1985:112) explains, 'It is clear that Paul took every care that financial negotiations in which he was involved should be carried out in a way that would stand the keenest scrutiny…' In the case of the Philippian church's support for Paul in mission, it appears that it was motivated by the Holy Spirit (Phil 4:10–20). This same love through the Holy Spirit's power was shown among the believers in Acts 2:42–47.

There are certain similarities between the Old and New Testament approaches to funding. In both, there were structures and the poor were considered. However, the structures for funding in the Old Testament were pre-defined as to how the tithes were to be distributed. The New Testament structures were set up when the need arose (Acts 6:1–7). The care for the needy notwithstanding, giving was participatory, because it was not left to only the 'haves' of the time.

4. Description of the Current Practice of Missions-funding

Data was collected through interviews, focus group discussion, document study and participant-observation, involving 60 participants from 20 African countries where CoP-Ghana has mission activities. The findings emerging out of the data analysis are discussed in this section.

4.1. Self-supporting identity

The respondents mentioned self-supporting as the model, and this had also been documented by CoP-Ghana (The Church of Pentecost 2008). Bush (1990:16) defined the self-supporting model of funding '…as mission-funded churches, depending on their own local economy'. However, the practice of missions-funding revealed by the data analysis of this study does not seem to agree with the definition of the self-supporting model in the theology literature reviewed. The CoP-Ghana self-supporting model has traces of

indigenous and partnership models. The participants also saw the CoP-Ghana model as biblical.

4.2. Funding structures

The financial structures of CoP-Ghana appear effective for funding. Nevertheless, it was found that the structures barely work in the African nations. The reasons provided included lack of trained personnel. The mission administrators agree on the main sources of funding, namely, monthly missions offering, a yearly McKeown mission fund, and donations from individuals and groups. The African nation leaders of CoP mentioned tithes, offering, and grants. The grants were mainly from Ghana, but in some cases the allocation of yearly budgets is thinly spread.

4.3. Poverty and missions-funding

All participants acknowledged poverty as a key challenge in the African nations. This was evidently confirmed by the large number of members in the African nations' engagement in subsistence employment. However, poverty alleviation does not appear to be a major item in the agenda of missions-funding practice. Accordingly, despite the financial investments of CoP-Ghana in the African nations, the results do not reflect the input. Nonetheless, the African nations expect further major financial investments to alleviate poverty. On the other hand, the mission administrators prefer training and empowerment.

4.4. Welfare of mission nation leaders

The welfare of both the indigenous ministers and missionaries appeared to be a concern, which was articulated discreetly by a few missionaries, and mostly by the indigenous mission leaders during the interviews. They appreciated what they were receiving from CoP-Ghana, but wanted a few structural and quantum changes in their remuneration so as to be on a par with the cost of living in the African nations.

4.5. Improvements in missions-funding

The CoP-Ghana's approach to improving its missions-funding includes efforts to develop infrastructure in the African nations. However, the improvement approaches are not standardised and well defined to bring about transformational change in the missions-funding practice.

5. Discussion and assessment of the current practice of missions-funding

5.1. Self-supporting identity

The participants saw the CoP-Ghana model as biblical in nature, quoting the Bible to support their claims. Apart from the self-supporting model, some participants mentioned other missions-funding models, such as the indigenous and partnership models. The disparities among the participants seemed to suggest an identity challenge for CoP-Ghana, regarding its missions-practice model. There appeared to be identity confusion in the missions-funding model, because the more senior administrators seem to identify with the self-supporting model, while the others appeared not to be sure of the model being practised by CoP-Ghana, during the interviews, and focus group discussion of this study. This identity challenge might lend credence to the multiple interpretation of the self-supporting model by different proponents as discussed in the literature (cf. Nevius 1899:7–18; Allen 1927: 51–66; Bush 1990:15–16). To complicate this identity challenge of the model, there were documents confirming that the founder of CoP-Ghana, James McKeown, had his own model of self-supporting, which appeared to differ from that of some of the early proponents (cf. Leonard 1989:170–171; Onyinah 2016:17). McKeown's beliefs in the Bible might have shaped his own understanding of funding missions (cf. Allen 1927). This might have led the participants to affirm that the CoP-Ghana model is biblical. This assertion may, however, be set against the current practice, where annual grants are given to the mission nations from Ghana.

5.2. Funding structures

The findings of this study indicated that although CoP-Ghana operates effective funding structures in Ghana, the question is, why do these financial structures seem not to work in the African mission nations (The Church of Pentecost 2013; 2014; 2015)? Could it be that not enough consideration has been given to effective means of communicating these structures to the mission nations? Although the African nation participants gave indications of a lack of personnel, there could be various approaches to correct this weakness. For example, Lederleitner (2010:chap.7) provides ample counsel on the cultural complexity of ensuring accountability in missions. Other scholars also provide practical financial guidelines for churches (cf. Malphurs 2013:255–282; Cunningham (2013:451–458).

5.3. Poverty and missions-funding

The participants confirmed the level of poverty among the African mission nations, which has affected the church members financially. They also believe poverty is caused by the corrupt leadership of the African nations. They therefore needed some kind of social and economic interventions. It appears, however, that the suggested approach to poverty alleviation could be different, depending who was talking about it. The African nations appear to desire a major financial investment, as against CoP-Ghana's orientation towards training and empowering to enable the African nations to become self-aware in solving their poverty problem.

5.4. Welfare of mission leaders

The concern of the mission leaders centres around their own welfare. Their standard of living could affect their performance, because their salaries may not be adequate in some circumstances. Economic analysis of the welfare of leaders in the African nations appears to have eluded COP-Ghana. However, there may be structural mis-matches that could create a major crisis. The mission leaders represent the priests and Levites of our time and need to be treated as such (Deut chap. 14). This calls for a major intervention towards improving missions-funding. The situation should therefore be considered in light of what scripture teaches and be addressed accordingly.

5.5. Improvements in missions-funding

The discussions in the previous sections, as noted from the findings, call for improvements in the missions-funding praxis of CoP-Ghana. However, the approach to the improvement needs to be considered, if it is to be holistic and sustainable. The findings show that the improvements attempted so far may rather require a contemporary transformational change approach, if they are to be sustainable. This must combine leadership backed by the Holy Spirit's direction and an understanding of the shift of vitality in Christianity to the majority world in current times (cf. Atterbury 2002:iv-v; Tsekpoe 2017:1–12). This approach could produce a standardised transformational approach to change.

6. Formulating a Biblical Model to Improve Missions-Funding Praxis

6.1. Self-supporting model

CoP-Ghana may need to define what it understands by the self-supporting model of missions-funding practice. This definition may

have to consider the various interpretations of the model in various circumstances. A clear definition of the model could lead to African-specific solutions to the missions-funding, because if the circumstances of the individual African nations were considered, the model would work well in the African nations. This will provide a clear model that would be owned by various African mission nations.

6.2. Funding structures

The structures of missions-funding in the African nations could be improved by having complete control of all donations coming from groups and individuals. Again, a portion of the tithes in Ghana could be allocated to missions, instead of the monthly missions-funding. The weak structures in the African nations could be repaired by a two-pronged approach. The first is ensuring that everyone posted to the African nations is adequately trained in the basic missions-funding practices to be adopted. Second, small portions of the mission funds should be allocated to monitoring. Funds should not be thinly allocated, but be concentrated in a particular geographical area in Africa, if prudence and economy are to be achieved.

6.3. Poverty

The CoP-Ghana could achieve poverty alleviation by researching the African economy and understanding the causes of poverty in Africa. This could help to deal with the inequality syndrome that has created 'haves' and 'have nots'. In effect, the culture of poverty could be reduced in the congregations of CoP-Ghana. Corbett and Fikkert (2012:99) provide a systematic way of dealing with poverty.

6.4. Welfare of mission leaders

The welfare of mission leaders should be treated as a sensitive and human welfare issue that should not be handled lightly. CoP-Ghana may have to be proactive in responding to the living-conditions of these mission leaders. This should follow the biblical guidelines, if it is to be improved. There are numerous scriptures that attest to this (Deut 14:29; 2 Chr 31:4–10; 1 Cor 9:11; Gal 6:6). The welfare of these critical agents of CoP-Ghana in missions in Africa, the mission-nation leaders, could make or break the mission.

6.5. Improvements in missions-funding

This study chooses one of the models in the change-management literature: The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach (Reed 2007:32)

to formulate an improved model for funding African missions. The AI could fit better in faith-based organisations. The AI approach is change through strengths. The AI is combined with the biblical guidelines to formulate improvements in the missions-funding praxis of CoP-Ghana as follows:

Discovery: What has worked well could be related to the biblical guidelines. This discovery could be leveraged on by relating best practice, for example, to Allen's (1927:51) Bible-based approach in contemporary times. The willingness of the African nations to find some means to support the work, even when they do not have much, could be a motivating factor (Acts chap. 8).

Dreaming: After discovery, there is the need to envision what might lie in the future for the African nations. Although termed as dreaming, the thinking should not be abstract. It should be a collaborative look at the bigger picture in missions-funding. The apostles in Acts 6:1–7 dreamed of the bigger picture of the ministry of distributing resources.

Designing: The dream should become a reality. Parts of the dream may not work at the designing stage, but the context in designing the missions-funding model could be very important. Collaboration at the design stage with the African nations could be crucial to achieve the desired improvement. The apostles consulted with the community before implementing the choice of the deacons in Acts chapter 6. Further, the design needs to meet God's standards (Exod 25:9).

Delivery. Delivery could be CoP-Ghana's ability to effectively present its missions-funding praxis to the African missions, and receive acceptance. The constituents of the mission-funding praxis, including the specificities and commitments of stakeholders should be agreed. What is delivered should be instilled in the African nation leaders as partners. However, adjustments could be made, since improvement and change are not static. There were adequate structures in both the Old and New Testaments (Exod chap. 25; Deut chap. 14; Acts chap. 6; 2 Cor chaps. 8 and 9).

7. Conclusion

This case study on CoP-Ghana missions-funding praxis could facilitate an improvement in CoP-Ghana's funding of African missions. It could also create awareness for missions-funding praxis in Africa-to-African missions, thereby, benefiting missions-funding practitioners, and leading to improved missions-funding praxis. The study critically incentivises missions-funding, as a unique impetus to Africa-to-Africa missions, by modifying the

Osmer model to fit the analysis of the case study. This could provide enhanced literature for missiology students in Africa, given that a major limitation encountered in this research, among others, was the lack of literature.

Future research opportunities stemming from this study could include a study of the missions-funding praxis of five major African Pentecostal missional churches, and an in-depth qualitative study on the various models of missions-funding praxis.

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Reading the Markan Transfiguration (Mark 9:1-9) in the Light of Jesus' Scattering of the Tyrian Baal Coins

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Abstract

The transfiguration is found in all three Synoptic Gospels yet remains one of the more puzzling incidents in the life of Jesus. At the level of narrative, the event forms the bridge between the Galilean ministry of Jesus and his coming passion and the occasion is bracketed by warnings of his imminent death. Focusing on the Gospel of Mark, I suggest that there are elements of dramatic irony present, when we read the account of the transfiguration in the light of Jesus' intervention in the temple. The tone is already set by Jesus' ironical comment on 'taking up one's cross'. The location on the mountain, and the mention of Elijah and Moses, in that order, point back to Carmel (Elijah and the worship of the Tyrian Baal) and to Sinai (Moses and the second commandment, the prohibition of graven images). The transfiguration points forward to Jesus' encounter in the temple and his scattering of the Tyrian Baal-Melkart coins. The radical transformation of Jesus and the responses of Peter and the other disciples in the ensuing debates, as they struggle to make sense of what is happening, furthers the ironical intent of the narrative. Reading the transfiguration through the lens of the temple events, allows us 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.

glimpse the penumbra of the cross, which like a shadow enshrouds the mountain top.

We can only read texts ironically, seeing the tensions and relations between what is said and not-said, if we commit ourselves to a sense and truth towards which speech and language strive (Coleman 2004:189).

1. Introduction: A Moment in the Life of Christ

The transfiguration is found in all three Synoptic Gospels, occurring just after Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi (Mark 9:1–9; Matt 17:1–9: Luke 9:28–36) and just before Jesus commences his final journey to Jerusalem. The event stands as a crisis moment in the life of the historical Jesus (Cranfield 1959:294 –294; Leifeld 1992:835), marking the end of the Galilean ministry and heralding the beginning of his suffering (cf. Luke 9:51). While the actual pericope is only nine verses long, the secondary literature is extensive,[2] yet fairly constrained in the diversity of its discussion.[3]

Luz (2001:397) describes the transfiguration as a 'polyvalent' story that integrates various layers of meaning, so lending itself to further elaboration. If the Markan version of the transfiguration is the oldest form,[4] we may suggest that the interpretation begins already with the Gospels of Matthew and Luke,[5] as a process of giving voice to the silences in Mark's text and substance to what is only hinted at. For example, we note Matthew's use of the Greek term ὅραμα or vision (v.9), which gives to the transfiguration a sense of an otherworldly[6] reality, reminiscent of the theophanies found in the Hebrew Bible (Lee 2004). While Mark is silent, Luke supplies the content of the conversation between Jesus, Elijah and Moses (Luke 9:32). Mark's description of Jesus' garments (Mark 9:3) is enhanced by reference to Jesus' face, so Luke (9:29) notes that the appearance of Jesus' face was changed and Matthew (17:2) adds that his face 'shone as the sun' (see Leifeld 1992:839). While Mark names Elijah first and Moses second (Mark 9:4), Matthew (Matt 17:3) and Luke (Luke 9:30) give the priority position to Moses—a difference noted, rarely discussed,[7] but vital to this article.

Luz writing of the difficulty of interpreting the transfiguration, concluded that 'there is no key in the tradition that completely unlocks it' (2001:395), but there has been no lack of suggestions. Both modern and ancient commentators have described the meaning of the transfiguration as the revelation (epiphany) of Christ's divine glory (Marshall 1978:383; Moses 1996:89–113);

[2] See the extensive bibliographies in the following studies (McGuckin 1986; Moses 1996 and Lee 2004).

[3] The only controversial idea was that the transfiguration was a misplaced resurrection-account, a view that was popular in the sixties and seventies and has been thoroughly refuted by Stein (1976) and others.

[4] Manson suggested an original Q tradition, on the basis of the agreements between Matthew and Luke (1935:32), but the earlier opinion of Streeter (1925:315-316), who argued convincingly against the notion of an independent tradition apart from that recorded in Mark, has remained the scholarly consensus.

[5] For a list of the verbal agreements between Matthew and Luke, independent of Mark, see Stein 1976:95, who postulates another source, like Q.

[6] We note Cranfield's caution not to press the visionary dimension of the noun too far since it is also used in other contexts (1959:294).

[7] Painter (1997:165), for example downplays the order of names by pointing out that they are both said to be 'with Jesus'.

what Schnackenburg has called 'dazzling glory' (2002:165). In the second letter of Peter, the writer comments, 'For he received honour and glory from God the Father when these words from the Majestic Glory were spoken about him: "This is my Son, whom I love. I am pleased with him."' (2 Peter 1:17). The writer goes on to say, 'We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain'. So, already, Second Peter discerns a theological connection between the transfiguration and the themes of honour and glory.

The Gospel of Luke envisages an explicit connection between the transfiguration and Jesus' death, found in Luke's description of the conversation between Jesus, Elijah and Moses (Luke 9:32). The three men were speaking of the death of Jesus, which, as the Greek makes clear, he would initiate (Leifeld 1992:838).[8] The presence of Moses and the location on a high mountain, remind us of Sinai (Cranfield 1959:292; Painter 1997:167; Carmody 2010:81),[9] an idea implicit in Luke's use of the unusual term ἔξοδος for Jesus' death (Luke 9:32).

In one of the most striking of the transfiguration studies, Kenny (1957) has compared and contrasted the transfiguration (the epiphany of Jesus' glory) with the Garden of Gethsemane (the humiliation of the Son of Man). On the basis of the Greek, he considers that the verbal similarities[10] are a deliberate Markan touch (1957:445–52). I suggest that within Mark's recounting of the transfiguration there is a sense of anticipation pointing not just to his death but towards the pathway to that point – for this we need to pause for a moment and consider a controversial coin.

2. The Tyrian Baal Coin

Leifeld (1992:835) makes the point that 'the Transfiguration takes place at a crucial time in Jesus' ministry. From this point on he faces his city of ultimate destination, Jerusalem, with its climatic events'. For the Markan Evangelist, from the moment of the transfiguration, his single concern is to trace Jesus' journey up to Jerusalem and to its crowning glory, the temple. If there is a missing key (so Luz 2001:395), I suggest it will be found in the events which take place there (Mark 11:15–16).

Mark, alone, makes the point that Jesus, on his arrival in Jerusalem looks inside[11] the temple, but takes no action, for evening has come (Mark 11:11; Herzog 1992:817). The next morning, Jesus interrupted the temple economy in no uncertain measure. Mark writes, 'Jesus entered into the temple and began to cast out those that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew

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[8] Luke 9:32 mentions that Moses and Elijah saw Jesus' glory and departure/exodus. Leifeld (1992:838) notes that Jesus is not described here as an involuntary victim but as the one who himself brings about the departure.

[9] Notably Exod 24:16; 34:5 (Painter 1997:167).

[10] Moses (1996:28) describes some of the connections as tenuous but concurs with the general trend of Kenny's argument (1957).

[11] The verb is distinctively Markan (6 of 7 occurrences)–so Herzog (1992:817).

the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of those that sold the doves (Mark 11:15).[12] Buyers and sellers of sacrifices (of doves v.15) and perhaps other merchandise (only in Mark 11:16) are jointly targeted, but the actions against the money-changers are particularly interesting. Their tables, which in Greek are τράπεζα—meaning both table and bank (Amemiya 2007:104) – are overthrown (Mark 11:15).[13] Naturally, all these actions had their consequences. In terms of the escalating tension between Jesus and the Jewish authorities, Sanders regards Jesus' actions as the proverbial straw (1995 n.p.), but what was the issue regarding the money-changers? Why did Jesus choose to target these officials? To answer this question, we need to consider the Jewish Temple tax.

12 Cf. Matt 21:12; John 2:14-16.

13 John's gospel adds that Jesus poured out the money and over-threw the tables (John 2:15).

By Jewish law, in the time of Jesus, every Jewish man over the age of twenty was expected to pay an annual half-shekel tax (Neusner 1989). According to the Mishna, *Sheqalim*, where the regulations for the temple tax are recorded, various collection points were set up across the regions of Galilee and Judaea and, annually, in the actual temple (m Sheq 1:3). The degree to which payment of this tax was compulsory, is uncertain, with the members of Qumran insisting that it was only required once in a man's lifetime (Qumran 4Q159 2:6–7).[14] The precise connection with the Laws of Moses is also uncertain.[15] Horsley (1987:279–284) describes the half-shekel tax as 'controversial in Jesus' time' (1987:280), referring to Josephus (JW 6.335 and Antiq 18.312) and Philo (Spec Leg 1:77–78). With reference to the annual collection in the temple, there is no indication that the money-changers abused their positions or cheated the people (Neusner 1989). The Mishna makes clear that the interest charged was not exorbitant, being between 4% and 8% (m Sheq 1:3). Yet, for some reason, Jesus overturned the tables and scattered the coins, which means that Jesus' actions were motivated by something other than the actual process of exchanging money. I suggest, following Richardson (2004) and O'Connor (2012) that the key to Jesus' actions was the actual imagery on the Tyrian shekel and half-shekel coins.

14 The scroll is very fragmentary, refers to a different coin and speaks of ransom not of tax.

15 Schmidt 1992:806. One third of a shekel following Nehemiah 10:32-33 (cf. Exod 30:11-16 and 2 Chron 24:6).

Hundreds of shekel coins have been found, throughout biblical Judaea and Galilee, including both a fine and a cruder minting (Kadman 1962; Marian and Sermarini 2013). The silver coins, both shekel and half-shekel, were minted in Tyre[16] and carried the head of Baal Melkart in the guise of the Greek hero Heracles (MFA 2008), with the inscription 'Tyre the holy and the inviolate' (Murphy-O'Connor 2012:63). The quality of the silver was extremely high (about 97%) making it one of the purest coins available, weighing in at 13 ounces (368.5 grams) for the larger

16 Apparently, there was also a Jerusalem minting of the same coin, for a short time (Kadman 1962).

17 Freyne (2014:180) links the action of Jesus to the sermon of Jeremiah, arguing that Jesus is reacting to the paganisation of the temple and the implicit breaking of the Decalogue.

18 This is also the view found in Chilton (1994:172-176) and Klawans (2006:231-232). But see my critique of their positions in Domeris 2015.

19 Meshorer (2001:76) on the basis of the Mishna, states unequivocally, 'It is known that a coin does not become defiled ("unclean", Mishna, *Kelim* 12, 6), and the pagan symbols on it are obviously invalid'. He is followed by Hendin (2010:477). However, Nuesner's translation of the passage in question makes no mention of coins (Neusner 1988:916 on Mishna Kelim 12:6). Hendon refers to Mishna Kelim 12:7, which does mention coins, to argue that only when a coin was defective did it become unclean. Therefore, the debate in the Mishna is not about the imagery on the coins (cf. Neusner 1988:916 for his translation of that passage).

20 Jensen writes that Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee, issued five series of coins, 'none of them has any figural images, showing his respectful observance of the Jewish ban against graven images' (2012:46). He limited his coins to floral motifs like palm branches and lulavs as did the revolutionaries of the first and second revolt.

21 Bohak (2002:11-12) comments on the rabbinic traditions which exist about coins supposedly minted by various biblical protagonists like Genesis Rabbah on Gen 12:2; Abraham is said to have minted coins depicting an old man and woman (one side) and a young man and woman (reverse); Joshua's coins had a wild ox and David's coins had a staff and bag on the face and a tower on the other side (Bohak 2002:11). Since there were no coins at that earlier time, the stories are obviously fictitious (Bohak 2002:12) and actually reflect coins in existence at the time of the composition of the Talmud (Bohak 2002:12). These stories may well be intended to legitimate the use of questionable coins by the writers of the Talmud.

denomination (MFA 2008). The coins appear to have been used in Jerusalem from about 126 BC to about AD 66 (MFA 2008).

One of the most cogent articles on the temple coins comes from the pen of Murphy-O'Connor (2012). He argues that, as a result of the pagan imagery, the coins would have been divisive. Richardson, the first scholar to draw attention to the imagery, reasons that Jesus did not want the tax abolished or replaced nor was he concerned about temple purity, rather he was motivated by 'a reformer's anger at the recognition of other gods' (2004:251). From the perspective of the priestly aristocracy, Murphy-O'Connor (2012:63) reasons that their high silver content, their consistent quality and the fact that Tyre was an autonomous mint would have outweighed the problem with the imagery on the coins and the superscription. On the other hand, for the pious Jews, who had no say in the matter, these coins would have been a problem. Murphy-O'Connor concludes that 'Jesus did what at least some Jews in the first century would have wanted to do' (2012:63). I have argued elsewhere that like Jeremiah, whose temple sermon (Jer 7:1–12) is quoted by Jesus,[17] Jesus was demonstrating his disquiet with the presence of the image of a pagan deity in the House of God (Domeris 2015).

Various studies of Jewish coins (Meshorer 2001:76; Hendin 2010:477) have argued the contrary—namely, that Jesus and the Jews of Jesus' time would not have had an issue with the imagery on the coin.[18] Meshorer (2001), on the basis of his reading of the Mishna, states unequivocally that coins would not be considered impure regardless of their imagery.[19] This raises the question of why the leaders of the first revolt immediately replaced these coins with their own minting of acceptable[20] coins (Richardson 2004:247). Did the Jewish aristocracy of the first century hold a more liberal view than these revolutionaries? Such is certainly the view held by Bohak (2002), who has done a thorough study of coin imagery in the rabbinic writings, leading him to conclude, 'As has often been noted, the Jewish perception of plastic art has shifted enormously in the first few centuries CE, from an almost total prohibition in the second temple period to the very liberal attitude we find in Rabbinic literature' (2002:13).[21] This means that we cannot take the silence of the rabbinic writings on the imagery of the Tyrian shekel as indicative of the views of the ordinary people in Jesus' time. Jesus scattered the coins because of their pagan imagery—a symbolic action in the spirit of the Hebrew Prophets (cf. Jer 7:9–11; Domeris 2015). This point brings us to Jesus' mountain meeting with two famous prophets, and the underpinning irony of that moment.

