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Table of Contents

The Use of Linguistic and Relational Ontology in Contemporary Lutheranism	1
Jordan Cooper and Dan Lioy	
Desperation in an Attempt to Curb Modern-Day Prophets: Pentecostalisation and the Church in South Africa and Zimbabwe	25
Elijah Elijah Ngoweni Dube	
The meaning of <i>hebel</i> in Ecclesiastes	35
Kimmo Huovila and Dan Lioy	
Creation Order Theodicy: The Argument for the Coexistence of Gratuitous Evil and the Sovereignty of God	50
Connie Johnson and Robert Falconer	
Re-thinking Mission, Missions and Money: A Focus on the Baptist Church in Central Africa	71
Eraston Kighoma, David Ngaruiya and Johannes Malherbe	
Epistemic, Historical and Theological Backtrackings of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority in relation to the Ukrainian-Russian Heritage and Modernity	94
Oleksandr Lykshosherstov and Bill Domeris	
The semantic field of the Hebrew word <i>שָׁמַיְמָה</i> in the OT	113
Hui Er Yu and Johannes Malherbe	
A Wesleyan Theology of Politics for the Ghanaian Context	142
William A. Mpere-Gyekye and Robert W. Brodie	

The Interface Between the Doctrines of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will: Judas Iscariot as a Test Case	160
James Partee Toga and Annang Asumang	
The Axiology of Qohelet and Life ‘Under the Sun’: What is Good for Us to Do?	173
Callie Joubert	
Lutheran and Reformed Theology in Conversation	192
Dan Lioy and Robert Falconer	
Review of Keener, Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost	224
Annang Asumang	
Editorial Policy	

Panel of Referees

Vincent Atterbury	DTh, University of Johannesburg
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Cover image

Woman Holding a Balance (1663)
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The Use of Linguistic and Relational Ontology in Contemporary Lutheranism

Jordan Cooper and Dan Lioy

Abstract

This essay is a study of the impact of linguistic and relational ontology in contemporary Lutheranism. In particular, the influence of John Austin's speech-act theory is explained in relation to its adaptation by Oswald Bayer and others associated with Radical Lutheranism. It is argued that though there can be some benefit in the use of the categories of linguistic philosophy, it is inadequate as an ontological system. The goal of this article is to demonstrate both the impact and flaws of linguistic and relational ontology on Radical Lutheran authors, and to validate essentialist ontology as a necessary backdrop for both linguistics and relation as discussed in Lutheran theology.

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1. Introduction

Since the nineteenth century, Lutheran theologians have often departed from the essentialist metaphysical convictions of Lutheran scholasticism in favour of other ontological approaches. Authors such as Johannes von Hoffman and Hans Martensen were influenced to an extent by the philosophy of Hegel, resulting in modifications to their understanding of God and other doctrines. Ritschl used the ethical philosophy of Kant in his reading of Luther (Lotz 1974). Later, Rudolph Bultmann adapted Martin Heidegger's existential views in his approach to Christian theology (MacQuarrie 1955). In recent decades, Lutheran theologians have often abandoned some of the important tenets of existentialism as well as the moralism of Ritschl, and the notions of progress and metaphysical unity in Hegel's approach. In place of these other systems, writers have adopted a linguistic approach to reality, especially as taught by JL Austin.

Several theologians have adapted Austin's speech-act theory to various degrees in their doctrinal systems. This has not been limited to Lutheranism. However, some thinkers have placed these ideas in a central position, even to the point of using linguistic philosophy as a replacement of the essentialist metaphysic in ancient Greek thought. The writers who have done this can be broadly placed under the rubric of 'Radical Lutheranism,' which is a phrase first used in a *Lutheran Quarterly* essay by Gerhard Forde (Forde 2004:3–16). The most important figures in this movement include: Gerhard Forde, Oswald Bayer, and Steven Paulson. Each of these thinkers has emphasised this linguistic turn in opposition to classical essentialist philosophy. Alongside of these authors, some Confessional Lutheran theologians such as Robert Kolb, Charles Arand, and William S Schumacher have adopted a linguistic ontology along with Bayer's critique of metaphysical essentialism.

In this article, it is argued that this shift has significant problems. Although aspects of contemporary linguistic philosophy can serve a beneficial purpose in explaining the relationship between the human creature and God's word, this cannot be done adequately without simultaneously affirming a traditional essentialist metaphysic. This article proceeds by first explaining the nature of modern linguistic philosophy, and JL Austin's work in particular. After this, the adoption of linguistic theology in the writings of three authors—Oswald Bayer, Gerhard Forde, and William Schumacher—is explained and critiqued. Following this, the idea of a relational ontology is discussed, which is a further element of the metaphysical system in these authors. The authors discussed

here are: Oswald Bayer, William Schumacher, Robert Kolb, and Charles Arand. The use of this philosophy is again criticised as inadequate without a firm foundation in classic essentialism. This essay then ends with a conclusion in which the findings here are summarised, and it is demonstrated that the shift away from essentialist ontology to linguistics and relation is not beneficial for the Lutheran church.

2. Linguistic Philosophy

2.1. The Development of Linguistic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century

If the central mode of philosophical discourse for the ancient Greeks was that of metaphysics, and the post-Kantian era of epistemology, much of contemporary philosophy can be placed within the category of linguistic philosophy. There are a number of contributing factors to this, which include the restructuring of logic through a deconstruction of propositions in Bertrand Russell, the development of symbolic logic in thinkers such as Paul Kripke and AJ Ayer, as well as the extensive influence of Ludwig von Wittgenstein (see Beaney 2017). Along with philosophy proper, schools of interpretation in literature which addressed similar problems also flourished in the twentieth century, such as the structuralism of Ferdinand de Saussure, the following Post-Structuralism movement (Belsey 2002), and then with deconstruction as practised by Jacques Derrida (Norris 2002). For present purposes, the linguistic school which is most important in its influence upon Radical Lutheran authors—as well as in theology more broadly—is the development of speech-act theory through the work of John L Austin, and its further modification in John Searle. The concepts set forth in these thinkers are connected with Luther's notion of the effective word, and it is proposed that several of the problems which have been associated with classical metaphysics can now be spoken of in linguistic terms. It is the contention of this article that such a proposal is inadequate.

The notion of speech-acts in linguistic analysis was first proposed by a series of lectures given at Harvard in 1955 by JL Austin. These lectures were compiled into the highly influential book *How to Do Things with Words* (1962). In this first lecture, Austin argues that there are two forms of speech which must be distinguished from one another: *constative* and *performative* (1962:6). A constative statement is one which merely describes something, or states a fact. To say, for example, 'I got married yesterday', simply communicates information about something which may or may not

be true. These types of statements are ones that can be distinguished as either true or false (1962:13). For Austin, linguistic theory has too often focused exclusively on such statements (this is particularly true of Aristotle and other ancient Greeks), to the neglect of other forms of speech. He labels this other type of language as *performative*. These are not mere statements of description, but linguistic actions that actually effect some kind of reality in themselves. A prominent example of such is in wedding vows. When someone declares, 'I do', this is not a descriptive sentence, but one which binds one to a contract (1962:5). A second example is the naming of a child. When someone declares that their newborn son's name is Joe, for instance, this decision brings about a new reality that this individual will be addressed by such a title. These types of speech cannot easily be described as either 'true' or 'false,' in the same manner that a constative sentence can. It is incoherent to say that one's vows, or the name of a child, are true or false. It is this fundamental distinction between constative and performative speech which forms the rest of Austin's linguistic theory and is used by Oswald Bayer's interpretation of Luther.

A further division that is introduced by Austin, which is further developed by Searle, is between locution, illocution, and perlocution (1962:98). The locution of a given sentence is its literal grammatical meaning devoid of societal context. If, for example, a statement is made that 'this room is messy,' the grammatical rendering of the sentence is simply constative, an observation about the state of that room. The illocution is the intended meaning of the speaker within the broader linguistic context. If the statement, 'this room is messy,' is made by a mother in a harsh tone toward her child in his bedroom, this may carry a meaning beyond what is the literal rendering of the words included in that sentence. There is an intended meaning on the speaker's behalf that is not simply observational. Instead, she is implying the notion that the child must clean that room and perhaps that there will be consequences for not doing so. For Austin, these nuances of speech are present throughout ordinary conversation. A third and final aspect of a speech-act is perlocution, which is the impact of that statement upon the hearer. In this example, the perlocution is the response of the child. The statement may bring about fear of punishment, then resulting in him cleaning the room.

Proponents of speech-act theory have categorised illocutionary acts in a number of different ways, generally divided into between four to six categories. Since Austin is most significant for Bayer's use of speech-act theory, his categories are followed here. Austin

proposes five types of speech acts: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives, and expositives (1962:151). In the theological use of Austin's philosophy, there are two of these which are important: verdictives and commissives. A verdictive is a speech-act which either acquits or condemns (1962:153). The clearest example of such an act is the declaration of a guilty or innocent verdict from the judge in a courtroom. In such instances, the declaration of this verdict has the effect of actually delivering such a verdict to the individual. The second is the commissive, which is an act of promise (1962:157). In these acts, the speakers commit themselves to performing some kind of act for the one spoken to. It obligates the individual to do or not do certain actions. The verdictive speech-act is spoken in a second-person form, such as: 'you are guilty' or 'you are innocent.' The commissive uses an I-you manner of speech, in which the speaker proclaims: 'I promise you.' For some contemporary Lutheran theologians, these forms of speech accord with gospel proclamation as taught by Luther.

2.2. Oswald Bayer's Use of Speech-Act Theory

Oswald Bayer is the thinker who most consistently uses Austin's ideas of speech-act in his exposition of Lutheran theology. He is then followed by Robert Kolb, William Schumacher, and Steven Paulson. For Bayer, linguistic philosophy corrects the errors of a purely existential approach to theology, while simultaneously using the beneficial aspects of Bultmann's approach. For Bayer, the existential approach succeeds in 'privileging proclamation over theology,' but fails in finding the heart of theology within an existential analysis of the human subject themselves, rather than with a communicative act between God and creatures (Bayer 2007:138). For Bayer, it can even be stated that the speech-act constitutes the 'essence of Christianity' (2007:138). It is clear that in Bayer's view, the notion of speech-act is not merely one aspect of philosophy to be explored by the theologian, but is the very centre of Christian faith and practice. Theology consists both in the actual doing of such speech-acts, as well as analysis of those actions in third-person constative discourse (2007:128). This is centred in the proclamation of law and gospel.

In Bayer's view, all of theology can be broken down into statements of first and second person discourse, or of 'address and response' (2007:18). This includes the deliverance of God's promises in speech-acts, along with the human response of offering praise and thanksgiving. The speech acts of God are twofold: law and gospel. These two words are described as the 'object of

theology', but he does not define them in their scholastic senses (2007:100). He likens them to a bird in flight, rather than propositions which can be studied in a scientific manner. Like Forde, Bayer understands God's law primarily within the context of its accusatory function, and does not write of the *lex aeterna* (Cooper 2017). The gospel, similarly, is identified with God's act of salvation in the present; this is the speech act of forgiveness proclaimed by the minister. This emphasis on linguistics, for Bayer, overcomes moralistic, existential, and metaphysical understandings of the Christian faith (2007:100). In his view, this understanding of law and gospel as speech acts was at the centre of Luther's reformation discovery.

In Bayer's view, Luther's turn from medieval theology was 'in the strict sense' the revelation that there is no strong division between *signum* (the sign) and *res* (the reality) (2007:129). In older approaches (at least according to Bayer) both the word and sacraments were understood as signs which pointed to a more ultimately reality found elsewhere. This notion comes primarily from St. Augustine's use of certain themes of Plato's philosophy, especially in his approach to language. For Luther, however, the *signum* is the thing itself. There is no reality which needs to be grasped apart from the sign. The most common manner of expressing this reality is with the words of absolution, which takes the form of a commissive speech-act with the 'I-you' formula of 'I forgive you all of your sins' (2007:130). In the absolution, the pastor does not merely declare that one's sins are *already* forgiven, or point one to forgiveness which can be received *elsewhere*, but the absolution does the act of absolving itself. In Austin's language, it is a performative rather than constative statement. There is no information being delivered in the words of absolution which is then subject to things like truth and falsehood, as is the case in constative utterances (2007:132). This very act brings about a reality between God and man, wherein the human creature stands before God now forgiven. This reality of the divine-speech act which constitutes the gospel is connected not only to the word of absolution, but also to the sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper (2007:130). Each of these utterances, again, uses the 'I-you' formula which occurs in commissive speech-acts. Both the phrases 'I baptise you,' and 'my body given for you' are promises which extend from God to the human recipient. These linguistic utterances create a reality between these two subjects which did not exist previously.

Before exploring the notion of linguistic philosophy further in its relation to particular areas of Christian theology, such as one's

anthropology, some remarks must be made regarding the connections made thus far in Bayer between Austin's notion of speech-act and Luther's understanding of *signum* and *res*. There are certainly valid connections to be made between these two ideological systems. In linguistics, promises—which constitute a significant portion of Scripture—do not fit properly within earlier models of language. The recognition of commissives and verdictives need not be rejected by the classical metaphysician, as these are modes of speech which humans have always used (though perhaps without recognizing it), and can be validly applied without foregoing an essentialist metaphysical system. When God gives promises, they are not mere informatory statements, but actually effect reality itself. Lutheran theology has always had a strong notion of the efficacy of the divine word as living and active, instead of purely constative. Austin's categories are a beneficial way in which these traditionally Lutheran concepts can be understood. However, despite the usefulness of Austin's categories, Bayer moves far beyond a critical and moderate utilization of speech-act theory, and instead makes it determinative for the entirety of Christian theology.

One of the most apparent problems with the contention that speech-acts constitute the essence of the Christian faith is the fact that the proclamation of Jesus and the apostles does not always follow such a formula. It is true, certainly, that at times the apostles speak in a second person manner, such as when Peter speaks of Jesus as the one whom 'you crucified' (Acts 2:36). This is an instance of a proclamation of law which comports with the speech-act interpretation of law and gospel. The following chapter includes similar preaching, such as the statement that 'you denied the Holy One' (Acts 3:14). These instances of law also lead to baptisms, which then includes the formula, 'I baptise you.' Here, then, one could make a strong argument that both the law and the gospel, as proclaimed by the apostles, are performative rather than constative statements. However, this would not properly take into account several other texts in which the gospel is preached. In what is perhaps the most famous text of the entire New Testament, John 3:16, Jesus speaks in consistently constative statements. Jesus tells Nicodemus, 'God so loved the world' rather than, 'God so loved *you*.' He then continues by giving information about the results of God's love which culminates in the sending of Christ, whose benefits can be received by faith. This is a simple statement of what is the case. It grants information of an event which can be judged as either true or false, and thus fulfils Austin's requirement of what a constative utterance consists of.

One could argue that the statement is not *purely* constative, as contextually it does indeed elicit some kind of response from the hearer (the perlocution), and ultimately beckons one unto faith in the messiah. What this demonstrates, however, is that while performative utterances may be helpful to an extent in descriptions of the gospel, both law and gospel have a strong constative element as well. Bayer states, to the contrary, that, ‘The gospel is not a general idea but a concrete word that addresses a specific person in a particular situation’ (2005:123). In this instance in John’s Gospel (which is only one of many) Jesus does discuss a ‘general idea’ of what God has done for the world. Certainly, this applies to Nicodemus as an individual, but there is no dichotomy between constative general statements and particular and concrete performative ones. The divide between proclamatory speech-acts and theological statements which simply give information is not as strong as Bayer supposes.

This is perhaps even more clear in Gerhard Forde’s description of two forms of speech as ‘primary discourse,’ and ‘secondary discourse’ (1990:2). In his book *Theology is for Proclamation*, he argues that the most essential type of theology is that which is spoken in a first to second person manner, using the ‘I-you’ formula which Bayer identifies with performative speech. Though he does not use Austin’s language as explicitly, Forde essentially uses the same categories. For Forde, the law and gospel are defined as primary, rather than secondary, discourse. This serves as the basis for one’s preaching. Forde differentiates between preaching the gospel and preaching *about* the gospel (1990:17). In his view, the majority of pastors never actually get around to preaching the gospel because they are simply speaking *about* it. As cited in the example above, this would mean that texts like John 3 are really not the gospel at all, because they do not contain direct ‘I forgive you’ statements. In reality there is no strong contrast between speaking the gospel, and speaking *about* the gospel. Both performative and constative statements are elements of preaching the gospel as evidenced by the New Testament.

Alongside of the inadequacies of Austin’s categories in properly expositing the gospel, Bayer’s idea of *signum* and *res* needs to be examined. As mentioned above, for Bayer, Luther’s fundamental insight in the Reformation is that there is no strong divide between the sign and the reality standing behind it. Instead, the sign is the thing itself. While Luther certainly holds to a stronger connection between sacrament and reality than do Calvin and the later Reformed tradition, there is no indication in Luther’s own writings that he self-consciously departed from the Augustinian

tradition in this matter. Had such a move been the very centre of Luther's thought, certainly this would have merited mentioning somewhere. The language of the sacraments as signs has a long history within Lutheranism. It is apparent in the entire scholastic era, from Chemnitz to Gerhard to Hollaz (Schmid 1899:520). One might simply argue that this is one of those areas in which the Lutheran tradition departed from its founder. However, the sign-signified language is consistent also within the writings of Melancthon, and it even gained confessional status in the Augsburg Confession (AC XIII). Luther never voiced disagreement on this point, either in communication with Melancthon or in his own public writings. While Bayer rightly expositis the unity of the sacraments and God's act for the sinner, once again he goes far beyond what the evidence actually merits. These problems with Bayer's method are even more apparent as they are applied to specific theological content—particularly anthropology.

For Bayer, humanity itself is defined by language. He proposes that we are not 'rational beings' as was supposed by Aristotle and other Greek philosophers, but instead are 'speaking beings' (2003:47). Speech is therefore definitional of humanity. It is this communicative nature of men and women that differentiates the human race from the rest of creation, and is the basis for one's relatedness to God. In a summary statement, Bayer defines his view thus: 'Our humanity consists of the fact that we are addressed and therefore can hear and can ourselves answer, being responsible for doing so' (2003:61). The implications of such a conviction are apparent in the manner in which he defines both the subject and object of theology. When speaking theologically, one must speak specifically of the 'sinful human', and the 'justifying God' (2005:98). While this, in and of itself, is not necessarily problematic, as these *are* properly spoken of in relation to soteriology, Bayer goes farther than would be done by the scholastics. He contends that these modifiers, both 'sinful', and 'justifying', are not accidental, but *substantial*. Bayer defines humanity—theologically at least—as 'people who are accused and absolved by God' (2005:98). God, in this system, is 'the one who accuses and absolves us' (2005:98). Bayer is careful to note that this does not imply a doctrine that God created humanity to be sinful in essence, but that theology is simply not concerned of classical metaphysical questions of man or God's essences in the abstract. The problems with such a theological anthropology are numerous. Here, two primary issues with Bayer's anthropology are discussed, followed by an examination of William Schumacher's use of such concepts.

2.3. A Critique of Bayer

The first issue with Bayer's approach is that it narrowly limits the field of theology to a reductionistic law–gospel schema. While the distinction between law and gospel is an important theological principle, it should not be the sole question in all doctrinal discourse. Joel Biermann has demonstrated the many inadequacies of such a reductionism in his *A Case for Character* (2014). And even in relation to law and gospel, Bayer further limits such study to their function in a proclamatory performative context, while Lutheran Orthodoxy defined the essences of both law and gospel first, which then informed their impact on the individual, whether linguistically or existentially. If God is purely understood through his acts of accusation and absolution, this negates a significant amount of productive discourse about subjects such as, creation, the divine attributes, the relationship between God and creation, and other important topics. In Bayer's view, theology is essentially *only* soteriology. This leaves no place for discussion about God as he is in himself (inter-Trinitarian relations, divine simplicity and immutability, and so on) or of humanity in either the prelapsarian or glorified state in which one is certainly not identified as the 'sinful human.' What Bayer proposes here is a theological novelty, and not a helpful one.