3. Markan Irony

Quite correctly, Sharp warns that 'No hermeneutics of sacred texts can proceed effectively without taking account of the dynamics of resistance and misdirection enacted by irony' (2009:8).[22] Mark's gospel is well-known for its use of irony (Duke 1985; Fowler 1991; Camery-Hoggatt 1992; Edwards 2002). Mark employs irony, *inter alia*, to convey a sense of the enigmatic revelation of Jesus and his Messianic secret (Duke 1985; Camery-Hoggatt 1992). Beyond that idea, Edwards writes, 'The medium of irony is important for the Second Evangelist, who throughout the Gospel portrays Jesus as one who challenges, confounds and sometimes breaks conventional stereotypes, whether religious, social or political' (2002:12). Finally, Edwards (2002:12) explains that Mark plays up the strengths of some, like the faith of a Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:29); and the weaknesses of others, like the twelve disciples in their seeming inability to recognise the truth about Jesus (e.g. Mark 10:32–41). Caird (1997:104) says 'Dramatic irony is a form of speech which assumes a double audience, the first understanding nothing but the face value of the words, the second seeing both the deeper meaning and the incomprehension of the first'. Dramatic irony, in the Gospel of Mark, occurs at two levels, namely at the level of the plot and at the level of the dialogue. Indeed, there is irony in the very details of the stories told, and the actors involved. For our purposes, we suggest that such dramatic irony is found in Mark both in the recounting of the temple intervention and in the transfiguration.

Irony pervades the temple intervention as recorded in Mark's gospel. As Jeremiah challenged the priests of his time in the Jerusalem temple for their worship of Baal (cf. Jer 7:1–12), so Jesus, by repeating a critical part of that sermon, the reference to a 'den of bandits' (Mark 11:17),[23] carried forward the judgment of God on another temple, in another time (so Freyne 2014:180). The irony continues, in Mathew's account. The same silver shekels were apparently used to pay Judas for betraying Jesus (Matt 26:15). Judas, in seeking redemption, then, scattered these coins on the floor of the temple, as Jesus did (Matt 27:5). The only discussion around the temple-tax is found in the Gospel of Matthew and curiously, in close proximity (the same chapter) to the transfiguration (Matt 17:24–27). There too we may discern a level of irony in Jesus' words (v.26) and in Peters' strange fishing expedition (v.27). While Mark makes mention of the image on the tribute coin (Mark 12:16), there is no mention of the imagery on the half-shekel coin, leading one scholar (Sheeley 2000: 916) to suggest it was 'bearing more acceptable images', but in fact it was not, as I have already indicated.

22 Baldick (2001:130) describes irony as 'a subtly humorous perception of inconsistency, in which an apparently straightforward statement or event is undermined by its context so as to give it a very different significance'. While the issue of author's intention remains a challenging question (Sharp 2009:26-27; Holland 2000:1-19), sufficient consensus around the idea of irony allows for its application to a range of literary works (Booth 1974; Baldick 2001), from the Greek tragedies (Holland 2000) to the Bible, both Old Testament (Sharp 2009; Domeris 2016) and New (Caird 1980; Duke1985; O'Day 1986).

23 The Hebrew word פָּרִיץ carries a sense of violence, which is commensurate with the Greek λῃστής used in the crucifixion account (Mark 15:27) (Domeris 1997).

As scholars have proposed links between the transfiguration and other historical events in the life of Jesus (Trites 1979), like the pathos of the Garden of Gethsemane (Kenny 1957), the resurrection of Jesus and Parousia of Jesus (Blomberg 1992:317), I suggest a series of connections with Jesus' intervention in the temple. By reading the pericope against the temple narrative, the sense of irony is heightened, and we begin to identify the elements which hold the picture together. Four principal details make up the transfiguration account; the location on a mountain, the transformation of Jesus, the presence of Elijah and Moses and the role of Peter. In addition, there are the two parts of the frame, namely the prelude (including 'taking up one's cross'), and the aftermath (involving the disciple's failure to comprehend who Jesus is). Concealed within the obvious material details of these elements, like the unseen mass of an iceberg, we find a whole world of meaning and implication.

4. Prelude

In the Gospel of Mark the transfiguration of Jesus follows on the feeding of the four thousand (Mark 8:1–9). Jesus came to the villages of the region of Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27) in upper Galilee (today's Baniyas)—a peaceful location, among wooded hills and near a strong spring. Here, in response to Jesus' questions about his identity (Mark 8:27–29a), Peter made his confession of faith (v.29b), which in Mark is simply 'You are the Christ'. Jesus responded by warning of his coming suffering and death at the hands of 'the elders and chief priests' (v.31). In the context of Mark's narrative, bridging the gap between Peter's confession and the transfiguration, Jesus offered a challenge about following him. The call included the well-known words about denying oneself and taking up one's cross to follow Jesus (Mark 8:34; cf. Matt 16:24; Luke 9:23). The reference to the cross is not a later (post-crucifixion) insertion but an ironical warning from Jesus, which fits the context of the historical Jesus. Painter writes, 'Mark intended readers to take the threat of crucifixion seriously' (1997:163). We might paraphrase the Greek: following Jesus into Jerusalem will have *grave consequences*.

The invitation to follow Jesus includes those who are already disciples (Mark 8:34), and so forms a second calling because this particular journey into Jerusalem will not be for the faint-hearted. Jesus needs to warn the disciples that from here on, the consequences and dangers of following him are about to be taken to another level. The plan of action, upon which Jesus is about to embark, will be perceived by the authorities as sedition against the

rulers, both Jewish and Roman (Saunders 1995, np; Herzog 1992:820). In terms of post-colonial or empire studies (Horsley 2016), Jesus is set to push back against the power of the empire. In the context of the Markan plot, the reader is invited to take up their own cross and to face whatever challenge God presents, knowing ultimately that they may, in time, be called to suffer for the Gospel.

5. Up a High Mountain

Six days later (Mark 9:2),[24] Jesus took three disciples, Peter, James and John up an unnamed high mountain. It would make sense (albeit ironical) to locate the transfiguration on a mountain, where Jesus experiences a critical moment in his ministry. Liefeld (1992:839) notes the textual links with Sinai, including the location on a mountain, and the cloud which overshadowed it (cf. the LXX of Exod 40:34). The name of the mountain is not given, but there have been several suggestions made, the traditional site being Mount Tabor (Cranfield 1959:289)—a mountain long associated with one of the Baal cults (cf. Hos 5:1). Notably, several of the mountains in Galilee had associations with pagan deities (Hermon—Judg 3:3 and Carmel—1 Kgs 18), so that simply the location on a 'high mountain', would already conjure up images of false worship (cf. Ps 121:1–2).

When we read the transfiguration in the light of the Baal-coins, the irony shines through. For Elijah, his destiny took him to Mount Carmel, where he fought against the prophets of the Tyrian Baal. For Moses, his destiny took him to Mount Sinai, where he received the ten commandments. For Jesus, too, his destiny would take him to the mountain of the transfiguration, where he would meet with Elijah and Moses and receive from them the prophetic mantle of the struggle against false religions and ungodly empires.

6. The Transformation

On the mountain, Jesus was 'transfigured before them' (Mark 9:2c). The Greek word here is μεταμορφόω[25] with the literal sense of 'being greatly changed' and so best rendered as 'transformed' (Liefeld 1978).[26] The following verse (Mark 9:3) describes the visual effects of the metamorphosis, as the outer-garments of Jesus were changed to become exceedingly white and radiant (cf. Exod 34:30).[27] For Mark, there is something unusual about the whiteness, since 'no launderer on earth' could achieve such brightness. The inclusion of the words 'on earth' makes this

24 Luke has eight days (Luke 9:28).

25 Luke simply says that Jesus' appearance became different (Gk. ἕτερος), while describing his apparel as white and gleaming (Luke 9:29).

26 Luke avoids the verb, perhaps because of its Hellenistic connotations (so Cranfield 1959:290)

27 Matthew seals the connection in his version (Matt 17:2) where the face of Jesus 'shone like the sun'.

an otherworldly connection. Many scholars interpret the visual appearance as an indication of God's glory shining out through Jesus (e.g. Painter 1997:165; Schnackenburg 2002:165) and is said to be reminiscent of Moses (Exod 34:29; cf. Matt17:2) and of heavenly beings (as in Daniel 7:9); in the case of the latter, pointing to the deity of Jesus (Moses 1996:89–113).

In the light of the path which Jesus will take, towards the temple mount, I suggest that the whiteness of his garments needs to be understood, also, in that context. The theme of white or radiating garments is not uncommon in scripture, being associated with righteousness and purity (Ps 51:7; Isa 1:18; Rev 1:14). We are reminded of the words of Malachi, regarding the cleansing of the temple priests (Mal 3:1–3) and of the Psalms of Solomon, which speaks of the Messiah purifying Jerusalem, 'as of old', to reveal the glory of God (Ps Sol 17:30–31). The irony is that, here at the transfiguration, Jesus is purified by God in preparation for his 'purification' of the temple, through his casting out of the traders and the money-changers. The irony of the allusion to the temple event is that it will turn out to be, not a cleansing of the priests, but an exposure of their sin.

7. Elijah and Moses

Jesus was joined on the mountain by two men, whom Mark identifies as Elijah and Moses, in that order (Mark 9:4), and who are seen to be conversing with Jesus, but the details of their conversation are absent. The presence of the two icons of Jewish faith, provides a valuable insight into the meaning of the transfiguration. What brought Elijah and Moses, in particular, to that lonely mountain in Galilee? Since the time of Victor of Antioch, Moses and Elijah were understood as the representatives of the Law and the Prophets – an idea that was common across the centuries and continues to find favour among scholars (Cranfield 1959:295; Leifeld 1992:839; Murphy-O'Connor 1987). However, this does not explain the order of the names. Mark should have introduced them in the reverse order—Moses and Elijah, not Elijah and Moses. Even Peter, mentioned in Mark, defaults to the Moses then Elijah pattern when he makes his suggestion about temporary shelters, although he places Jesus first (Mark 9:5). Were these two introduced because of their unusual life conclusions (Painter 1997:165) or is this a reference to Elijah as the precursor of the Messiah (cf. Mark 8:40; Mal 3:1; 4:5–6; Carmody 2010:81)? I suggest the presence of the two men and the name order should likewise be viewed through the lens of Jesus' temple interaction.

Ryken says 'Dramatic irony consists of discrepancy between what we as readers know and the ignorance of characters in the story' (1992:19). As the narrator of Mark's Gospel brings together Elijah, Moses and Jesus on a mountain, the discerning reader sees the irony. It is hardly a coincidence that the two men who spent so much of their lives challenging false worship, specifically the worship of Baal, should meet with Jesus at this point. Elijah is first because of his epic struggle against the Tyrian Baal. The book of Kings (1 Kings 16:29–33) paints a dramatic portrait of the prophet Elijah in his conflict with the monarch Ahab, his consort Jezebel and her choice of the deity Baal. Her championing of the Baal cult is not just of any Baal cult, but specifically of the cult of the Baal of Phoenicia, the home of Jezebel – the city of Tyre (Kagmatché 2007). On Mount Carmel, Elijah challenged the might of the Tyrian Baal (Kagmatché 2007) and emerged victorious (see Bronner 1968:8–11). On Mount Sinai (Horeb), through the agency of Moses, God makes his will clear in the Decalogue: the first commandment elevates the worship of the Lord God above all other gods: the second commandment contains the prohibition on images (Exod 20:4; Deut 5:8). In our imagination, we hear Elijah and Moses warning Jesus that the path chosen by God will involve acting out the judgement of God on the priestly aristocracy, for allowing Baal a place in the House of God.

8. Peter's Role

Peter's role in the Gospel of Mark is ambiguous, with both high points and low points, making him an ideal candidate for the Markan dramatic irony. Caird (1997:134) writes, 'Dramatic irony differs from simple irony in that the contrast between what is said and what is meant is intended by the writer of the story, but there is always some character within the story, whether the speaker or another, who does not understand'. In a misdirected response to the wonder of the scene, Peter suggested (Mark 9:5) that he and his fellow disciples build three temporary shelters (tabernacles). The narrator is quick to point out the irony that 'he did not know what to answer; for they had become terrified' (Mark 9:6). Peter's use of 'Rabbi' simply confirms his failure to understand the significance of the moment[28] and its relevance for the person of Jesus (Painter 1997:167). In addition, he adds, 'It is good for us [the disciples] to be here' (Mark 9:5), thus entirely missing the point – a further instance of dramatic irony. Painter stresses 'It is as if Peter had groped for a position which at least admits Jesus to the same level as Moses and Elijah. But this was mistaken. Even

[28] Matthew 17:4 has 'Lord' and Luke 9:33 'Master' demonstrating what Brooks (1991:175) understands as 'greater reverence'.

after a special revelation to the three, they had made no progress' (1997:167).

As at Sinai, there is a heavenly voice, which on this occasion announces, 'This is my beloved Son, listen to him' (Mark 9:7b; cf. Deut 18:15) and as at Sinai, the onlookers are left fearful (ε□□κφοβος cf. Exod 20:18). The voice, as also the event, is for the benefit of the three disciples—the very disciples who struggle to understand what they have seen and heard (Painter 1997:168). When the cloud disappeared, Jesus was found alone with the frightened disciples (Mark 9:8)—a parody of Moses and the children of Israel on Mount Sinai.

9. The Aftermath

On the way down the mountain, Jesus, for the second time, referred to his death and suffering (Mark 9:12). The two predictions, of Jesus' suffering (Mark 8:31; 9:12), frame the transfiguration account; a pattern which is repeated in Matthew (Matt 16:21;17:22–23) and Luke (Luke 9:22; 9:44). In spite of the divine instruction (Mark 9:7b) 'Listen to him', in a passage full of irony, Peter, James and John fail to comprehend the meaning of Jesus' teaching (Mark 9:10), leading Painter (1997:168) to comment, 'They remained as lacking in understanding and *insight* as the crowds' (see 4:20–12; 6:52; 8:16–21) [italics in original]. The discussions on both the role of Elijah and the resurrection (Mark 9:9–13) are filled with ambiguity, heightening the sense of irony. Blomberg sums up the situation, adding his own ironical comment. 'Peter's confusion is now followed by general perplexity concerning Elijah. The logic of the disciple's question is uncertain, perhaps because they are again portrayed as somewhat dense' (on Matt 17:10).

10. Conclusion

The transfiguration is a moment of decision—closely following Jesus' ironic challenge to his disciples to join him on the journey to Golgotha, carrying their crosses, and framed by two predictions of his suffering and death. The Markan passion of Jesus begins here on this unnamed Galilean mountain, where Jesus stands with the two champions of monotheism, Elijah and Moses. There is a tragic, indeed ironical twist, in what should have been a glorious occasion—and one to be enjoyed at leisure, as Peter's tabernacles suggested. That is not to be, as the narrative makes clear with its introduction of a note of urgency. Jesus, from this moment on, will take the road up to Jerusalem, to the temple, and to the enacted

parable of his confrontation with the money-changers, and ultimately to a trial before a vengeful High Priest, determined to preserve his stronghold of power and wealth.

In true Markan irony, the disciples will abandon Jesus to die alone on the cross (Mark 14:50). In conclusion, Mark speaks of the fearful silence of the women after their angelic encounter at the garden tomb and the Gospel ends on a hanging *gar* (Mark 16:8). But because this is irony, there is always another side to the story. The silence of the women conceals a form of unspoken irony, because this particular silence is pregnant with a deeper meaning and a greater truth, which spills over into the emerging resurrection faith of the first Christians. There the deeper purpose of the Markan irony finds its ultimate fulfilment.

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The Theologian's Speech: Stuttering and the Beauty of Christ

Robert Falconer and Dan Lioy

Abstract

Testimony, scholarship, and pastoral-devotion form a triad to this journal article on stuttering and its relationship to the beauty of Christ, for the theologian who stutters. The paper begins with some of the personal struggles of stuttering highlighted in a personal testimony. Stuttering can be described as disfluency of speech, characterised by frequent stoppages in the flow of speech, usually with a repetition of sounds, syllables, or even one-syllable words. Along with the vocal impediment, certain emotional characteristics may be evident, such as anxiousness, shyness, timidity, and lack of assertiveness. While this may not always be the case, it is usually the general perception of others. According to research, those who do stutter are often regarded as having undesirable personality characteristics, which may intensify the problem. Aside from the general facts about stuttering, which we explore, the issues of the cause and cure of stuttering are of interest. While little is known about the direct cause of stuttering, recent research does indicate that it may be neurological, and therefore there is yet no cure. However, studies on the cause of stuttering in light of the neurological sciences indicate that a cure may be available in the not-too-distant future. The paper also offers an exegetical study on Moses, focusing on his speech defect,

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

and how YHWH had created Moses and knew intimately the limits of his abilities. Nevertheless, YHWH promised Moses that he would be with him as he spoke. Even Moses' stutter was not an obstacle for the all-powerful Lord. The exegetical study from the New Testament examines the Apostle Paul and his willingness to put aside his intelligence and shrewdness for the sake of allowing the Holy Spirit's wisdom and strength to work through him, thus being a vessel for the beauty of Christ evident in the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's letters. Drawing from the earlier sections of the paper, the final discussion offers a pastoral-devotional approach, exploring stuttering in relation to the beauty of Christ, with a special focus on the stuttering theologian. The paper argues that stuttering may become an inconspicuous crucible for the beauty of Christ, and in so doing, becomes something beautiful, being overshadowed and transformed by the beauty of the divine.

1. Introduction

This paper is the result of thinking one morning, a few months ago, that I ought to put together a devotional piece about my stutter, and then that afternoon, and without him knowing, my colleague Prof. Dan Lioy sent me a link to an online interview with Gerald McDermott, himself a stutterer, on *Empowering Unlikely Leaders,* discussing his recent book, *Famous Stutterers: Twelve Inspiring People Who Achieved Great Things while Struggling with an Impediment.* After sharing my thoughts with Lioy, he suggested we collaborate on a research project, and as a Bible scholar, he would work on the exegetical sections. It was at this point that this journal article was birthed. This is a very personal journal article, blended together with scholarship. The first section is a brief, but honest reflection of my, Robert Falconer's, life as someone who stutters. After which a scholarly overview of stuttering is offered, exploring, (1) what stuttering is, (2) the emotional aspects of stuttering, (3) facts about stuttering, and (4) a discussion on the cause and cure of stuttering. The next two sections offer detailed exegetical studies on Exodus 4:10–17 and 1 Corinthians 1:10–2:5, first considering a contextual overview of both passages and then offering a descriptive analysis of each. The last section, rather than focusing too heavily on academic scholarship, takes a pastoral -devotional approach, exploring the idea of stuttering in light of the beauty of Christ.

2. A Testimony of a Young Theologian[2]

Ten years ago, September 2008, I knelt on my knee on the sandy shore of Iona, a small island in the Inner Hebrides off the west coast of Scotland, famous for its ancient monastery and its Celtic monk, Saint Columba, who brought Christianity to Scotland. Kneeling nervously, with a ring in hand and a clammed mouth with only four words to speak. The words were forced out over a minute later in spluttering gibberish. Two days later Rayhuewin returned her ring.

I have never known fluency for any extended period. I started to speak late and probably stuttered on my first word. At the age of six, my parents took me to Sunday school at the local Baptist church. The teacher did not know what to do with a six-year-old introverted stammerer, so every week she sent me to the 'naughty corner'. I spent most my Sundays there looking down at my knees shamefully.[3] The story did not end well.

My schooling was mostly unpleasant. Most of my schooling was in a special school for those with learning disabilities. Giving orals in front of my class was difficult enough, but reading the class set-work book aloud in class was humiliating, being stripped of the option of substituting difficult words for easier ones − I had mastered my synonyms. On more than one occasion, upon walking out of the classroom to the school speech therapist, after a spoiled speech or poem recitation, I overheard the teacher shouting to the pupils in my earshot, how, 'If Robert only tried harder…'. Years later while studying architecture at university, reading aloud from Righini's *Thinking Architecturally: An Introduction to the Creation of Form and Space* (Righini 1999)*,* was equally humiliating. At least my fellow students were mature enough not to ridicule me as they often did in my schooling career. Introducing myself and saying my name was always difficult, it still is, as it is for any person who stutters. In my youth, I remember a team of us standing in front of a church having been asked to introduce ourselves, after 3 minutes of incoherent sounds and contorted expression, my dear friend next to me, kindly introduced me, 'This is my friend Robert, he is from Port Elizabeth'.

Since childhood, I had always wanted to be an aviator. My father sent me to *Progress Flight Academy* to study for my commercial pilot's licence. After two weeks of flying, the flight school called my father and told him that my speech impediment was a severe hinderance and that I should pursue something else. So, I did, I studied architecture and theology simultaneously. The disappointment and humiliation were oftentimes unbearable. Countless prayers were offered up to God to take away my stutter,

with no response. One Sunday morning my youth pastor prayed for me. I was healed. I shared my testimony two weeks later at youth group. A few days later the stutter returned, along with many painful questions.

With a calling for the proclamation of the gospel of Christ, from my youth, and speech poorly suited for the pulpit, the church, and its pastors, up until recently, treated me with caution, at arm's length with no opportunities, even after I had completed a PhD in theology. I felt undervalued and misunderstood. I remain uncertain as to whether it was because of my speech, or distrust because of my inquisitive mind for things theological. Nevertheless, five years ago I became a missionary to Kenya for three years where I taught and preached from the pulpit frequently and led a discipleship school. During this time, I met Barack Obama's grandmother and told her about Jesus. I now preach periodically at our church, here in South Africa, and have presented several academic papers. I currently work as a senior academic at the South African Theological Seminary (SATS), where I communicate daily with colleagues and students over Skype.

My dedication to SATS is largely a result of my stutter. I will probably never be able to reach thousands to proclaim this exquisite gospel of our Saviour, but together my students can. And without sounding egotistic, I like to think that every lesson taught, and every sermon preached by one of my students, in one way or another has my fingerprint on it. In this way, I fulfil my calling in remarkable, though unexpected ways, through the faithfulness of others.

I still stutter. Some days or some months are worse than others. However, I was helped immensely a few years ago by a British speech therapist. She sat with me over dinner and with 'napkin diagrams' she explained how stuttering was normal for a person whose brain was wired as mine was. From that moment on I accepted my stutter, which in turn allows me to peer into the transforming and illuminating beauty of Christ, and that gives it meaning. Part of the beauty of Christ has been his extraordinary faithfulness to that which he has called me, and not least, giving me a beautiful and supportive wife, Catherine, who does not fail to accept and love me. We have two adopted sons, Ezekiel and Gabriel.

3. An Overview of Stuttering

3.1. Introduction

Stuttering is a complex disorder, generally misunderstood by others (Everard 2007:21). The 2010 movie, *The King's Speech,*[4] took the world by storm and made the public aware of stuttering. The film was a gripping psychological drama, depicting King George VI's painful struggle with stuttering, revealing his inner frustrations and his relationship with the Australian speech therapist Lionel Logue (McDermott 2016:online; Hooper 2010). The previous section of this paper was deeply personal, this section is somewhat more scholarly as the science of stuttering is explored in some detail.