The second issue with this proposal is that it inevitably leads to Flacianism. When the reformer contended that sin constituted the essence of humanity, the other Lutheran theologians recognised the problems with such an approach. Bayer, in rejecting the traditional essence-accidents distinction in Aristotelian philosophy, ends up in the same position by defining humanity itself by sin. His small qualification that this does not mean that God himself created the human essence as sinful does not resolve the problem (2005:98). Whether one wants to speak of sin as the essence of man theologically, metaphysically, or something else, this still introduces a radical discontinuity between the human person at some point within the process of redemption. If sin is of the essence of humanity, this appears to imply that Adam himself had a different essence before and after sin. Similarly, so does the human person who passes into a glorified state. This demonstrates, once again, that linguistic philosophy simply does not have the necessary categories to speak with the theological nuance which is necessary biblically. Essentialist metaphysics, with the distinction between essence and accidents has a way in which theologians can uphold two important truths: that sin is a real and damaging problem upon humanity, and that despite this sinful nature, one still remains essentially human from the

prelapsarian to the post-lapsarian state into the glorification of humanity at the Parousia. Bayer's proposal simply cannot do this, which is a further demonstration of its inadequacy. These problems are magnified in William Schumacher's use of linguistic theological anthropology in his critique of the Finnish approach to Luther.

2.4. William Schumacher's Linguistic Theology

Schumacher's proposal is especially important because he writes in opposition to Platonic philosophy, which he argues is opposed to Luther's metaphysical system. He argues in *Who Do I Say that You Are* against Tuomo Mannermaa and the Finnish interpretation of Luther. These Finnish authors contend for the notion that Luther's theology of justification is, in some respects, consistent with the Eastern Orthodox belief in theosis. Rather than arguing against the particulars of union with Christ and its relationship to justification in the *ordo salutis*, Schumacher finds the central problem with Mannermaa to be one of metaphysics. The Finnish authors approve of theotic notions because they believe in Platonic essentialism, which Schumacher argues stands in opposition to a word-centric metaphysics that is found in Luther. He applies these principles to a theological anthropology that comports with Bayer's as discussed above.

The core of Schumacher's anthropology is stated at the beginning of his book, when he says that 'the essential being of human creatures is determined and defined by a word said about them—indeed, by a word said to them' (2010:1). Being is subsumed under word, setting up a strong distinction between Schumacher's approach and that of real-essentialism. Schumacher argues that human nature is not to be described in 'substantial' language, as this implies that the definition of being is somehow within the human self, rather than in God (2010:14). Instead, in a theological anthropology, it is the performative word of God which is definitional—not substance. In Schumacher's view, this performative word is not only creative at the beginning of human existence, but continues its sustenance and preservation in creation (2010:15). He refers to this as an 'ontology of the word' that stands in stark contrast to the Platonic convictions present in the proponents of the Finnish interpretation of Luther (2010:15). He criticises Mannermaa for holding to what he labels a 'static realism' in which everything that is real is necessarily within the realm of being (2010:48). For Schumacher, Luther's approach to reality is exclusively defined by the word, which leads to a 'real-verbal' view of the life of faith (2010:49). Schumacher's work is one

which sets up a strong dichotomy between word and being. This is a problematic approach.

This dichotomy proposed by Schumacher is a false one. He is highly critical of any language of substance or essence as the real in favour of the dynamic word of God as a better theological alternative. However, there is no reason why these two aspects of reality must somehow be placed in opposition to one another at all. One of the criticisms of essentialism that Schumacher proposes is that it defines human creatures by something in themselves, rather than by God's act (2010:14). However, this simply is not true in traditional essentialism in any of its forms. While it is true that individual things have essences in which they participate, these are not in any sense autonomous things. God's word is active in creation—this is not doubted by any Christian thinker. However, when God creates, he does not only make merely the particular, but also the general. It is not to attribute some kind of autonomy to the human race to acknowledge that God's word creates, not only individual persons, but an actual human nature which can be examined and defined. This is precisely the nature of the creation account in Genesis. God's word is the instrument of creation (Gen 1:3), which makes both particular objects (Gen 1:20), and various 'kinds' in which these objects are placed (Gen 4:2). Christian Neoplatonism, in particular, has emphasised all three of these realities with the notion that the Logos is the intermediary between God and man who is the instrument of creation, and in creation, particular objects are made but participate in their essences which are in the mind of God. This is far from any notion of autonomy, as essences themselves are always participatory, as nothing has being at all apart from God. While it is not that clear, it appears that Schumacher confuses essentialism with the notion of autonomy which arose in modern philosophy, and was promoted during the Enlightenment (2010:5). Classic essentialism retains a proper balance between the realities of both the dependency of created things on the Logos, and the belief in a strong realism with regard to essences.

In Schumacher's approach, Mannermaa errs largely in his definition of justification, which is placed in categories of substance, and the central soteriological motif is the real-ontic union of God and the believer (2010:47). This leads to a theological schema which mirrors that of Andreas Osiander, who is condemned in the Formula of Concord. Schumacher is correct here in differentiating ontology from justification as do the Lutheran scholastics. Justification is not synonymous with union in Luther, though the two are intimately related concepts as is argued in *The*

Righteousness of One (Cooper 2013). The problem, however, is that Schumacher throws out the entire Platonic and Aristotelian tradition because ontological categories are insufficient in expositing Luther's doctrine of justification, which is a legal rather than metaphysical act. As is argued in *Christification: A Lutheran Approach to Theosis* (Cooper 2014), there is no reason why forensic and ontic categories should be pitted against one another. Salvation is comprehensive, and includes a variety of metaphors and facets which no one particular idea exhausts. The Lutheran orthodox tradition affirms both classical metaphysics and the centrality of the proclaimed word as efficacious in justification. To be fair, the dichotomy does not begin with Schumacher, but it is Mannermaa himself who pits his ideas against the Lutheran Confessions. Within the scholastic view, however, both Schumacher's focus on the primacy of divine speech *and* Mannermaa's contention for a real-ontic union are affirmed together, without neglecting the import of one or the other.

Another problem that arises in Schumacher's proposal for a purely word-centric approach to reality is that it does not comport with the Lutheran Confessional tradition. This is significant because Schumacher is a member of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod and has therefore vowed to uphold a *quia* subscription to the Book of Concord. There is plenty of essentialist language utilised in the various documents comprising that text, as has been demonstrated above. The most basic is the Nicene Creed which speaks strongly about a divine and human essence. There is no indication within the text itself that the Council of Nicea understood human nature as defined by a performative speech-act. Instead, the confession of Christ's divine and human natures uses traditional Greek categories. It is clear that the Lutheran confessors continue to understand humanity in essentialist terms, especially in the Osiandrian controversy explain in Article I of the Formula of Concord. It is specifically in relation to the human essence in which the essence-accidents distinction in Aristotle is affirmed. This is not to say, however, that the Greeks somehow exhausted all that is to be said about humanity, as Schumacher is right to address the relationship of humanity to the word of God, as well as the important relational categories that have often been missing in older philosophical anthropology. However, such can be done without dismissing the entire classical essentialist tradition.

2.5. Linguistic Philosophy: Conclusion

Oswald Bayer, Gerhard Forde, and William Schumacher each use JL Austin's theory of speech-acts as an essential component of

Lutheran thought. For Bayer, the distinction between constative and performative utterances coincides with Luther's understanding of the word of God as efficacious, rather than merely informational. He views the entire theological task as consisting in speech-acts and descriptions of those acts. In view of this, Bayer does not speak in terms of substance, and thus defines both God and man by way of the adjectives 'justifying', and 'sinful' respectively. The two problems with this approach are: First, that it is reductionistic, leading to a theology which is solely concerned with soteriology. Second, it is a reiteration of Flacianism, wherein sin is described as of the human essence itself. Gerhard Forde explains the same distinctions as does Bayer, though using the terms 'primary discourse,' and 'secondary discourse,' rather than 'performative,' and 'constative.' His view has the same problems as that of Bayer. Schumacher uses the insights of these two other writers in his criticisms of Tuomo Mannermaa and the Finnish interpretation of Luther. In doing so, Schumacher formulates a theological anthropology which is a 'real-verbal' one, in opposition to substantialist views of other authors. The problem with this is that the proposal itself is based upon a false dichotomy in which word and ontology are set in opposition to one another. The scholastic method allows for an adoption of the utilization of aspects of *both* ideas, instead of limiting soteriological language either to the ontological or the legal. Contemporary linguistic philosophy can be a helpful aid in expositing certain theological ideas. However, it is not an adequate system without the solid grounding of an essentialist metaphysic. This is further seen in an outgrowth of this linguistic turn in Lutheran writers which is an idea called *relational ontology*.

3. Relational Ontology

A further philosophical conception which arises out of the linguistic emphasis of contemporary Lutheran thinkers is *relational ontology*. There is no unified set of authors who identify themselves with a number of identical philosophical convictions which are then called relational ontology. However, despite differences on particulars, or even on the definition of exactly what relation is, there is one unifying theme which identifies a relational ontological system. In essence, a relational ontology is any system which prioritises the category of relation over that of substance. For Aristotle, relations are an accidental category of essences, but this movement proposes that instead, essences are defined by relation. For writers such as Bayer, Schumacher, and

Kolb, this relational ontology is an outgrowth of the centrality of the word.

3.1. Bayer's Relational Ontology

Bayer explains what he describes as a 'revolution in logic' within Luther's thought wherein a 'relational ontology' replaces metaphysical ideas as found in Aristotle (2007:19). Though he acknowledges that such an ontological schema is not adequate in explaining *every* aspect of reality, he contends that this is the only valid manner in which soteriology can be described. Salvation is purely relational—not ontological. Bayer further explains this by noting the relationship between various ontological systems and the two kingdoms. Within the civil realm, Bayer acknowledges that the category of 'substance' has some validity (2007:79). He rejects extreme forms of relational ontology by arguing that God is in essence God, regardless of his relationship to creation (2007:20). However, within the right-hand sphere, in which God is active in salvation, a relational ontology is the 'only appropriate one' (2007:79). This is explained in Bayer's understanding of faith, and ecstatic existence in Christ.

One of the central themes in Bayer's interpretation of Luther is the notion that faith always extends beyond itself to Christ. He argues that passive righteousness results in a life that is outside oneself, and found in another (2003:25). This identification with Christ externally frees one from the concerns of either self-judgment or the judgment of others, since one's identity does not exist within the self at all (2003:39). Good works flow out of this idea, as passive righteousness frees one from concerns of self-justification so that one might serve the neighbour freely. Paulson, following Bayer, describes this as being 'foreign to ourselves' (2011:2) and living 'outside one's self' (2011:3). It is faith which creates this reality, as faith clings to Christ who remains external. As do the Lutheran scholastics, Bayer and Paulson both emphasise the fact that faith never rests within itself or in any inherent quality of the human subject, but solely in Christ (Paulson 2011:57). In faith, the individual is 'created anew' (Bayer 2007:103). One then exists, not in the self, but within Christ, with whom one is permanently identified. For Bayer, this concept cannot coexist with essentialist metaphysics, since the Greek systems have no place for a notion of 'ex-centric being' in the identity of another (2007:103). While Bayer is correct in his contention that justification is relational rather than ontological, and that identity is to be found in Christ, his relational exclusivism in soteriology is problematic.

The first problem is that the natural result of this contention is that soteriology is limited to justification. Other parts of salvation, such as the mystical union, do not cohere with a purely relational ontology, and therefore they receive no treatment from Bayer. The only union which receives attention is a union of relations between the person and Christ, rather than one of essences (2007:79). This is also likely connected to his conviction that there is no fundamental differentiation between justification and sanctification (2003:59). There can be no progressive change in any ontological sense in the Christian, although he does acknowledge that there can be a kind of relational progress in connection with the new creature throughout the Christian life (2003:65). Both Scripture and the Confessions are far more multi-faceted than is allowed with Bayer's ontology.

Another issue with this relational emphasis is that, like Forde's existential approach to regeneration, it does not account for any continuity in the subject. While it is true that one gains a new identity in Christ in the great exchange, this identity does not erase the previous self. If the individual is, theologically, defined solely by relation, and one's relation to God changes before and after regeneration, then the self must become something utterly foreign. If there is a change of relation, then there is also a change of self. Furthermore, if one is identified *solely* with Christ in this supposed 'ex-centric' notion of being, then it would be more accurate to simply say that the individual *is* Jesus in faith. To be sure, Bayer himself does not make such connections. However, such is the result if there is no talk of human essence apart from relations within soteriological discourse. There must be a human ego and identity within the self in *some* sense, if the individual actually experiences redemption. Therefore, although there is a sense in which it is proper to speak about living in and through another, and being identified with Christ, this cannot be the sole means by which one exopts redemption. Identity is both in some sense within the self—or, again, there is no actual self to be redeemed in the first place—and in Christ. The problem is that Bayer forces an unnecessary dichotomy. His insights into ecstatic existence in Christ can be explained more properly not by dismissing ontology from soteriology altogether, but acknowledging the coherence of the two ideas within the broader scope of salvation.

3.2. Schumacher on Relational Ontology

William Schumacher adopts a relational ontology from Bayer, and explores the fact that one is defined not purely by one's faith-

relation to Christ, but also to fellow creatures. He is highly critical of Platonic dualism of body and soul, even claiming that body and soul are not two separate substances, but two different ways of viewing the entire human person (2010:154). The soul describes the person in relation to God, and the body is one's self in relation to other creatures. It is in relation to others that Schumacher expands upon Bayer's relational emphasis. For Schumacher, relations to other individuals are not merely accidental qualities of people, but are actually 'constitutive of human nature' (2010:155). There is, then, no human essence which can be determined apart from connections between particular people. Schumacher further clarifies that relations constitute the human essence 'in the fullest sense' (2010:155). For Aristotle, in contrast, relations are accidental, since such relations are in flux and the identity of an object remains despite whatever relations it has at the present moment. If an individual becomes a widow, she remains the same self regardless of the changed husband-wife relation that defined a significant aspect of her life previously. Even within a relationship, there is constant flux so that no single relation or set of relations remains fixed through time. If one were to cut off every single relationship that one had, moving to a far away place or alone on an island, one's essential identity would not change. It is for these reasons that essence *has* to have a priority over relation. Schumacher himself basically admits as much when he says that if one were cut off from relations with other humans, one would still remain a human, 'in the same sense as a human being who has lost arms or legs or eyes is still human' (2010:156). The fact is that even though Schumacher wants to give relation priority over essence, he simply cannot do it consistently, and without seemingly realizing it, he comes to the same conclusion that Aristotle does. Relations are a fundamental aspect of what it means to be in a material world, and one is always standing in relation to others; however, those relations are not definitional of what an object is (its essence), since an object retains its identity as relations change. Again, Schumacher's insights are helpful, but only make sense within the essentialist framework from which he continually distances himself. The same problem arises in Kolb and Arand's work.

3.3. Kolb and Arand's Ontology

In *The Genius of Luther's Theology*, Robert Kolb and Charles Arand argue that the idea of the two kinds of righteousness is a central theme in Luther's thought. In particular, they explore these themes as relational categories in connection with how one relates to both God and fellow creatures (2008:28). These types of

righteousness are *passive* and *active*. They each serve in a relational capacity to identify how one is to act with regard to God and humans respectively. One's relatedness to God is always passive, as an infant is with their parents (2008:28). God gives salvation as a free gift, and the man or woman can do absolutely nothing to earn it. They, therefore, enter before God in a purely passive stance, and receive their identity before God in Christ (2008:29). In connection to other creatures, however, one is to live a life of active obedience to God through works of love toward the neighbour (2008:29). Like Shumacher, Kolb and Arand connect this life of obedience largely with the relations that one has in various vocations and communities. In opposition to the monastic ideal, Christians live for the sake of those around them—always within community and in civil society at large. Both of these facets of human existence constitute human identity.

What is promoted by Kolb and Arand is a kind of relational ontology which purports that identity flows out of relations to both God and man. Speaking of one's *coram Deo* status, they argue that faith is not a mere accidental quality of the human creature, but instead that it 'lies at the core of human existence' (2008:38). They further clarify that Luther 'does not consider the human person substantially' (2008:49), but instead, he speaks of humanity in strictly relational terms. To make the point as clear as possible, Kolb and Arand also approvingly cite Bayer in saying that 'My very being is faith' (2008:51). This conflation of essence and relation is highly problematic. To say that one's being is identified with faith, or that both existence and identity are strictly tied to one's *coram Deo* status leads to a devaluation of the unbeliever. If one takes these statements in their strict and literal sense, then the individual who is devoid of faith therefore has no existence, identity, or being. The inevitable conclusion, again, is Flacianism. If reality is defined by relation, then one's own being is fundamentally altered in faith in which there is no continuity of subject. This is not to say that Kolb or Arand would themselves make such contentions. However, it does demonstrate the necessity of speaking of a continuous human essence which remains in the individual. A purely relational or linguistic ontology simply cannot account for this.

The criticisms which Kolb and Arand offer toward Greek metaphysics are mostly within the context of the Eastern doctrine of theosis, and especially its use by Tuomo Mannermaa. Kolb and Arand are highly critical of any soteriology which is ontological (2008:48). They categorise such approaches as a denial of human creatureliness, wherein the goal of redemption is to be 'absorbed

into God's divine being,' which results in the loss of individual creaturely identity (2008:48). This is then associated with the view of Andreas Osiander, who denied the forensic nature of justification, and then with the Eastern Orthodox tradition which operates from a supposedly 'radically different metaphysical base' than Luther (2008:48). Kolb and Arand are simply incorrect in their characterization of the Eastern tradition. Apart from absolute pantheism, no Christian theologian who identifies with Neoplatonism argues for a complete loss of the individual into the very substance of God. Nearly every Eastern Orthodox text on theosis makes repeated statements that such is not the case. This is, in fact, the entire point of the prominent distinction between God's essence (which is not participatory) and his energies (which are participatory) that assures that the believer never actually participates within the divine essence at all (Cooper 2014:9). Furthermore, it is not the contention of Eastern writers that the creature becomes in any sense less of a creature, but instead that theosis makes the individual more truly human (Cooper 2014:4-5). Here, the supposed opposition between a relational ontology that holds to a strong creature/Creator distinction and a Platonist one that does not is simply manufactured.

A further problem with Kolb and Arand's criticism is that they continue to promote the false dichotomy that either one adopts a relational understanding of salvation or a metaphysical one (2008:49). There is no reason why the two concepts must necessarily be opposed to one another. It is true, certainly, that justification is a decidedly relational category, which refers not to a change in substance, but in the individual's relatedness to God. However, when the Lutheran scholastics developed the *ordo salutis*, they acknowledged the broad variety of realities involved in salvation, though without negating the unique forensic nature of justification (Schmid 1899:409). Kolb and Arand's helpful insights surrounding the two kinds of righteousness need not negate essentialist ontology as a subject of soteriological discourse (Cooper 2016:120). The complete disregard for any metaphysical discussions related to the human subject in Kolb and Arand's work lead to a rather unique view of sanctification.