3.2. What is stuttering?

One might describe stuttering simply as disfluency of speech.[5] Such disfluency is characterised by stoppages in the flow of speech, usually evidenced by a repetition of sounds, syllables, or even one-syllable words. Prolongations of sounds and 'blockages' or 'blocks' are also manifestations of stuttering (Guitar 2013:7; National Stuttering Association, n.d.:online; Lavid 2003:3; Iverach *et al.* 2017:540).

Stuttering may also be exasperated when the person who stutters reacts to the disfluency by blocks, repetitions, and prolongations by forcing words out by use of extra sounds, words and even distorted facial and bodily movement.[6] These are employed in an effort to become unstuck, or to avoid becoming stuck on a word (Apel 2000:7; Guitar 2013:8). Such movements usually include 'various kinds of movements such as jerking of the head, shutting of eyes, sticking out the tongue, clenching the fists, gasping, and sudden expiratory thrusts of air' (Mulligan *et al.* 2001:25). Yet, people who stutter know exactly the words they want to say, but they experience physical difficulty in saying them (National Stuttering Association, n.d.:online).

Scientifically, stuttering is a 'neurodevelopmental disorder whose primary symptoms are disfluencies, involuntary disruptions in the normal flow of speech' (Smith and Weber 2017:2483). Disfluency in stuttering arises 'when the motor commands to the muscles are disrupted, and normal patterns of muscle activity required for fluent speech are not generated', thus creating 'breakdowns in speech motor processes'. For adults who stutter, the cause of stuttering is not 'excessive muscle activation', and neither is it a 'consistent symptom of stuttering'. Instead, the only 'neurologically abnormal muscle activation pattern' seems to be tremor, that is, 'involuntary rhythmic muscle contractions' (Smith and Weber

4   The first part of the title for this paper was inspired by the title of the film.

5   One ought to be aware that there is a difference between stuttering as an actual speech impediment and simple speech disfluency that is evident in many children, some teenagers and even adults who experience slight speech disfluencies every now and again (Apel 2000:7).

6   These are typically called secondary behaviours (National Stuttering Association, n.d.:online); Mulligan *et al.* (2201:26) say that about 75% of the movements related to secondary behaviour occurred during stuttering but that some of these movements, notably the blinking of the eyes, were not related to stuttering, and are 'just as likely to occur with fluent speech' or with what might be termed normal dysfluencies. Yet, earlier they argued that these 'movements have been traditionally classified as a conditioned or learned response to stuttering' (2001:25).

2017:2487). Recent studies that employ modern imaging techniques have suggested that there is a dysfunction in stuttering 'within the cortical and subcortical areas of the motor control system wider than that pertaining to speech motor alone'. If this is true, then 'motor deficits extending beyond and unrelated to the production of speech in people who stutter' could be expected (Mulligan *et al.* 2001:23).

New research shows dramatic variances during the 'course of cortical excitability, during the speech motor planning and motor initiation phases' in adults who stutter compared to those who speak fluently. Those who are fluent displayed 'a left motor cortex facilitation of tongue motor neuron excitability during the 300-ms interval prior to speech onset'.[7] Those who stuttered did not display a left or even 'a right facilitation of tongue muscle activation in the pre-speech interval'. The research findings provide a good reason to believe 'that speech motor programming is typically left lateralised for fluent speakers but not for' those of us who stutter. It appears that the amount of decrease[8] in primary motor cortex pre-speech excitability is associated with stuttering severity (Smith and Weber 2017:2488).

Regardless of how one might wish to define stuttering, the impediment does not only affect speech, but most certainly also leads to anxiety, frustration, embarrassment, and lack of self-confidence. For this reason, those who stutter avoid difficult words and difficult speaking situations, if they can. Oftentimes this may affect the way they come across to other people (Everard 2007:21). Everard points out that some who stutter have developed successful strategies to hide their stutter; such 'hiding strategies' are a coping mechanism, sometimes called 'avoidance behaviours'. However, more often than not, these become part of a larger problem (2007:21).

3.3. Emotional aspects of stuttering

According to Boyle, people who stutter are regarded as having undesirable personality characteristics, which may include anxiousness, shyness, timidity, and lack of assertiveness. As a result, they are thought to be less employable than those who enjoy fluency of speech, especially when a specific profession requires a high level of speaking. He continues to explain that they 'are perceived as less intelligent or competent in a variety of jobs in which communication is highly valued compared with fluent co-workers' (Boyle 2017:921; Guitar 2013:19–20). If stuttering is a speech disorder which is characterised by involuntary speech disruptions, it is not surprising that it may hinder effective communication in both performance and social situations (Iverach

7 Cf. Mulligan *et al.* 2001:24.

8 Smith and Weber (2017:2494) explain that 'studies using functional imaging techniques consistently show that AWS (adults who stutter) have reduced activity in left hemisphere areas specialised for speech and that they over activate homologous areas of the right hemisphere… It has been hypothesised that the right hemisphere overactivation arises as an attempt to compensate for the structural and functional deficits in the left premotor and primary motor speech areas'.

9   Boyle is no doubt correct; it is critically important that the public stigma of stuttering and all that is associated with it must be challenged. Such stigmatisation, negative social identities, and stereotypes, often exaggerated by avoidance, segregation, or discrimination, ought to be reduced and prevented through various strategies (Boyle 2017:921). The movie, *The King's Speech,* directed by Hooper (2010) offered a powerful challenge to the public perception of stuttering (cf. Boyle 2017:923). Nevertheless, the Slovenian Marxist philosopher, Slavoj Žižek describes the film as 'reactionary', saying that the king's stutter displayed 'a minimum of common sense, experiencing the stupidity of seriously accepting that one is king by divine will' and then proclaims that the Australian speech therapist rendered the king as 'stupid enough to accept his being a king as his natural property' (Žižek 2012:421).

10   Iverach *et al.* comment that according to the American Psychiatric Association, 'Social anxiety disorder is a prevalent, chronic, and disabling anxiety disorder … characterised by intense fear of social or performance-based situations, or situations with the potential for scrutiny by others'. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, identifies social anxiety disorder as being 'associated with physical and motor symptoms, such as, "blushing, trembling, sweating, stumbling over one's words"', which individuals fear will be negatively evaluated by others. Such a pronouncement of fearing negative responses from others include 'fear of embarrassment and humiliation, with anxiety occurring across a broad range of situations, including public speaking, meeting new people, speaking to authority figures, giving presentations at work, and socialising at formal or informal gatherings. Individuals with social anxiety disorder tend to avoid these situations' (Iverach *et al.* 2017:541).

11   It is was also noted by Iverach *et al.* (2017:547), that socially anxious people engage in cognitive and behavioural strategies to reduce anxiety temporarily.

et al. 2017:540). Despite such perceptions[9] regarding inferior intelligence or poor competence being unfortunately misplaced, these misconceptions are somewhat understandable. It is not surprising then, as Smith and Weber explain, adults who stutter experience a high rate of social anxiety[10] as a result of social interactions affecting the overall quality of life (2017:2492). Iverach *et al.* in the journal article *Maintenance of Social Anxiety in Stuttering: A Cognitive-Behavioral Model,* wrote that,

> Mounting evidence has confirmed that stuttering is frequently accompanied by social anxiety, with approximately 22%–60% of adults who stutter meeting criteria for a diagnosis of social anxiety disorder[11]… There is also preliminary evidence that adolescents who stutter may demonstrate a high rate of anxiety disorders, such as social anxiety disorder (2017:540).

McDermott, himself one who stutters, reminds us that when one's stuttering becomes particularly bad, it is easy to fall into despair and self-hatred, believing that things will never improve; wondering why life has treated us this way, nursing feelings of self-pity, anger, and bitterness (McDermott 2016:124).

The public generally reacts negatively to people who stutter, which affects their personal wellbeing and participation in communication.[12] Communication and social interaction are no doubt essential 'to relationships, education, work, and quality of life' (Iverach *et al.* 2017:540). People who stutter are very much aware of 'negative social attitudes' from others and these are often internalised, says Boyle. These contribute to high levels of anxiety and depression, and low levels of hope, self-efficacy, and self-esteem, not to mention little hope for a brighter future (Boyle 2017:922). Yet, people who stutter underestimate themselves, largely because their speech is their primary focus of concern, and are therefore, 'particularly likely to underestimate the quality of their speech and overestimate the severity, frequency, and conspicuousness of their stuttering'. Viewing themselves from their own perception of their audience's perspective confirms their negative self-impression, this may indeed compound social fears (Iverach *et al.* 2017:544–45).

While this overview offered some facts about stuttering, it focused primarily on its emotional features. The next section, however, offers facts about stuttering in more general terms. It is not an exhaustive catalogue of facts, but it is hoped that it will offer the reader a greater awareness of the impediment.

12   Accordingly, the ideal social environment for those who stutter would be an enlightened one 'about stuttering, understanding of the experiences of people who stutter', being 'accommodating, assisting, sympathetic, and accepting' (Boyle 2017:923).

3.4. Facts about stuttering

Generally, when an acquaintance walks up to me and says, 'May I ask you a personal question?' I know without fail that they want to know something about my stutter; they have heard me speak and have a curious question. Such questions, along with others are answered here in this section.

To begin with, you will never hear a person who stutters stutter when he or she is singing. Also, stuttering becomes fluency when one who stutters reads along with another who speaks fluently (McDermott 2018:online). Most people who stutter are able to predict with a degree of certainty which words they will stutter on, sometimes even a sentence or two before they get there; this is especially true when reading aloud (Guitar 2013:20). They also have specific words or sounds at certain times in their lives that they find difficult to say with any fluency (Everard 2007:21).

Stuttering affects 1% of adults, irrespective of race and language (Guitar 2013:20; National Stuttering Association, n.d.:online). Yet, at some point, about 5% of young children have difficulty in fluency of speech, but most will achieve fluency later, often with help from a speech therapist. And while in early childhood the ratio between boys and girls is almost equal (Action for Stammering Children 2018:online), the approximate ratio of adult males to females who stutter is 4:1. The recovery rate for girls is considerably higher than their male counterpart (Smith and Weber 2017:2486, 2495).

According to Everard, stuttering has been known to run in families[13] (Everard 2007:21). Studies have shown that 'DNA is a significant factor when determining whether one will stutter into adulthood'[14] (Smith and Weber 2017:2487).

The severity of stuttering varies from person to person, from situation to situation and from day to day, week to week, or even month to month. Saying one's name or speaking to an authority figure can also be particularly difficult. Stress, tiredness, fatigue, illness (like a cold or the flu), and time pressure may also exacerbate the stutter of some individuals. Further, attempting to hide one's stutter may worsen one's fluency (National Stuttering Association, n.d.:online).

Despite what some may think, research has demonstrated that those who stutter are 'as emotionally stable as the general population', and that stuttering is not an indication of one's competence or intelligence (National Stuttering Association, n.d.:online). However, recent research on the brain suggests 'that there may be an underlying neurological/physiological cause of'

13 Cf. Apel 2000:5.

14 Differences in brain activity patterns also exist between adults who stutter and those who do not. Such differences can apparently also be 'observed in speech perception tasks with both auditory and visual linguistic stimuli' (Smith and Weber 2017:2494).

16 I made use of the VoiceAmp for about 6 months. It works by tricking the mind in believing that another person is speaking simultaneously, which alleviates stuttering. It takes the voice from the speaker and delays it for about half a second and gives distorted feedback in the ear of the speaker. It is initially very effective. However, it has the following problems: (1) In time it begins to have continual white noise, (2) Every other sound, including others speaking is picked up and is fed back into the ear of the user. (3) If the user tampers with its settings, the speech therapist needs to reset it, and this is often an unnecessary consultation. (4) The mind eventually gets used to the device and can no longer be tricked into thinking there is another person speaking in unison ('VoiceAmp' 2018:online; cf. British Stammering Association 2016:online). Perhaps others have had a better experience with this than I had.

stuttering in some people (Everard 2007:21), suggesting a fundamental difference between those who stutter and those who do not.[15] Therefore, if stuttering seems to be neurological or physiological, one is inclined to inquire about the causes of stuttering and its cures.

3.5. Cause and cure

Every now and again someone recommends an aid or a cure for my stutter, ranging from speaking with pebbles in my mouth, as in the case of Demosthenes, the Greek statesman and orator (McDermott 2018:online), using some obscure traditional medicine from a dubious back alley shop, singing instead of speaking, speaking staccato, and using a VoiceAmp[16]—all very well intentioned. Throughout the ages stuttering has been subjected to ridicule, predisposition, and misguided 'cures'. Apparently, at one time it was believed that stuttering was the result of abnormalities of the tongue which led to cutting the organ or burning it (British Stammering Association 2016:online). But as already mentioned, stuttering may be hereditary or triggered by environmental factors. Thus, one's stuttering may be the result of the family you were born into (Apel 2000:5).

Although these offer some clues as to the cause of stuttering, along with neurological and physiological factors, scientists have still not discovered the direct cause, and thus it remains a mystery (Guitar 2013:5). Therefore, while 'stuttering is basically neurological and physiological', it is not psychological in nature (National Stuttering Association, n.d.:online). The onset of stuttering usually 'occurs when the child's linguistic abilities are developing very rapidly, such as rapid growth in mean length of utterance… and phonological skills' (Smith and Weber 2017:2490). There are three kinds of stuttering, namely (1) developmental stuttering, this is the typical scenario, as in my case, where one simply begins stuttering from childhood, (2) neurogenic stuttering, which is usually developed as result of a stroke or trauma to the brain, and (3) psychogenic stuttering as a result of severe emotional trauma (British Stammering Association 2016).

At present, there is no known reliable cure for stuttering.[17] However, various forms of speech therapy may prove to be helpful, but relapses are common and not every method of speech therapy will help every individual (National Stuttering Association, n.d.:online). Nevertheless, there are two promising research fields, neuroimaging and molecular genetics,[18] which may contribute to a better understanding of the brain and its processes that facilitate stuttering, and in turn, may offer a cure for stuttering.

Researchers are employing the latest advances in these fields to search for a cure (Lavid 2003:69).

3.6. Conclusion

In this chapter a response to 'What is stuttering?' was offered. This led to a discourse on the various emotional aspects of stuttering. Interesting facts about stuttering were then provided, and lastly, the causes and cures were explored. There is, however, hope that there may soon be a cure for stuttering. The next two sections of the paper offer detailed scholarship on two Biblical passages that we find relevant for the topic of stuttering. The first is the account in Exodus 4:1–19 of Moses' speech deficiency, often believed to be a stutter, and the second is 1 Corinthians 1:10–2:5, where Paul describes his personal limitations which were employed to magnify God's power.

4. An Exegetical Study of Exodus 4:10-17

4.1 An overview of Exodus 1-3[19]

The book of Genesis reveals how Joseph was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers; but, in time, Joseph rose to prominence in Egypt and became the prime minister.[20] When famine struck Canaan, Joseph's brothers sought relief in Egypt.[21] While there, they happened upon their long-lost brother and discovered that he was able to obtain the resources they needed to prevent starvation. Joseph forgave his brothers; and since the famine was continuing to worsen, he urged them—along with their families and his father, Jacob[22]—to resettle in the land of Goshen.[23]

As a result, Jacob and his family settled in Egypt.[24] Genesis 46:8–27 and Exodus 1:1–4 list the names of Jacob's sons who made the journey. Including Joseph, who was already living in Egypt at the time, Jacob's clan numbered 70.[25] Sailhamer (1992:241) observes that by including these names at the beginning of Exodus, Moses[26] signalled the book's tight literary connection with Genesis. The narrative of Exodus 1 reveals that throughout the long ordeal the Israelites endured, they remembered their ancestry and the God whom their patriarchs worshipped.

Eventually, the first generation of Israelites who relocated to Egypt died.[27] Apparently, Jacob's descendants liked Goshen, for they did not return to Canaan when the famine ended. In fact, they were to remain in Goshen for 430 years.[28] During those centuries, God's chosen people had numerous children and

19   The discourse that follows in the next two sections presumes the authenticity and textual integrity of Exodus. The following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the overview of chapters 1-3: Brueggemann (1994; 1997); Cassuto (1983); Childs (1976); Cole (1973); Durham (1987); Dyrness (1977); Fretheim (1991); Goldingay (2016); Jacob (1958); Kaiser (1990; 2008); Keil and Delitzsch (1981); Merrill (1991); Osborn and Hatton (1999); Sailhamer (1992); Sarna (1991); Schreiner (2013); Seters (1994); Smith (1993); Vos (2000); Waltke and Yu (2007); Wells (2009).

20   For a detailed consideration of the Genesis account of Joseph (Jacob's son), cf. Coats (1992); Longacre (2003); Pfeiffer (2009).

21   For a comprehensive overview of Egypt and the Egyptians within an ancient Near Eastern context, cf. Kitchen (2003; 2009); Ward (1992).

22   For an assessment of Jacob's life and legacy, as presented in the Tanakh, cf. Rigsby (2003); Walker (2009); Walters (1992).

23   Goshen was part of the Nile River Delta; cf. Gen 45:9-13, 17-18; 46:3-7.

24   Cf. Gen 46:26-27.

25   Cf. Gen 46:27; Exod 1:5.

26   Hereafter, Moses is the presumed human author of the entire Pentateuch. For an assessment of Moses as Israel's premier lawgiver and an iconic figure within Judaism and Christianity, cf. Allis (2009); Chavalas (2003); Gillman (1992).

27   Cf. Exod 1:6.

28   Cf. Exod 12:40-41.

29 Cf. Exod 1:7.

30 Cf. Gen 1:28.

31 Cf. Gen 12:1-3.

32 Cf. Gen 47:1-12.

33 Cf. Exod 1:8.

34 In the Old Testament, the noun, עִבְרִי, occurs 35 times and refers to the Hebrews as a distinct ethnic group; cf. Harris (1980); Koehler and Baumgartner (2000); Swanson (2001). Durham (1987:12) elucidates that the noun appears in the 'narrative of oppression' solely as a 'derisive epithet intelligible to the Egyptians'.

35 Cf. Exod 1:9-22.

36 From about 1630-1530 BC.

37 Cf. Exod 2:23.

38 Cf. Exod 1:24.

39 Cf. Gen 12:1-3; 15:18-21.

40 Cf. Gen 17:21.

41 Cf. Gen 35:10-12.

42 Cf. Exod 2:25.

grandchildren. Indeed, their population multiplied to the point where the whole region of Goshen seemed to be overrun by them.[29]

Moses described the prosperity of the Israelites by using the language of the creation account. Long ago, when God brought humankind into existence, he commanded them to be fertile and have many children.[30] As a reflection of God's blessing on his people and in fulfilment of his promise to Abraham,[31] he enabled the Israelites to flourish in Egypt. Without Joseph's presence and influence in the royal court, it is unimaginable that any Israelite clan of nomadic shepherds would have received such a gracious welcome from Pharaoh in the sophisticated, cosmopolitan nation over which he ruled.[32]

While the Israelites were treated well during Joseph's time in office, a new ruler eventually came to power who had no memory or appreciation of Joseph.[33] The monarch also claimed to be ignorant of the Lord, Israel's covenant-keeping Creator. Enns (2000:147) explains that at this point in the Exodus narrative, the Egyptian ruler is 'presented as an anti-God / anti-creation figure' who 'repeatedly places himself in direct opposition' to the Creator's salvation-historical, redemptive 'purpose'. The unfolding account indicates that Pharaoh would learn through a painful series of events that the Lord is the one true, and ever-living God.

When Pharaoh began to fear that a group of Semitic foreigners, such as the Hebrews,[34] might rise up and oppose him, he forced them into slavery and tried to reduce their numbers through the mass killing of all their male offspring. In effect, Pharaoh's decision was state-mandated infanticide.[35] Sarna (1991) posits that the edict might have been motivated by the unpleasant memory of the approximately century-long rule of the Hyksos over Lower Egypt.[36] Wells (2009:166) describes them as 'Semitic foreigners', whom the Egyptians 'eventually ousted'. Throughout the period of Hyksos domination, the indigenous population 'retained power over Upper Egypt'.

Tragically, when this tyrannical Egyptian ruler died, the severe oppression of the Hebrews continued unabated under his successor.[37] As God's chosen people toiled under the hot Egyptian sun building monuments for the nation's monarch, they cried out to the Lord for deliverance. In turn, the Creator heard the Hebrews' cries and remembered the covenant oath he had made[38] with Abraham,[39] Isaac,[40] and Jacob.[41]

Furthermore, God's awareness of and concern for the Hebrews[42] prompted him to choose and commission a deliverer for them. Specifically, Moses was the person the Lord summoned to lead the

Hebrews out of Egypt and into the promised land. Moses was raised for 40 years in Pharaoh's royal court;[43] nonetheless, Moses did not ignore the plight of his Hebrew peers. He rashly and foolishly murdered an Egyptian whom Moses caught beating a Hebrew slave.[44] Then, to escape Pharaoh's retribution for committing the capital offence of homicide, Moses fled into the wilderness of Midian.[45] Another 40 years passed, during which Moses—now a fugitive in exile—married, started a family, and tended sheep.[46]

By now, Egypt had become a distant memory for Moses; yet, at the right moment, God disclosed to the 80-year-old shepherd the plan the Creator had in place all along.[47] It revealed his love and concern, not only for Moses, but also for all the Hebrews. Moses was to be the Lord's hand-picked instrument in leading his chosen people out of captivity from Egypt and into the promised land. At first, the task seemed impossible to Moses; yet, God pledged that he would be with his bondservant.[48] Moses did not have to fear his inadequacies whether real or imagined, for ultimately it was the Lord who would rescue the Hebrews from their plight.

4.2. A descriptive analysis of Exodus 4:1-19[49]

Even after the Creator had instructed Moses about what to do when he returned to Egypt, he still had deep reservations about his ability to carry out his divinely-appointed task. So, he began to raise objections. Brueggemann (1997:580) describes the exchange as Moses' 'vigorous protest', followed by the Lord's abrogating 'response'.

Moses first expressed concern that the Israelites might question whether God had really appeared to the shepherd.[50] Moses no doubt recalled the reception he had received the last time he tried to assist one of his fellow Hebrews. Specifically, an unnamed peer had asked, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us?'[51] Should one of the Hebrews openly voice that question again, Moses wanted to be prepared to give an answer.

The Creator evidently accepted Moses' concern that the Hebrews might not believe him, especially since they had no basis for trusting the erstwhile shepherd. Accordingly, the Lord gave Moses three signs of his God-given authority. In turn, Moses could use these to authenticate his message and validate his credibility. Jacob (1958:225) explains that these miracles, in addition to signifying that both the messenger and the message were from God, would also authenticate God's 'promise' to the Hebrews and 'strengthen' their 'faith' in him.[52] Keil and Delitzsch (1981:448) add that the miracles likewise 'served to strengthen Moses' faith'.

43 Cf. Exod 2:1-10; Acts 7:23.

44 Cf. Exod 2:11-12; Acts 7:24.

45 Cf. Exod 2:15; Acts 7:29. Midian was located directly southeast of the Gulf of Elat and extended south along the shore of the Red Sea.

46 Cf. Exod 3:1; Acts 7:30. Waltke and Yu (2007:353) point out that along with 'Moses', the 'founder' of Israel as a 'nation', God likewise summoned 'David' from 'tending flocks' and commissioned him to enlarge the 'kingdom to its promised dimensions'.

47 Cf. Exod 3:2-22; Acts 7:31-34.

48 Smith (1993:118) clarifies that Jesus, in what is called the 'Great Commission', similarly pledged to 'be with His disciples' at all times right up to 'end of the age' (cf. Matt 28:18-20). For an accessible consideration of how the Father operated in the life of Moses to prefigure and unveil the redemptive work of the Son, cf. Selvaggio (2014).

49 The following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the descriptive analysis of Exodus 4:1-19: Brueggemann (1994; 1997); Cassuto (1983); Childs (1976); Cole (1973); Durham (1987); Fretheim (1991); Goldingay (2016); Jacob (1958); Kaiser (1990); Keil and Delitzsch (1981); McDermott (2016); Osborn and Hatton (1999); Sailhamer (1992); Sarna (1991); Seters (1994); Smith (1993); Vos (2000); Waltke and Yu (2007); Wells (2009).

50 Cf. Exod 4:1.

51 Cf. Exod 2:14.

52 Cf. Gen 9:12-13; Judg 6:17; 1 Sam 2:34; 10:1-7; 1 Kings 13:3; 2 Kings 19:29.

53   Cf. Exod 4:2-4.

54   Cf. Beck (2011); Fabry (1980);
Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman
(1998).

55   Lower Egypt refers to the Nile
Delta region.

56   Cf. Exod 4:5.

57   The underlying Hebrew verb,
צרע, refers to some form of rash or
fungus-like malady of the skin that
most likely is different from clinical
leprosy (or Hanson's disease); cf.
Lev 13-14; Brown, Driver, and
Briggs (1977); Harrison (1997);
Koehler and Baumgartner (2000).

58   Cf. Exod 4:6-7.

59   Cf. Harrison (1986); Merrill
(2003:412-3); Ryken, Wilhoit, and
Longman (1998).

60   Cf. Exod 4:8-9.

61   Cf. Alexander (1980);
Bergman (1980); Ross (1997).

62   Cf. Exod 4:10.

63   For a detailed lexical and
theological deliberation of the
divine names used in the Hebrew
sacred writings, cf. Baker (2003);
Kuhn (2009); Rose (1992).

For the first sign, the Creator told Moses to throw his ordinary-looking shepherd's staff to the ground. When Moses complied, the Lord turned the staff into a snake. Then, God told Moses to pick up the snake by its tail. Even though at first Moses recoiled from the sight of the snake, he obeyed the Lord's order. As the shepherd grasped the serpent, it turned back into a staff.[53] To the Egyptians snakes represented fertility, wisdom, and healing.[54] They were even worshipped as the patron deity in Lower Egypt.[55] Hence, this sign was meant in part to show God's authority over the pagan deities the Egyptians venerated.[56]

For the second sign, the Creator told Moses to put his hand into the fold (or top part) of his cloak, and then to remove his hand. When he did so, his hand became afflicted with what Osborn and Hatton (1999) describe as a 'flaky and scaly' skin disease, perhaps similar to 'psoriasis'.[57] Then, God told Moses to put his hand back into his cloak. When Moses pulled his hand out a second time, it was fully restored.[58] In ancient times, a variety of skin diseases were prevalent in Egypt, as well as elsewhere throughout the Fertile Crescent, which people considered to be incurable.[59] The second sign would reveal the Lord's power, for only he could heal the incurable.

In case the Hebrews remained unconvinced by the first two signs, God offered Moses one more to perform;[60] however, Moses would be unable to enact this demonstration of divine power until he arrived in Egypt. So, for the third sign, the Lord told Moses to take water from the Nile River and pour it on the ground. The Creator promised that when the shepherd did so, the water would turn into blood. The sight of the spectacle would be particularly sobering for the Egyptians, since they considered the Nile to be their source of life and productivity.[61] Turning the Nile's water into blood would prove that God had supreme power over the Egyptians' lives.

Still, despite all the preceding reassurances, Moses shied away from his divinely-ordained task. He respectfully addressed God as the 'Lord',[62] which renders the Hebrew noun *adonay*.[63] It emphasises the authority, rule, and majesty of God over all creation. 'God' is the typical rendering for *elohim* in the Hebrew. Despite the plural form of the noun, it is consistently used in the Old Testament as a singular term. *Elohim* portrays the Lord as the one, true, and unique God.

'Lord' renders the four Hebrew letters making up the divine name, *yhwh* (or *Yahweh*). According to Fretheim (1991:63) this distinctive term for the covenant-keeping God of Israel stresses the Creator's 'faithfulness' to his promises. Brueggemann (1994:714) carries the analysis further by drawing attention to God's eternal existence,

supreme power, and active involvement in human history. In short, the one whom Sarna (1991) refers to as 'absolute Being', is the ever-present, ever-living God.[64]

The preceding observation notwithstanding, Cole (1973:21) points out that Israel's Lord is 'dynamic, not static' in his existence. Moreover, the totality of scripture leaves the impression that the Creator is unique in his ontological essence, the fountain and source of all things, and the one who unifies all the forces of space-time reality. For this reason, as observed by Goldingay (2016:20), the immortal Lord stands in marked 'contrast' with the 'lifeless gods and images' venerated by pagans.[65]

Moses' deferential form of address in Exodus 4:10 might be paraphrased, 'Pardon your bondservant, Lord'. The shepherd put forward the excuse that he was an inept speaker who lacked eloquence, regardless of whether it was the past or the present. As observed by Cassuto (1983:48), the Hebrew text is literally rendered, 'heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue'. Expressed differently, Moses claimed he routinely became tongue-tied. One intriguing possibility for the shepherd mangling even the words he uttered is that he severely stammered or stuttered.

Marshall (2003), after evaluating the 'biblical evidence and post-biblical commentary' (71), concluded that Moses' 'speech condition' (73) was not due to 'structural or organic factors'. Gruber (1986:5), when taking into account 'Moses' hesitancies, his dialogue with God, and the eventual confrontation with Pharaoh', deduced that the lawgiver's 'speech impediment' was 'stuttering'. Similarly, Leon-Sarmiento, Paez, and Hallett (2013:231), as a result of their 'analysis of ancient descriptions' through the prism of 'current research', conclude that 'stuttering is the most likely pathology' experienced by Moses. The authors also surmise that there is 'clear evidence for both genetic origin and environmental triggers' associated with Moses' stuttering.[66]

The above notwithstanding, it remains unclear whether Moses was exaggerating the actual extent of his speech impediment, for Acts 7:22 quotes Stephen as declaring that Moses was 'powerful in speech'. In any case, God used a series of rhetorical questions to remind Moses that due to the Creator's omnipotence, he determined everyone's abilities and disabilities. Specifically, he made a person's mouth.[67] The Lord also decided whether people spoke or were mute, could hear or were deaf, and could see or were blind.[68] In the case of Moses, God had created the shepherd and intimately knew the limits of his abilities.

[64] Cf. Exod 3:13-14.

[65] Cf. Jer 10:14; Acts 14:15.

[66] Cf. Exod 6:12, 30; Garfinkel (1995); Gruber (1986); Leon-Sarmiento, Paez, and Hallett (2013); Levin (1992); Marshall (2003); McDermott (2016:1-14); Rosman (2014); Shell (1986).

[67] The mouth is a metonymy for the human organ of speech; cf. Caird (1980:136–7).

[68] Cf. Exod 4:11.

69 Concerning the role and function of the Old Testament prophets as God's authorised spokespersons, cf. Buller (2003); Möller (2005); Shields (2008).

70 Cf. Deut 18:18; Jer 1:9.

71 Cf. Exod 4:12.

72 Cf. Exod 4:13.

73 Cf. Exod 3:6.

74 Cf. Exod. 7:7.

75 Cf. Exod 4:14.

76 Cf. Exod 28.

77 Cf. Exod 4:14.

78 Cf. Exod 4:15.

79 Cf. Exod 4:16.

So, the Lord once again commanded Moses to go to Egypt. God reassured the reticent shepherd by promising to be with him as he spoke. Put another way, the Creator would work through the organs of speech, which he had created, to enable Moses, as the Lord's prophet,[69] to successfully accomplish his divinely-ordained task.[70] God even pledged to 'teach',[71] or instruct, Moses in 'what to say'. In short, his perceived lack of eloquence—regardless of its cause and extent—was not an obstacle for the all-powerful Lord.

As Sailhamer (1992:248) notes, Moses' audacious counter-response indicates that he remained extremely 'reluctant' in accepting the task God had given the shepherd. Thus, Moses pleaded with the Creator to send anyone else but his bondservant to do what God wanted.[72] Earlier, when the Lord announced his sacred presence from the burning bush, Moses covered his face because he feared the possibility of looking directly at God.[73] In contrast, when summoned by the Lord to carry out a redemptively important task, Moses dared to turn down the divine call. The Hebrew text of Exodus 4:14 literally says that, as a result, 'the anger of Yahweh burned against Moses'.

Graciously, the Lord sought to alleviate Moses' intense anxiety by telling him that Aaron, his older brother,[74] would be his spokesman. The Creator informed Moses that 'Aaron the Levite'[75] was already on the way to meet him. Childs (1976:62) observes that since both Moses and Aaron were descended from the tribe of Levi, the mention of Aaron as the 'Levite' points to his 'religious office'. Kaiser (1990:329) builds on this premise by stating that the biblical text anticipates Aaron's instalment as a priest after Israel's exodus.[76] His ability to 'speak well'[77] would enable him to perform a vital priestly function, namely, to instruct others—including Pharaoh and his court officials—about God through various judgment oracles.

The Lord noted that when Moses and Aaron were reunited, Aaron would be filled with delight. Perhaps the gladness in his heart would be due in part to the fact that the Creator had revealed himself to Moses and intended to use him to set the Hebrews free from their Egyptian taskmasters. When Moses spoke to his brother, he would tell Aaron what to say. God also pledged to help the duo speak and would even instruct them concerning what they must do.[78]

In this cooperative arrangement, Aaron would be Moses' agent and declare what he wanted the Lord's chosen people to know. Also, Moses would be like God to Aaron whenever Moses told his brother what to say to others about what the Lord was thinking and deciding.[79] Later in biblical history, the Creator would likewise

inspire his prophets to declare his judgment oracles to monarchs and people alike.[80] The Lord concluded by telling Moses to take his staff, for it would be the means for bringing about the wondrous 'signs'[81] the Creator had promised.[82]

Moses apparently ran out of excuses to avoid God's call for the shepherd to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt; or, perhaps Moses realised he had angered the Lord, and did not want to exacerbate the situation any further. In either case, Moses journeyed east back to Jethro's camp and obtained permission from his father-in-law to leave Midian and travel to Egypt. Jethro granted Moses' request to depart and wished him well.[83] The door of opportunity allowing Moses to return to Egypt was open. As further encouragement, the Lord assured Moses that the Pharaoh who had wanted him killed was now dead.[84] Moses could travel to Egypt without the fear of putting his life in jeopardy.

5. An Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

5.1. An overview of 1 Corinthians 1:1-9[85]

The first-century AD church at Corinth was relatively young when it began to be plagued by one crisis after another.[86] The congregational issues included disunity, abuse of church ordinances, disorder during worship services, theological disputes, and the extremes of lax morals and legalism. This long letter to the church was Paul's pastoral attempt to deal with the congregation's problems.[87]

Regarding the city of Corinth, it was located on a narrow isthmus of land in southern Greece about 45 miles from Athens, in the Roman province of Achaia. Then, as now, the lower portion of Greece was connected to the rest of the country by this four-mile-wide isthmus. So, all traffic between the two areas of the country passed by Corinth. The isthmus was bounded on the east by the Saronic Gulf and on the west by the Gulf of Corinth.

Sea captains could literally have their ships rolled across the isthmus on a stone tramway and avoid a 400-kilometre trip around southern Greece. As a result, the city prospered as a major trade centre, not only for most of Greece, but also for much of the Mediterranean area. The latter included North Africa, Italy, and Asia Minor. Nearby Isthmia hosted the Isthmian games, one of the two major athletic events of the day.[88] In turn, this event created more human traffic through the city and thus increased the potential for business and prosperity.

80 Cf. Exod 7:1-2.

81 Cf. Exod 4:17. Kruger (1997) observes that the 'salvation-history of the Israelites is one area where the application of the sign is particularly prominent'. According to Deut 4:35, miraculous events occur so that all humanity would recognise Yahweh alone as the one, true, and living God. Stolz (1997) advances the discussion by pointing out that both the writings of Second Temple Judaism and the New Testament build upon the theological emphasis found in the Old Testament.

82 Cf. Exod 3:20.

83 Cf. Exod 4:18.

84 Cf. Exod 4:19.

85 The discourse that follows in the next two sections presumes the authenticity and textual integrity of 1 Corinthians. The following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the overview of 1:1-9: Barrett (1968); Beale (2011); Bruce (1986); Fee (1987); Furnish (2003); Garland (2003); Gill (2002); Goldingay (2016); Grosheide (1984); Guthrie (1981); Kaiser (2008); Lenski (1961); Longenecker and Still (2014); Lowery (1994); Marshall (2004); Morris (1990; 2001); Sampley (2002); Schreiner (2013); Thielman (2005); Thiselton (2000); Verbrugge (2008).

86 Cf. Hafemann (1993); McRay (2000); Murphy-O'Connor (1992).

87 Hereafter, Paul is the presumed human author of the 1 Corinthians. For differing views on the optimal approach to assess the apostle's theological perspective, including his way of looking at salvation, Jesus' significance in the divine plan of redemption, and Paul's aspiration for the churches he established, cf. Campbell (2012; post-new perspective view); Johnson (2012; Catholic view); Nanos (2012; Jewish view); Schreiner (2012; Reformed view).

88 The Olympic games were the other major athletic events of the era.

As a commercial city with a constant influx of visitors from nations around the known world, Corinth also became notorious as a centre for rampant immorality. Greek philosophy was deliberated, and wisdom was emphasised, yet, such considerations in no way bridled the debauchery practised throughout the city. Indeed, in some respects, Corinth's religious makeup helped create this atmosphere of depravity.

Even though the Jewish residents had established a synagogue near the city's forum, at least 12 temples to various pagan deities existed in Corinth. In turn, these heathen shrines overshadowed the city's Jewish influence. One of the most famous of these temples was dedicated to Aphrodite, the ancient Greek goddess of love, pleasure, beauty, and procreation. Here, at one time, there were more than 1,000 priestess-prostitutes serving the shrine's patrons.

It was into this setting, while Paul was on his second missionary journey,[89] that he brought the gospel. Next, before leaving the city to continue his evangelistic excursion, the apostle established a church made up of a growing number of Christian converts. Sampley (2002:777) relates that the parishioners included both Jews and Gentiles, higher classes and lower classes, free persons and slaves. According to the assessment of Thielman (2005:276), 'Gentiles' most likely were 'in the overwhelming majority'. Fee (1987:4) adds that they were mainly from the 'lower end of the socioeconomic ladder'.

Upon Paul's departure, the philosophical, sexual, and religious temptations within Corinth took their toll on many of the new Christians. Garland (2003:8) argues that the central 'problem' involved 'too much of Corinth' infecting the 'church' located there. After a while, the deteriorating situation began to break down the unity of the faith community. When the apostle learned about the divisiveness and immoral practices arising among the believers, he sought to address in writing these and other issues the Corinthians were experiencing.[90]

According to 5:9, Paul previously sent a letter to the congregation,[91] which the early church did not preserve. After that, he received either a personal or written report from members of Chloe's household about several issues that were threatening the faith community and its ministry.[92] Admittedly, in line with the assertion made by Sampley (2002:803), there is minimal information concerning the 'identity of Chloe and her people'. Even so, Barrett (1968:42) represents the consensus view that Chloe was a female believer who lived in Corinth. According to Gill (2002:110), Chloe likely dispatched some of her 'domestic

[89] Paul's second missionary journey transpired from AD 49-52; cf. Acts 15:36-18:22. For a chronology of the major events in the life Paul, including relevant data found in Acts, the apostle's canonical letters, and extrabiblical sources, cf. Alexander (1993); Porter (2000); White (1992). For the sake of expediency, the chronology adopted herein is based on the dates appearing in Carson (2015).

[90] Cf. the representative list of issues listed in the opening paragraph of this section.

[91] The missive possibly was delivered to Corinth by itinerant missionary-evangelists.

[92] Cf. 1 Cor 1:10-11.

servants' (whether 'slaves' or 'freemen') to the apostle about the ecclesial situation unfolding in the city.

Paul, in response, began composing his treatise, which would become a vital resource for sustaining the ongoing work of the Corinthian congregation. Grosheide (1984:13) surmises from 16:8 that the apostle wrote the epistle from Ephesus during his third missionary journey.[93] Since he stayed in Ephesus over two years,[94] he likely authored the letter around AD 54. In that day, epistles normally started out with an introduction that listed the names of the sender and the recipients. Next came a formal greeting in which the author expressed thanksgiving, followed by the body, or purpose or writing. The letter usually concluded with appropriate remarks and a farewell.[95]

In general, Paul's epistle followed the preceding literary pattern. Thiselton (2000:82) remarks that the apostle replaced the typical generic greeting with a salutation combining Christian 'grace' and Hebrew 'peace'.[96] The apostle's expression of gratitude was also more than a formality. It was a sincere statement of appreciation for the well-being of this congregation, even though it was struggling. His farewell at the end of the epistle was similarly warm and personal, containing both individual greetings and a benediction.[97]

When thinking about the numerous problems that existed in the church at Corinth, it is impressive that Paul would offer thanksgiving to God for these believers. After all, earlier, when the apostle wrote to the theologically wayward Galatians, he struck a more sombre and strident tone.[98] Perhaps with respect to the Corinthians, Paul realised that it was better to begin his epistle to them on an affirming note. Even though he could not totally commend them for their noble deeds, he could praise the Father for the grace he had bestowed on them in union with the Son.[99]

5.2. A descriptive analysis of 1 Corinthians 1:10–2:5[100]

As noted in the preceding section, reports had reached Paul that factions and quarrelling had developed within the Corinthian congregation. Though the apostle had the God-given authority to issue commands to his readers, he instead appealed to them as fellow believers. Paul urged them, as those living under the Saviour's lordship, to discontinue bickering among themselves and begin to cultivate harmony, rather than hostility, within their faith community. He also implored them to be of one mind, whether it involved their thoughts, plans, or actions.[101]

In this diverse faith community, the parishioners favoured different prominent ministers of the gospel.[102] Some followed Paul,

93 Paul's third missionary journey transpired from AD 52-57; cf. Acts 18:23-21:16.

94 Cf. Acts 19:8, 10.

95 For a synopsis of Greco-Roman epistolary features, including their forms, types, and functions, cf. O'Brien (1993); Stowers (1992); Weima (2000).

96 Cf. 1 Cor 1:3.

97 Cf. 1 Cor 16:19-23.

98 Cf. Gal 1:6-10.

99 Cf. 1 Cor 1:3-4.

100 The following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the descriptive analysis of 1 Corinthians 1:10-2:5: Barrett (1968); Beale (2011); Bruce (1986); Eastman (1999); Ellingworth and Hatton (1993); Fee (1987); Furnish (2003); Garland (2003); Gill (2002); Goldingay (2016); Grosheide (1984); Guthrie (1981); Kaiser (2008); Ladd and Hagner (1997); Lenski (1961); Longenecker and Still (2014); Lowery (1994); Marshall (2004); Morris (2001); Schreiner (2013); Sampley (2002); Thielman (2005); Thiselton (2000); Treat (2014); Verbrugge (2008); Wells (2009).

101 Cf. 1 Cor 1:10-11.

102 For an extensive assessment of the four cliques Paul listed in 1 Cor 1:12, cf. Thiselton (2000:123-33).

103   Cf. Acts 18:24-19:1.

104   Verbrugge (2008:266) expresses the view that the so-called 'Christ party' sought to 'rise above any human leaders'. Guthrie (1981:249) goes further by suggesting that in 1 Cor 1:12, Paul might have been 'combatting' the assertions of a clique whose adherents denigrated Paul for not having 'any contact with Jesus' according to the flesh. Ladd and Hagner (1997:423) explicate that such a 'perspective' regarded the Saviour merely 'from a human point of view' (cf. 2 Cor 5:16).

105   Cf. 1 Cor 1:13. Sampley (2002:783) defines 'rhetoric' as the 'art of persuasion'. For an overview of classical rhetoric, including public oratory techniques used in the proclamation of the gospel, cf. Majercik (1992); Stamps (2000); Watson (1997); Winter (1993). According to Winter (1993), 'orators used three accepted proofs to persuade their audience', as follows: (1) *ethos*, or 'acting out of character'; (2) *pathos*, or 'manipulating' the 'feelings' of an 'audience'; and, (3) *demonstration*, or 'arguments' used to convince listeners. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 1-2, predominantly made use of the third category, especially as he attempted to convince his readers to become more Christlike in their attitudes and actions.

106   Cf. 1 Cor 1:14-16. For a discussion of baptisms and baptismal ceremonies in the New Testament, including the letters of Paul, cf. Beasley-Murray (1993); Hartman (1992); Wainwright (1997).

107   Cf. Rom 15:20; 2 Cor 10:16; Gal 1:8.

their spiritual parent, while others listened only to Apollos, an eloquent teacher and missionary from Alexandria, who had served in Corinth after Paul left to evangelise elsewhere.[103] There was also a faction devoted to Peter, whom Morris (2001:40) notes was the lead disciple among Jesus' 12 original followers. Marshall (2004:253) hypothesizes that the most spiritual-sounding congregants portrayed themselves to be ardent followers of the Messiah.[104]

Paul used a series of rhetorical questions to signal to his readers that they were creating divisions within the metaphysical body of Christ.[105] The apostle wanted them to realise that while the Father used different believers to proclaim the good news of salvation, they were all united in their message and focused on pointing the lost to the Son. On the one hand, various ministers of the gospel are portrayed in the New Testament as having teaching worthy of consideration; yet, on the other hand, the Redeemer alone died on the cross to atone for the sins of unsaved humanity.

Regrettably, the believers at Corinth had over-identified with one or another of their spiritual mentors rather than the Messiah. For this reason, Paul deemphasised the baptisms he performed while ministering among the Corinthian converts.[106] The apostle was not minimising the importance of this religious rite; instead, he was emphasising the supremacy of the Son in all situations. Beasley-Murray (1993) adds historical perspective by noting that from the earliest days of the church, ecclesial 'communities' regarded the practice as both a 'corporate' and an 'individual rite'. Furthermore, Paul leveraged this 'understanding' in his 'protest' to the believers at Corinth against all forms of 'individualism taken to an extreme'.

The Corinthians also displayed such worldly attitudes as self-centredness and immaturity. Their narcissistic, shortsighted preference for one minister of the gospel rather than another caused them to argue repeatedly with their peers over which evangelist they alleged was better. In this way, the congregants childishly lauded particular human spokespersons more than the Father's message of salvation centred in the cross of Calvary. They failed to appreciate what Sampley (2002:811) describes as the Father's 'decisive action' in the Son's 'death and resurrection', a series of historical events that 'inaugurated the apocalyptic end times'.

In response, Paul declared that his divine mandate was to proclaim the gospel, and that is what he exclusively focused on doing.[107] He refused to use clever speeches or high-sounding elocution to tell the unsaved about their need for redemption; rather, the apostle heralded the good news of redemption in plain

language. His intent was that the cross would not be emptied of its power to save the lost.[108] Paul was not opposed to those who carefully prepared what they said; instead, he was against orators who tried to impress others with their erudite knowledge or impressive speaking ability.

Factionalism among the believers at Corinth was not limited to favoured personalities. Many congregants also took sides on the issue of God's wisdom versus worldly learning; and, at the centre of many of their arguments was the necessity of Jesus' death and the certitude of his resurrection. In turn, these philosophical debates were drawing recent converts away from the key truths of the Christian faith anchored in the cross.

Paul acknowledged that though the cruciform message he and others proclaimed had the power to save lives eternally, it was sheer folly to unbelievers; yet, when they rejected the gospel as being irrational and absurd, they remained eternally doomed. In contrast, those who were saved because of trusting in the Messiah demonstrated the Creator's eschatological power to break into the temporal realm through the proclamation of the good news.[109]

Paul, quoting the Septuagint version of Isaiah 29:14, stated that the Father used the gospel to demolish heathen expressions of shrewdness and annihilate pagan forms of erudition.[110] Many people in the apostle's day claimed to be experts in philosophy and ethics; by way of concession, the Greeks were famous for being some of the most educated people in the first century AD. The luminaries of the day included Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Indeed, their contributions to world literature, mathematics, and metaphysics are still studied in the most acclaimed universities around the globe.[111]

The above statements notwithstanding, as Paul had done in 1 Corinthians 1:13, he likewise used a series of rhetorical questions in verse 20 to reinforce his argument against arrogant Hellenistic intellectuals and Jewish thinkers.[112] Many of the elitists had earnestly looked only to wisdom in this age in the hope of finding God and miracles to show beyond doubt that he operated within space-time reality.[113] They failed to realise that the Creator did not intend secular, pagan erudition to be the means of knowing him; instead, he wanted people to encounter him through faith in his Son, Jesus of Nazareth.