Kolb and Arand contend that there is no 'progress upward on a spiritual continuum' in the Christian life (2008:49). At one point it is even stated rather clearly that there is no growth in sanctification at all (2008:126). This is not to say that the Christian does not participate in good works, according to Kolb and Arand. However, these good works are not the result of a process of the individual becoming more holy. Instead, the believer is

completely holy in Christ, and that holiness is only partially manifested in the world before the eschaton (2008:125–126). Kolb and Arand demonstrate this through the popular phrase *simul iustus et peccator*. This phrase, in their view, refers to two totalities. One is completely righteous in relation to Christ, and completely sinful in oneself (2008:49). The movement between these two realities is never one of actual change from one to the other, but is purely psychological (2008:49). This seems to be the inevitable conclusion of a relational ontology. If being is by relation, and justification is a perfect act, then there is no place for partial righteousness at all, as one is already perfectly related to God. Good works then are dealt with in the category of inter-human relationships, especially within the context of vocation. This denial of any sense of partial righteousness or sanctification seems, however, to contradict Biblical texts which speak of a process wherein the individual is changed (2 Cor. 3:18, Phil. 3:12, Heb. 10:14, 2 Pet. 1:4–8), along with passages contained in the Book of Concord that speak about progress in sanctification (LC II.54, 57, Apol. IV.124, FC SD III.32). These passages are explained in detail in *Hands of Faith* (Cooper 2016). It is the Lutheran scholastic tradition that is able to hold both to a strong notion of forensic justification alongside an ontological change in sanctification.

Any ontology, from a Lutheran perspective, has to wrestle with two realities: Luther's doctrine of justification, and genuine change in the Christian life. For Kolb and Arand, this means either making justification an ontological change (which they reject) or arguing that there is no actual progress in sanctification (which they affirm). The Lutheran scholastics posit both a legal and relation conception of justification, and speak in Platonic and Aristotelian categories about being. Both the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions have ways of speaking about change in the Christian without somehow subsuming humanity into divinity, as Kolb and Arand fear (2008:48). For the Platonist the ideal human—in the mind of God—is a sinless one. As one is involved in the process of sanctification, or Christification, one participates more in that ideal, and thus becomes more truly human. This is why the Eastern tradition can speak of divinization as the fulfilment of human nature, rather than a loss of one's creatureliness. For the Aristotelian, sanctification can be placed in the category of accidental change, rather than substantial. Throughout the process, one retains the same ego and essence, but genuine change does occur, though without a change from one essence to another. In each of these ways, the classical

metaphysician is able to argue for the reality of some kind of ontological change over time, while simultaneously affirming the consistency of human identity. An ontology which favours relation over essence cannot do this.

3.4. Relational Ontology: Conclusions

Bayer, Schumacher, Kolb, and Arand all have strong and important modifications to Christian anthropology and the notion of relations. Bayer rightly argues that there is a sense in which Christian identity and existence is not within the autonomous self, but in Christ. However, he wrongly puts soteriology solely in this category, and thus negates the redemption of the human essence itself. Schumacher is correct to note the communal nature of humanity. God did not make individuals to live or subsist solely within themselves, but in the context of the broader human community. However, Schumacher's points cohere perfectly well within the essentialist metaphysic from which he continues to distance himself. Kolb and Arand identify how the two kinds of righteousness spoken of by Luther are to be applied to the notions of relatedness to both God and creatures. However, they unnecessarily then dismiss substantial understandings of humanity, and in doing so, they mischaracterise Neoplatonism and the Eastern tradition. They also are forced, by their relational ontology, to deny any real sense of progressive sanctification, though this teaching is prominent in both Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Each of these relational approaches brings important aspects of nuance to a theological anthropology. However, they can provide a more balanced explanatory function only when based upon an essentialist ontology.

4. Conclusion

This essay began as an exploration of the impact of linguistic philosophy in contemporary Lutheranism. The impact of Austin's speech-act theory has been demonstrated, and it has been shown that though there can be beneficial ways to speak in such categories, they cannot replace classical metaphysical categories of essence or substance. The findings of the study are presented here.

Oswald Bayer draws from JL Austin's speech-act theory in his exposition of Luther's thought, which distinguishes between constative and performative speech. Forde holds to a similar distinction, using the terms 'secondary discourse' and 'primary discourse' respectively. For Bayer, this performative speech-act constitutes the very essence of Christianity, thus strongly

differentiating his own view from most (all?) previous theology. William Schumacher follows this centrality of divine speech in his criticism of the Finnish school of Luther interpretation defended by Tuomo Mannermaa. For Schumacher, classical philosophy and Luther have two opposing systems of reality. Reality is either defined, according to Schumacher, by essences in themselves or by the word of God. He opts for the latter. It was demonstrated that each of these proposals is built upon a false dichotomy. There is no reason why these models of speech are necessarily a replacement of essentialist categories. One can adopt the usefulness as the category of performative speech in connection with sacramental theology without then also negating essentialist metaphysics. Schumacher, especially, wrongly divides these two truths and misunderstands essentialism by arguing that classical philosophy somehow assumes autonomy in the subject. This is simply not the case. The scholastic method can validly incorporate the insights of Austin, Searle, and others while simultaneously affirming real-essentialism in either its Platonic or Aristotelian form.

Connected with this shift to linguistics, Schumacher, Bayer, Kolb, and Arand all argue that relation is a more proper category than substance, at least in connection with soteriology. Through his word, God creates a new relation between himself and the human subject. The relatedness to God constitutes one's passive righteousness and identity *coram Deo*. This notion of identity is definitional of humanity, rather than a shared essence of humanness. Bayer identifies faith as one's being. This relational ontology is tied, not only to God, but also to fellow human creatures. Schumacher argues that the human essence itself is constituted by such relationships. This entire argument, again, is based upon a false dichotomy. The Lutheran scholastics all argued for justification as strictly forensic relational terminology without negating essentialist concepts. For them, forensic and participationist soteriological categories were not pitted as two opposing systems, but two aspects of the comprehensive reality that is salvation. This relational ontology, if it negates any other ontology in reference to salvation, does not have any proper place for the language of the mystical union, which is both a Biblical and historically Lutheran idea.

It is apparent that the Radical Lutheran theological method, in its use of linguistic and relational ontology, falls short in its attempt to formulate a doctrinal system. There are simply too many aspects of Christian theology which simply cannot be explained without a classical essentialist metaphysic. The doctrines of both God and man are strongly altered by this rejection of substantial

ontology, and not in a manner that is either helpful or consistent with Scripture. While the church today need not simply reprimand the thought of the Protestant scholastics in every area, in the realm of metaphysics, this older view proves to be one which is relevant and beneficial today.

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Desperation in an Attempt to Curb Modern-Day Prophets: Pentecostalisation and the Church in South Africa and Zimbabwe

Elijah Elijah Ngoweni Dube

Abstract

Pentecostalism continues to spread in Africa like a veld fire. This paper will pay attention to the phenomenon's pervasive presence in South Africa and Zimbabwe. The new forms of pentecostalisation, characterised by modern-day flamboyant 'Prophets' who initiate and run Pentecostal ministries have become the order of the day. Apart from enriching themselves, these 'Prophets' propagate a kind of gospel that is a complete departure from basic Christian teachings. They also use unorthodox means in delivering people from illnesses and in conducting their business in general. This new manifestation of pentecostalism has drawn criticism from both the public and the Church, but it would seem that no one clearly knows how to curb these 'shrewd business people masquerading as Christian Prophets'. While the public has attempted to stage protests against this new form of pentecostalism, the governments in both South Africa and Zimbabwe have also been considering ways of regulating practice in religious organizations.

Keywords

Pentecostalisation
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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

This paper was presented at a Webinar by the South African Theological Seminary on 'Pentecostalisation and faith in the Global South' that was held from 13 to 14 June 2018. The paper was triggered by a #FalseProphetsMustFall March that took place in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, on 14 March 2018. It is thus a response to the rampant extreme forms of pentecostalism in both South Africa and Zimbabwe. The paper seeks to challenge theological educators and theological students to be more responsive to the excesses of pentecostalism and/or pentecostalisation that have become a pervasive element. First, there is an attempt at a definition of terms. Subsequently, based on internet news articles, the paper paints a picture of how extremes of pentecostalism have become so rampant in a way that they seem to be becoming the norm. Towards the end it explores the 'desperation' that appears to be creeping in as far as dealing with these neo-pentecostalism excesses is concerned. Ultimately, the paper proffers what could be possible ways of mitigating the disruptive and undesirable effects of the modern-day flamboyant 'Prophets'.

2. Definition of terms

It ought to be emphasised that pentecostalism is different from pentecostalisation. Pentecostalisation is the broad pervasive influence of pentecostalism (Smith 2018). Pentecostalisation has infiltrated Christendom (the worldwide body or society of Christians). Pentecostalisation is not confined to denominational boundaries, as will be shown below. It is evidenced in or by the fact that a significant number of Protestant Christians today practise a Pentecostal style of worship including speaking in tongues, exorcism, and highly-spirited services (Chesnut 2014) irrespective of whether they belong to Pentecostal denominations or not. Christerson (2012) submits that, 'Christianity (or at least Protestantism) is becoming Pentecostalised.' Straub (2015) concurs with Christerson's assertion.

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, *Cambridge Dictionary* and the *Free Dictionary* define pentecostalism and/or Pentecostal as relating to or suggesting Pentecost. They note that pentecostalism constitutes various Christian religious bodies whose members aim to emulate the Apostles at Pentecost in being filled with the Holy Spirit. These sources argue that pentecostalism traces its origins back to 1901 in the US. It emphasises Holy Spirit baptism and a

heightened belief in the truth of everything written in the Bible, arguing that this truth can be replicated today.

The *Collins Dictionary*, in line with the above, submits that, 'Pentecostal churches are Christian churches that emphasise the work of the Holy Spirit and the exact truth of the Bible.' It ought to be stressed that there is a fundamentalist attitude attached to what Pentecostals call 'the exact truth of the Bible'.

On the pentecostalisation of Christianity, Kobylinski (2016: 100) avers that,

Over the recent years, we have witnessed a pentecostalization of Christianity around the world. The term pentecostalization refers to the exceptionally fast rise in the number of many types of strictly Pentecostal communities, and the gradual transformation of many other Christian churches and congregations into a single, universal type of charismatic Christianity around the globe.

This further substantiates what has been mentioned earlier – the fact that pentecostalisation transcends denominational boundaries.

It is worth noting that pentecostalism is not a homogeneous movement. It reconfigures and reorganises itself in different contexts. Kobylinski (2016:106) notes that, 'The Pentecostal Movement takes different forms corresponding to the social, cultural and religious identity of its followers; but as a spiritual movement, it has no territorial or denominational boundaries.' That unrestricted and unfettered Pentecostal effect can be better defined or referred to as pentecostalisation.

3. Pentecostalism and Pentecostalisation in South Africa and Zimbabwe

Separating pentecostalism from the 'Prosperity or Health and Well-being gospel' has become very difficult. As part of the excesses of pentecostalism and pentecostalisation, manipulative preachers, pastors and 'Prophets' have become commonplace. These prey on 'desperate' followers or on followers who are 'eager for a miracle'. Africa, with its vast array of economic, social, health, and political problems has provided a very fitting turf for such opportunists.

In line with the above, Vengeyi (2011:223) calls Africa 'one of the fertile grounds for Pentecostalism. ...' In addition, Magezi and Manzanga (2016) argue that, '... this [Prosperity Gospel]

movement tends to grow rapidly where there are challenges such as poverty, unemployment and health problems.’

With pentecostalisation becoming pervasive, fundamentalism which is characteristic of pentecostalism, has been further entrenched. As mentioned earlier, there is a fundamentalist attitude attached to what Pentecostals call ‘the exact truth of the Bible’. This in itself is not utterly bad. The belief that everything written in the Bible is true and perhaps can be replicated has been taken to extremes. This has brought to the fore a brand of modern ‘Prophets’ who are never wrong in what they say or do, at least according to their followers, no matter how unacceptable it may be. Their flock rush to their defence irrespective of what these ‘Prophets’ are accused of.

With reference to Zimbabwe, Magezi and Manzanga (2016) mention that, ‘prosperity gospel tendencies are manifested in three major (among others) preachers: the United Family International Church, led by Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa; the Prophetic Healing Deliverance Ministries, led by Prophet Walter Magaya; and Spirit Embassy (on the decline), led by Uebert Angel.’

This is indisputably not a comprehensive list, but it does give an example of where excesses of pentecostalism have led to ‘Prosperity or Health and Wealth gospel’ preaching.

The belief that Biblical miracles can be replicated has become the basis on which modern ‘Prophets’ base their ministries. Kobylnski (2016:106) submits that, ‘... advocates of Pentecostal movements have developed their own vision of religion, morality, and social life. They believe that supernatural phenomena, such as the miracles and healings described in the Bible, occur just as frequently today, if the faith of the church members is ardent enough.’ Christians who flock to most of the ministries founded and run by modern-day ‘prophets’ in Zimbabwe and South Africa do so in the strong belief that their faith would make them achieve what they long for.

In order to satisfy their over-expectant followers, this modern brand of ‘Prophets’ twist and tweak Scripture to their taste. They use unorthodox means in delivering people from illnesses and conducting their business in general, while enriching themselves in the process. More worrisome is the fact that most of them propagate a kind of gospel that is a complete departure from basic Christian teachings. Fred Khumalo (2016) of *Sunday Times* writes that ‘Pastors are using toxic “healing” and measuring faith in donations.’ There is thus a complex web and an intricate relationship between the hope that these ‘Prophets’ sell to their

followers and the monetary rewards and subsequent wealth they get in turn.

On the news in South Africa and Zimbabwe, often one hears a lot about the weird things the modern-day flamboyant 'Prophets' are doing or have been doing. Stories of 'Prophets' spraying 'Doom' insecticide on their followers in church services—asking congregants to eat rats, grass, drink petrol—touching female congregants inappropriately in deliverance sessions—abusing and raping congregants—profiteering, among others, abound. These have become commonplace. In a sense, the 'Prophets' have become 'untouchables'.

4. Theological Educators and Theological Students' Role

For me, what is even more troubling is the fact that theological educators and theological students are nowhere to be found in public spaces or in public discourses on the matter in question. In his presentation at the Webinar by the South African Theological Seminary, Dr Annang Asumang rightly pronounced that theological educators have been too elitist and far removed, adding that they need not think of themselves as higher than God's people. Regrettably, in my view, theological educators have been conspicuously absent in public discourses. What one gets in public media are more voices evidencing pentecostalism's excesses.

The absence of theological educators and students in public discourses and/or spaces means Christians and non-Christians alike are confronted with the modern-day flamboyant 'Prophets' and have to grapple with them on their own. There appears to be no response, or perhaps 'adequate response,' from theological educators to what is happening around them. This paper maintains that no one seems to know what to do with the modern day 'Prophets', hence the 'Desperation' in the title of this paper. Our apparent preoccupation with treating this phenomenon from an elitist point of view, such as publishing exclusively in academic journals where our works are not accessible to the ordinary people has contributed to the 'desperation' in the public sphere.

By the above, it is not meant to convey the message that nothing is being done to try and combat the ever-surging phenomenon of the excesses of pentecostalism and pentecostalisation. The voices, however, are few and far-between. For example, in a *news24* article on 26 October 2017, Misheck Makora reports that, 'Apostle Khaya Maseko of The Salvation Church of the Revival of Faith has condemned other pastors for living it up in the lap of luxury, while

their followers wallow in poverty.’ Maseko warned Christians to be wary of pastors who seek their own glory and not God’s. He was addressing followers at a Sunday rally at the OR Tambo Hall in Khayelitsha, where he warned against false prophets.

On 1 September 2017, *Times Live* reported that Benjamin Dube, a veteran musician and pastor had slammed fake pastors. In this *Times Live* article, Dube is quoted as having said, ‘What is going on in church is disappointing, abominable and disheartening. It calls for the true son of God to stand up and model the true gospel of Jesus Christ.’

Although there are some representative voices speaking up on behalf of the rest of Christendom, it is irrefutable that there has not been adequate response to the regrettable excesses of pentecostalism. The fact that on Wednesday, 14 March 2018, some few people participated in a *#Fake Prophets Must Fall March* in Braamfontein, Johannesburg (Haffejee 2018; Dlamini 2018) sums it all up. Desperation rings loud in this gesture. This desperation is demonstrated in the following respects:

1. There was a low turnout. Hardly 50 people pitched for the march. The protesters marched to the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities to hand over a memorandum against false prophets (Haffejee 2018; Dlamini 2018).
2. One of the ‘Prophets’ (Prophet Bushiri) whose name had been on the posters challenged the marchers, a day before the march, in court to have his name removed from the list of the ‘Prophets’ implicated. He won his bid and the marchers were not allowed to carry banners with his name on them. This is a fitting example of how invincible the modern day ‘prophets’ have become, especially considering the vast wealth that they have amassed.
3. Not much was reported in the media about this march.
4. The very fact that only a handful of people (about 50) felt an obligation to protest against the rise and fame, as well as the abuses and excesses of ‘false prophets’, an issue which has become a very serious one for both society and government, is beyond worrisome.

Desperation can also be evidenced in Zimbabwe on the news that The Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (Baz), on 8 April 2018 banned all the country’s radio and state television stations from carrying programmes that advertise ‘prophets’ and traditional healings. The ban was part of concerted efforts by authorities to

clamp down on the increasing incidences of charlatans who masquerade as powerful ‘prophets’ (and traditional healers) (Machamire 2018).

A Zimbabwean news article on 20 June 2017 reported that, ‘Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) secretary general, Kenneth Mtata has blasted “false prophets” for misleading people into believing that the country’s political and economical crisis could be resolved spiritually through certain rituals’ (<https://relzim.org/news/zcc-secretary-general-blasts-false-prophets-for-misleading-people/>).

South Africa has also, for a long time, been considering regulating religious practices and speaking against religious abuses. According to *EyeWitness News* on 14 March 2018, ‘Chairperson of the CRL Commission Thoko Mkhwanazi-Xaluva had strong words of encouragement for those calling for the end of abuse of religion by false prophets who have often been accused of abusing women and children.’ She said this as she received a memorandum from leaders of the ‘False Prophets Must Fall’ march in Braamfontein.

The fact that these bodies have tried to curb and/or regulate the raging fire of invincible and rampant modern-day ‘Prophets’ should send a clear message to theological educators and students. There is a great need for some adequate response to the excesses of pentecostalism. In other words, while we embrace pentecostalism and pentecostalisation, we ought at the same time to be speaking against their abuse.

Theological educators will need to be more participative in contemporary issues bedevilling society at large. Some of the ways which are proposed are the following:

1. Theological educators need to make their voices more widely accessible on what is happening around them.
2. They need to go beyond writing to themselves and to their peers and colleagues while ignoring glaring issues around them clamouring for attention.
3. As much as is possible, they should use public media to counter the rampant proliferation of modern-day ‘Prophets’ (and their teachings), who have no regard for the Lord they claim to serve.
4. Finally, they should refrain from leaving the government and Christian Regulating Bodies to do for them what they themselves could and should do.

5. Conclusion

While pentecostalism and pentecostalisation have been widely embraced across the world and in Africa in particular, the excesses of modern-day 'Prophets' have been worrisome. Some few voices have spoken against the abuses of pentecostalism in modern-day South Africa and Zimbabwe, but there remains a great need for an adequate theological response to the excesses. The lack of such an adequate response paves the way for desperation and to uncoordinated voices attempting to confront the invincible modern-day 'Prophets', in vain. Theological educators and students should aim to be more attentive to issues bedevilling society. They, therefore, ought to step into the limelight and defend publicly what they consider correct from a biblical and theological perspective (1 Peter 3:15). The excesses of pentecostalism need to be exposed and confronted in public spaces and discourses.