Divine wisdom is the ability to evaluate a range of options and to follow the best course of action. One's decision is based on biblical knowledge and understanding.[114] In contrast, human wisdom uses philosophy and reasoning to fathom the mysteries of existence and

108 Cf. 1 Cor 1:17.

109 Cf. 1 Cor 1:18. Guthrie (1981:591) defines Paul's understanding of 'faith' as 'essentially acceptance of God's message'. Thiselton (2000:223) goes further by pointing out that 'faith' denotes an outlook that 'includes both an intellectual conviction of truth', along with a 'stance of heart and will' that displays a reliance upon the Father's 'salvific act' in the Son.

110 Cf. 1 Cor 1:19. For an exposé of Paul's use of military symbolism in elaborating the apocalyptic and cosmic significance of the gospel, cf. Macky (1998). He maintains that Paul portrayed the Father as the 'warrior at the head of the eternal Kingdom of Light' (4). In addition, the Son is depicted as the Father's 'regent over the earthly realm of light'. 'Satan' is pictured as the 'Prince of Darkness' who presides over an 'opposing army', which consists of 'angelic rulers of nations'. Their temporal counterparts are 'human rulers', who operate as 'earthly agents of darkness'. Within this context, 'sin' and 'death' jointly function as the devil's 'agents' who overrun and subjugate the 'lives of individuals'; yet, through the Messiah's 'death' and 'resurrection', the Creator vanquishes all the 'powers of evil' arrayed against 'believers'.

111 For an exploration of classical Greek schools of thought, especially their treatment of logic, metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics, cf. Dillon (2000); Graham (2018); Paige (1993); Violatti (2013).

112 Cf. the comparable and suggestive wording of the LXX version of Isa 33:18.

113 In conjunction with 1 Cor 1:21, cf. Matt 12:38-39; Mark 8:11-13; Luke 11:16, 29-32; John 2:18-22; 6:30.

114 Cf. Prov 2:6.

115 Cf. Prov 1:7; 11:2.

116 Cf. Prov 17:24; Jas 3:13-18. For an appraisal of the concept of wisdom in the Pauline corpus, cf. Patzia (1997); Ridderbos (1997:242-5); Schnabel (1993); Schreiner (2001:92-4, 173-5); Wenham (1995:129-33).

117 Cf. 1 Cor 1:22-23. For a disquisition of the centrality of the cross in Paul's proclamation of the gospel, cf. McGrath (1993); Ridderbos (1997:182-93); Schreiner (2001:91-4); Stott (2006:38-45); Wenham (1995:147-55). McGrath (1993) highlights the following three points of emphasis: (1) the 'cross is the exclusive ground of salvation'; (2) the 'cross is the starting point of authentically Christian theology'; and, (3) the 'cross' is the 'centre of all Christian thought'.

118 Cf. 1 Cor 1:24.

the universe. Whereas people with mere human wisdom may brag about how much they know, those with divine wisdom humble themselves before the Lord in reverence and worship.[115] The worldly-wise flaunt authority and live for themselves, while the divinely-wise prioritise heeding the laws of the land and obeying the Creator.[116]

Paul readily admitted that both educated Jews and Greeks struggled to accept the crucicentric logic and apocalyptic imperative of Jesus' sacrificial death; nonetheless, as Treat (2014:144) elucidates, 'throughout redemptive history', the Father always intended to 'establish his kingdom' through the Son's 'crucifixion'. Regrettably, the divine plan of salvation involving the cross appeared to be utter madness to the worldly-wise; yet, a message that was offensive to Jewish elitists and lunacy to Greek sophisticates was the only way for people to arrive at a true knowledge of the Creator.[117]

The Greek phrase rendered 'Messiah crucified' was a startling contradiction in terms. Verbrugge (2008:270) clarifies that to the heathen elitists—regardless of their ethnicity—the noun translated 'Messiah' was associated with grandeur, dominance, and victory. In contrast, Fee (1987:75) indicates that the verb rendered 'crucified' denoted 'weakness', 'humiliation', and 'defeat'. Despite that, Jesus of Nazareth—the divine, incarnate Redeemer—was the locus of God's 'power'[118] to pardon iniquity and 'wisdom' to overcome the scourge of depravity. Garland (2003:63) adds that by means of the 'cross', humanity's social 'pyramid', including its caste system of iniquities, was upended.

In 1 Corinthians 1:25, Paul used sarcasm to challenge unsaved humanity's understanding about reality. By means of this literary technique, the apostle revealed a twofold, piercing irony. First, though the Creator appeared to be foolish, he was infinitely wiser than any person or group. Furnish (2003:40) comments that divine wisdom belongs to an 'entirely different order', for it 'transcends the boundaries of time and space'. Second, even when it seemed as if God was weak, he proved to be infinitely stronger than anyone or anything else in the entire cosmos.

Paul's broader point was that the Father, in his eternal wisdom and sovereign grace, deliberately chose a means of salvation that garnered the scorn of the world's acclaimed philosophers. Conventional expressions of sagacity reasoned that an all-powerful Creator would never allow his Son to die ignominiously on a cross; instead, such a truly supreme monarch would intervene and deliver his Son. None of this, though, mattered to God, for he used

the cross as a completely different and counterintuitive means to open wide the door of salvation to the lost.

It was not just the cross that the elitists regarded as being absurd. Likewise, in the view of unbelievers at Corinth, their Christian counterparts were deemed to be fools. Paul conceded that few, if any, of them were intellectually impressive, at least according to the sophisticated benchmarks of the day. This might be why the apostle's readers, as explained by Fee (1987:10), were tempted to incorporate some aspects of Hellenistic philosophy into their belief systems.[119] Allegedly, doing so would give them a greater status and respect among their peers.

Against the preceding backdrop, Paul warned his readers not to carry favour with their detractors. He reminded them that before becoming Christians, many of them did not occupy positions of power or originate from eminent families.[120] This situation contrasted sharply with pagan religions of the day, which favoured proselytes who had noble pedigrees and considerable wealth. Indeed, the aristocrats looked down upon the majority of the Corinthian converts as being feeble, contemptible, and deserving scorn.[121] Amazingly, it was to the rejects of society that the Creator entrusted the most valuable message the world has ever known.

Paul explained that the presence in the church of believers who had no rank or standing completely negated what secular, human culture deemed to be important. In this way, God disgraced the worldly-wise and overturned their warped perspective. Moreover, through the despised message of the cross, the Creator demonstrated conclusively that the lost could do nothing to earn their salvation. Consequently, no one had any basis for bragging before God that they deserved to be pardoned.[122]

So, all the effort in the world—along with all the wisdom in the universe—could never bring the unsaved any closer to the Lord. Regardless of whether it was the desire to be declared righteous, obtain holiness, or be redeemed from spending an eternity in hell, none of it was secured apart from faith in the Messiah. Beale (2011:476) is close to the mark when he refers to the Saviour as the 'complete and perfect eschatological' embodiment of these and every other eternal verity. Ladd and Hagner (1997:589) point out that the emphasis in 1 Corinthians 1:30 is on the ontological reality of the Son as the enfleshment of the believers' 'righteousness, holiness, and redemption'.

Accordingly, as Paul surmised in his paraphrase of Jeremiah 9:24, no person had any right to celebrate his or her own accomplishments; rather, he or she was to centre his or her

119 The amalgam of Hellenistic philosophy and Christian theology amounted to religious syncretism. For a synopsis of this phenomena within a Greco-Roman cultural context, cf. Arnold (1997); Pearson (2000); Schermerhorn (1924).

120 Cf. 1 Cor 1:26.

121 Cf. 1 Cor 1:27-28.

122 Cf. 1 Cor 1:29.

123 Cf. 1 Cor 1:31.

124 Cf. 1 Cor 2:3.

125 In the first century AD, Macedonia was part of northern Greece.

126 Cf. Acts 16:8-10.

127 Cf. Acts 17:16-34.

128 Cf. Acts 18:1.

129 Cf. Acts 18:2.

130 Cf. Acts 18:3-6.

131 Cf. Acts 18:7-8.

132 Cf. Acts 18:11, 18.

133 Cf. 1 Cor 2:1.

134 Cf. 2 Cor 10:10.

135 Cf. 1 Cor 2:1. Metzger (1994) spotlights a textual discrepancy in 1 Cor 2:1. A larger number of pertinent Greek manuscripts read μαρτύριον ('testimony'; cf. TR1881; SBLGNT; KJV; NKJV; RSV; NASB; ESV; Lexham; NRSV; NIV; NET), whereas a smaller number read μυστήριον ('mystery'; cf. Westcott; NA27; NA28; NRSV; CSB; NLT). Within the letters attributed to Paul, some form of the phrase 'mystery' plus either 'of God' or 'of Christ' is common (cf. 1 Cor 2:7; 4:1; Eph 3:4; Col 2:2; 4:3). There is one instance of the phrase 'testimony of our Lord' (cf. 2 Tim 1:8), and another of the phrase 'testimony of Christ' (cf. 1 Cor 1:6). Elsewhere, within the writings of Paul there is no other occurrence of 'testimony of God'. According to Fee (1987:91), the latter phrase, then, signifies the harder reading in 1 Cor 2:1, which explains why it enjoys stronger preference among various modern English language translations.

confidence and exultation only in the Lord.[123] This declaration remained true even for the apostle, who, as Ellingworth and Hatton (1993) point out, was 'weak from a human perspective' when he first arrived at Corinth.[124] This fact explains why he referred to himself as a relevant example of someone who though once eternally lost, found redemption through faith in the Messiah.

Even though Luke did not say anything in Acts about Paul's correspondence to the Corinthians, Luke did provide some background information about the apostle's founding of the church during his second missionary journey. Paul had come to Macedonia[125] after a vision he experienced while in Troas.[126] Before heading to Athens, he established churches in the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. The apostle's time in Athens convinced him that worldly wisdom was the epitome of folly.[127]

Next, after leaving Athens, Paul journeyed to Corinth.[128] There, with the support of an influential, married, Christian couple named Priscilla and Aquila,[129] the apostle preached in the local synagogue, that is, until Jewish opposition forced him to redirect the focus of his ministry on the resident Gentiles.[130] As a result of Paul leading a number of people to trust in the Saviour, a congregation was established.[131] The faith community consisted of both believing Jews and Gentiles. To them the apostle ministered for more than 18 months, and he accomplished a great deal of eternal good while headquartered in the city.[132]

As in Athens, the Hellenistic culture that Paul encountered at Corinth evaluated the presentation of new ideas on the basis of its eloquence and intellectual depth. So, in order for a message to be accepted, it had to be persuasively delivered; yet, three years later, as the apostle wrote about his earlier visit to Corinth, he recalled that he deliberately rejected this approach when proclaiming the gospel to the unsaved.[133]

Grosheide (1984:57) clarifies that a missionary such as Paul had the ability to speak like a well-trained Greek 'orator'. In that day, rhetoricians studied how to make clever speeches and use important-sounding words to convince an audience. Remarkably, the apostle rejected this option and, instead, heralded the good news in a simple, unpretentious manner.[134] The Greek phrase literally rendered 'testimony of God'[135] could refer to Paul's message about the Creator, the witness God made through the apostle, or his testimony initiated by God.

Regardless of which interpretive option is preferred, Paul declared divinely inspired and authoritative truth concerning Jesus' crucifixion. Indeed, the apostle intentionally decided to focus all

his attention on the cross-event.[136] Despite the contrarian consensus opinion voiced by Paul's detractors, the Spirit blessed the missionary's efforts. Nothing else could explain why so many unsaved people were converted as a result of the apostle's evangelistic ministry at Corinth.

Moreover, there was nothing either winsome or laudatory in Paul to attribute to his success. After all, before the apostle first arrived in the city, he had been beaten and imprisoned in Philippi, expelled out of Thessalonica and Berea, and spurned in Athens.[137] This harrowing set of circumstances is the basis for his statement that at that time, he was completely exhausted, felt totally inadequate, and feared for his life.[138]

The implication is that Paul's physical health, emotional state, and psychological condition kept him from preaching at his best. To the Corinthians listening to the apostle, he must have seemed poorly prepared to deliver a compelling witness; yet, despite Paul's run-down condition and dishevelled appearance, he received sustaining power from the Spirit to minister effectively to the lost in the city.[139]

Neither Paul's oratory skill nor his wide-ranging knowledge could explain the amazing number of conversions that resulted in Corinth.[140] The wonderful results could be traced only to the presence and power of the Spirit enabling the apostle to proclaim the gospel in straightforward terms and with unmitigated conviction.[141] As he looked back on those earlier days, he reminded his readers that what had taken place was a work of God and not anything based on human erudition and cleverness.

Expressed another way, Paul neither resorted to staged theatrics nor rehearsed techniques to manipulate a response from the people who heard the gospel. Garland (2003:84) infers that while the apostle undoubtedly studied and prepared his messages in advance, he did not rely upon his own shrewdness and brilliance to achieve his missionary goals; rather, he looked to the Spirit's wisdom and strength. In turn, this encouraged the Corinthians to do the same.[142]

Paul's remarks in 1 Corinthians 2:1–5 might contain an implicit allusion to some visitors in the city who were guilty of distorting the apostle's teachings with their own human-centred views about the Messiah. If so, it is possible to surmise that these opponents of the apostle claimed their understanding of truth was more valid than his. They could have also maintained that their sophisticated logic and carefully crafted oratory put Paul to shame.

136 Paul also proclaimed the truth of the Son's resurrection from the dead; cf. 1 Cor 2:2; 15:1-8.

137 Cf. Acts 16:22-24; 17:10, 13-14, 32.

138 Cf. 1 Cor 2:3.

139 Cf. Paul's illuminating comments recorded in 2 Cor 12:9-10.

140 Paul's impressive speaking ability, his deep understanding of God's Word, and his extensive awareness of his contemporary cultural horizon were all on display when he delivered his speech in the presence of the Areopagus council at Athens; cf. Acts 17:22-31.

141 Cf. 1 Cor 2:4.

142 Cf. 1 Cor 2:5

The proposed, preceding scenario sheds light on Paul's criticism of his readers' inflated regard for secular, pagan forms of sagacity. Out of pastoral concern, the apostle warned them about the dangers of their fascination with worldly wisdom. He declared that it would lead them to self-sufficiency and self-congratulation, which were the exact opposite of what would bring them to Christian maturity.

In any case, Paul did not try to hide his personal limitations; rather, he used them to magnify God's power. The presence of so many converts in Corinth demonstrated that effectiveness in ministry did not reside in any preacher—not matter how gifted and talented that person might be—but in the message about the crucified and risen Messiah. Ultimately, then, ministers of the gospel did not have to be brilliant, eloquent, or sophisticated; instead, they simply needed to rely completely on the Spirit's presence and power to bring the lost to saving faith.

6. Stuttering and the Beauty of Christ

6.1. Christ's beauty made perfect in weakness

As we have seen in the lives of Moses and the Apostle Paul, God's power is made perfect in weakness. Similarly, the beauty of Christ is made perfect in our own weakness, whether it is stuttering or some other disability, or the like. The beauty of Christ is no doubt infinitely perfect in itself,[143] in its essence, but by *being made* perfect, we mean its expression by which we perceive its manifestation in our midst. Christ himself accomplished his divinely-ordained task of salvation (Moltmann 1993) by means of the counterintuitive crucifixion, the ultimate symbol of humiliation and suffering in the ancient Roman Empire (Rutledge 2017:72–105; Wright 2016:19–21). While the flogging and crucifixion of Jesus were horrific and grisly, void of any sense of the beautiful (Stott 2006:31–32), Jesus' response,[144] sacrifice and salvific purpose are infinitely beautiful.

While one dare not liken stuttering or any other disability to Jesus' crucifixion and his atoning work, we might in some limited sense share in his humiliation and affliction.[145] If we submit our lives to Christ, we will begin to see the Spirit's presence and power in our lives illuminating the beauty of Christ to others, even when we find ourselves utterly inadequate. Both Moses and Paul, and many others were acutely aware of their inadequacy and feebleness, yet God hand-picked them as his instruments to accomplish his divine purposes. While this is folly to believers and unbelievers alike, it is genius on the part of God, whereby the person who stutters is

[143] Cf. Beeke 2011; Owen 2015.

[144] Christ's beauty is evident during his crucifixion when he, naked, in excruciating agony, and suffocating, turns to his mother and to John, and says to her, 'behold your son', and says to his friend, 'behold your mother' (John 19:25-25). Or when Jesus prays to his father about those who have crucified them in an ultimate expression of forgiveness says, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do' (Luke 23:34). The beauty of Christ is expressed here by his words and actions in his ultimate position of weakness, not to mention all that he is achieving in his sacrificial and atoning work on the cross.

[145] Cf. Matt 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23, 2 Cor 1:5, Phil 3:10, Col 1:24, 1 Pet 4:13.

emptied of his or her own brilliance. And even if he or she has such brilliance, they are unable to express it as they would like in everyday speech. Nevertheless, they are promised the comforting presence of Christ (2 Cor. 1:5) and the sustaining power from the Spirit to minister effectively, as they have nowhere else to look, but to the Spirit's wisdom and strength. It is despite stuttering that the stuttering theologian can proclaim the gospel that has the power to save lives eternally. Despite the means (stuttering speech and all that accompanies it) and the absurdness of the cruciform message, the Creator's eschatological power to break into this world through gospel proclamation is reinforced in strength and looks even more beautiful.

6.2. Feeling the inadequacy and suffering of others

Those who have suffered ill usually relate to those who suffer, perhaps more than someone who has never undergone similar suffering. God breaks into our world and experiences our life, our temptation, and our hardship climaxing ultimately in his agonising crucifixion. If anyone can relate to our suffering and humiliation, it is Jesus Christ (Moltmann 1993). Similarly, though certainly not comprehensibly, Christ calls on the theologian's speech to identify with those who feel inadequate or who have suffered in similar ways. God had concern for his people, the Hebrews, in Egypt, and so he hand-picked Moses as his instrument in leading his chosen people out of captivity and into the promised land. Christ has concern for the broken world, and for those who suffer, and thus calls upon those who have experienced humiliation, with the power of the Spirit, to comfort others through their speech and their writing, to point them to the beauty of the crucified and risen Messiah. McDermott, talking about stuttering, has said, 'No doubt your suffering this malady has caused you suffering. Let that knowledge of your own pain cause you to try to feel the pain of others and express to them your consolation. They will appreciate it' (2016:124). Similarly, Davies (2003:33–46) talks about how our own transformation and ontological existence is intensified as we begin to have compassion for another.

6.3. Stuttering inspires creativity and beauty

Depending on how the person who stutters responds to their stutter, it may stimulate tenacity and personal growth. Stuttering can be an extraordinary teacher.[146] As Baily has said, 'We know little about the great depths of the human spirit until we have endured suffering... Suffering[147] can become a doorway to profound wisdom' (Bailey 2009:70, 74). There are plenty of opportunities for

146 Cf. Bailey 2009:70.

147 One might argue that stuttering is a form of suffering, for the sake of this paper I take that approach

stuttering to be a catalyst for creativity and beauty. Stott tells us that 'deprivation' of any kind often forms the basis for 'creativity' (Stott 2006:368). Dr Tournier reminds us that 'we are scarcely ever creative without suffering' (cited in Stott 2006:369). And while it is not suffering or stuttering itself that makes us creative or tenacious, it is nevertheless how we respond to it. This is evident in the lives of those mentioned in McDermott's (2016) book, *Famous Stutterers: Twelve Inspiring People Who Achieved Great Things while Struggling with an Impediment.*

Moses, as we have already seen, stuttered, and while he 'was forced out of self-pity', he 'discovered that stuttering did not cripple him. He still stuttered, but he managed to lead a nation through perilous times' (McDermott 2016:120). God used him to perform astonishing miraculous works, unprecedented in the history of the people of Israel and wrote the Pentateuch, including at least three beautiful songs.[148]

Paul the apostle did not stutter, although writing to the Corinthian Church he told his readers how he came not with lofty speech or plausible words of wisdom, but in weakness and trembling. Yet, his message was a demonstration of the Spirit and power of God.[149] Later, in 1 Corinthians 13,[150] Paul composes arguably one of the most beautiful poems on love, not to mention the creativity in all his other letters.[151] Whether our speech is deficient, or if we are not particularly articulate, learned or wise by human standards, we need not be hindered from doing great things (McDermott 2016:121). If we avail ourselves as Moses and Paul did with the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus will use and inspire us to demonstrate his power and beauty in creative ways.

6.4. Stuttering as architecture for the beautiful

Architecture is fundamentally an envelope housing people and objects, accommodating human activity. By arranging form and space, it responds to specific conditions of function, context and purpose whilst communicating meaning (Ching 1996:ix). The American architect, Richard Meier, defined architecture as 'vital and enduring because it contains us; it describes space, space we move through, exist in and use' (Quintal 2016:online). Claudio Silvestrin (Elle Decor 2018:online), on the other hand, argues that architecture ought to complete nature, making nature more beautiful, giving it power.

Reflecting on the architecture of art museums, among others, I identify three options for basic design principles: (1) the art museum could be designed as a sculptured monument to the architect, the client's name or the client's marketing brand,[152] (2)

148 Cf. Exod 15 :1-21, Deut 32 :1-43, Ps 90.

149 Cf. 1 Cor 2:1-5.

150 Cf. Lioy's journal article (2018), 'The Supreme Importance of Promoting Equity, Kindness, and Humility: A Descriptive and Comparative Analysis of Micah 6:1-16 and 1 Corinthians 13:1-13'. *Conspectus* 25:56-91.

151 Although I enunciate the beauty and creativity of Paul's writings, one ought not to discount divine inspiration and the fact that Paul was a very learned man.

152 The architects at COOP HIMMELB(L)AU, for example, believe that an art museum in a city ought not only be a place where art is housed and viewed, but that it should also contribute to the urban fabric. This is evident in their Akron Art Museum, Knight Building Akron, USA, 2004. The extension stands in stark contrast to the original structure which consisted of brick and limestone, but now has an additional three stories of steel and glazing, with three components (1) the Crystal, which functions as the entrance, (2) the Gallery box, and (3) the Roof Cloud which is suspended above the building. No doubt, a sculptured monument to the architect and their client (Coop Himmelb(l)au, n.d.:online).

the architecture responds to its urban and/or geographic context,[153] or (3) the building may be well designed to be purposely inconspicuous in order to enunciate the valuable artefacts housed therein. In the third option, the aesthetics of the architecture are de-emphasised to emphasise the focus on its valued contents. Such a building does not compete with its contents or draw attention to itself, at least from the interior, but rather becomes architecture for the beautiful.[154] It is the last principle I am most interested in for the concept of the theologian's stutter as architecture for the beautiful. John the Baptist shares a similar sentiment; he proclaimed, 'He must increase, but I must decrease' (John 3:30, ESV).

Any Christian who stutters ought not hide his or her personal vocal limitations, as we saw in Paul. Our speech need not be brilliant, eloquent or sophisticated, yet it may be employed to enunciate the incomparable excellencies of Christ. Our limitations[155] in speech, or whatever else, are to house the beauty and power of the divine. The beauty of Christ does not ultimately reside in our talent or giftedness, but in broken vessels where the spirit of the crucified and risen Messiah works.[156] While the Apostle Paul did indeed study and prepare his messages, he did not rely upon his own astuteness and intelligence to achieve his missionary goals. Instead, he looked to the Spirit's wisdom and strength, often feeling totally inadequate. As a result, Paul saw an amazing number of conversions to the Christian faith, not to mention missionary success and Spirit-inspired writing for the New Testament canon.