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The meaning of *hebel* in Ecclesiastes¹

Kimmo Huovila and Dan Lioy

Abstract

The interpretation of *hebel* in Ecclesiastes has a great influence on one's understanding of the message of the book. This article discusses six different proposals for the meaning of *hebel* using the criteria of usage outside of Ecclesiastes, of natural prototype extensions from the attested meanings, of contextual fit, and of authorial cues to the reader. Using these criteria, it is argued that in Ecclesiastes the word means 'futile' without implying worthlessness. Ecclesiastes makes a case to value joy over pursuing the impossible task of achieving permanent profit in life and losing joy in the process.

Keywords

Ecclesiastes, Hebrew language, Hebel, הֶבֶל, lexical study, prototype theory

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1. The relevance of the study of *hebel* to the study of Ecclesiastes

The interpretation of the book of Ecclesiastes depends to a large degree on the interpretation of the key word *hebel*. The message of the book is summarised by calling all things *hebel* (Ecc 1:2, 12:8). The message conveyed is quite different if all things are called worthless or meaningless (Longman 1998:61–65), temporary (Fredericks 2010:50–54), absurd (Fox 1999:30–42), enigmatic (Staples 1943, Ogden 1987:17–22, Bartholomew 2009:104–107), or futile (Huovila 2018:114–156). Understanding *hebel* as ‘worthless’ summarises the book in terms of value. ‘Meaningless’ leads one to think of the book as discussing the meaning of life, and concluding that it has none. If everything is called ‘temporary’, the book discusses the transience of life. If everything was called ‘absurd’, the book juxtaposes expectations with observations in life, and notes the incongruity between them. If everything is called ‘enigmatic’, Qohelet was struggling with intellectual dilemmas. If everything is called ‘futile’, the book relates effort to some goal. Finding a single meaning that fits all occurrences in the book has been so difficult that some argue that the word has multiple meanings in the book (Seow 1997:102), even though it would not make much sense to summarise different, unrelated meanings by using a single word (Fox 1999:35–36). This illustrates the difficulty of finding the meaning of *hebel*, especially as the book itself summarises itself using this word. Regardless of the choice the exegete makes, it has significant ramifications for understanding the book.

2. The main proposals for the meaning of *hebel*

2.1. Enigmatic

Staples (1943), Bartholomew (2009:104–107), Ogden (1987:17–22), and Ogden and Zogbo (1997:3–4) argue that *hebel* means ‘enigmatic’ in the book of Ecclesiastes. Staples expresses a weakly argued claim that *hebel* originally meant something like ‘cult mystery’, and so something unfathomable, unknowable or unknown to man. Ogden and Zogbo understand Qohelet to be wondering why God does not make things the way they should be. He uses *hebel* to express his frustration and to acknowledge that he is faced with questions that he cannot answer. Ogden understands Ecclesiastes 3:17–18 to be an example of *hebel* being used to respond to an apparently insoluble problem of God’s justice. He thinks that in Ecclesiastes 4:7–8 the enigma is why the

workaholic does not stop to ask for what purpose he is toiling. Bartholomew argues that Qohelet had an epistemological quest and that if there is meaning and value, it cannot be grasped.

2.2. Absurd

Fox (1999:30–42) argues that *hebel* in the book of Ecclesiastes means ‘absurd’, which he defines as ‘a disjunction between two phenomena that are thought to be linked by a bond of harmony or causality, or that *should* be so linked.’ (quote in 1999:31). Thus absurdity is a result of a clash between one’s expectations of harmony or causality and reality. Consequently one may deduce Qohelet’s expectations from what he calls absurd, if Fox is right about the meaning of *hebel*.

Fox (1999:36–42) lists things that are *hebel*. They are toil and wealth, pleasure, justice, wisdom, speech, living beings, death, and all. Toil is absurd when another enjoys the benefits. Pleasure is absurd in that it does not provide meaning even though it is the best thing around. Justice is absurd when lifespans do not correspond to moral deserts. Wisdom is absurd in that the wise and the fool end up the same. Speech is absurd in that words are just meaningless sounds. Living beings are absurd as life can be absurd in various ways. Death is absurd in that we are not to expect more rationality after death than before.

2.3. Temporary

There are two main views of *hebel* as transient, represented by Fredericks (2010) and Seow (1997). According to Fredericks (2010:50–54), *hebel* means transitory in almost all of the occurrences in Ecclesiastes (he mentions 5:6 as a possible exception). Seow (1997:112) thinks that *hebel* is ephemeral and unreliable. Yet in Ecclesiastes 8:14 he gives *hebel* the meaning of ‘incomprehensible reality’, thus actually representing a multiple-sense view (1997:295, see section 2.6 below). The main difference between Fredericks and Seow is that Seow thinks *hebel* is a negative term (‘unreliable’) and Fredericks (2010:197) thinks it is fortunate that some things, like the trials referred to in Ecclesiastes 8:14, are temporary (Huovila 2018:58–59).

2.4. Worthless or meaningless

Longman (1998:61–65) thinks *hebel* means ‘meaningless’. This meaninglessness is not limited but it is an all-inclusive statement. There is no meaning anywhere. Also Seybold (1978:319) thinks of *hebel* as meaningless. He contrasts it to *yitron*, which he understands as ‘that which counts or matters’. Both consider *hebel* to imply lack of value. *Hebel* does not mean ‘meaningless’ in the

sense of an expression not having any meaning, but it could perhaps mean it in the sense of lack of purpose. The latter idea implies that the book is about the search for the meaning of life.

2.5. Futile but not worthless

Huovila (2018:114–156) argues that *hebel* means ‘futile’ in Ecclesiastes, but this is without the connotation of worthlessness or meaninglessness. He allows for the possibility of occurrences unrelated to the summary, and considers Ecclesiastes 6:4 to be a possible example (Huovila 2018:134–136, 153). Values are implied by Qohelet’s statements and there is no need to understand his view as inconsistent. Futility is to be seen in the context of being measured against expected *yitron* ‘profit’. When the two words are introduced in Ecclesiastes 1:2–3, *yitron* helps the reader disambiguate the meaning of *hebel*.

Huovila argues that the futility in the book of Ecclesiastes in almost all occurrences is a prototype category consisting of three foci. The foci are metonymically related and they are ‘that which is associated with failure to gain permanent profit, (1) as that which fails to accomplish this, or (2) as the cause or (3) circumstance of the failure’, though at times a more general sense of futility is intended (Huovila 2018:116).

2.6. Multiple-sense views

Seow (1997:102) thinks that no single definition of *hebel* works in every occurrence of Ecclesiastes. It can refer to ephemerality (6:12, 7:15, 9:9) and to that which is of little consequence (5:7, 6:4, 6:11). He also considers the word to have the meaning of ‘incomprehensible’. Miller (2002:15) has a more nuanced view. He considers the word to be used as a symbol that includes the meanings of ‘insubstantiality’, ‘transience’, and ‘foulness’. The symbol brings them together under one concept.

3. Criteria for a Solution

As there are several competing hypotheses, the criteria used to evaluate them need attention. Four criteria are proposed and applied to the hypotheses in a cursory fashion to argue in a simplified manner that in Ecclesiastes *hebel* means ‘futile’ without implying worthlessness (option 2.5 above). Further argumentation is found in Huovila (2018:52–65, 114–156).

3.1. Usage outside of Ecclesiastes

Unless there is evidence to the contrary, the meaning of *hebel* in Ecclesiastes should be seen as one of the meanings of the word apart from its use in Ecclesiastes or as a natural extension of one of the meanings. Meanings found in the extant corpus are discussed in this section, and category extension is discussed in the next section.

Miller (2002:53–90) studied rather extensively the occurrences of *hebel* in biblical Hebrew, in rabbinic Hebrew, and in Qumranic materials. He gives two examples (1 QH 7:32, 1 QS 5:19) that he interprets as ‘uncomprehending’, as used of humans. In the context of 1 QS 5:14–19 the latter example talks about one who transgresses against God’s word. The thought is that a holy man is not to rely on works of *hebel*, as those who do not recognise God’s covenant are *hebel*. The cohesive link between the two *hebels* favours the interpretation that the meaning of *hebel* is not related to lack of knowledge. The association with trust suggests that the sense is ‘unreliable’. As it is futile to trust in something unreliable, the two senses are interrelated. Miller (2002:85) connects the sense in 1 QS 5:18 with unrighteousness. The use of *hebel* in 1 QS 5:19 functions to associate the doer and the deeds. The deeds are unreliable, because the doer is one of similar character. This seems to be a better interpretation than ‘uncomprehending’.

1 QH 7:32 describes human limitations. The thought is that people are too empty (*tohu*) and are characterised by *hebel* (*ba`al hebel*) to understand God’s wondrous works. This does associate *ba`al hebel* with lack of understanding. It can be argued that ‘incomprehensible’ is a metonymic expansion of uncomprehending. While this is a possibility, it does not seem to be attested. Thus none of Miller’s examples is a clear example of *hebel* meaning ‘enigmatic’ or ‘incomprehensible’ outside of the book of Ecclesiastes.

The meaning of ‘absurd’ is difficult to support, since absurdity is dependent on both the objective situation and a subjective evaluation of it and these are not often, if ever, contextually evident in the extant corpus. The meanings of ‘transient’ (Miller 2002:75–78), and ‘futile’ (Miller 2002:68–69) are supported outside Ecclesiastes. In connection with effort, the sense is ‘futile’ in Isaiah 49:4 and Job 9:29 (Miller 2002:68–69).

Miller (2002:87) mentions 4 Q 184 1:1–2 as an example of worthlessness as associated with *hebel*, used of speech. As Miller notes, the text associates it with errors (*to`ot*). Deception is also mentioned in the text. The meaning ‘unreliable’ fits the text, so the

text requires no new sense for *hebel*. As many futile things are worthless, such can be called *hebel*, as failing help (Lamentations 4:17). Thus ‘worthless’ is also a possibility, but it is not a required sense for the word. Yet in these texts, the unreliability makes it also worthless, so the sense ‘worthless’ remains a possible interpretation in these texts, and it illustrates the potential for semantic extension.

The word does not seem to be used of purposelessness. Rather a frustrated purpose or expectation is often part of the context of futility, as in Job 21:34 (purpose to comfort), 35:16 (purpose to transmit knowledge), Isaiah 30:7 (purpose to help), 49:4 (the purpose that the toil had), Jeremiah 10:3 (the purpose of idolatry by the idolaters), and 16:19 (the expectation to have profit from inheritance). Usage outside Ecclesiastes supports the meanings of ‘transient’, ‘futile’, and also ‘worthless’ as a possibility.

3.2. Natural prototype category extension

The possibility that *hebel* is used in a somewhat novel sense in Ecclesiastes should not be excluded *a priori*. Therefore, the prototypical nature of linguistic categorization and category extension, especially by way of metonymy and metaphor (Taylor 1989), must be considered. If a proposed sense of the word is found to be metonymically or metaphorically related to an attested sense, it is thereby more plausible. It must be remembered that we have a quite limited corpus of Classical Hebrew, so many words may have had more meanings than attested in the corpus, *hebel* included.

The three attested senses discussed in the previous section are metonymically related to each other. Transience and futility are often related to each other in a cause-effect relationship, transience often being the cause of futility. Futile things can be worthless because of the futility. This is true when the futile thing does not have any value outside of fulfilling the purpose that is used to evaluate its futility. Thus these three meanings (transient, futile, worthless) are metonymically related to each other.

If ‘uncomprehending’ is accepted as the meaning of *ba`al hebel* in 1 QH 7:32 (see Miller 2002:85–88 and also 1 QS 5:19), *hebel* may have extended its sense to mean ‘incomprehensible’ by way of metonymy. Without clear examples, it is not clear if the Hebrew language made that to be part of the meaning of *hebel*.

The relationship of absurdity to the clearly-attested meanings of futility and transience is not as clear as their mutual relationships. A futile attempt can very well be also absurd, making room for

semantic extension, though I am unaware of any positive evidence for this development in Classical Hebrew. The sense of ‘absurd’ could extend also from ‘deceit’ or ‘nonsense’.

Fox (1999:29) gives a list of examples of *hebel* meaning ‘deceit’ (Zech 10:2, Ps 62:10, Prov 31:30, Job 21:34). While it may not be clear that ‘deceit’ is the sense in each of the passages, they do associate *hebel* with deceit. Fox thinks that the transition from deceit to nonsensical is slight. However, if something does not make sense, it is not very deceitful. In the contexts where deceit is nonsensical, the deceit can seem also absurd.

Miller (2002:67–68) thinks that in Job 35:16 the sense of *hebel* (referent in his terminology) is ‘nonsense’. If ‘nonsense’ is accepted as the sense, Fox’s view is strengthened in that ‘nonsense’ is a good candidate to be the meaning in the context and it is closer to ‘absurd’ than ‘deceit’. Fox’s sense on ‘absurd’ is not exactly ‘nonsense’, as something has to make sense to defy the expectation of rationality. When that expectation is rationality, nonsense defies it. So clearly nonsensical speech can be absurd. While there is still some semantic distance, it is conceivable that *hebel* had the sense of ‘absurd’ in some contexts. The semantic distance is smaller if it is derived from ‘nonsense’ rather than ‘futility’ or ‘deceit’.

Using the criterion of natural prototype extension, ‘incomprehensible’ is somewhat more plausible than ‘absurd’ if *hebel* in 1 QH 7:32 is considered ‘uncomprehending’, as the category extension is by way of a rather natural metonymy and more straightforward than the extension from ‘deceit’ to ‘absurd’. Both ‘futile’ and ‘transient’ and possibly also ‘worthless’ fare best as attested meanings, with ‘incomprehensible’ or ‘enigmatic’ and ‘absurd’ following, when natural prototype extension is used as the criterion.

3.3. Contextual fit

Contextual fit is a highly important criterion. The meaning ‘enigmatic’ is not a good contextual fit for example in Ecclesiastes 2:15. There Qohelet does not consider it enigmatic that he pursued wisdom. Rather he wonders if his efforts were misplaced. Neither is ‘enigmatic’ a good fit for Ecclesiastes 4:7–8. The text discusses a workaholic. In Ecclesiastes 4:8, *hebel* refers either to the work of the workaholic described in verse 7 or to Qohelet’s work and deprivation of good. There is nothing in the text to raise the question of why the workaholic does not ask what his purpose is. If the reference is to Qohelet’s own work (Fox 1999:222), he asks for whom he toils. Either way, the question is not quite the same as

asking why he toils as if trying to find the answer to an intellectual dilemma. Workaholicism is lamented rather than wondered. For a more detailed discussion of the view that *hebel* means ‘enigmatic’, see Huovila (2018:54–57) and for a more detailed discussion of Ecclesiastes 4:7–8, see Huovila (2018:128–129). The question is raised whom labour benefits, regardless of whether it is the labour of the workaholic or of Qohelet. It is a question of profit (*yitron*), which is used as an antonym of futility (*hebel*) in the book of Ecclesiastes (see Huovila 2018:88–91). Thus the context supports ‘futile’ better than ‘enigmatic’ as the meaning of *hebel*.

Transience is one of the meanings of the word *hebel* (Miller 2002:75–78). The question is whether transience is the sense for the word in most of its occurrences in Ecclesiastes. The hypothesis is tested in Huovila (2018:118–156). He argues that transience is a good fit in many contexts, but not all. Its contextual fit is poor in 2:19, 4:7–8, and 6:1–2. The problem of the workaholic in Ecclesiastes 4:7–8 is a good example. The problem is called ‘a painful business’ and *hebel*. Transience of something that is a painful business is a good thing, but the parallelism favours that both are negative statements (see Huovila 2018:128–129).

Fox (1999:48–49) thinks there are two ways something can be absurd. One blames the doer who could have desisted. The other blames the fact that the results of an otherwise good action are not in line with reasonable expectations. According to him, Qohelet assumed that actions should reliably produce appropriate consequences. This clashes with divine justice, in which Qohelet believes, making everything absurd.

This kind of absurdity can be predicated of much of futility in Huovila’s (2018) sense. Bad action can reasonably be called futile in producing any profit, and when the expected good results fail to materialise, futility is manifest. According to Fox (1999:49), Qohelet expected that actions reliably produce appropriate consequences. Qohelet believes in divine justice. In this view, injustices are offensive to reason. Because they are not mere anomalies but infect the whole system, everything is absurd. This absurdity leads to the collapse of belief in a grand causal order. Fox limits the observation to life ‘under the sun’.

However, if Qohelet believed in a just afterlife, all would not be absurd in this sense. Rather the grand causal order would prevail, though not under the sun. Huovila (2018:175–242) argues for this to be a plausible interpretation of Qohelet’s thought. If this is so, absurdity in Fox’s sense is not as good a solution for the meaning

of *hebel* as ‘futile’ in Huovila’s sense. The relationship between the two interpretations of *hebel* and the future divine judgment can be seen in their respective arguments on Ecclesiastes 3:17. Fox (1999:215) considers that the judgment is before or at death. Huovila (2018:178–188) argues that an afterlife judgment is the most probable view. If he is right, the case for Fox’s view on the meaning of *hebel* is weakened. This is because the interpretation of Qohelet’s view makes Fox’s lexical view a worse contextual fit to Qohelet’s worldview.

To find decisive examples to disambiguate between ‘futile’ and ‘absurd’ is difficult, because a futile action is absurd in a worldview that expects the action to produce profit. This is exactly the worldview that Fox thinks Qohelet had. Therefore, the exegetically more difficult case of Qohelet’s view of divine judgment may be one of the strongest arguments one can make on the basis of contextual fit alone, along with lack of textual cues that absurdity is in view.

Fox (1999:30) claims on the basis of Ecclesiastes 8:14 that *hebel* is not ‘futile’. His thought is that while the works of the righteous may turn out to be futile insofar as they aim at a reward, the same cannot be applied to the wicked when they receive what the righteous deserve. Huovila (2018:147) understands the passage to refer to the fact that it happens that righteousness and wickedness do not produce corresponding results. The fact causes futility, as the profit of righteousness is not materialised and as wickedness can produce the same profit. Thus it is called futile by way of metonymy.

The sense of ‘worthless’ is contextually problematic in making Qohelet inconsistent. It creates unnecessary tension between all being worthless (Eccl 1:2) and some things being valued (such as joy in 3:12–13 and work in 9:10). This is a problem of contextual fit within the larger worldview of the book. If Qohelet claimed that all things lack value, he was not consistent in applying this. Nevertheless, Seybold (1978:319) is to be commended for noticing the link between *hebel* and *yitron* in Ecclesiastes.

Huovila (2018:118–156) tests the meaning of ‘futile’ for all occurrences of *hebel* in the book of Ecclesiastes, and concludes that for all occurrences likely to be related to the summary of the book, the sense has good contextual fit. The multiple-sense view fails the contextual fit criterion as the very summary of the book in 1:2 and 12:8 argues for a unified meaning for all mentions of *hebel* that are connected with the summary (see also section 3.4). However, for any occurrences that are not connected to the summary, it remains a possibility that is to be decided contextually. Out of the views

surveyed here, the view that *hebel* means ‘futile’ without meaning ‘worthless’ has the best contextual fit.

3.4. Authorial cues to the reader

The word *hebel* is a polysemous word. The author of Ecclesiastes helps the reader arrive at his intended meaning. When he first introduces the word, he introduces it in the context immediately preceding the question of the profit of work. This helps orient the reader to the question of the benefit of work, which in turn disambiguates *hebel* and sets the two words in opposition. This is further confirmed in 2:11 where the rhetorical question is answered and the two words appear again as antonyms (Huovila 2018:91). See also Huovila (2018:154–156).

The problem with multiple-sense views is well expressed by Fox (1999:36): ‘If Qohelet were saying, “X is transitory; Y is futile; Z is trivial”, then the summary, “All is *hebel*” would be meaningless.’ This argument applies to Seow’s view, but also to Miller’s symbolic view with one qualification. If it is possible to find an abstract sense that unites all of Miller’s symbols, then the summary is appropriate. However, this is what Miller (2002) does not do, and if he had done it, it would no longer be a multiple-sense view proper. It is also to be noted that the possibility that some occurrences of the word are not related to the summary cannot be excluded *a priori*.

In Ecclesiastes things are called *hebel* in contexts that some interpreters have considered enigmatic or problematic in some way. These include the question of lack of distinction between humans and animals in death in Ecclesiastes 3:19 (Ogden and Zogbo 1997:115) and that the righteous get what the wicked deserve and vice versa in 8:14 (Ogden and Zogbo 1997:305). However, there is nothing in the text to indicate that an intellectual dilemma is at issue. The author of the book does not lead the reader into identifying ‘enigma’ as the meaning of the word. The nature of the assumed enigma is not spelled out in the book. At most the questions that are difficult to answer are raised, but the book goes no further in identifying them as enigmas or describing what is enigmatic about them. Even if *hebel* clearly had the meaning of ‘enigmatic’, the ambiguity of the term would need to be clarified for the reader.

It is clear that at times *hebel* is painful. For example in Ecclesiastes 2:15–18 *hebel* and the associated lack of memory and death led Qohelet to hate life and work. It is clear that Qohelet thought *hebel* to be contrary to his expectations. He expected his work to produce permanent profit (2:11), but there was none. The

results were not in line with his expectations, so the results were absurd. This is in line with the idea that *hebel* means ‘absurd’. This absurdity is related to work. Work is used in the immediately following text when *hebel* is introduced in Ecclesiastes 1:2–3.

However, the link between absurdity and work is not a very clear authorial cue for the meaning of *hebel*. This is because the word is inherently ambiguous, and because absurdity is not a clearly attested or common meaning of the word, especially in connection with work. Though neither is *hebel* a frequent word associated with work or profit, the evidence we have points rather to *hebel* in connection to effort meaning ‘futile’ rather than ‘absurd’ (section 3.1).

Transience makes good sense as the meaning of *hebel* in many of the occurrences in Ecclesiastes. However, as the term is introduced in chapter 1, the discussion is in the context of permanence of activities (1:4–10) rather than a discussion of transience of individual activities. Thus the author actually leads the reader away from interpreting *hebel* as ‘temporary’. Huovila (2018:58–59) discusses this further.

Worthlessness makes some sense as the meaning of *hebel* the way it is introduced in Ecclesiastes 1:2. In 1:3 it is contrasted with profit, and it is reasonable to assume that lack of profit implies lack of worth. The main problem with this view is not how the word is introduced but the fact that it makes the message of the book somewhat less coherent. If everything were worthless, it would not make much sense to ascribe value to various things, such as joy (2:24). For further discussion, see Fredericks (2010:47–49).

The view that *hebel* means ‘futile’ without implying worthlessness is supported by the introduction in Ecclesiastes 1:2–3. The contrast with profit leads the reader to contrast *hebel* with it and to disambiguate the word not to mean ‘transient’. The profit is further elaborated. The rhetorical question of what profit there is for the work (Eccl 1:3) is answered in the negative in 2:11. Lack of profit is futility in Ecclesiastes 2. Temporal profit exists (2:13), but it is not the kind of profit that he is looking for (2:11). He is looking for profit that is not nullified by death (2:14–16). Whether future generations benefit from one’s possessions is uncertain because a fool may end up having them (2:18–19). That futility does not indicate lack of value is implicit in the affirmation of various values in the book (wisdom in 2:13; joy in 2:24,3:12–13; work in 9:10).

Multiple-sense views face the difficulty that the author summarises the book using *hebel*, signalling to the reader that a singular meaning is meant for whatever occurrences of the word relate to the summary. The sense of ‘enigmatic’ lacks authorial cues, and the sense ‘absurd’ can claim only weak support from the argument of authorial cues, though ‘absurd’ fits many contexts. The sense of ‘temporary’ goes against authorial cues in the introduction of the term. The sense of ‘futile’ accords best with the way *hebel* is introduced. The evidence for the idea that futility does not imply worthlessness comes out only implicitly as it is needed to make Qohelet coherent. That authorial cue is clear even though it is not explicit.

3.5. Discussion of criteria

Usage outside the book of Ecclesiastes fits best the views that in Ecclesiastes it means ‘temporary’ or ‘futile’, though this argument on its own is not conclusive. These are clearly-attested meanings of the word. If potential extensions of attested meanings are included, ‘incomprehensible’ or ‘enigmatic’ becomes a possibility based on the idea that *ba`al hebel* can mean ‘uncomprehending’.

The meaning of ‘absurd’ for *hebel* does not seem to be clearly attested, but it is arguably a possible extension of the basic meaning of ‘nonsense’ or ‘deceit’ or even ‘futile’ in the context of an absurd attempt at something. The contextual fit of ‘absurd’ is somewhat dependent on the view one takes on divine judgment in the book. If it is considered that Qohelet believed in a just divine judgment in the afterlife, the meaning is less likely than if he believed that God is a just judge in this life but that life does not meet the corresponding expectations. There are possible authorial cues to hint that ‘absurd’ may be the sense of *hebel*, but the signs are weak and ambiguous.

The multiple-meanings view can find some support in that *hebel* is polysemous. Many of the suggested meanings fit individual occurrences, and the difficulty scholars have had in finding a single meaning for the whole text is a major reason for the view. However, the view is strongly argued against by the use of *hebel* to summarise the book.

Contextual fit is the best with ‘futility’ as it fits every occurrence of the word, as tested by Huovila (2018:118–156). This view is also favoured by the criterion of authorial cues, regardless of whether Qohelet is considered to have believed in a just divine judgment in the afterlife or not. So on the basis of the cumulative evidence by these criteria, ‘futile’ without any implication of worthlessness is the most likely sense of *hebel* in the book of Ecclesiastes.

4. The significance of *hebel* for the study of Ecclesiastes

The meaning of *hebel* has long been considered to be an important word for understanding the book of Ecclesiastes. The author of the book makes this clear by using the word to summarise the message of the book. Other important themes add to the argument of the book, such as the major theme of joy and the theme of divine judgment, which is a minor theme until the very end, where it is made quite central in summarizing the teaching of the book.

Joy is recommended on the basis of futility (Eccl 2:23–23, 3:19–22, 8:14–15). If this joy is a genuine recommendation to grasp the value of joy, as argued by Huovila (2018:101–114) rather than a resigned, disappointed recommendation (Longman 1998:106–107), the book makes sense as a recommendation not to lose joy over pursuit of permanent profit, which is an unattainable goal in life.

The theme of divine judgment, if understood as a just divine judgment of all deeds in the afterlife, gives a hint how to reconcile the teaching with Jesus's command to gather treasures in heaven (Matt 6:19–20). Divine judgment is not futile, but rather the ultimate evaluation of values. It determines lasting profit. However, divine judgment is not a judgment of achievements in life but of deeds. No permanent profit is achievable in this life because death separates one from all one's possessions and accomplishments. However, permanent profit is granted by divine judgment in the afterlife on the basis of deeds.

This view of divine judgment as being Qohelet's view is very much a minority view. If it is not accepted, understanding *hebel* as futility still contributes to understanding the message of the book. In that case the connection to the rest of the canon is weaker, but the overall message of futility and joy remains almost the same. The epilogist believed in a divine judgment of all deeds (Eccl 12:13–14). The minority view that Qohelet held the same view of divine judgment has been argued to be plausible by Huovila (2018:175–242).

Understanding *hebel* as referring to futility as an antonym of profit without the implication of worthlessness, Huovila (2018:7, 167–168) summarises the message of book as 'there is nothing anyone can do to make any profit out of life', or in more detail, 'No permanent profit is possible in this life. This makes all work futile with respect to the goal of securing permanent profit. Yet people work as if it were possible, depriving themselves of joy in the process. People should rather face their mortality and the futility of all work, and enjoy life while doing good and taking God's judgment into account.'

5. Conclusion

This study compared six proposals for the meaning of *hebel* in Ecclesiastes by using a combination of criteria. The criteria are usage outside of Ecclesiastes, possible semantic extensions, contextual fit, and authorial cues to the reader. Huovila's view that *hebel* means 'futile' without implying 'worthlessness' satisfies these the best. In most cases the meaning can be narrowed down to one of the three subcategories, resulting in the meaning of *that which is associated with failure to gain permanent profit, (1) as that which fails to accomplish this, or (2) as the cause or (3) circumstance of the failure*, though at times a more general sense of futility is intended. The futility of 'all' (Eccl 1:2) can be understood as a somewhat limited 'all'. God's judgment is not included. Rather it sets the ultimate value of deeds (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14). The book makes a case to value joy over pursuing the impossible task of achieving permanent profit in life and losing joy in the process.

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Creation Order Theodicy: The Argument for the Coexistence of Gratuitous Evil and the Sovereignty of God

Connie Johnson and Robert Falconer

Abstract

The argument for the coexistence of gratuitous evil and the doctrine of the sovereignty of God is ardent amongst scholars. This article seeks to examine Bruce Little's Creation Order theodicy and its claim that gratuitous evil exists concurrently with the sovereignty of God.

Upon exploring prominent greater good theodicies and enumerating both their strengths and weaknesses, Little's justification for his Creation Order theodicy is posited, followed by the content of the theodicy. The Creation Order theodicy is then evaluated against prominent greater good theodicies and contemporary theodical viewpoints. Lastly, the Creation Order theodicy is evaluated as a valid explanation for the concurrence of gratuitous evil and the sovereignty of God.

This article contends that Little's Creation Order theodicy does offer a valid argument for the existence of gratuitous evil concurrent with the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. Further, the Creation Order theodicy addresses many of the questions which plague theodicy and it does so in a manner which is biblically consistent. The Creation Order theodicy, with its

Keywords

Theodicy, Creation Order theodicy, greater good theodicy, Bruce Little, Gratuitous Evil, Sovereignty of God

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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.

associated gratuitous evil, offers a compelling answer to those who are experiencing evil or ministering to those experiencing evil.

1. Introduction

The Creation Order theodicy maintains that gratuitous evil exists concurrently with the sovereignty of God. If the argument for the coexistence of gratuitous evil and the sovereignty of God is determined to be valid, it would prove to alter not only the explanation for evil but also how people should be biblically counselled when they encounter evil. Validation of the argument would result in acute implications for erroneously telling people that God has a purpose for whatever they may be going through, that God works every situation out for the good or that God will bring something good out of their trouble. The goal is to evaluate Little's theodicy and thus his claim that gratuitous evil exists concurrently with the sovereignty of God. The methodology chosen for the evaluation is a dialectical inquiry. The dialectical inquiry examines existing theories, and compares and contrasts them to illuminate areas for suggested modification (Berniker 2006:645). Little's theodicy is analysed against several theistic greater good theodicies and the biblical text. The evaluation provides insight into how well Little overcomes perceived deficiencies in competing theodicies.

Little proposes the Creation Order theodicy as a better answer to the problem of evil. The Creation Order theodicy integrates the concepts of creation order, libertarian freedom, the best of all possible worlds and middle knowledge. Little claims the Creation Order theodicy affirms a Christian worldview, provides for the existence of gratuitous evil and maintains the sovereignty of God. According to the Creation Order theodicy, there is an omnipotent, omniscient and wholly good and sovereign God who allows gratuitous evil as a by-product of creating the best of all worlds.

2. An Overview of the Greater Good Theodicy

Greater good theodicies are prominent in the history of monotheistic Christian thought. Such theodicies maintain that there are arguments for the existence of God (Little 2005:31). Further, they are committed to a profile of God as omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent. A greater good theodicy is one in which God allows evil to happen. This evil will be used to bring about a greater good or to prevent an evil equal to or greater than the evil permitted (p. 1). A greater good theodicy claims that the

good obtained from an evil justifies that evil (Peterson 1998:89). Greater good theodicies are based on the premise that gratuitous evil does not exist. Gratuitous evil is that evil from which God does not obtain a greater good, nor does he stop an equal or greater evil from being perpetrated by allowing the evil in question (Hasker 2008:178). This line of thought is contingent on a meticulous application of the doctrine of God's sovereignty. The understanding of God's sovereignty in the greater good theodicies is that because God is sovereign, everything in this life has a divine purpose (Little 2005:2).

In support of a greater good theodicy in historical theology, Augustine insists that 'God judged it better to bring good out of evil than to suffer no evil to exist' (1955:§5.11). Hick alleges that Augustine has presented the problem of evil but has not resolved the problem (1992:219). Similarly to Augustine, Aquinas argues that God is omnipotent and all-good and thus cannot allow any gratuitous evil (2014:§1.3.1). Aquinas' argument is one of deduction, says Middleton, and is a very problematic argument when considering the evidence of actual evil (1997:86). Leibniz contends that this is the best of all possible worlds and in being the best, the evils must be allowed by God so that the greater good can be derived. God would be at fault if he did not allow the evils (Leibniz 1996:91). While agreeing with Leibniz that this is the best of all possible worlds, Little posits that all evil does not result in the greater good being derived, some evil is gratuitous (2010:33). In contemporary scholarship, support and debate continue regarding a greater good theodicy. According to Hick, the good obtained from an evil could never have taken place unless the evil precipitated, making the evil necessary for God (1978:176). While admitting that the good obtained from an evil may not always be shown evidentially, he maintains that one must appeal to mystery in one's understanding of the good obtained (369-370). Also denying the existence of gratuitous evil, Wykstra insists that there is an epistemic difference between God and humans, humans not having reasonable epistemic access to the knowledge of the good being obtained with each evil (1984:152). Alston (1991:26) and Howard-Snyder (1996:§8009) echo the thoughts of Wykstra. To the scholars who have appealed to mystery and epistemic distance, Little asks, if God sees things differently than humans, how can a human know if they are doing good (2005:108)? A person would have to have the same understanding of the definition of good. Conversely, in denying the existence of gratuitous evil, Swinburne goes so far as to say, 'we falsely suppose that it is logically possible for an omnipotent God to bring about the good without the bad' (1998:33). MacGregor considers the argument that evil is

necessary for God to bring about good an absurdity (2012:118). The necessity of evil to bring about a good, transforms the universe into a ‘philosophically overdetermined system’ containing hidden benefits assigned to individual evils (p.118). Geisler and Bocchino do not accept the existence of gratuitous evil, suggesting that God knows a good purpose for every evil which he allows, and the end justifies the means (2001:222). To the contrary, in justifying the evil via the good obtained, Flemming argues that this is incompatible with the ‘moral task which religion gives to God’ (1988:7). Gould approaches the issue of gratuitous evil from a different perspective. He argues that if God must allow evil in order to have a meaningful relationship with humankind, then the evil is still for a greater good, that of enabling relationship (2014:461). However, Erlandson contends that before the fall, God had a meaningful relationship with people, thus evil was not necessary to the relationship (1991:5). Therefore, there seems to be strong historical and contemporary support for a greater good theodicy, as well as robust opposition to a greater good theodicy.

3. Little’s response to the greater good theodicy

Little is a strong proponent of the existence of gratuitous evil, and thus responds to the argument which greater good theodicies make against gratuitous evil. Extrapolating from the greater good theodicy position, if an evil were found to be gratuitous, then the conclusion would be that God is not sovereign and in control (Little 2005:3). If a gratuitous evil existed, then God must not be morally justified in allowing that evil. Little finds this position of the greater good theodicies to be fallacious. To deny that any evil is gratuitous, Little contends that one must be able to evidentially prove that all evil results in a greater good. The greater good theodicies’ position becomes quite questionable, because in attempting to protect the character of God, namely his sovereignty, the greater good theodicies raise concerns about a God who would allow such things as the Holocaust when no observable greater good has ever obtained from that extensive evil. Furthermore, if no gratuitous evil exists, and some evils are allowed because they prevent a worse evil, then God must not be omnipotent. According to the greater good theodicies, God requires one evil in order to prevent another evil, making evil necessary for God. The greater good theodicies assume that if gratuitous evil exists, then the sovereignty of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God would be challenged (Little 2005:7). Little concludes his objection to the greater good theodicies’ tenet of no gratuitous evil stating ‘therefore, denying gratuitous evil, which is intended to protect the

character of God (particularly his sovereignty) in the end, accomplishes just the opposite and raises serious questions for the greater good theodicy as a whole' (p. 3). In particular, Little finds Augustine's reasoning to be illogical. Augustine begins his argument with a view of God's providence and goodness which prevent God from allowing any evil from which a greater good does not obtain (Little 2005:39). This is deductive reasoning and does not consider the evidence of evil. Similarly, Little contends that Aquinas' argument is 'built on an assumption of inference, namely, that an omnipotent and all-good God cannot allow anything in his creation that does not serve a good purpose' (Little 2005:45). Little finds Leibniz' explanation to be deductive as well (2010:33). Leibniz assumes that an all-good God would actualise the best of all possible worlds, and that world would only have evil which served to obtain a greater good. Little asserts that these arguments do not consider the evidence from apparent gratuitous evil. Regarding Hick and Swinburne and their appeal to mystery, Little denounces this line of thinking, stating:

I think it is theologically questionable to appeal to mystery in order to ignore blatant contradictions in our theological systems. I say this because one test for truth is internal consistency; that is, different parts of our theological systems must cohere, and if they do not, it is reason to believe at some point our system has gone awry (Little 2010:39).

An appeal to mystery is an insufficient explanation for the reason there appear to be gratuitous evils. Little does not object to inferential arguments unless there is not sufficient evidence to make the inference, as in the case of the greater good theodicy denying the existence of gratuitous evil (2005:106). The greater good theodicy have, in Little's view, committed inferential fallacies in appealing to God's sovereignty as a reason to deny the existence of gratuitous evil.

4. Little's argument of theodicy for gratuitous evil and God's sovereignty

Little's belief in the existence of gratuitous evil comes as an outworking of his Creation Order theodicy. Foundational to Little's theodicy are creation order, libertarian freedom, the best of all possible worlds and middle knowledge. Little combines these elements to construct his theodicy. Recognizing the ontological difference between God and humans, the Creation Order theodicy establishes the mechanism by which God and humans can be in relationship (Little 2010:85). This relationship requires the self-

limiting aspect of God's sovereignty, thus providing for and protecting people's libertarian freedom as well as the potential for gratuitous evil (Little 2005:166; 2010:112, 117).

4.1. Creation order

The first element of the Creation Order theodicy is creation order. Creation order is the position that creation is ordered by God, providing rules which allow beings who are ontologically different to have a meaningful and volitional relationship (Little 2010:85). Little finds that the Bible delineates the rules of creation order and assigns associated penalties for violating the rules (2010:87; cf. Deut 28–30). Within the creation order, humans can make free choices from the limited choices made available. These limits define the 'moral framework' in which humans can operate. A human operating within this framework has an authentic mind and libertarian freedom, able to influence history while also functioning within the parameters which God has set. The authentic mind of a person includes their ability to make judgments (p. 86). This framework allows God to achieve his overarching plan while assuring the free will of people.

Creation order includes covenant ordering. Included in the covenants are those by which God has limited himself (Little 2010:91). Covenantal limiting is seen in both Genesis 3:15 and 9:11. In Genesis 9, God is found to limit himself in how he would deal with future punishment and the earth. He willingly chose to limit himself by declaring that he would never again destroy the earth by a flood. This type of covenantal limiting demonstrates that God has certain covenants which he has made with humans or certain groups of humans. Through choosing to be in the covenant, God willingly limits himself. The limitation is not due to a lack in his omnipotence, but rather in his express willingness to be in a covenant. This self-restraint on the part of God is for the benefit of humanity. The covenants 'contribute to the structure within which libertarian freedom operates' while simultaneously assuring the 'end will be as God promised' (p. 91).