While there is the continual danger of the stuttering theologian's frustration and introspective obsession with the impediment, he or she ought to fix their gaze on the beatific vision of Christ,[157] for it is only there where the joy of life is found.[158] The theologian can only point to the beauty of Christ and describe it to his or her listeners or readers, if he or she has gazed upon it.

The speech of the stuttering theologian, and by 'speech' I mean all communication output, is to be unobtrusive architecture, designed to house the beauty of Christ, so to speak, and because the stutter houses the beauty and the power of the divine, the stutter itself becomes a beautiful thing.

7. Conclusion

This paper was written from the perspective of stuttering; however, the same may be considered for any infirmity, disability or dire situation in which the Christian or Christian theologian

153 An example is Daniel Libeskind's extension to the Denver Art Museum, Denver, USA, 2006, which blends dramatically with the Rocky Mountains which sit alongside it, as well as its correlating urban fabric. The architect's goal was to represent part of the city's new cosmopolitan identity. Libeskind's trademark vertigo-inducing, sharply-angled form and spaces contribute to his marketing, and are a monument to be admired (Studio Libeskind, n.d.:online). Although not an art museum, a famous example is the residence designed in 1935 by Frank Lloyd Wright, called 'Fallingwater' in rural southwestern Pennsylvania. It is nestled among trees and has a series of cantilevers over falling waters (Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, n.d.:online).

154 Another design by Frank Lloyd Wright is the 'Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum', often referred to as 'The Guggenheim'. It is an art museum at 1071 Fifth Avenue on the corner of East 89th Street in the Upper East Side neighbourhood of Manhattan, New York City. The building is noticeable from the exterior; however, the interior accommodates a large spiral ramp which one ascends, viewing the artwork fixed on the wall, as one gently makes one's way to the top of the spiral. In this way Frank Lloyd Wright's 'Guggenheim' is inconspicuous, becoming architecture for the beautiful (Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, n.d.).

155 Or whatever limitations we might have, whether it is sickness, disease, disability, poverty orsimilar.

156 Cf. 2 Cor 12:5-10.

157 By 'beatific vision', I do not mean the eschatological notion found in Roman Catholicism.

158 McDermott 2016:120

may find themselves. The paper could have been 'cancer and the beauty of Christ', 'poverty and the beauty of Christ' or 'Asperger's and the beauty of Christ', or whatever it might be. Nevertheless, this article is the story of a specific theologian's speech, taking cognisance of Moses' speech impediment, and Paul and his willingness to put aside his intelligence and shrewdness for the sake of allowing the Holy Spirit's wisdom and strength to work through him, thus being a vessel for the beauty of Christ evident in the Acts of the Apostles and his letters. Consequently, we discovered that stuttering itself may be a beautiful thing, housing the superlative beauty of Christ. The paper began with Robert Falconer's testimony as someone who has stuttered since childhood, after which an overview of stuttering was presented. This led to serious biblical exegetical studies on relevant texts, namely, Exodus 4:10–17 and 1 Corinthians 1:10–2:5. Drawing from the previous sections, the last section of the paper offered a pastoral-devotional approach, in understanding stuttering in light of the beauty of Christ, with a special focus on the stuttering theologian's speech.

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Genesis 4:8: Why did Cain Murder His Brother?

Callie Joubert

Abstract

The literature on Genesis 4:1–16 advances several reasons why Cain murdered Abel. The majority of commentators believe that Cain killed him because of anger, jealousy or envy. Some suggest that the murder is to be explained by Cain's depression. Those who believe that Cain was jealous of Abel often confuse jealousy with envy. Then there are those who oppose the idea that Cain killed Abel out of envy, and suggest that God was capricious to reject Cain's offering. The aim of this paper is to make sense of these divergent views. First, it establishes with whom Cain was angry and why he got depressed. The thesis is that Cain got angry at God and not Abel, and became depressed because he realised that he could not obtain what he desired (God's favour) on his own terms. It then clarifies the conceptual connection between envy, covetousness and jealousy, and argues that Cain murdered Abel because he envied, resented and hated him for his character and spiritual qualities, and because he lost honour and esteem. It concludes, in contrast to critics, that God was not capricious when he rejected Cain and his offering.

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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 Christian scriptures are an inexhaustible resource for the study of human feelings. That is hardly surprising, given the role that the passions and affections (emotions) play in our everyday relationships, not only interpersonally, but also our daily living in relation to our Maker. Scripture reveals that people are subject to joy and depression, to anger and fear, to sadness and grief. That is because we are self-conscious and goal-seeking creatures; we can recognise what frustrates our desires and purposes, and we can reflect on them and the loss of what we value. Because we are by nature social creatures, we are given to love, affection and loyalty, hence also subject to anger, envy, hate, hostility, jealousy, resentment, sorrow, guilt, shame, remorse and regret. Thus, and most importantly, in displaying our feelings, we reveal ourselves – what kind of person we are, what we care about, how much we care, and what reasons move us to action.

It is, therefore, unsurprising that Cain's murder of Abel has been an object of scholarly attention since antiquity. When Cain and Abel 'were in the field', the Bible says, 'Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him' (Gen 4:8).[2] Why did he do that? The answers to that question present us with three problems I wish to address.

2. The Problems

The literature on Genesis 4:1–16 reflects several reasons why Cain murdered his younger brother. These range from depression (Gruber 1978:89–90) and anger (Fruchtenbaum 2008:119; Gray 2003:347; Lin 1997:78; Michael 2015:458; van Volde 1991:29; Waltke 1986:370; Webb 2008:60) to covetousness (Gray 2003:347), hate (Hughes 2004:105; Lin 1997:78; Waltke 1986:371), hostility and rage (Reis 2002:107), irritation and resentment (Burnett 2016:47, fn. 7; Hughes 2004:104; Lin 1997:78; Moberly 2009:97, 99) to jealousy (Davis 1984:577; Smit 2013:7; Webb 2008:60) and envy (Blowers 2009:22; Hagedorn and Neyrey 1998:32; van Volde 1991:29). The problem is that these commentators rarely clarify the similarities and differences between these emotional states and passions.

An even larger problem relates to what Genesis 4:1–16 does not say. Some commentators suggest that readers of the text make a mistake to turn to the New Testament to validate their understanding of the narrative. For example, John Byron (2012:334) states that the text does not declare Abel righteous; 'it is awarded to him posthumously by later interpreters'. His

righteousness in Matthew 23:35 'is a Matthean addition' (p. 336), and 'As with Abel, Cain was saddled by interpreters with titles and character traits that do not appear explicitly in the Genesis 4 story' (p. 338; cf. also Kim 2001; Lohr 2009). However, if Byron's objection is valid, then we would be unable to understand, for example, the meaning of the bronze serpent in Numbers 21:8–9 and 2 Kings 18:4. To see why Byron's objection is misleading; note that the bronze serpent is referred to only twice in the entire Old Testament before Jesus refers to it again in John 3:14–16 as a prophetic type of his crucifixion for the healing of our souls. Therefore, if it is a sound hermeneutical principle to allow scripture to interpret scripture, then our understanding of the reason Abel was killed does not begin and end in Genesis 4.[3]

The third problem I wish to deal with is the accusation that God was capricious to reject Cain's offering. According to Angela Kim (2001:66), interpreters 'recast the story in light of sibling rivalry and envy', and along this way 'deflect attention away from the more troubling problem of YHWH's capriciousness' (p. 66): God unfairly rejected Cain's offering. But that is not what scripture says; God rejected *both* Cain and his offering (Gen 4:5). An additional problem for her is that 'envy itself is not presented as the explicit motive for the murder' in the text (p. 68), in contradistinction to how most Jewish interpreters and church fathers understood the reason for Abel's murder.[4]

My aim is to shed some light on these problems. I want to suggest that the emotions that are listed as explanations for the murder are all, in one way or another, interconnected. The challenge is to place them in the right perspective. For example, with whom was Cain angry, and if he got depressed, why. I hope to show that Cain got angry with God and not Abel, and became depressed because he realised that he was unable to have what he desired on his own terms. By implication, his will was frustrated. Events in the life of Jonah, Amnon (2 Sam 13:1–6) and King Ahab (1 Kgs 2:1–16) will hopefully help us to understand that. I will then clarify the conceptual connection between envy, covetousness and jealousy, and argue that Cain murdered Abel because he envied, resented and hated him for his character and spiritual qualities, and the honour and esteem he lost. Evidence from the New Testament will be used to defend the thesis. Taken together, the evidence will help us to determine whether God was capricious when he rejected Cain and his offering.

[3] As Waltke (1986:364) pointed out, there is nothing wrong about an approach to the text that presupposes that the narrator drops clues that demand the close attention of the reader, and that the reader may turn to the rest of scripture to determine the meaning of those clues.

[4] Blowers (2009:22) concludes his study of envy on the following note: 'Pagan and Christian writers alike in late antiquity recognised that the invidious emotions took shape through their subject's incipient judgments of superior or inferior status or stature in relation to a desired good (honor), moral or otherwise'.

3. Cain's Rejection, Anger and Depression

Our text states the following about Cain's anger and what several authors referred to as his 'depression' (Kruger 2004:214):

> So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell' (Gen. 4:3–5).

For Mayer Gruber (1978:96), 'Cain's murdering Abel is to be explained … by reference to the etiology of depression'. Although he thinks Cain got depressed because he was 'rejected by his love-object' (p. 94), he leaves his reader totally in the dark about what rejection entails. He also seems to think that Cain was rejected because he did not offer his offering 'correctly' (p. 94, fn. 19). From a biblical perspective, to be rejected by a loved one is a devastating experience. Isaiah puts it thus: 'Like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of youth when she is rejected'. Here the youthful wife is rejected because of no fault of her own. However, the Bible shows that when God rejects a person, he does so for good reason. For example, King Saul was told because 'you rejected the word of the Lord' the 'Lord has rejected you' (1 Sam 15:26; cf. vv. 22–23). The author of Hebrews admonishes his readers to see to it that there is 'no immoral or godless person like Esau' among them; he 'sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it with tears' (Heb 12:15–17).

From our quoted passage above, two things seem quite obvious. The first is that Cain could not have been angry at Abel.[5] If anger is an emotional response to an insult or offence to one's status, pride, or dignity, and is directed at an offender, then Cain's anger must have been directed at God. The context provides no clue that suggests that Abel insulted or offended Cain in any way or at any time. The second point is straightforward: the quoted passage explicitly states that God looked with favour upon *both* Abel and his offering as well as with disfavour upon *both* Cain and his offering.[6] The New Testament writers are, therefore, not inconsistent about what they wrote about Cain and Abel. The writer of Hebrews affirms that 'Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain' (Heb 11:4), and the Apostle John affirms that Cain was without love[7] and was 'of the evil one' (1 John 3:10–12).

5 Most commentators agree that Cain's anger was directed at Yahweh (Michael 2015:458; Waltke 1986:370). However, Sailhamer (1992:112) describes Cain's response as one of anger against both God and his brother. Smit (2013:7) seems to think that Abel's murder was Cain's claim of victory over Abel: 'This was in fact an ultimate victory, as Abel was no longer there to taunt him or seek favours ahead of him'.

6 Commentators seem divided on this point. As noted by Moberly (2009:93), the great majority of interpreters from antiquity to the present explain God's preference of Abel's offering in terms of a defect in either Cain or the quality of the sacrifice (cf. Gray 2003:347; Michael 2015:458; Webb 2008:60). Fruchtenbaum's (2008:118–119) contention is that Cain killed him out of anger when his bloodless sacrifice was not accepted by God. However, Waltke (1986:369) is adamant that Cain's offering was not rejected because it was bloodless. The deformity was 'in his character' (see also Sailhamer 1992:112). Hughes (2004:103) concurs: 'the Old Testament Scriptures honor both types of offerings … The difference was that of heart attitude'.

7 Of all the commentators listed in this paper, Moberly (2009:88) is the only one who describes the 'Cain and Abel narrative as a negative exemplification of the double love commandment' in Matthew 22:36–39.

The foregoing information leads to the question of whether Cain had any reason to become angry and depressed. Our text states, 'Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door, and its desire is for you, but you must master it"'. And Cain told Abel his brother (Gen 4:6–8).

God's questions suggest that Cain had no reason to have felt the way he did. Otherwise the questions 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?' would have been inappropriate or out of place. It is also clear that God did not only act graciously by offering Cain an opportunity to change his situation; God informed Cain what was expected of him: he had to master his sin and do right. It implies that Cain realised, thus was fully aware, that he could not obtain God's favour on his own terms, and that, I submit, explains his depression. To see why, it would be useful to take a brief look at events in the lives of Jonah, Amnon and King Ahab.

3.1. Jonah and anger

The prophet wrote that he became 'greatly displeased... and angry' (Jonah 4:1) after he became aware that 'God relented concerning the calamity which he had declared he would bring upon' the wicked Ninevites (3:10). It suffices to make three points. First, the quotations suggest the reason he got so intensely unhappy and angry was because his knowledge of God's compassionate nature and willingness to forgive repented sinners (v. 2) was at cross-purposes with his own wishes for them. What Jonah wished for was nothing less than their death. It suggests that Jonah had absolutely no concern for the well-being and/or future of these people. Second, Jonah must have realised that God challenged his uncaring and unforgiving attitude; but instead of being willing to change it, he wished to die (v. 3). Finally, just as God did with Cain, God graciously asked Jonah (twice!) whether he had any 'good reason to be angry' (vv. 4, 9), and that after God demonstrated his own care of and goodness toward Jonah with a miracle (vv. 6–11).

3.2. Amnon, King Ahab and depression

In 2 Samuel 13, we read of King David's eldest son Amnon, who thought he was 'in love' with his beautiful half-sister Tamar (vv. 1, 4). But Amnon was a deeply frustrated man; he could not have his way with her sexually, for three reasons: (1) she was a virgin, meaning she was unmarried (v. 2); (2) because she was a virgin, she was most probably never alone, since it was the custom among the Israelites to keep young unmarried women protected; and (3)

the Law of Moses (God's will) forbids incest (cf. Lev 18:6–18; 20:11–14, 17). Scripture says that 'Amnon was so frustrated because of his sister that he made himself ill' (v. 2). That 'illness', referred to in verse 4 as depression, was something Jonadab, Amnon's shrewd friend, could observe 'morning after morning' in Amnon's demeanour and behaviour—he refused to eat. Here we have a person who is willing to starve rather than deal with his sinful desires. Because of that, he eventually raped her in order to satisfy his lust (v. 14).

The emotional reaction of Amnon has similarities with those of Cain and King Ahab. 1 Kings 21 documents that King Ahab visited Naboth only to express his desire to have Naboth's vineyard (v. 2). Because Naboth lived according to the will of God, he said to Ahab, 'The Lord forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers' (v. 3; cf. Lev 25:23; Num 36:7). Thus, unable to obtain it on his terms (vv. 1–2), he got 'sullen and vexed' (depressed), laid down on his bed, and just as Amnon, he refused to eat (v. 4). The most amazing thing is, when the king heard that Naboth was dead, he immediately got up from his 'sickbed' and took possession of what he coveted (desired).

By way of summary, it is not difficult to see why Cain got angry and then depressed. Just as Jonah, he became angry for no good reason. Jonah would rather die than accept God's will for the Ninevites. His anger demanded retaliation and retribution, because he judged them to be unworthy of God's forgiveness. Cain, as Amnon and King Ahab, became depressed when his desires to obtain God's favour were frustrated. Instead of mastering their sinful passions, these people chose to focus on the person whom they judged to be the cause of their frustration rather than God's will. Cain, instead of following God's advice and approaching God on God's terms, decided to have his own way, a way the New Testament refers to as 'the way of Cain' (Jude 11). It began with anger and depression, followed by the rejection of God's counsel and eventually, the murder of an innocent person.

I shall next distinguish between envy, covetousness and jealousy, and by so doing, lend support to commentators who believe that Cain killed his brother out of envy. The analysis will show that these passions are also interwoven with resentment, hostility and hatred, which are all forms of anger. At least, it will show that the boundary of our feelings is not always neat and clean. Some often occur together, for one quite naturally transmutes into another. Nevertheless, they are distinct feelings, involving different beliefs and what people value (Taylor 1988:233–249).

4. Envy

8 According to Cruz (1984:357), OT expressions of 'evil eye' and 'to eye' indicate 'envy and jealousy' (cf. 1 Sam 18:9; cf. Mark 7:22). In contrast, a 'good eye' signalled an honourable and benevolent person (Prov 22:9). For an in-depth study of the meaning of 'evil eye' and envy, see Elliott (1992:52–65; 1994:51–84).

9 'It is resentment at not having that to which we believe ourselves entitled. Our envy begrudges both the good fortune of beneficiaries and generosity of benefactors' (Elliott 1992:59).

10 'Passion' or 'urge' (*thymos*) can refer to an evil feeling (*pathos*), desire or pleasure. Cf. Num 5:14; Prov 6:34; 14:30; Rom 1:26; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:5; in Rom 7:5 and Gal 5:24 passion is associated with the 'flesh' (sinful nature). See Vine (1984:28-30).

11 'Envy and strife' in Phil 1:15 is contrasted with 'good will' (*eudokia*) (Field 1975:58).

The envious person is one who has his or her eye[8] on another person as a target for hostile feelings and resentment.[9] According to John Elliott (1992:55), implicit traces of the concept of the 'evil eye' can be suspected in texts that refer to envy, hatred, greed or covetousness (Gen 4:5; 30:1; 37:11; Exod 20:17; 1 Sam 2:32; 18:8–9; Ps 73:3; Prov 23:1; Jer 22:17). Hostility, as a form of anger, is the desire to spoil the better position of another, because what the other has is not available to the envier (cf. Gen 26:14–22; Luke 11:49–54). It seems that it is not so much the qualities of the possessor that are the reason for envying him or her; rather, they indicate to the envious person that he or she is lacking them. It is a deeply painful feeling, for the presence of the possessor of the desired goods is a constant reminder of the envier's inferiority and envy.

Paul Blowers (2009:22) refers to 'envy' as a 'vicious passion'.[10] The book of Proverbs compares it to a cancer: 'passion [envy; NKJV] is rottenness to the bones' (Prov 14:30). Jesus teaches that its source is the sinful heart (Mark 7:21–23), and Paul mentions it as one of the manifestations of the sinful nature (Gal 5:19–21). Envy is also mentioned in word groups in which covetousness, maliciousness, strife and evil speaking is mentioned (Mark 7:21–23; Rom 1:29; Gal 5:26; 1 Tim 6:4; Titus 3:3; 1 Pet 2:1). In addition, the scriptures show that envy has certain objects, which can range from material objects to someone's status or stature and character qualities. For example, the Philistines envied Isaac for his possessions (flocks, herds and 'great household') and might (Gen 26:14, 16), the consequence of which was constant frustration for Isaac, and continuous strife and hostility (vv. 15–22); a person may be envious of wrongdoers (Ps 37:1) as well as the prosperity of the unbeliever and wicked (Ps 73:3; Prov 3:31; 23:17; 24:1); the labourers in Matthew 20 were envious of the goodness (i.e. character) of the landowner who said to them: 'Is your eye evil because I am good?' (v. 15); and some people even preach salvation in Christ 'from envy and strife' (Phil 1:15).[11] The desire of the latter was to undermine Paul's reputation.

Based on the information which the Bible provides, it is reasonable to infer that someone cannot feel envy without some conception of himself or herself and an awareness of his or her own limitations. It implies concern with esteem (or honour), and the degree of the intensity will depend on how undermining one's own and others' favourable view of oneself is, including what the relevant good is one is believed to be lacking.

4.1. Envy and covetousness

Covetousness[12] is not only related to envy; it is also possible that it is the root of envy. From what we have seen so far, it seems reasonable to distinguish at least three main differences between envy and covetousness. In the first place, envy seems to have a wider scope. Covetousness is the desire to have another's possessions—anything that belongs to one's neighbour (Exod 20:17—a wife or husband, house, cattle, servants, and so forth). But we have also seen that the envier, in addition to coveting someone's possessions, envies another's character and moral qualities, position of honour, esteem or reputation (Gen 26:14, 16; Matt 20:15; Phil 1:15), if not also someone's faith and right standing with God (Heb 11:4, 6). In the second place, unlike covetousness, envy involves ill-will towards the person envied. Envy is not the desire (passion) to merely have what another has; it is a feeling of discontent, displeasure or resentment that another has what someone wants or desires for oneself. Finally, whereas a covetous person may feel satisfied when he or she attains what another has, the envious feels satisfied when the other loses what he or she is envied for having.

4.2. Envy and jealousy

What a person envies and is jealous of matters deeply to that person.[13] Whereas envy 'is the displeasure at the assets and success of another, a resentful consciousness of inferiority to the person envied, a sense of impotence to acquire what is desired, and a malevolent wish to harm the envied one or to see him deprived of what he has', jealousy 'involves the fear of losing what one already possesses and has legitimate claim to' (Elliott 1992:58). In scripture, God is referred to 'a jealous God' (Exod 20:5), which refers to God's intimate and exclusive relationship with Israel (Exod 20:4–6; 34:12–16). Not surprisingly, this relationship is illustrated with a marriage (Isa 54:5–6; 62:5). The Apostle Paul informed the church in Corinth that 'I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy' (2 Cor 11:2) in order to denote God's deep concern for them.

It seems reasonable to infer that the paradigmatic objects of jealousy are relationships and love, pre-eminently those characteristics of the marriage relationship. It involves rage and vengeance (a desire for retaliation) at the discovery of unfaithfulness and betrayal (Prov 6:34), and is mostly linked with strife (Rom 13:13; Jas 3:14, 16) and anger (2 Cor 12:20). We may say that someone can become jealous of the love and affection bestowed on another (Gen 37:11, 28; 39:2, 21ff.) and another's status or importance, even in the church (1 Cor 3:3). Thus,

12 'Covet' means to fix one's desire upon something or someone (*epi*, upon, and *thymos*, passion). It is used in a good sense (1 Cor 12:13 [v. *zēloō*]; 14:39) or bad sense (Exod 20:17; Deut 5:21; Rom 7:7–8; 13:9; 1 Cor 10:6 [n. *plonexia*, from *pleon*, more, and *echō*, to have]; 1 Tim. 6:10 [v. *oregō*]). 'Coveting' in Mark 7:22 is 'covetings' in the original, meaning various ways of coveting. In Rom 1:29 the word is 'greed' (cf. Luke 12:15; Eph 4:19; 5:3; 1 Thess 2:5; 2 Pet 2:3, 14) which is idolatry (Eph 5:5; Col 3:5). The adjective, *pleonektēs*, literally means eager to have more, to have what belongs to others or greedy (1 Cor 5: 10-11; 6:10; Eph 5:5). See also *philarguros* (lit. money-loving) in Luke 16:14 and 2 Tim 3:2. Moo (1996:433) states that 'coveting' refers to an 'inner desire to "possess"' and adds that it encompasses 'illicit desires of every kind' (p. 434).

13 'Jealousy' (*zelōs*) is the 'desire to have the same or the same sort of thing' (Vine 1984:369). Cf. Jas 4:2 (you are 'envious' [v. *zēloō*] and do not obtain'); Jas 3:14, 16 ('bitter jealousy' [also Gal 5:20] and 'selfish ambition' [*eritheia*; also Phil 2:3]). Where this passion is present 'there is disorder and every evil thing'. It is also used in a good sense (Jas 4:5).

jealousy, just as envy, may involve a sense of humiliation; in the case of envy, a person may feel humiliated by competitive failure in which the person bitterly envies and resents the esteem or honour of a rival. In the case of jealousy, a person may feel humiliated at the loss of love and betrayal, for the betrayed had bared his or her soul and body to the gaze of the beloved. While the jealous seem to value relationships, intimacy, devotion and possessions and, therefore, want to keep and protect it, what the envious value is his or her status, esteem and honour and, therefore, desire the good the other has. Note, however, that the jealous value what he or she believes is important enough to warrant protection in the face of a perceived threat. By contrast, the envier does not necessarily value the other's good; he or she believes that the other is not entitled to his or hers. Thus, if we think of jealousy as a defensive emotion, then we may think of envy as a self-protective emotion. However, despite the common features of envy and jealousy, there are several differences between these two passions.