4.2. Libertarian freedom

Little opts to use the term libertarian freedom in lieu of 'free will'. He suggests that the term, 'free will', is confusing. Libertarian freedom is a more restricted and specific term (Little 2010:14). Libertarian freedom means that people have the ability to make choices and consequently, cause events. A choice may be influenced by an antecedent choice or event, potentially limiting the choices people have under the understanding of libertarian freedom.

People can make ‘authentic choices’ from within the allotted options, which have been either limited by antecedent choices or events, the providence of God, or creation order. Little concludes that, regarding a person, their choices may be limited, but not their ability to choose (2010:14). The parameters of libertarian freedom are governed by creation order. People have limits on choices and legitimate use of their libertarian freedom (2010:88). The covenants which God has freely entered into contribute to how libertarian freedom is exercised. The covenants assure that the overarching plan of God will be obtained, while libertarian freedom is simultaneously maintained (p. 98).

4.3. The best of all possible worlds and middle knowledge

Little finds the concept of the best of all possible worlds critical to the development of his theodicy. In the development of theodicy, accepting the concept of the best of all possible worlds leads to internal consistency and lessens tensions which are created if one rejects the best of all possible worlds concept (Little 2005:103). Leibniz’ concept of the best of all possible worlds is one to which Little ascribes while not adopting all of Leibniz’ criteria (p. 45). In Leibniz theodicy, God is all powerful and all good and therefore can only create that which is good. When choosing to create, God must, by his nature, create that which is best (1996:61). Little reasons, ‘logically deduced then, what God has created is not only good ontologically, it was the best of all the possible worlds’ (2005:45).

Little qualifies the meaning of the word ‘possible’ in speaking of the best of all possible worlds. There are limitations on what type of world could actually exist and on what is created. All worlds are not possible, such as one that has all free moral agents who would obey God (Little 2005:151). Creation is likewise limited because it is contingent while God is necessary. The contingent can never be equal to the necessary.

Essential to the concept of the best of all possible worlds is the middle knowledge of God. God’s knowledge, or omniscience, is comprised of three types of knowledge (Little 2005:146). God’s knowledge can be natural, free, and middle. Intrinsic to God is his natural knowledge. Consequently, Little explains, God actualised the world which exists due to his natural knowledge of all the possible worlds God’s knowledge of everything about the actualised world is his free knowledge. Free knowledge is ‘comprised of contingent truths’ (p. 146). Middle knowledge affirms the sovereignty of God while allowing for the libertarian freedom of humans. Middle knowledge is the knowledge which God has of all

counterfactuals of his free moral agents. This middle knowledge means that God knows all possible 'contingents stemming from the free choices' of his free moral agents under any set of circumstances (p. 146). Knowing all the possible contingents allowed God to select the best combination of contingents, thereby selecting or actualizing the best of all possible worlds (p. 147). Although middle knowledge is controversial, Little believes there are 'good and sufficient reasons' to accept the concept of middle knowledge.²

In considering which world, or combination of choices, to actualise, God had the ability to know all undetermined acts of his free moral agents. In choosing which world to actualise, the rules of creation order had to be considered and applied to each set of counterfactuals (Little 2005:148). Included in the counterfactuals are prayer, answers to prayer and all other events which are permitted within the creation order. The world which was actualised is the entire course of humanity from creation to the 'realization of the Kingdom of God' (p. 150). Because God applied the rules of creation order to each contingent world, by his middle knowledge he knew which choices people would make. His actualization of the best of the possible contingent worlds maintains his sovereignty while preserving the libertarian freedom of people. The best of all possible worlds eliminates the greater good theodicies appeal to mystery (p. 148).

Little discusses two main reasons why he deems this the best of all possible worlds. From Genesis 1:31, where God pronounced that all which he had made was 'very good', Little finds this statement to be evaluative and reflective of the character and nature of God (2005:152). The second reason he discusses is the limited nature of contingent free moral agents, humans. Only God is a necessary and perfect being. The created human is contingent and therefore limited. The limitation is not a flaw but an ontological condition (p. 155). The turning of humans away from God is not caused by this ontological limitation. However, the limitation is the condition which makes it possible for one to turn away from God. In maintaining the best of all possible worlds, Little finds that it is best for contingent agents to have a free moral choice (libertarian freedom) than for them to lack this ability to choose. Although humans are ontologically limited, making it possible to turn away from God, it is better that humans have libertarian freedom in lieu of their choices being determined by God.

2 *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* defines middle knowledge as '(Lat. *scientia media*) A concept developed by the Jesuit Luis de Molina (1535-1600) concerning God's conditioned and consequent knowledge of future events. God foreknows how each person will cooperate with grace.' Modern proponents of middle knowledge include MacGregor in 'Can Little's creation-order theodicy be reconciled with sovereign individual predestination?', Craig in 'A middle knowledge perspective on biblical inspiration' and Geisler and Corduan in 'Philosophy of religion'.

5. Little's argument for gratuitous evil

Having explained his view of the foundational elements, Little constructed his Creation Order theodicy, stating, 'I think it is safe to say every theodicy touches all other major Christian doctrines, so this is no small matter' (2010:104). His theodicy acknowledges the existence of gratuitous evil, but demonstrates that the evil does not count against the 'moral perfection of God' (p. 103). In the development of the Creation Order theodicy, Little sought to answer for the weaknesses which he found in the examined greater good theodicies. His Creation Order theodicy does not leave one always looking for the greater good in a bad situation, hoping that one's suffering has some meaning. In lieu of the greater good, Little contends that the sufferer, if a believer, should seek the comfort and mercy of God during such time. It is this comfort and mercy that will sustain a believer through suffering. One should not be burdened with trying to ascertain what good is being derived from the suffering. 2 Corinthians 1:3–4 and 12:9 intimate this very idea, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'³ Similarly, Little's Creation Order theodicy erases another issue created by greater good theodicies: The God who is called upon to ease suffering is the same God who wills the suffering to take place. The Creation Order theodicy does not make God responsible for willing the suffering. Thus, the disparity is eliminated.

³ All reference to scripture will be taken from the English Standard Version (ESV), unless otherwise stated.

Common among greater good theodicies is the idea that gratuitous evil does not exist, as it would indicate that God is not truly sovereign (Little 2010:104). Little contends that gratuitous evil does exist and that while God does allow everything that happens on the earth, he is justified in allowing even gratuitous evil. This position maintains Little's belief in gratuitous evil and in the sovereignty of God. Since the human, and thus his mind, is contingent, it is a mind which is limited. For God to interact with the limited, material and created human, he must employ some 'self-imposed restraint (not requiring any change in essence)' in the way some of his attributes are evidenced in the contingent, created reality (Little 2010:105). Creation order is the structure which God built to allow this engagement with humanity. In choosing to create, God set up covenants within the creation order. In exercising his 'power and prerogative', he established limits to the manifestation of his attributes within created reality. He chose to limit himself (p. 107). In establishing the covenants and creation order, God must abide by the parameters which he established. Creation order allows the free moral beings in the contingent reality of creation to operate with libertarian freedom. Creation

order likewise allows for an omniscient, sovereign God to engage with material, contingent humanity (p. 105). There are two conditions under which God's attributes are exhibited. He manifests his attributes in the uncreated, necessary reality. It is in this reality that his attributes are unrestrained. Within the contingent, created reality, God's attributes are voluntarily restrained. God, in the unrestrained reality, chose to create the contingent reality. In this contingent reality, God sovereignly chose to give people libertarian freedom. For people to exercise true libertarian freedom, God willingly restrains 'the manifestation of sovereignty (and other attributes) in the created circle' (p. 105).

The Creation Order theodicy asserts that everything which happens has a reason. However, everything may not have a purpose (Little 2010:106). Purpose and reason are very different. The Holocaust had a reason, even if it did not have a purpose. The existence of gratuitous evil was the reason the Holocaust happened, though there was no divine purpose in it happening. Creation Order theodicy guarantees that even horrific evils, like the Holocaust, are explainable. Little believes the structure and application of the Creation Order theodicy silences the 'complaint that everything on earth must have a purpose' (p. 106).

While the nature of humans is to be celebrated, the choices which humans make may not be worthy of celebration. The creation order does not allow for God to sift through people's choices and only allow the good (Little 2010:109). Creation Order theodicy allows for gratuitous evil as a consequence of libertarian freedom. The environment in which God and humans can interact must either be wholly determined by God or function by a creation order. God chose the creation order by which to interact with humans. Although given libertarian freedom, humans are still limited (p. 110). Humans are limited in that God ultimately controls the course of history, and the types and number of choices from which humans can select are limited. However, the limitations do not compromise the biblical understanding of salvation. Libertarian freedom ensures that a person can freely choose to follow or reject Christ. God can use persuasion to influence the decisions of humans without violating the libertarian freedom of humans (p. 93). While the choices may be limited, as the means of salvation, the ability to choose is not. Creation order also ensures that there is a law of cause and effect in place. Galatians 6:7 assures us, 'Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.' In some instances, God may choose to reverse the result or intent of an evil action. He does this in spite of the

evil, not because of it. While all actions do not receive the direct intervention of God, creation order allows for intervention. Creation order is not just about God possessing power, it is about how God will manifest his power within the created reality. God has voluntarily limited himself covenantally, while simultaneously leaving the choice of divine intervention open. This created order allows for people's libertarian freedom to be true, for God's sovereignty to be intact, for miracles to be possible and for the law of cause and effect to operate.

The Creation Order theodicy does not assert that all evil is gratuitous. There may be some good which results from an evil (Little 2010:115). However, the argument is that the evil was not necessary for the good. God may have reversed the intent of the evil to bring about a good in spite of that evil, not because of the evil. Creation order argues that there is no way to validate that the good which obtained could only have obtained via the evil. Concluding his argument, Little asserts that, 'the sad fact is that in this present age there is much suffering and a large measure of it is gratuitous, which seems to be exactly what one would expect in a place alienated from God' (2010:120).

6. Critique of Little's theodicy argument

The essential elements of the Creation Order theodicy are creation order, libertarian freedom, the best of all possible worlds and middle knowledge. To effectively critique Little's theodicy, the essential elements will be examined individually.

6.1. Creation order

The strengths of the creation order are that it recognises and preserves the ontological difference between God and man. MacGregor finds the concept that the uncreated God cannot transfer to his created beings the attribute of his perfection foundational to theodicy (2005:1). The very fact that the beings are created makes them limited. Olson likewise supports creation order (2010:1). Creation order holds that God is self-limiting. This self-limitation is particularly evident in the incarnation and covenant agreements. Divine determinism is avoided with the employment of creation order and divine self-limitation. Through creation order, God limits himself for the 'sake of our free will' (Olson 2009:44). If one is to deny that God is the author of sin, argues Olson, it is logically imperative to believe in the self-limitation of God via his creation order (2010:2).

The self-limitation of God essential to creation order is viewed as a weakness by some scholars (Fouts 1993; Hendryx 2018; Highfield 2002). Hass argues that 'human decision-making and divine determination' are not at the same level and should not be treated as such (2011:13). Embracing the self-limitation of God, Hass finds, is to deny God's sovereignty.

Hasker has developed a natural order in contrast to Little's creation order. While Little's creation order ascribes evil as the result of the fall of man, Hasker's natural order does not (Little 2005:139, Hasker 2008:139). Natural evil, as defined by Hasker, 'is the result of the overall order of the cosmos, an order which, taken as a whole, is good and admirable' (p. 140). The natural world has not been flawed by the sin of Adam, so to say that it has been would be to say that God did not create a good natural world (p. 203). God, in his self-limiting sovereignty, chose to refrain from directly controlling his creation. This lack of immediate control by God allows for the possibility of evil and precedes the sin of Adam (p. 143). While agreeing with the self-limiting nature of God's sovereignty, Little's creation order maintains that the sin of Adam predates the natural evil found in the world (2005:142).

6.2. Libertarian freedom

Hasker supports Little's understanding of libertarian freedom which he terms libertarian free will (2008:150). To adequately address the problem of moral evil, he insists that the libertarian understanding of free will is essential (p. 152). Agreeing with Little, Hick goes so far as to say that in order to be in relationship with God, humans must possess libertarian freedom (1978:302). Swinburne concurs with this understanding of libertarian free will, asserting that 'the natural primitive understanding of "free will" is as libertarian free will' (1998:40). Peterson echoes Little's thoughts on libertarian freedom, finding that this world requires that free moral agents can make uncoerced choices (1998:41).

Unlike Little, Phillips does not embrace an absolute libertarian free will view, one in which people are free under all circumstances to decide one way or another (2005:72). Phillips finds Little's libertarian freedom to be a weak explanation for evil in particular cases. He argues that in particular cases, the suffering allowed by God is so intense that it eradicates any semblance of a freedom to choose (p. 74). Phillips finds that theodocists, such as Little, often resort to generalizations, citing libertarian free will, in lieu of explanations in particular instances. Little would argue that libertarian freedom does exist, even in the case of horrific evils (2010:111, 112). To ask God to eliminate horrific evils requires a

judgment call on which evil is more horrific than another and by whose standard of morality the judgment would be made. Taken to its logical extension, 'if a horrific evil is horrific because of how it compares to another evil, then logically this will mean that all evil should be prevented' (p. 111).

Christensen and Hendryx hold positions antithetical to libertarian freedom. Christensen asserts that if a libertarian understanding of free will is correct, then it would limit God's sovereignty (2016:7). Likewise, Hendryx adopts a strong anti-libertarian freedom position, finding libertarian freedom to be a weakness which undermines the biblical understanding of salvation (2018:1). True freedom, as defined by Hendryx, is the compatibilist ability to be free to do what is pleasing to God (p. 2)

6.3. The best of all possible worlds and middle knowledge

While essential to Little's best of all possible worlds, Hasker (2008), Phillips (2005), and Peterson (1998) agree that theory of divine middle knowledge is a weakness for theodicy and is not a plausible theory. Hasker finds that the theory of divine middle knowledge is 'a hindrance and an obstacle to a viable doctrine of divine providence' and to constructing a viable theodicy (2008:176). Considering it to be a foundational problem, he contends that there is no way to know counterfactuals (p.67). Since a counterfactual is not actualised, then a person never chooses A or B, thus undermining the validity of the theory of middle knowledge. Phillips, in denying middle knowledge, asserts that the future is not something which exists, therefore even God cannot know that which does not exist (2005:102). Concluding his argument, he deems the concept of middle knowledge to an illusion, thus making the assertion that this is the best of all possible worlds illusive as well (p. 105). Similarly, Peterson states that God can only know things that are logically possible for him to know and the future choices of free moral agents are not logically possible to know (1998:73).

Erlandson denies that this is the best of all possible worlds, because that erroneously assumes that the world should be created in a manner that is best for man (1991:6). Further, he contends that a proper theodicy must rest on the belief that the world which is created best manifests the glory and attributes of God (p. 6). The world was actualised in a manner which best exhibits God's 'righteousness, justice, mercy and grace' (p. 6). Only a world where humanity falls from goodness to sin would allow the stated attributes of God to manifest fully. To this argument, Little would contend that Erlandson's understanding would make God reliant

on evil to obtain good (2005:170). While some instances of the good obtaining appear to require evil, Creation Order theodicy posits that under those circumstances the good obtained was not a necessary good and the associated evil was not a necessary evil (p. 101, 112). God could have brought about the good in spite of the evil.

MacGregor (2005:5), Craig (1999:45), Geisler and Corduan (1985:352) embrace the doctrine of *Scientia media*, middle knowledge. Little's account of how God chooses which world to actualise and his treatment of sovereign predestination is deemed, by MacGregor, to be a weakness in his theodicy (p. 5). By offering a revised sequence and explanation of the criteria for the world which God chooses to actualise, MacGregor attempts to protect both sovereign predestination and libertarian freedom. This revised sequence and explanation seek to marry Calvinist predestination and libertarian free will. Compared to Little, MacGregor (2005:5) and Craig (1995:9) have put stricter parameters on their definition of best, that being the 'optimal balance between belief and unbelief' (MacGregor 2005:5). Ultimately narrowing down the range of potential worlds, MacGregor establishes a set of worlds called 'salvific-moral optimal worlds' (p.5). God is now choosing from an infinite range of equally good worlds, each world containing the maximum amount of people who accept Christ compared to those who deny him, and with the minimal amount of accompanying evil (p. 5). Upon defining the set of worlds from which God can choose, MacGregor suggests that the term 'best feasible world' is more accurate than Little's 'best of all possible worlds'. MacGregor finds this differentiation to be substantive for it does not limit God to having only one world which is the best and which he can actualise but instead, provides a range of feasible worlds from which God can choose to actualise (p. 5). This is essential in the task of simultaneously protecting both the Calvinist sovereign predestination doctrine and that of libertarian freedom.

Little's concept of the best of all possible worlds defines the world as existing from the point of creation to the Kingdom which is to come (2010:97). Geisler and Corduan do not agree with Little's characterization of what constitutes the world and find it to be a weakness (1988:313). They contend that this world we live in is not the best of all possible worlds, but it is the best way for God to bring about the best possible world (p. 333). Based on the soul-making value of evil, Geisler and Corduan find that this world is the 'best way' for God to achieve the best world, the best world being a perfect Heaven (p. 356).

7. The Validity of Creation Order Theodicy

Little has constructed a theodicy which he claims acknowledges the existence of gratuitous evil while embracing the doctrine of the sovereignty of God (2005:156; 2010:114). In building his theodicy, Little addressed the definition of sovereignty. The major theistic greater good theodicies utilise an understanding of sovereignty where 'God is sovereign in such a way that all individual choices of men are only those which God directly permits' (Little 2005:105). Little understands sovereignty to be divine autonomy and utilises this understanding in his theodicy (p. 106). Mitchell agrees with both Little's definition of sovereignty and the existence of gratuitous evil (2018:5). Scripture is replete in conveying that God is sovereign, as evidenced in Job 42:2, Psalms 135:6, Daniel 4:35 and Ephesians 1:11. In his sovereignty, God gave people free will (libertarian freedom) and he permits people to act according to their own wishes as seen in Joshua 24:15, 'and if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve'. This seems to provide opportunity for gratuitous evil. What a person does is their own responsibility and is not the fault of God. The existence of gratuitous evil, Mitchell asserts, does not negate the sovereignty of God (p. 5). MacGregor supports Little's Creation Order theodicy as a valid explanation for the coexistence of gratuitous evil and the sovereignty of God (2012:119). He contends that sovereignty, as biblically illustrated, consists of divine autonomy and governance. This is in contrast to a highly deterministic view of sovereignty which many theistic greater good theodicies maintain. Agreeing with Little, MacGregor finds that 'because gratuitous evil, or evil lacking any divine purpose, undermines neither divine autonomy nor divine governance, the biblical understanding of sovereignty receives no threat from the existence of such evil' (p. 120).

Plantinga supports an understanding of sovereignty such as Little presents (1974:30). He argues that God can create free creatures, but if he were to make them choose to only do good, then they would not be truly free (p. 30). He finds that humans, being free, sometimes make wrong or evil choices. These choices, however, do not count against God. While Plantinga agrees with Little's definition of sovereignty, he contrariwise maintains that God still brings good out of evil, although we do not always recognise the good obtained. Our failure to recognise the good obtained is because 'our cognitive powers, as opposed to God's, are a bit slim for that' (Plantinga 1996:73).

Geisler and Corduan do not agree with Little's Creation Order theodicy, yet they echo Little's understanding of sovereignty

(1988:384). They argue that for humans to have true freedom in making choices, the choices cannot be 'externally determined' (p. 384). God holds humans responsible for their choices and this can only be done if humans are completely free to make the choices.⁴ God knows what people will choose, but he does not determine the choices for them. This design, to allow people to make free choices, was sovereignly willed by God. By investing people with the ability to make free choices, God's sovereignty was delegated (p. 384). Geisler and Corduan assert that the sovereign God allowed for humans to be sovereign over their choices (p. 384). Geisler sums up the essence of God's sovereignty as he states, 'God is the "author" of everything that happens in the indirect and ultimate sense; he is not the immediate cause of evil actions. He neither promotes them nor produces them; he permits them and controls the course of history so that it accomplishes his ultimate purposes' (2011:24). Saying that God is the 'author' is an important distinction, in that God permits something to happen but he is not the producer of all things. By his sovereignty, his permissive will allows for evil choices to be made, while his perfect will does not promote evil (p. 23). Although embracing the same divine autonomy interpretation of sovereignty as Little, Geisler, and Bocchino do not accept the existence of gratuitous evil, suggesting that God knows a good purpose for every evil which he allows (2001:222). They default to inferring that it is beyond the ability of a human's finite mind to know the good obtained from each evil permitted. While agreeing with Little in part, Geisler and Bocchino support a greater good theodicy, not Little's Creation Order theodicy.

Borofsky argues against Little's Creation Order theodicy as an explanation for the coexistence of gratuitous evil and the sovereignty of God (2011:8). Creation Order theodicy, Borofsky contends, states that God will never go against our choices in order to preserve free will. Real life, however, shows that sometimes God does, in fact, go against our choices. Based on real-life evidence, Borofsky concludes that the Creation Order theodicy makes God 'reactionary to evil and not really sovereign' (p. 8). Gould argues against Little's Creation Order theodicy as an explanation for the coexistence of gratuitous evil and the sovereignty of God on a different basis (2014:461). He argues that if God must allow evil in order to have a meaningful relationship with man, then the evil is still for a greater good, that of enabling relationship. Therefore, the evil is not gratuitous, and Little's theodicy is not a valid explanation for gratuitous evil. Kraay echoes the findings of Gould, thereby finding Little's Creation Order theodicy to be invalid (2018:5).

4 2 Corinthians 5:10, 'For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.' Romans 14:10, '...For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God.' Romans 14:12, 'So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.'

Blocher contends with Little's idea of sovereignty urging that we forget the notion of divine self-limitation (1994:61). Blocher argues that 'Nowhere does Scripture suggest that God suspends the exercise of his sovereign power in respect of the slightest occurrence in the world' (p. 61). Likewise, Alston finds the existence of gratuitous evil to be irreconcilable to a sovereign God (1996:§2768). Erlandson also posits that to be sovereign, God must be in control of the results of the 'free acts' of men (1991:5). If God does not have complete control, then he is no longer sovereign. Based on their conclusions regarding gratuitous evil and sovereignty, Blocher, Alston, and Erlandson would not find the Creation Order theodicy to be a valid explanation for the concurrence of gratuitous evil and the sovereignty of God.

5 Wykstra 1984. The human obstacle to evidential arguments from suffering; Alston 1991. The inductive argument from evil and the human cognitive condition; Howard-Snyder 1996. The evidential argument from evil.

6 Wykstra defines CORNEA as 'the Condition of Reasonable Epistemic Access', (1984:153).

Wykstra, Alston, and Howard-Snyder⁵ dismiss the Creation Order theodicy as a valid explanation for the coexistence of gratuitous evil and the sovereignty of God on the basis of not believing that any evil can be gratuitous. Wykstra proposes CORNEA,⁶ insisting there is an epistemic difference between God and humans, humans not having reasonable epistemic access to the knowledge of the good being obtained with each evil (1984:152). Alston likewise appeals to the inability of humans to comprehend the good God may obtain via an evil (1991:26). Howard-Snyder follows the same logic, finding that humans are unable at times to discern the purposes of God and thus, humans do not know the good which God will obtain through some evils (1996:§8009).

In spite of the opposition, the evaluation of Little's Creation Order theodicy concludes that it is a reasonable and valid explanation for the coexistence of gratuitous evil and the sovereignty of God. Much of the consternation is centred on the definition of sovereignty. Wellum, in accord with Little, describes such sovereignty as God limiting himself, with the term limitation not referring 'to a weakness of imperfection in God; rather it refers to a self-imposed limitation that is part of his plan, not a violation of it' (2000:78). This view of sovereignty, divine autonomy, is an essential building block to Little's creation order theodicy. Utilizing Little's view of sovereignty, the creation order follows, including the bestowal of libertarian freedom upon humans. Little's theodicy provides for people to make genuinely free choices, which may result in evil (2005:155). Some of the evils may be gratuitous, having a reason, which is the evil choices of humans, but not a divine purpose. The evil does not have a purpose either for the greater good being obtained from it or a worse evil being thwarted by the lesser evil. While God may choose to bring a good in spite of an evil, he is not obligated to bring a good out of any evil, as this would make him

dependent on evil in order to do good. This is in perfect keeping with his sovereignty, as he sovereignly declared the order by which he and humans would interact. This creation order was part of his plan and he sovereignly abides by the order he ordained. Little's understanding of sovereignty is biblically consistent and based on that understanding, does not create any conflict with the sovereignty of God being coexistent with gratuitous evil.

8. Conclusion

The Creation Order theodicy stands in contrast to the greater good theodicies. Having explored the tenets of greater good theodicies, Little's opposition to the greater good theodicies was then surveyed. In response to deficiencies in the greater good theodicies, Little constructed his Creation Order theodicy. His theodicy was delineated and critiqued by considering its essential elements of creation order, libertarian freedom, the best of all possible worlds and middle knowledge. Utilizing the critique of the individual elements allowed for an assessment to be made on the main claim of the Creation Order theodicy; gratuitous evil exists concurrently with the sovereignty of God. Having examined all aspects of Little's theodicy and considering the objections against it, Little's Creation Order theodicy offers a valid explanation for the coexistence of gratuitous evil and the sovereignty of God. Little seems to have effectively answered the objections of his peers, providing a biblically-consistent argument which preserves the doctrine of the sovereignty of God while allowing for the existence of gratuitous evil.

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Re-thinking Mission, Missions and Money: A Focus on the Baptist Church in Central Africa¹

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Abstract

The African church has the highest increase in numbers compared to the west, and yet it is the least contributor to world missions. This paper analyses the issue of disparity in funding mission practices between the African church and its mother church, the western church. It then explores reasons behind the African church's struggles to support missions, and identifies opportunities for world missions to which the eastern Congolese church is exposed. A critical analysis of different arguments and reports from different authors was used to draw the main conclusions and therefore identify the central reason for the disparity and provide recommendations to the two churches. The paper suggests how scholars and the church should re-think mission, missions and money in eastern Congo.

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1. Introduction

During a tour to visit churches of the Baptist Church in Central Africa with a short-term intern from outside Africa, Nehemiah, the youth leader noticed that the children asked for sweets and biscuits from the missionary. John shook his head and told the kids, 'I don't have money.' The children then laughed and told him 'Muzungu masikini' meaning 'poor white man'.

In addition to existing universally-accepted principles concerning the distribution of wealth, the fact that the church in the West has to continue supporting the church in Africa seems to be worth considering. Both Westerners and Africans assume that the West is wealthy and Africa is poor in terms of financial resources. The question of how the so-called 'imbalance in the relative wealth of evangeliser missionaries and those among whom they work distorts the transmission of the gospel' (Bonk 2006,xi) is not as relevant in today's context where each African country experiences its own particular context (Wheeler 1989:1), and especially in Eastern Congo where the local wars affect the church's mission and the evangeliser is not necessarily from the west or wealthier compared to the one being evangelised. But what is relevant in that context, and the issue being addressed in this paper, is to question and analyse disparity in financial mission practices between the African church and the Western church.

In 1989, the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society (CBFMS) had 568 missionaries overseas and declared an income of \$1,420,000 to support overseas missions (eds Roberts and Siewert 1989:54–6). In 2004 the same missionary society had 558 missionaries overseas and declared an income of \$19,155,068 for overseas missions (Bonk 2006:9); whereas the church in Africa, with the fastest growth rate, has no significant statistics to provide in terms of overseas missionaries, as the Western Church had maintained the practice of funding missions in the Global South.

The West however, has become a field for re-evangelization and Africa is expected² (by the global church) to give back to the West by sending missionaries and supporting them with African money. The need is even acknowledged by Western Christians who 'recognise that they are both the agents and the objects of mission; that those, the evangelisers also need to be evangelised...' (Scherer 1999:15). Unfortunately the African church is still receiving support from the same West. It is curious that the same African church has access to resources; in the Baptist church in Central Africa, for example, members hold themselves responsible for funding local church buildings.

² It is said that 'There are more evangelicals in Africa than in all of North America and Europe combined' (see Center for Mission Mobilization. *XPLORE*. USA: CMM Press, 2015, 11.)

It is contradictory that the church in Africa, the fastest growing church, struggles to support missions while it has riches. Looking at the contrast and what is called imbalance in wealth distribution between the West and Africa, the issue of the disparity of wealth between the West and Africa being the reason why the African church is still depending financially on the West is not convincing. Another reason, stronger than the imbalance in wealth distribution, needs to be identified, and concrete steps taken to involve the African church in general, and the Baptist Church in Central Africa (CBCA) in particular, in an exercise of re-thinking mission, missions and money in its particular context. The CBCA is the first to have benefitted from the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society's support in Congo during the period of the Second World War II.

Using the case of the CBCA this paper argues that the church in Africa has sufficient funds to mobilise and support its own mission and contribute toward the funding of World Missions, but it struggles to do so for a variety of reasons according to the author's opinion: (1) lack of a clear understanding of the missional nature of scripture, having only captured its evangelical dimension; (2) a heritage from the missionaries that did not allow their gospel to adequately address material realities; (3) continued dependence upon the West, predicated upon a false binary of African poverty and Western opulence; and (4) lack of mission strategy due to a lack of/ or a poor curriculum of theological education of church leaders/ missionaries.

2. Misunderstanding of Mission and Missions

My early childhood was spent in Manguredjipa, in the north part of North Kivu province in the DRC. My father was very committed in the life of the Baptist church, especially in evangelism and the music team. He had migrated from his native area to that part of Eastern Congo and had been involved in the planting of the church in Mataba. I grew up with indigenous children who were from the 'Piri' and the 'Wapakombe' ethnic groups. One of the challenges of evangelism that our parents were facing was that the Wapiri were not identifying with Christianity. They would habitually tell their common slogan to evangelists, saying, 'After you killed your Jesus in Butembo,³ then you come here to tell us that he died for us.' There is a misunderstanding of mission and missions.

The New Testament owes its existence to 'God's heart for the world and the efforts of God's people to spread the message of God's love' (Williams 2012:49). Joel F Williams argues that 'The Gospels

³ Butembo, with which our parents were being identified, is located 98km east of Manguredjipa and was considered as a civilised city.

present the mission of Jesus, God's Son, who came to provide salvation through his death and resurrection. He has sent his followers out on a mission to make disciples of all nations' (Williams 2012:66). It is clear that Jesus is presented not only as a sent missionary but also as the one sending missionaries who transferred the message to his followers so that they would go out and make disciples. When the gospel was first presented in Eastern Congo, it was presented as the 'Good news of the Lord Jesus', a Jesus who was killed for us by his people. And it might have been hard for the receivers to accept that they were concerned by that death and resurrection of a foreigner presented by foreigners from either the West or the regions that were first 'conquered' by the missionaries. On the other hand, missionaries presented the gospel as a shift from the Old Testament to the New Testament, while God's heart for the world does not start with the New Testament.

David Bosch (1991:11–55), in his book favours Joel F Williams' view. Bosch argues that there is a fundamental shift that the New Testament witnesses when compared to the Old Testament in terms of mission interpretation. The missionary character of Jesus' ministry and the early church, and the way three New Testament authors interpret mission are proof of the shift. If 'mission' is sending preachers to distant places, then I agree with Bosch (1991:17) that the Old Testament does not show Israel reaching to nations outside its geographical and cultural boundaries with its faith. However, the story of Jonah appears to even contradict Bosch's idea. Jonah's mission was a message of redemption to Nineveh, which is in the present-day Iraq which is outside Israel's geographical boundaries and culture. God used a Jewish messenger to the Gentiles who had a negative background and understanding of God's will. It is true that the Jews never converted the Gentiles, though called to bear witness to the nations as Genesis 12:1–3 gives the mandate, 'foreigners (gentiles) adopted the group obligations and became a full-fledged part of Israel.' (Goheen 2011:24) The Gentiles' move to become followers of Judaism, which appealed to them even though accompanied by the requirement to obey the Torah, is likely to be identified with today's missional practices. Today's church members do not live apostolically, they do not consider themselves as missionaries, they do not routinely introduce new believers to faith in Christ, and so on (cf. Minatrea 2004:184–195). During his ministry 'Jesus selected twelve disciples to be with him and he sent them to twelve tribes of Israel' (Bosch 1991:26) that were to receive the gospel and mission, and therefore became the proclamation of victory for all. Although it took time to acknowledge the Gentiles' participation,

the exiled Hellenistic Christian church of Antioch inaugurated a harmonised church of both Jews and Gentiles and the beginning of the worldwide mission in sending Paul and Barnabas to the nations.

The shift in mission is not very helpful in such contexts like that of Manguredjipa in Eastern Congo. Christopher J Wright counters views such as those of Bosch and Joel F Williams with the argument that 'Mission is what the Bible is all about' (Wright 2006:29). He defends his idea by saying that, 'In a missiological approach to the Bible, [it is not to say that], every sentence of the Bible talks about evangelism but with the term "Mission", we are thinking of the purpose for which the Bible exists, the God the Bible renders to us, the people whose identity and mission the Bible invites to share, the story the Bible tells about the whole world and its future.'(2006:31) The love of God has a story which needs to be told in its entirety to people who are being reached for Christ. In the case of Eastern Congo, people were told to repent for the past and for some of their cultural and behavioural practices which were helpful for life as an individual and as a community. If the pastor saw anyone preparing medicine from wild leaves, they were to be excommunicated from the assemblies of believers, because the gospel message was about forgetting the past and starting an alliance with the God of the New Testament. It is here where this church missed the point in the early days. All that you had was not sufficient as an input for the gospel to be spread. The West had the best things to offer, starting with the gospel, and therefore believers lost confidence in what they possessed as individuals and communities, and put hope in money which was being brought by the only missionaries, who were, in the case of Eastern Congo, government officials. Therefore, their possessions, that is, their values, solidarity, and material belongings which could have been developed towards a capitalised wealth and investment to elevate not only unity but African church contribution toward World Missions' funding were not empowered.

Today the church mission is being understood to have a double vocation, that is a cultural mandate and an evangelical vocation (cf. Beals 1988:3). Therefore, 'everything the church is sent in the world to do is mission' (1988:3) The CBCA, however, still holds the view of mission in its evangelical aspect only. It has a department of Mission and Evangelism and Life of the Church responsible for reaching out to people for Christ, at every church local level, through the evangelistic team called the 'evangelism commission'. A missionary is therefore not understood as every Christian 'learning and adapting to the culture around while remaining

biblically sound' (Stetzer 2006:19) but as either a white person from the West or a church member commissioned by the church to go and serve a particular purpose outside the church denomination coverage area. The understanding of who a missionary is, is thus limited to a restricted view of evangelism. Operating in settings such as Goma, where migrations due to wars in the region have forced into existence a cross-cultural community, the church has not been able to develop mission-minded and missional local churches which can be on-mission by being intentional and deliberate about reaching other people, and adopting the posture of a missionary church (2006:19). This situation therefore confirms that the church in Eastern Congo misunderstood the concept of mission, missions and a missionary.

3. Disparities (Differences) in Fundraising Approaches

There has been a disparity in fundraising approaches between the Western church and the African church. Trying to address the issue of whether the flow of a large amount of money from the North to the South is still needed, Walber Buhmann (2006:xi-xiii) is positive about the flow of money due to the fact that the life of the church will always need money. However, his 'yes' is conditioned by 'the allocation of the fund to be done in the right proportions and with full knowledge that will not corrupt the evangelization process' (Buhmann 2006:xi). He argues that the 'transmission and enculturation of the gospel is affected by the imbalance in the relative missionaries and those among whom they work' (Buhmann 2006:xi). The fact is that the support is a one-way donation; the missionary establishes a church that will never follow the church-planting movement approach, and therefore will remain dependent on the sending church. The North should continue to support the South until the South is able to support missions in other regions. Some African churches are well equipped and can support missions, while some might need continued assistance. But both need empowerment on a rational use of money, a gift from God, and how to guard against dependency scenarios that perpetuate the myth of Africa as being poor. On the other hand, the North during the colonial era was not supporting missions in the South due to the availability of funds, but due to a vibrant fundraising system, and this needs to be understood and learned from by the African church.

3.1. Fundraising for missionary work in Africa

In many cases, missionaries were sent by Mission societies from the West. There were both denominational mission societies such

as the Church Missionary Society (Robert 1994:258) and interdenominational societies. The interdenominational mission societies were of two categories: those founded by councils of denominational churches such as the CBFMS (cf. Shelley 1981:37–47) and those founded by private and nondenominational missionaries such as the ‘faith mission’ called China Inland Mission founded by Hudson Taylor (Tuttle 2006:318). Each society was overseen by a mission board, which recruited missionaries and mobilised funding to support the mission work. The Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention would receive \$19,000 annually to support over 100 missionaries serving almost 400 churches in 1860, and the Women’s Missionary Union of the same Convention would raise \$10,000 from fifty-seven young women to build the school for women in 1917. From this example, it is clear that both churches and individuals were donors to the task of supporting missionaries, and that mission boards were acting as channels to fund missionaries in the field with support. However, we have to note that there were wide variances among Western missions, with great disparity even in the support received by Western missionaries.

4 Robert, *Adoniram Judson Gordon 1836-1895*, 20.

Regular mission reports were motivators of new fundraising actions. Upon hearing from Adoniram J Gordon’s report of Congo that the new Baptists needed a chapel, the Claredon Street Church raised \$2,500 and sent a complete prefabricated chapel by steamship.⁴ Such cases lead one to think that missionary support was results-oriented, and that missionaries who were not writing home for any reason might have been obliged to quit the mission field or have been forgotten by their home churches and sending mission organizations.

The second category of funding missionaries was support from missionary families and friends. Missionaries would ask their families to either support their mission work fully or contribute a part of their upkeep in the field. Dae Young Ryu says that, ‘Some of these educated young men and women who went as missionaries were from comfortable middle-class [backgrounds]’ (Ryu 2001:93). It is reported that during the period of 1905–1909, 81 out of 135 new American missionaries who sailed for Korea were SVM volunteer families and became American missionaries in Korea (2001:97). But amongst the faith-based missions, such as Africa Inland Mission (AIM), the missionaries tended to come from rural regions, were poorer, and less educated. Dick Anderson (Anderson 1994:17–18) reveals for example that even the founder of AIM, Peter Cameron Scott, was from a poor family which ‘owned little of this world’s goods...’ but joined the mission work together with his

brother for the Congo mission 1889. Furthermore, the contribution of the spouse and parents of certain Western missionaries has been of great impact. Some missionary parents were contributing by taking care of the preschool grandchildren in their homes, and this allowed missionaries to be more effective in the most dangerous mission fields (Steffem and Douglas 2008:276). It is therefore assumed that parents were responsible for funding the needs of missionary children whose parents had no support from a well-settled organization.