Firstly, the feeling of envy is rooted in the desire to deprive another of what he or she has, and jealousy is rooted in the desire to have for oneself the same sort of thing another has. Secondly, whereas the envious desire to have or acquire what another has, to begrudge the possessor his or her possessions, and to take malicious pleasure in his or her loss of them, the jealous person desires to keep the love that a beloved has granted him or her, fearing and profoundly resenting its loss to another. Thus, while someone may envy the character traits, esteem or possessions of another, the object of jealousy is a relationship that obtains between two other people (cf. Acts 7:9; 13:44−46). Thirdly, the envious person does not necessarily desire, if at all, an exclusive relation with another. Jealousy does. We can, therefore, infer that envy may lead to malice, spitefulness and hatred, and jealousy to resentment at the deprivation of an exclusive love and anger at the loss of intimacy and devotion, if not also a desire for revenge and punishment (cf. Num 5:14, 30; Prov 6:34).

So when Cain murdered his brother Abel, for what could it possibly have been? It is easy to conclude that Cain was jealous of Abel; Cain's offerings were rejected by God, he lost God's favour, and we may even conclude that he lost his 'love-object' (Gruber 1978:94). But if so, what was he jealous of? The problem is that Genesis 4:1−16 provides no clue that allows us to think that Cain cared about his relationship with God, the object of his anger; if he had, he would have done something to keep or obtain God's favour. In fact, there is a total absence of love on Cain's part, hence the Apostle John's explanation for the killing of his brother (cf. 1 John

3:10–16). John suggests that Cain hated him (cf. vv. 13, 15). It is possible that Cain hated Abel because he cared more about honour and esteem, for one of the first things he did after he 'went out of the presence of the Lord' was to 'build a city' (Gen 4:16–17). Perhaps it was his way of attracting the honour and esteem he so deeply and desperately desired. I wish to submit that Cain killed him out of envy, despite the fact that he may have been jealous of God's relationship with Abel.

4.3. Envy and Cain

We recall that God rejected *both* Cain and his offering. Thus, to obtain God's favour, he had a choice: either he wished to master his sin and become like his brother, or, if unwilling, not to let Abel have his valued goods either. And here we come to the distinguishing mark of envy, which has been alluded to throughout the foregoing analysis: envy, as opposed to jealousy, essentially involves comparison. Envy is experienced as frustration at not having what the envier believes he or she needs, with consequent anger and resentment directed at the other. The good is, therefore, not desired for its own sake, but primarily to boost self-esteem. That is so because the envier would not feel as frustrated and hostile if his view of himself needed no protection from comparison.

Not only has Cain compared his offering with that of his brother, and realised that his brother's was better, he also compared himself with Abel's character and spiritual qualities. He consequently felt himself as deprived by comparison; it was Abel's qualities which explain his comparatively advantageous status and position, and that is what Cain desired to remove or eradicate. We can say that Abel had become a competitor or rival whose acceptance by God was in some way linked to his own failure. It means Abel had become a thorn in Cain's flesh, rather than an object of admiration. I want to suggest that Cain envied and resented Abel for at least three things.

The first was Abel's righteous status before and in relation to God (cf. Matt 23:35). The second is that he envied Abel's faith (Heb 11:1–4), and the third is that Abel was resented for his prophetic office (Luke 11:49–51). Thus, if they had indeed been in the field, as Genesis 4:8 states, then it is not difficult to imagine that Cain may have not approved of what Abel, as a prophet of God, may have revealed to him about himself and what it was that was pleasing to God; for scripture says, 'And without faith it is impossible to please Him' (Heb 11:6). Thus, the mere presence of Abel was much more than he could bear. Lest the reader think this is far-fetched, let us consider Jesus.

4.4. Envy and Jesus

Two of the Gospel writers noticed and recorded that 'he [i.e. Pilate] knew that because of envy they [the chief priests] had delivered Jesus' to him (Matt 27:17–18; Mark 15:10).[14] What did they envy Jesus for having? The short answer is, for everything about him which they could not be and have for themselves. Realising that, they decided that Jesus should not have it either—by having him killed. What this confirms about Cain's envy and that of the chief priests is that the root of their passion lay in comparison and self-love (self-centredness) which, in turn, is the reason for the rivalry (cf. Jas 4:2). It also reveals that envy, like most other passions and affections, provides the envier with a motive for action; it is the envier's reason for doing evil. The envier acts to deprive the envied of that object he or she desires or wants only for him or herself, even if it means bringing about the death of the envied.

Losing the esteem or favour of either God or others is nothing but a painful experience (cf. Gen 4:13–16). It is, therefore, connected with two more passions or affections. One is the fear of losing esteem or favour; the other is the passion to gain it – at whatever cost. It appears to be a problem in the church as well, as can be illustrated by events that occurred in the lives of Ananias and his wife Sapphira (Acts 4:1–11). They must have compared themselves with Barnabas, of whom it is said that 'he owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet' in order that it be used to meet the needs of the needy (Acts 3:34–37). Noticing his generosity and benevolence (i.e. his goodness), Ananias and his wife must have thought that that was a quick way to gain the esteem of the church, albeit through deception. Simon the magician had been in 'the gall of bitterness' after he became a Christian, for he realised that he, by comparison with the apostles, no longer enjoyed the attention of the 'smallest to the greatest' (Acts 8:23). Scripture says, 'Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of hands, he offered them money' (v.18). He thought that he could purchase the Holy Spirit as one would purchase a commodity only for its instrumental value, thus to restore what he valued most and lost, namely, the honour and esteem of others.

Let us return to Jesus and see why he was envied. It is most interesting that both Matthew and Luke refer to 'the righteous Abel' in the context of a set of woes that Jesus pronounced to 'experts'—scribes, Pharisees and lawyers (Matt 23:13–36; Luke 42–52). For my purposes, it is enough to note that Jesus, himself a prophet, referred to prophets these 'experts' had killed, 'from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah' (Luke 11:51). If Abel and

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14 It is interesting that Carson (1984:569) makes no reference to envy or jealousy in his commentary on Matthew 27:17–18. But, on page 428, he writes that 'envy' (lit. 'evil eye') in Matthew 20:15 'refers to jealousy'. Turner (2008:479), in turn, says that 'evil eye' in that text 'reflects deep envy'. Both Wessel (1984:774) and Stein (2008:701) write that 'evil eye' in Mark 15:10 'clearly means envy' and not jealousy. It is also interesting that 'envy' in Mark 7:22 and Galatians 5:21 appears in the plural (*phthonoi*), which suggests, as with coveting, many kinds of envy.

Jesus were killed out of envy, then it is most probably the reason the other prophets were killed, and by implication, because of their reputation and because they enjoyed God's favour. It is also reasonable to conclude that Jesus' presence and reference to the righteous Abel made them aware of their own envy. For scripture says that soon after Jesus spoke to them about the killing of Abel and the prophets, 'the scribes and Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question him closely on many subjects, plotting against him, to catch him in something he might say' (Luke 11:54).

If the scribes and Pharisees compared themselves with Jesus and saw him as a rival, then we may ask for what did they compete? Without any doubt, it must have been their love of honour and fame, for which Jesus berated the Pharisees as follows: 'Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the front seats in the synagogues, and the respectful greetings in the market places' (Luke 11:43). Jesus was telling them that they did not deserve that honour, because they 'are like concealed tombs' over which people walk but are unaware of them (v.44). The Gospel of Mark tells us that Jesus' 'fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee' (Mark 1:28; NKJV. See also 1:45; 2:1–2, 13; 3:7–8, 20; 4:1; 5:20–23, 27–28; 6:14, 32–34, 53–56; 7:24–25; 8:1, 27–30; 10:1, 46; 11:1–11, 18) and that great crowds of people 'enjoyed listening to him' (12:37; lit. 'were gladly hearing him'). To the enviers, that must have been a painful feeling: their reputation diminished, and Jesus' fame meant their loss. In the words of Peter Hacker (2018:183), 'The acclaim given to another person may be disturbing in the extreme to someone who feels robbed of due recognition, and who resents the actual recipient's being granted it'. It is no wonder that the 'evangelist summarily identifies all the hostility against Jesus in Mark 14–15 as the result of envy' (Hagedorn and Neyrey 1998:46).

5. Was God Capricious to Reject Cain and Cain's Offering?

It is no coincidence that Jesus said that a prophet is everywhere honoured, 'except in his home town and among his own relatives and in his own household' (Mark 6:4). Abel was the first one who was murdered because he was envied by his elder brother for his character, spiritual qualities and the favour God showed to him. Cain was a reckless person; he could not care a bit about the quality of his offering or the attitude of his heart—as long as he could obtain God's honour and esteem. Realising that it was not going to happen on his terms, he decided that Abel should not have it either.

The Bible shows that when God rejects a person, he does so with good reason. I therefore conclude that God was not capricious in rejecting Cain and his offering.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to make sense of the various reasons for which commentators believe Cain murdered Abel. That was done by clarifying the characteristics of some of the passions and emotions. The paper then focused on envy. Envy, understood from a biblical perspective, is a vice par excellence; it is a deadly sin. It involves other-directed hostility, resentment and hatred. It is essentially an emotion rooted in comparison and hence, its interconnectedness with covetousness and jealousy. In contrast to the coveter who cannot find rest for his or her soul unless they possess what another has, the envier cannot rest until the other loses what he or she has. And in contrast to the jealous who value love, devotion, and an exclusive relationship, the envier has no need of that, except for whatever honour or esteem it may bring to him or her.

In the final analysis, what scripture teaches us is that a loss of honour and esteem is not only a painful experience; the passion to gain it no matter what the cost is self-destructive. It is nothing less than 'rottenness to the bones'. Our Lord asks, 'For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?' (Mark 8:36). His answer is nothing (v. 37).

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God's 'Repentance' in light of the Covenantal Relationship between שׁוּב and נָחַם in Jeremiah 18:1–10[1]

Allen Bythel Marsh and Bill Domeris

Abstract

This article addresses the relationship between two Hebrew verbs found in Jeremiah 18:7–10 that may shed light on the subject of God's 'repentance', especially when the Hebrew verbs words are viewed from the context of the covenant. We see that the main point of the passage shifts from the potter's unilateral control and sovereignty over the clay to the flexibility of the potter to work with his clay. The significance is that in this covenantal context, the author(s) used שׁוּב (*shub*) and נָחַם *(nacham)* to demonstrate that God sometimes, but not arbitrarily, relents in response to the decisions of his people, meaning that the response of the nation had an influence on God's actions.

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

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1. Introduction

The concept of the 'repentance' of God makes for an interesting roundtable discussion among scholars. If it were not for the numerous examples in the Old Testament that portray God as having changed his mind or relented, it would be easier to simply overlook these texts or classify them as nonconsequential in the grand scheme of theology. It was, however, this recurring pattern that piqued my curiosity enough to draw a seat to the table. Nowhere is the concept of God's relenting better exemplified than in Jeremiah 18:7-10. Here, repentance is illustrated by the usage of the Hebrew verbs שׁוּב (*shub*) and נָחַם (*nacham*). The first verb, שׁוּב (*shub*), refers to a nation 'turning' *from* evil or 'turning' *towards* evil. The second verb, נָחַם (*nacham*), refers to God 'turning' from sending judgment or 'turning' from sending blessing.

When speaking of God, נָחַם (*nacham*) is translated to express an idea of change (Fabry and Simian-Yofre 1998:340−356). The problem, however, is how this 'change' is to be understood. The debate is on whether נָחַם (*nacham*) is an accommodating anthropomorphism or straightforward (literal) language. For example, scholars who understand 'God's relenting' as an accommodating anthropomorphism interpret נָחַם (*nacham*) as a metaphor or figure of speech that does not reflect literal reality but instead accommodates God in human terms so he can be understood (Oliphint 2012:123; Geisler 2010:117; Routledge 2013:252). In Jeremiah 18:7−10, then, a nation's repentance, שׁוּב (*shub*), would lead to a change in the circumstances surrounding the situation at hand but not to a literal change with God. In other words, the nation's actions should not influence God's actions.

Scholars who interpret 'God's relenting' in a straightforward way believe that even if the language was metaphorical, it does not necessarily and automatically negate a straightforward literal interpretation of the phrase (Fretheim 1984:5−12, 1987; Goldingay 2006:89; Enns 2005:106−107). This is because the anthropomorphic metaphor would still have to communicate something true about God and his relationship to the world. This view sees Jeremiah's use of נָחַם (*nacham*) as binding God to human activity. For example, the nation's turning from evil caused God to turn from sending judgment, so not only does the situation change from the nation's perspective but also from God's perspective as well (Hays 2010:82; Chisholm 1995:390; Brueggemann 2002:171).

As we can see, the way we interpret נָחַם (*nacham*) affects the interpretation of the meaning of the passage and our understanding of the relationship between God and mankind.

Furthermore, שׁוּב (*shub*) hardly ever enters the discussion when scholars try to determine how נָחַם (*nacham*) is to be understood. The premise of this article is that the covenantal relationship[3] between שׁוּב (*shub*) and נָחַם (*nacham*) in Jeremiah 18:1–10 proves to be significant in shedding light on the controversial passage. To test this premise, we must look briefly at שׁוּב (*shub*) and נָחַם (*nacham*), and then exegetically analyse Jeremiah 18–10.

2. Word Study Overviews

2.1. Word study of שׁוּב (*shub*)

שׁוּב (*shub*) is used 1059 times, making it the twelfth most used verb in the Old Testament (Fabry and Graupner 2004:461–522). שׁוּב (*shub*) has a wide range of meanings and can be translated: to turn back (to God), return, turn away from, abandon, to bring or lead back, to give back, to repay, to answer, to revoke or cancel, to convert from evil, to restore and to repent. As evident from the semantic range, the verb is associated with motion (Fabry and Graupner 2004:461–522). שׁוּב (*shub*) appears in five different Hebrew verb forms: qal, hilphil, hophal, polel and polal. For relevancy's sake, only the qal verb form will be considered in this article.

2.1.1. שׁוּב (*shub*) in the Qal stem

שׁוּב (*shub*) appears in the qal form 679 times in the Old Testament, of which both Jeremiah 18:4 and 18:8 represent two of those instances (Donnell 1988:27). The qal stem is 'the simple or basic verbal stem', and qal verbs are mostly active in voice, meaning the subject is doing the action (Practico and Pelt 2009). In qal form, the subject of שׁוּב (*shub*) is most often man, but there are instances where God is the subject (e.g. Deuteronomy 13:17). שׁוּב (*shub*) is also used in the context of the relationship between God and man. In these instances, שׁוּב (*shub*) can be described primarily in two ways: firstly, '"return" in the sense of relationship' (Donnell 1998:27) and secondly, 'covenantal' in the sense of 'expressing a change of loyalty on the part of Israel or God, each for each other' (Holladay 1958:2). The difference between these two 'usages' is that the first example can apply to human-to-human relationships, such as marriage or kinships. The second example applies exclusively to people's relationship to God and God's relationship to people. Donnell (1988:27–28) noted that there are twelve examples in the Old Testament where שׁוּב (*shub*) refers to a 'return in a relationship', and there are 129 times where שׁוּב (*shub*)

in qal form is used exclusively in a 'covenantal context', mainly in the writings of the prophets.

Holladay (1958:53) wrote extensively on the covenantal aspect of שׁוּב (*shub*) and defined the central meaning when it appears in qal form:

> The verb (שׁוּב), in the qal, means: having moved in a particular direction, to move thereupon in the opposite direction, the implication being (unless there is evidence to the contrary) that one will arrive again at the initial point of departure.

In the covenantal contexts, the idea of 'moving in the opposite direction to arrive at the initial place of departure' (Holladay 1958:53) implied a return on unfaithful Israel's part to Yahweh. In other words, Israel was once faithful, but now they had become unfaithful and moved away from Yahweh. Repentance would have moved the nation in the opposite direction of their unfaithfulness and brought them back to where they once were positioned, that is, in a faithful relationship with Yahweh.

2.1.2. שׁוּב (*shub*) in 'Covenantal Relationship' in Qal Form[4]

There should be no surprise that the prophets used שׁוּב (*shub*) as an expression of the covenant between God and Israel, as they often called the nation back into right relationship with God. Holladay (1958:120) noted that the usage of שׁוּב (*shub*) in the covenantal contexts was predicated on the assumptions of the covenant, 'namely, that it was established in the past on the initiative of God'. In this context, שׁוּב (*shub*) does not represent the initial *turning* to Yahweh but a *returning* to Yahweh. As indicated from the context of Jeremiah 18:1–10, it refers to a turning back from evil to God. Donnell (1988:28) discovered that of the 129 times שׁוּב (*shub*) is found in the context of covenantal relationships, Israel is the subject of the verb in all but seven instances. In the other seven occurrences, God is the subject (Donnell 1988:28). Davis (1983:19) noted that Jeremiah 32:40 is the only instance where God is the subject, that his relationship to Israel was not dependent upon what Israel did or how they related to God. This is significant, because it shows that the normal usage of the verb with God as the subject associates God's response as relating to Israel's actions. For example, in Deuteronomy 30:1–5, God's 'turning from' judgment and promise to 'restore' is solely dependent upon the obedience of Israel.

4 שׁוּב (*shub*) is found in covenantal usage eleven times in the Hilphil form, which expresses a causative action in active voice. Because Jeremiah 18:4 and 8 are expressed in qal form, we shall not cover the Hilphil form in this article.

2.2. Word study of נָחַם (*nacham*)

נָחַם (*nacham*) is used 108 times in the Old Testament (Fabry and Simian-Yofre 1998:342) and can be translated to mean: comfort in the face of calamity, one who seeks to identify with another in suffering, compassion, to be sorry, to have pity, to grieve, to change one's mind, relent and to repent (Fabry and Simian-Yofre 1998:340 -356). נָחַם (*nacham*) occurs in four verbal forms: Niphal, Piel, Pual and Hithpael. In the Piel and Pual forms, the verb most often refers to 'comfort' or 'compassion' and has an emotional component in that the person who is comforting shares the pain of the one being comforted (Parunak 1975:517; Butterworth 1997:82). When God is the subject of the verb in these forms, he is said to bring comfort to the people from judgment or oppression from enemies by removing or changing the circumstances (Parunak 1975:516). In the niphal and hithpael form, there are examples of, God grieving about decisions that people have made, God regretting decisions he has made based on the disobedience of people, and God changing his mind in response to the obedience or disobedience of people. In Jeremiah 18:1–10 נָחַם (*nacham*) occurs twice and both are in Niphal form.

2.2.1. נָחַם (*nacham*) in the Niphal Stem

The Niphal stem is used to express simple action with either a passive or reflexive voice (Practico and Pelt 2009). Oftentimes, 'whatever a verb means in the Qal stem, it becomes passive or reflective in the Niphal stem' (Practico and Pelt 2009). Jeremiah contains fourteen usages of נָחַם (*nacham*). In twelve of the fourteen times, it is found in the Niphal stem (Donnell 1988:23).

The complexity of the lexical problems when it comes to the niphal and hithpael[5] of נָחַם (*nacham*) can be seen by the unrelated translations given in lexicons. Parunak (1975:519–525) grouped the basic meanings of נָחַם (*nacham*) into six categories: (1) suffer emotional pain, (2) be comforted, comfort oneself, (3) execute wrath, (4) retract punishment, (5) retract blessing and (6) retract a life of sin.

The breakdown of נָחַם (*nacham*) can be listed as follows: there are at least thirty-three occurrences where נָחַם (*nacham*) associates God with changing his mind or experiencing emotions. Seven of these present God as experiencing regret, sorrow, and pity.[6] In another instance, God stated, 'I will not show pity'.[7] In the remaining twenty-five of the thirty-three occurrences, נָחַם (*nacham*) is used in reference to God changing his mind and can be further broken down in the following way: on three of these uses, the text directly states twice that God does not change his mind.[8]

5 The Niphal and Hithpael forms of נָחַם *(nacham)* are similar and are oftentimes grouped together.

6 Genesis 6:6, 6:7; Judges 2:18; 1 Samuel 15:11, 15:35; 1 Chronicles 21:15; Psalm 90:13.

7 Ezekiel 24:14.

8 Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29.

On six of these occasions, the text implies that God can and does change his mind.[9] Finally, in sixteen occurrences, נָחַם (*nacham*) is used to portray God as either changing his mind or promising to change his mind depending on whether his people repent.[10] Jeremiah 18:8, 10 are two examples of this category.

Having examined albeit briefly שׁוּב (*shub*) and נָחַם (*nacham*), we can turn our attention to exegetically analysing Jeremiah 18:1−10 to see exactly how these words prove to be significant to this passage.

9 Psalm 110:4; Isaiah 57:6; Jeremiah 4:28, 15:6, 20:16; Zechariah 8:14.

10 Exodus 32:12, 14; 2 Samuel 24:16; Psalm 106:45; Jeremiah 18:8, 10, 26:3, 13, 19; Joel 2:13, 14; Amos 7:3, 6; Jonah 3:9, 10, 4:2.

3. Exegetical Analysis of Jeremiah 18:1−10

3.1. Jeremiah 18:1−4

Jeremiah 18:1−4 began with Yahweh telling Jeremiah to visit the potter's workshop in order to receive his message. The Hebrew word for 'message' in verse two is דָּבָר (*dabar*) and reiterates that the following illustration and message is from Yahweh and not Jeremiah's own concoction (Hays 2016:125). This command represented another symbolic act, like Jeremiah 5:1−6 and 16:1−4, that Yahweh planned to use to illustrate Jeremiah's prophetic messages (Longman 2008).

Jeremiah was obedient and went down to the potter's house (Carroll 2004:82). In ancient cultures, making pottery was an important occupation (see King 1993:164−178). The prophet had probably watched a potter at work prior to the event recorded here, but the difference for this visit was that he was going to learn something about God (Huey 1993:180). Upon his arrival, he saw the potter 'working at the wheel' (Jeremiah 18:3). The 'wheel' consisted of two discs revolving one above the other (Allen 2008:214). Huey (1993:180) described the process of how the potter's wheel operated:

The lower stone was turned with the feet. It was attached by an axle to the upper wheel. As the lower wheel was turned, the upper wheel, on which the lump of clay was placed, rotated. As the wheel turned, the potter skillfully shaped the clay into a vessel by the pressure of his fingers against the pliable material. If the clay did not achieve the desired shape, he did not throw it away. Instead, he patiently reworked it until it became the vessel he wanted it to be. If it became misshapen as he worked it, it was not because of his lack of skill. The clay may have been of an inferior quality, may have contained defects, or perhaps was not sufficiently moist and pliable.

Huey's (1993:180) point about the potter patiently reworking his clay until he received the desired result is important for

understanding the illustration of Jeremiah 18:4. We should notice that it was not the poor skill level of the potter that was responsible for the 'misshapen' clay. Instead, Jeremiah 18:4 reveals the clay had become 'marred' in the potter's hands. In response, the potter was skilled enough to take the 'misshapen' clay and 'form' it into something desirable. 'Marred' is the Hebrew verb שָׁחַת (*shachath*) and its basic meanings are 'to ruin, destroy, annihilate; to behave corruptly, cause trouble' (Holladay and Köhler 2000:366–367). In the context of 18:4, שָׁחַת (*shachath*) means 'to have become ruined or corrupted' (Conrad 2004:583–584). The clay had not turned out the way the potter was hoping or had originally intended. The word 'formed' (Jeremiah 18:4) is a variation of the Hebrew verb root שׁוּב (*shub*) (Hays 2016:125). In this context, the potter had to change directions (or turn back) and rework his clay to get his desired product. In other words, the potter revised his plan.

3.2. Jeremiah 18:5–6

In these verses the symbolism of the illustration becomes clear. In this specific context, the potter represented God, while the clay represented Judah. Willis (2002:164) explained that God addressed Judah as 'house of Israel' rather than 'people of Judah', because God was appealing to their sense of obligation as a covenant people. A common misconception among Judah was that this covenant relationship guaranteed their divine protection (Jeremiah 7:1–15). The prophet, on the other hand, was proclaiming that the covenant relationship demanded obedience and faithfulness on Judah's part (Brueggemann 2002:171). The nation's choices mattered, and if they wanted to experience the blessings of the covenant, they had to obey.

In this section (Jeremiah 18:5–6) God pointed Judah back to the illustration of the potter working with the clay. The rhetorical question, 'Can I not do with you …', expects an affirmative answer, but 'the fact he asks it suggests that there was some doubt—probably based on their sinful actions—as to whether they actually accorded him this "right"' (Willis 2002:164). God reminded the nation that he has the right to do with them as the potter did with the clay. The question is, 'What did the potter do with the clay?' Many commentators believe the main point of 18:5–6 is to show God's absolute sovereignty over nations and people in that God's actions are never dependent upon human actions (see Longman 2008; Huey 1993:181; Ware 2000). While we may agree that God is certainly sovereign, is the main point of the potter and clay illustration to show the potter's absolute sovereignty in that he never changes his plans in response to the clay? Answering this

question leads us back to the question posited above: God says he can do with Judah as the potter did with the clay, so what exactly did the potter do with the clay?

As indicated from Jeremiah 18:1–4, the potter saw that the clay was defective, so he crushed it and started over, and perhaps this process continued until he received his desired result. In the same way, God knew that Judah had become defective, corrupted or marred, because of their disobedience and sin. In other words, at this point in their history, Judah was not what God had originally intended for them to be according to their covenant relationship and standards. This passage shows that God, like the potter, instead of throwing them away completely, was willing to change or revise his plans based on the response of the people as indicated in 18:7–10. If the potter and clay illustration was solely about God's unilateral control over Judah, then would that not make God responsible for Judah's failures? I suggest that perhaps a more consistent way of understanding the potter and clay illustration is that it shows God's flexibility in dealing with his covenant people. In other words, God can be flexible in that he is sovereign and can revise his plans and change directions, if the circumstances require him to do so. This 'change', however, is never arbitrary as we shall see in verses 7–10.

3.3. Jeremiah 18:7–10

If there is any confusion about what verses 5–6 are teaching, then verses 7-10 provide clarity. I understand this statement is not agreed upon by all. For example, Frese (2013) argued that 18:7–10 is not connected in any way to 18:1–6, except that they are both complementary points that help serve the large purpose of 18:1–11, that is, calling the people of Judah back to repentance. Unlike what I am arguing here, Frese (2013:377) believed that 18:7–10 does not elaborate on or explain the metaphor of the potter. One of the main objections Frese (2013:383) raised is that the potter and clay in verses 1–6 are not depicted in the same way as God and the nations in verses 7–10. In other words, Frese (2013:383) believes that if verses 7–10 were meant to explain verses 1–4, then the author should have portrayed the potter as changing his plans based on the behaviour of the clay.

In Frese's (2013) analysis of Jeremiah 18:1–10, he overlooks two important points. First, the potter does in fact change his plans in verses 1–6, because the clay had become marred in his hands. The words of Jeremiah 18:7–10 show examples of exactly how God, like the potter in verses 1–4, changes or revises his plan for the nations. These verses (7–10) also show a contrast 'between how the LORD responds to evil nations who repent (vv.7–8) and how the

LORD responds to good nations who "repent" and become evil (vv. 9–10)' (Willis 2002:164). The structure of this chapter is such that 18:1–4 is a narration of the illustration, while 18:5–10 is the explanation and interpretation of the action in verses 1–4.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, these verses show a relationship between the Hebrew verbs שׁוּב (*shub*) and נָחַם (*nacham*), particularly in the context of covenant relationship. For example, when a nation repents, then God will relent. On the other hand, if a nation does not repent, then God will not relent (Goldingay 2007:77). In other words, without humankind's שׁוּב (*shub*), there is no נָחַם (*nacham*) from God. Frese (2013:388) ultimately concluded that God's plans for the nations are not rigidly fixed and can be altered based on people's behaviour, even though Frese's method of structuring the text is different from mine. In the same sense, Stulman (1999:55) observed that 'Yahweh can "re-form" the destiny of Israel and the nations based on their conduct and response to prophetic speech'. Huey (1993:181) concluded, 'When we change, God can change his actions toward us . . .' and that 'the clay cannot challenge the potter, but Israel can act so that Yahweh will change'. A main point of Jeremiah 18:7–10 is that when people or circumstances change, God can adapt his actions in response to the change (Willis 2002:167).

It is argued here that both שׁוּב (*shub*) and נָחַם (*nacham*), in the context of a covenantal relationship, work together to form a powerful relationship that has an enormous influence over the entire meaning of the passage. Understanding the relationship between שׁוּב (*shub*) and נָחַם (*nacham*), in the covenantal context of Jeremiah 18:1–10 reveals that God's change of mind does not happen arbitrarily. As Longman (2008) wrote, 'These decisions are conditional upon the response of the nations and kingdoms. If those announced for judgment repent or those who are established sin, then all bets are off'. The blessings and curses listed in Deuteronomy 28 give strong evidence that in covenantal contexts, conditional clauses are literal not just from man's perspective but also from God's perspective. In other words, there is nothing about the use of these words in this covenantal relationship context that implies they are not to be taken literally. As Moberly (2013:129) correctly concludes, '...to say that God repents implies that God's relationship with humanity in general, and with Israel in particular, is a genuine and responsive relationship, in which what people do and how they relate to God matters to God'.

Understanding the relationship between שׁוּב (*shub*) and נָחַם (*nacham*) in the covenantal context of this passage allows us to

reaffirm the main point of the entire potter and clay illustration. The covenantal relationship in this passage does not emphasise a firm definition of God's sovereignty where he unilaterally controls everything, including the clay. If this was the central message of 18:1–10, then Jeremiah's use of שׁוּב (*shub*) and נָחַם (*nacham*) in verses 7–10 does not make practical sense. This illustration shows, rather, that in the context of covenantal relationship God is able and willing to adjust his plans with people, just as a potter adjusts his plans with a vessel that has been spoiled (Boyd 2000:141).

So, in Jeremiah 18:1–10, God brought the prophet to a potter's workshop where the potter was shaping a vessel that was not turning out the way he had hoped. The potter changed his plans and worked the clay into something else. God showed the prophet this to illustrate that because he is the potter and Judah is the clay, he has the right to change his mind about his plans for them, if they will repent (Boyd 2018). The potter and clay analogy is not about God's unilateral control but his right to change plans in response of the nation's decisions.

Only when reading this passage in the light of the Exile, did Jeremiah's readers grasp the full meaning of the passage. Before that there was a lack of understanding, which is evidenced by the nation's response to God's plea for repentance in Jeremiah 18:12 (Stulman 1999:55). The nation did not think repentance would have saved them. They did not understand that their actions might have a literal influence on God. They, instead, thought it was of 'no use'. God had already declared judgment was coming, they reasoned, and nothing could stop it.

4. Conclusion

We can see how in one view, both שׁוּב (*shub*) and נָחַם (*nacham*) play a vital role in understanding the overall meaning and message of Jeremiah 18:1–10. Furthermore, we see that when שׁוּב (*shub*) and נָחַם (*nacham*) are viewed from a covenantal context, they shed light on the understanding of the concept of God's repentance or 'changing his mind'. An area of further research would be to determine how this covenantal view of Jeremiah 18:1–10 might potentially shed light on the understanding of another controversial passage, Romans 9, particularly where Paul references the potter-clay analogy in verses 19-21. This would require exploring Romans 9 in light of its Old Testament background with an emphasis on Jeremiah 18:1–10 and the covenantal relationship between שׁוּב (*shub*) and נָחַם (*nacham*).

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The Appeal of the Word of Faith Movement[1]

Genis Pieterse and Kevin Smith

Abstract

Theologians are often mystified by the popular appeal of the Word of Faith Movement. Although biblical scholars have deconstructed the movement's core teachings to the point where one would not expect the movement to retain a substantial following or exert significant influence, it remains the largest and fastest growing expression of Christian faith in many parts of Africa. The objective of this article is to explain the appeal of the Word of Faith Movement by using the theories of selected philosophers, sociologists, and theologians to furnish an explanatory framework.

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1   This article is a condensed chapter summary from a PhD thesis summary submitted by Genis Pieterse. Title of thesis: The Word of Faith Movement: Towards a Constructive Engagement. Supervisor: Dr Kevin Smith. Institution: South African Theological Seminary.

1. Introduction

Theologians are often mystified by the popular appeal of the Word of Faith Movement (also known as the Prosperity Gospel). Although biblical scholars have deconstructed the movement's core teachings to the point where one would not expect the movement to retain a substantial following or exert significant influence, it remains the largest and fastest growing expression of Christian faith in many parts of Africa. Despite its well-documented hermeneutical and theological deficiencies, the Word of Faith continues to appeal to the populace.

This paper explores why the Word of Faith Movement continues to attract a large following and exert great influence. The objective is to provide a theoretical framework that helps to understand the phenomenal appeal and influence of the movement. The explanatory framework is sought through a synthesis of the theories advanced by several philosophers, sociologists, and theologians. The work of William Bainbridge and Rodney Stark on the dynamics of cult formation, more recently supported by the research of Laurence Iannaccone, Robert Barro, and Sriya Iyer, provides insight into the economics of religion. Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance shows how the law of supply and demand can find its way into the spiritual and theological functions of the church. James Fowler demonstrates the dynamic link between individual faith and social interaction. William Avery and Roger Gobbel's study of how the preached word is perceived and received by church members sheds light on why the hermeneutical deficiencies of prosperity-gospel preaching are overlooked by the laity. By bringing together insights from several streams of research and theory, the paper proposes an explanation for the growth and influence of the Word of Faith Movement.

2. The Theory of Cult Formation

To understand how the Word of Faith Movement attracts adherents and exerts influence over them, it is essential to understand how a social or religious group forms and why it is susceptible to influence. The extensive research that Bainbridge and Stark conducted into the ways in which social and religious groups form may provide some insight (Bainbridge and Stark 1979, 1987). They refer to such groups as *cults*, which they define as social enterprises 'primarily involved in the production and exchange of novel and exotic compensators' (Bainbridge and Stark 1979:284). These movements may or may not be religious in nature, but they all offer 'innovative alternatives to the traditional

systems of religious' rewards (p. 284). Bainbridge and Stark propose three models of cults. The first two are initiated by a leaders who develop 'novel cultural responses to personal or social needs' (p. 285) and then form their group by offering these as rewards to their followers. The success of the cult depends on its ability to innovate so as to achieve product differentiation. In the third model, the cult forms without the driving influence of a leader. A group of individuals with a similar social, political, or religious needs dynamically interacts and collectively develops reward systems.

These three models cohere around the principle of supply and demand. The demand is placed by the group (the consumers). The demand is a need that is identified within the social network, which prompts their search for a compensator (reward). The leader functions as an entrepreneur on the supply end. Through personal experience or through observation, he (or she) identifies the compensator need and sets out to develop such a compensator. By matching the supply with the demand, both the entrepreneur and the consumer are adequately compensated, the entrepreneur through reward and the consumer by means of the appropriate compensator or need fulfilment.

Contextualising this sociological explanation of cult formation within a religious context, the development of innovative alternatives to contemporary religious thought arises from the need that drives the requirement for innovation. This need is expressed by the 'religious consumer' and is fulfilled by the 'religious supplier'.

Considering Word of Faith doctrine from this perspective, the interplay between supply and demand within the context of a need to innovate points towards the complicity of the minister (supply side) and the congregants (demand side) in the evolution of doctrines that diverge from Pentecostal and/or Evangelical beliefs and practices. The movement derives some of its influence from personal and social needs, and some of the followers within the movement participate in driving the development of its theology. The dynamics of our contemporary socio-economic society have entrenched a culture of entrepreneurship, which has now found its way into the realm of theological development. Miller (2002:456) astutely observes that the 'boundaries between religion and other industries can be blurry. Blurring occurs through secularization of religious organizations.' The rise of the Word of Faith Movement suggests that the differentiation between the spiritual and organisational functions of the church has become blurred. This

blurring allows a supply and demand culture to influence the theological development of the movement.

3. The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance explains how the law of supply and demand, which is being superimposed upon the organisational function of the church, can even influence the spiritual and theological functions of the church (Festinger 1957; Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter 1957; Festinger and Carlsmith 1959). The theory states that people are motivated to minimise the cognitive dissonance that occurs when two beliefs do not fit together. Festinger argued that people could reduce dissonance in three ways: (a) by changing their beliefs, (b) by changing their behaviour, or (c) by exposure to new information or views. When the choice is between changing beliefs or changing behaviour, the evidence suggests people are inclined to change whichever of the two they perceive will bring them the most reward. In essence, if the real or perceived reward demands or better fits a belief change than a behavioural change, then they will tend to change their beliefs rather than their actions.[2]

Prof. Nico Frijda, an authority on human emotions, contributes to the dissonance theory of Festinger. Frijda concludes that 'there thus are good reasons for thinking that emotions influence beliefs' (Frijda, Manstead, and Bem 2000: 4). He applies Festinger's theory within human emotional studies and demonstrates, as Festinger has, that the tension between belief and experience causes people to adapt their beliefs rather than their behaviour. According to Frijda,

> a perceived discrepancy between two or more conditions gives rise to an uncomfortable tension-like state that motivates the individual to seek ways of reducing this discrepancy between cognitions. The reviewed research supports the notion that cognitive discrepancy produces negative affect, and that this in turn motivates attempts at discrepancy reduction. One way in which discrepancy can be reduced is through belief change. (Frijda, Manstead, and Bem 2000:8)

Revisiting Bainbridge and Stark's examples of rewards and compensators as part of a response to socio-economic and socio-political environments, against the backdrop of Festinger's theory, defines unrestricted influence within a dangerous framework. Where the socio-economic and socio-political environment produces a specific human need, influence is exerted through an agent that produces a product aimed at meeting the specific need. The

2 The \$1-20 experiment conducted by Festinger and Carlsmith, 'Cognitive Consequences of Forced Compliance' (pp. 203-208), as well as the 'Counter Attitudinal Advocacy' experiments that were conducted by Leippe and Eisenstadt in 1994, as cited in E Aronson, *The Social Animal*, 9th ed. (New York: Worth Publishers, 2004), 166, provide some of the evidential support for this claim.

innovation that is employed differentiates the agent (organisation, community, or individual) from its competitors. The perceived or experienced benefit, if in opposition to an established belief system, challenges the individual's beliefs, which can result in the re-evaluation of the individual's beliefs. Such re-evaluation may result in an adaptation of the belief itself.

The implication of Festinger's statement within the context of the Word of Faith Movement is that the movement innovates a spiritual product that comes with the promise of a better life, which meets the felt need. The need and its associated emotional impact is so strong that people are prepared to alter their beliefs in the hope that the innovation will ultimately meet their individual needs. In essence, then, the desire for rewards can be so powerful that it results in people reshaping their theological beliefs to meet their physical, emotional, and social needs in people reshaping their theological beliefs to meet their physical, emotional, and social needs.

4. The Theory of Faith Development

James Fowler's influential theory of faith development also informs our understanding of group formation and cohesion in the Word of Faith Movement. Fowler theorised that an individual's faith might develop through six stages as the person matured, although it was recognised that individual faith development might stagnate in any of the six stages. The first three stages of faith development are characterised by an emphasis on stories, images, and experiences (stage 1), an anthropomorphic concept of God and a predisposition towards taking take metaphors literally (stage 2), and conformity to authority together with a tendency to overlook or ignore conflicts and inconsistencies (stage 3). Only in the last three stages do people begin to struggle with inconsistencies and conflicts in their beliefs (stage 4) and to accept paradoxes as the limitation of logic (stage 5).

Green and Hoffman (1989) support the claim of Chirban that there is a link between Allport's intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity and Fowler's stages of faith. Allport related extrinsic religion, which he called *religion as a means*, to prejudice. By contrast, he argued that intrinsic religion, which he called *religion as an end*, is free of prejudice (Hood 1998:246–47). Allport defined *prejudice* as a belief that is held without understanding. He calls it prejudice because holding beliefs without understanding often leads to an 'unreasonable attitude that is unusually resistant to rational influence' (Rosnow 1972:53). This kind of non-rational conviction

causes individuals with shared beliefs to cluster together and to exclude those who do not share these beliefs. This prejudice serves as the catalyst that binds certain individuals together within a worshipping community. Chirban (cited in Green and Hoffman 1989:247) identified the presence of prejudice as a motivating factor in faith stages 1–3, but noted that such prejudice was lacking in stages 4–6.

The prejudice that is present in faith stages 1–3 establishes unique communities. Faith communities form with a more simplistic approach to faith. There is a reliance on the group to provide validation for certain beliefs, which are not subjected to serious scrutiny. The group attaches a high level of reverence to leadership figures, which enforces the group synergy and diminishes the probability of critical examination of beliefs. Green and Hoffman point out that the literal interpretation of faith and beliefs in stage 2 leads to negative impressions of those who do not share the preferred interpretation. Stage 3 people tend to be heavily oriented towards their in-group, which inevitably involves negative attitudes towards those in the out-group (Green and Hoffman 1989:248). Beliefs and values that are appealing to members in faith stages 1–3 are reinforced through group synergy, which is strongly based upon the trust placed within a central authoritative figure.

These two theories—Fowler's six stages of faith and Allport's religion with prejudice—help to provide a theoretical framework for understanding how people become committed members in Word of Faith churches. The groups are formed by people in faith stages 1–3. They embrace a literalistic understanding of Scripture and an uncritical acceptance of their beliefs, which are reinforced by trusting allegiance to a charismatic leader. These characteristics lead to the formation of faith communities that have strong in-group ties, but are averse to out-group engagement. Their 'prejudice' insulates them; they defend an uncritical allegiance to the in-group beliefs.

5. The Theory of Minister Validation

William Avery and Roger Gobbel's (1980) research into 'how the laity understand the relationship between the words of the preacher and the Word of God' also helps to explain the reception of the Word of Faith message. This is their conclusion:

> The laity closely identify the Word of God with the Bible. Sermons containing overt and explicit biblical material are judged to be a proclamation of the Word of God. Also, the interpersonal

relationship between clergy and laity was a major determining factor in judging sermons as a proclamation of the Word, frequently regardless of content of sermons. Where there were differences between clergy and laity concerning the Bible and matters of the Faith, there was a tendency for laity to rely on some unspecified individualistic, privatistic criterion. (Avery and Gobbel 1980:41)

They base their conclusions on several observations. Firstly, if the preacher quotes or cites much scripture, or if his (or her) language is salted with the words of scripture, then he is judged to be preaching the Word of God. Secondly, people look upon their minister as an expert who will rightly interpret the Bible. Thirdly, listeners filter sermons on the basis of personal needs; they hear the message selectively through their expectation that God will speak to them to provide guidance and comfort for daily life. Lastly, and most significantly according to Gobbel and Avery, congregants judge the sermon on the basis of their attitude towards the preacher. 'In determining the presence of the Word of God, relationships between the minister and the laity appear to take precedence over what is said in a sermon' (Avery and Gobbel 1980:51).

Gobbel and Avery's study sheds light on why members of the Word of Faith Movement often fail to perceive theological flaws in the preaching. The sermons, which intentionally speak faith and hope to people desperately seeking comfort, are saturated with biblical phrases and quotations. The preacher is typically esteemed as 'a man of God', who is revered by the audience as someone with direct access to the mind of God. The congregants feel privileged to have such a man of God as their pastor, and thus feel a deep allegiance to him.

6. Conclusion: Towards an Explanation

Although there may be many more competing and supporting variations of the theories describing the dynamics of influence, the small selection presented above seems to represent a firm understanding of the dynamics.

Bainbridge and Stark showed that groups form to address people's immediate and social needs. Influence is an exchange between the influencer and the influenced. The relationship is dependent upon the success of the influencer in identifying and meeting the felt needs of individuals. The concept of felt needs is important, because the influence is not necessarily tied to the influencer's ability to meet the needs. If the influencers can persuade the

influenced that they have a solution, the person may buy into the transaction.

Festinger showed that individuals respond to a tension between their beliefs and their experiences by adapting their beliefs in terms of their perceived or real reward. He demonstrates that the physical reality associated with experience can be utilised to challenge and change the beliefs of an individual. In other words, the desire for a better life can be so strong that people will believe someone who gives them the hope of attaining it. In relation to Bainbridge and Stark, Festinger's observation has the potential to allow an influencer to exert sufficient influence over the individual, through meeting social and personal needs, to change longstanding beliefs without proper evaluation and validation.

It is easy to see how the dynamic interplay of these two theories— (a) Bainbridge and Stark and (b) Festinger—plays a role in the acceptance of the health and wealth gospel. Recognising people's felt need for physical and emotional health and their desperate desire to escape from poverty, the Word of Faith preachers have innovated a theological message that promises to meet adherents' felt needs for personal well-being and economic freedom. Their persuasive propaganda coupled with the enticing power of their promises is sufficient to cause many to accept their message without subjecting it to rigorous intellectual evaluation.

Avery and Gobbel show how powerful the relationship between the spiritual leader and the listener can be. The dynamic that they observed demonstrates how surrogate validation is used by individuals, and how this allows these individuals to be influenced. Avery and Gobbel's case studies fit Fowler's hypothesis that there is a segment of people who rely on literal interpretation in the development of their beliefs: they do not subject their beliefs or new beliefs to serious scrutiny and at the same time place their trust in a central authoritative figure.

Avery and Gobbel noted that listeners interpret the validity of what they hear in terms of the fact that scripture has been quoted. These individuals also accepted as true what they heard from a trusted spiritual leader, and did not necessarily subject what they heard to scrutiny. Again, as with Bainbridge, Stark, and Festinger, understanding and acceptance was contextualised in terms of individual and private needs.

What is evident is that personal needs play a vital part in the process by which people understand and accept what they are taught by a spiritual leader. In terms of theology, an influencer may structure a doctrine aimed at addressing a specific need, and

in doing so depart theologically from the truth. This is seldom intentional. The spiritual leaders are themselves influenced by the quest for solutions to felt needs—either their personal needs or their need to ensure the success of their ministry through innovation. The leaders themselves are not immune to the power of felt needs to influence theological convictions. They need a high level of spiritual and emotional maturity to submit new teachings or ideas to rigorous intellectual evaluation. They also need a deep commitment to a Christocentric approach to theology.

What is equally evident is the influence that a spiritual leader can exert over a listener through an established trust relationship. The observation by Avery, Gobbel, and Fowler that such a trust relationship results in acceptance without rigorous scrutiny opens the door for exploitation.

In context, it is clear that the relationship between the influencer and the influenced is not a one-way exertion of power of the influencer over the influenced. There exists a subtle dynamic of mutual response. On the one hand, the influencer responds to the needs of the individuals who willingly accept the influence, due to the fact that they derive a reward or benefit from it. Their acceptance validates the actions of the influencer. The trust relationship between both parties strengthens, and the influencer is empowered by the influenced to exert even more influence. This is a symbiotic and not a parasitic relationship, and in my view is best described as the economics of religious influence. Using the term economics contextualises influence in terms of a mutually acceptable exchange that is, at the time, considered by the parties as mutually beneficial.

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

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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