The last category of missionaries to the South was that of ‘tent-makers’. Motivated by their missionary call many Christians were using their career to fulfil their missionary duties. Tony Wilmot, for example, a British businessman, initiated the student movement, the Pan-African Fellowship of Evangelical Students (PAFES), in African English-speaking countries during his business tour in Africa in 1958 (cf. *Groupes Bibliques Universitaires d’Afrique francophone* n.d.).

The case of Jacques André Vernaud, a Swiss citizen, who established the Assemblies of God in Congo, reveals the role of women in missions in the Congo. Jacques and Johanna Vernaud settled in Kinshasa, then Leopoldville, in 1965. The first years of Vernaud in Leopoldville were full of hardships. Cut off from the support of the Assemblies of God / France, the family had to rely on only one income, that from Mrs Vernaud who had to take a small job and worked as midwife at the General Hospital (Eglise La Borne n.d.). This allowed the church planter Jacques Vernaud to establish many churches, including the prestigious CEF-La Borne (Centre Evangelique Francophone—Francophone Evangelical Centre) in Kinshasa.

The Baptist Church in Central Africa has had missionaries from both the first and the second category. Charles Erwin Hurlburt was a founder and general director of the AIM (cf. *Charles E. Hurlburt 1860 to 1936 Africa Inland Mission Kenya / Tanzania / Congo* n.d.). It is stated by CBCA: Département des Jeunes et Enfants (2013:44) that after he had had experience as AIM director following the death of Peter Cameron Scott in the 1890s, ‘he decided to evangelise the unreached Africa’ and therefore founded the Unevangelised Africa Mission (UAM), a family and private missionary organization. He put the Mission under the leadership of his son Paul Hurlbert. Little has been written about the UAM. The Baptist Church, by then UAM, was registered as a Domestic Nonprofit business incorporated in California, USA on March 10, 1928 with registration number C0127979 (cf. Unevangelised Africa Mission n.d.). So, the Baptist Church in

Central Africa, CBCA in short, is a Church born from the work of the UAM, a mission institution founded in America in 1927. History tells that, 'Later on, in 1946, the UAM handed over its mission field to the CBFMS (CBCA 2013:44). In 1957, CBFMS became "Mission Baptiste au Kivu (MBK)" (CBCA:44)'. Also, little is also known about 'the agreement with the UAM which made possible the entrance of CBFMS into the Congo'(CBCA:49). It is this particular agreement that determined the shift of the Baptist church from being funded by the Hurlburt family to being fully supported by Baptist churches from the USA. During its first four months CBFMS received \$42,000 from over 200 churches (CBCA:45), which may have been allocated to the only Mission work located in Eastern Congo.

3.2. African fundraising for sending African missionaries

The African believers were 'called "native" and considered as immature and therefore were voiceless in the church councils' (Baker 1926:402) during the Westerners' church leadership in Africa. And so, they had to rely on their mother churches for funding even after the missionaries withdrew, and therefore the idea of poverty of the Global South took root. It becomes something of a deep narrative believed on both sides of the Atlantic and perpetuated by Africans and Westerners alike. This has always made both sides unable to recognise, as Moffatt did, that Africans 'have become rich in a variety of acquirements, favoured above measure in the gifts of providence, unrivalled in commerce, preeminent in arts, foremost in the pursuits of philosophy and science, and in all blessings of civil society' (Bonk 2006:3). Rather than using these riches as opportunities to send missionaries, many African churches have continued to believe in the power of the disparity of resource availability between the West and Africa. Consequently, these churches are not sending missionaries outside their settings. The few poorer missionaries in the West are seldom acknowledged as missionaries. Their status as African missionaries hinders them from gaining the trust of both their own churches and the Western churches. In most cases they are perceived as less than pastors, as poor, as uneducated, as adventurer migrants, and so on. Since they are not associated with any agency other than their sending churches and since their cross-cultural missionary endeavours are restricted by the bounds of their own countries...(Bonk 2006:15), rather than calling them national evangelists as Jonathan J Bonk does, I would say they are transplanted evangelists. They are limited to reaching out to their poor fellow- citizens in the Western countries. It is a big mistake that the church has made in underestimating its capacity to fund

missions fully. It is clear that before we can reshape the missional nature of the churches, we have to wrestle with the status of missionaries on the continent.

The case of the CBCA fits in the context described above. From its statistics set out below, this church appears to be doing well, as it is reported that,

The CBCA has more than 450,000 members (children included) in 404 parishes lead by 704 ordained pastors, 180 retired pastors and it cares for 130 widows of pastors. It runs 506 schools among which 18 nursery schools, 342 primary schools and 145 secondary schools in different domains. In the health sector, the CBCA runs 3 hospitals, 17 surgical medical centres, 41 health centres, 80 health stations, and 4 medical schools. To fight illiteracy, CBCA organises 135 training centres for the youth and adult people. Most of CBCA pastors are trained in 2 Bible schools and at ULPGL. CBCA has many socioeconomic development projects, 3 big HIV/AIDS centres with a coordinating office in Goma supported by our partners, and 1 demobilization centre for child soldiers.(Baptist Church in Central Africa, n.d.)

It is, however, curious to discover that with these statistics, the CBCA is still using foreign money both in its projects and to support its few outside missionaries. Through its partnership with the United Evangelical Mission (VEM), the church has sent missionary doctors into Tanzania and has currently a theologian pastoring a German church with a missionary status (cf. *Bulletin Bimensuel d'information de la Communauté Baptiste au Centre de l'Afrique* 2013:3). I attended a farewell for an expert and his family who were being commissioned by the Church in Goma to a church in Equatorial Province in Congo as 'Missionary of the United Evangelical Mission'. The family will be paid by the VEM and not by the Mission department of the CBCA. Rather than calling it missionary-sending it is clear that it is likely to be job recruitment by VEM from CBCA. Thus no church member knows how the money to support missionaries from the church should be raised, and may therefore still believe that a missionary is paid from abroad when he or she is able to contribute for mission.

Surprisingly, the war and poverty in eastern Congo is not a hindrance for church members to support the church mission. During the farewell and commissioning of missionaries I witnessed, another missionary was being sent as a church-planter in Maniema. He was not going to be supported by a foreign fund. No plan and support philosophy have been given to participants for his survival in Maniema. The *Bulletin Bimensuel d'information*

de la Communauté Baptiste au Centre de l'Afrique (2013:3) states that during the service, members incidentally made 'a quick resource mobilization and gathered a hundred sheets, bags of cement as well as several other contributions that will allow the construction of the Temple of Kindu This therefore supports our argument that poverty in the South is not a reason that hinders the African church in supporting their missions.

4. Indigenous contributions towards mission work

It is true that 'the so-called "natives" were still immature in running church businesses'(Baker 1926:402). However, this is not a reason to exclude their voice in church councils. For example, while history tells that Paul Hurlbert led the team of delegates from Eastern Congo to the first missionary conference held in Stanley-Poll (Kinshasa), no native is said to have been part of such a strategic gathering. History seems to ignore a series of annual gatherings entitled 'the General Conference of Protestant Missions' from 1902 to 1911; this is due to the fact that natives were not part of such leadership gatherings. This may have caused their involvement in church-planting work without ensuring both continuity of possession and continuity of manner. The succession model used by missionaries was not in line with the biblical models of succession as far as church-planting was concerned because the 'ownership is maintained through succession ... and the object of succession is an institution' (Stepp 2005:193). Using the experience of Uganda, Louise Pirouet (1978:2) attributes the rapid expansion of the church to the 'catechists' who courageously took the gospel to other citizens from the city to the rural areas, while most of them survived in the field without any support. The missionaries' contribution toward indigenous preachers' work was more technical and social. Western missionaries gave them plans to reach the unreached, and had to train them on a crash basis to enable them to communicate the biblical message. Then they provided clothes to wear, food to eat, and a house to live in to preachers and communities (cf. Pirouet :12). This led to a disconnection between the gospel and the material needs of people. What was missing in the process was communicating the character of missions ownership, which consisted in teaching them how to fund and fundraise for missions locally and how to keep the funding system sustainable.

5. The colonial legacy of the view of the church on money

African Christians were not taught missionary support. Archibald G Baker says that, 'During the nineteenth century, mission theories were dominated by the conception of divine authority, revelation, and power. Therefore, the missionary spoke with the authority of the prophet and administered in the name of God' (Baker 1926:402). They taught their followers that ministry is about suffering in obedience to God. This explains the Anglican song entitled 'Go to the World! Go Struggle, Bless, and Pray' (Hiltz 2008:307). The pioneers of church-planting who served with the first missionary of UAM maintained through oral history that the missionary could send one of them to take a parcel from Kitsombiro to Katwa on foot while he would drive to the same destination believing that suffering was part of the training he gave the locals.

The missionaries concentrated their efforts on spiritual aspects of Christianity. There was no room for holistic mission. Missions contributed a lot to sustaining poverty in Congo. The speech of King Leopold II of Belgium to missionaries at Leopoldville on 12 January 1883 makes it clear that the missionary mandate from the coloniser country was 'to make every effort so that the blacks never become rich. To make them sing every day that it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' They taught Congolese that the 'reward' for church service will be received in heaven predicated on a special kind of eschatology. This explains why churches became unable to take care of their personnel even while experiencing growth in attendance as a result of church-planting efforts that followed the withdrawal of Westerners. The Congolese Kiswahili uses the word 'Mutume' (apostle) for the worker and 'Kitume'(apostolate) for the work which does not need payment. Another word used within the CBCA is the phrase 'Kazi ya kanisa' (work of the church) or 'Kazi ya Mungu' (work of God) and when it is used, every believer is aware that service is voluntary service.

The culture of volunteer ministry is one of the strong negative legacies from the missionaries, who were giving catechists food, clothes and housing for their work. The CBCA took it as a precious legacy and as the only payment or support a missionary deserved from the church denomination. In a discussion I had with one of the pastors of this church in Goma a few years ago, he revealed that the reason he resigned from pastoring a specific church in 2006 was that he was undermined by the church council, which considered him as not being spiritual as he tried to challenge the council to increase his salary which was fifty dollars, and could not

help him to take care of his family in the city. To a certain extent, this attitude came from the faith-based missions. Paul Hurlburt being a direct descendant of Charles Erwin Hurlburt, a co-founder of a faith-based mission, could not have run this church planted by him, and not promote among evangelists the concept of dependence on God for their well-being.

6. Theological education and the challenge to own missions financially

According to Manfred Waldemar Kohl, 'Pastors, missionaries, and evangelists put into practice what they learn, and pass on their experience to people in their churches, mission work, or outreach ministries' (Kohl 2005:10). Education provides intellectual preparedness and sharpens anyone for any specific task to which he/she is assigned in his/her specific culture and context in a dynamic way. Kohl opposes the slogan recalled by Fred Hiltz, 'Go to the World! Go Struggle, Bless, and Pray' (Hiltz 2008:307). This was written by Sylvia G Dunstan and 'appears in the mission section of Common Praise, a 1998 hymnal of the Anglican Church of Canada' (Hiltz:10), to capture 'the very essence of theological education for the future church, a future into which we are being drawn even now' (Hiltz:10). It is wrong to confuse missionary work with a ministry service full of struggles and challenges due to lack of missionary education; however, it is also wrong to agree that to be spiritual brings financial prosperity.

What is worse is that many missionary-sending churches and/or organizations believe in the struggle of missionaries on the ground as part of the training of the team. One of the weaknesses of Paul Hurlburt who planted the CBCA, was that, though he was very aggressive in sending indigenous believers to plant churches, he did not consider educating them before they were sent. Oral history transmitted from generations conveys that he was convinced a baptism class was enough to equip them for ministry. A day after his baptism, my late grandfather was sent to start a church, which he never succeeded in establishing due to a lack not only of theological education but also the fact that he had no education at all.

From the research data I conducted in Goma concerning missiological education in eastern Congo, the CBCA is still not able to send its missionaries and support their well-being. This is because of the poor educational background of its mission field pastors, a geographical disparity of theologians within the denomination; the theological curriculum used by the theological

institution which trained most theologians is not fit to prepare theologians who will face church-planting challenges in the region. The fourth reason and main cause of the first three is the lack of a mission strategy, even though the church has a structured department of Mission and Evangelism and Life of the Church.

Mission fields pastors' educational background

The CBCA has the so-called 'Shamba Mpya' areas targeted for new church plants. In the church process of expansion inside the country and abroad, Rwanda was the first foreign country to be reached, where four missionary stations are being established. Our interview with the secretary of the Department of Evangelism and Mission and Life of the Church and documentary analysis revealed that the church has a total of 25 church-planters in six different areas. According to the interviewee none of the 25 church-planters was sent by the church, but most of them, in the search for survival and daily bread, found themselves in areas where there was no church and decided to gather people under the banner of their mother church. In the case of Rwanda, Kamuha Musolo W'Ivuka quotes Muhindo Kasekwa (2008), who reveals in his survey of the records of the CBCA that, 'the local church that is being established in Rwanda consists of a group of Rwandan refugees returned home to Rwanda, where even their former churches were destroyed by the war, they were compelled to start a new church there as a sign of gratitude to the CBCA' (W'Isuka 2009:65).

Fourteen out of the twenty-five church-planters (56%) went to look for fertile farming land and opportunities, three (12%) have a background as businessmen, two others (8%) are carpenters, one person is a mason constructor (4%), and the others' background is unknown (20%). This suggests that church-planters survived without church support because they were able to support their livelihoods by using farming products, or cash-for-work jobs, or income generated by their business.

When it comes to their educational background, the most learned church-planters are those 15 (60%) with either two or four years of Bible school education. It is curious to realise that 60% of the church planters are ordained ministers and 40% are evangelists. Missionary and/or church-planter is a low-status position, perhaps equivalent to being an evangelist under a pastor, but more than a lay person. It seems that in the culture of the CBCA, once a church lay person gets Bible education, he or she is first called an evangelist who is to be mentored, then ordained as a fulltime pastor. So, church-planters are wrongly called evangelists.

The fact that church-planters took individual initiatives to plant churches which they run demonstrates that no strategy of church-planting exists, and explains why the department of Evangelism and Mission organised in 2010, ‘a one-month seminar to train the church-planters on church-planting and self-supporting’ (cf. The researcher’s interview with the secretary of the Department of Mission and Life of the Church, July 2012, in Goma at the head office of the Baptist Church in Central Africa). The report of the 33rd General Assembly of the CBCA held in Kikyö/Butembo supports our view that after 85 years of existence the CBCA has no mission strategy. The report says that,

Having realised that there are Christians who are planting churches in new mission fields without following any norm and even in neighboring countries without any financial ability, seeing that there are also chapels being planted without authorization from the church district or mother church, the General Assembly realises that there should be Mission strategies within CBCA (Mutahinga and Midiburo 2011:10).

When there are no mission strategies, the church will be unable to control the volunteers who have the burden to serve God wherever they go. It is the mission strategy that has to include the fundraising and funding strategies for missions. Neither does CBCA have strategies to fundraise for missions within the church, nor does it have a clear plan to support missions on a strategic and well-designed scale. Consequently, the church leaders complained of being overwhelmed by uncontrollable volunteer church-planters.

Concerning the geographical disparity of theologians in the Baptist Church in Central Africa, a recent evaluation (see Figure 1) revealed that 92 out of 506 (18.2%) pastors running stable churches within the CBCA have been to theological school and the rest have been to Bible school for either two or four years. It is good to note that this Bible school is equivalent to a secondary school with concentration on biblical studies. While the rural areas lack theologians, 67.3% of theologians are in the cities. For example, the ecclesiastic district of Busaghala has no theologian at all, and the district of Beni has the highest number of pastors from Bible schools.

During the Bible study session at Goma-Ville parish on 20 July 2012, the talk with the former President and Legal representative of the CBCA revealed that ‘theologians are very selective in terms of the geographic areas of service and always decline the appointments of the church when it comes to the rural areas.’ This

Pastor's level of education by district (Poste)

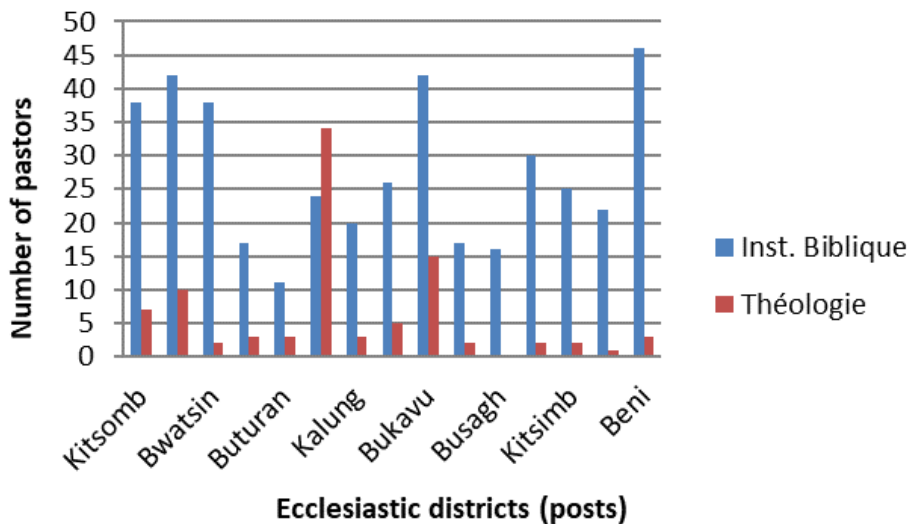


Figure 1: Pastor's level of education by district ('Poste')

Source: taken from a leaflet entitled 'Effectifs des Pasteurs de la CBCA' written in 2011, available in the Department of Evangelism, Mission and Life of the Church of CBCA at Goma.

situation is very risky for the future of the church in the rural areas. It is true that the availability of those called 'Biblistes' in the rural areas in today's context is a proof of their commitment. However, these pastors still are limited, and to leave them at the frontline where a sound doctrine is needed to be taught is a dangerous decision for the church. In addition, to have 67.3% of theologians in the cities is a waste of resources. The idea of continuing theological education or refresher courses being held for pastors is part of the solution.

The report of the President and Legal Representative of the Baptist Church in Central Africa (CBCA) to the 33rd General Assembly reveals that 'in the next ten years 40% of CBCA pastors are going to retire' (CBCA 2011:10) while the number of students in theological school and Bible schools has decreased. This situation is a catastrophic one, and the church is likely to lack ministers and therefore leadership from the younger generation, which is not interested in theological education. It is true that the General Assembly recommended that 'the vocational groups be initiated ... and the local church initiates the 'Local scholarship' to support theological students', and that 'the Church districts create income-generating activities for Pastors' families ... to attract young people to pastoral service.' From this decision it appears that the issue of money is affecting all the recruited servants of the

church to the extent that local church pastors' family members are frustrated by the financial motivation of their spouse or father (pastors are men). When the senior pastor does not receive good treatment from the church it is hard, if not impossible, for him to plan and mobilise the church he is leading to give funds for missions.

Theological curriculum of ULPGL (Free University of the Great Lakes Countries) compared to the Great Lakes' context and needs

The fact that, 'Church workers who hold a university level education have been educated within the theological faculties of the four main universities, among which is ULPGL in Goma, which belong mainly to CBCA ...' (W'Isuka 2009:114) made us analyse the curriculum of ULPGL where most of the CBCA theologians have been trained.

The *Prospectus 2006-2007* (Mutahinga and W'Isuka (eds) 2006:10–13) shows the faculty of theology at the Free University of the Great Lakes Countries (ULPGL) as having a five years BTh programme with a course called Practical Theology in addition to Philosophy, Systematic Theology and Biblical Languages. The course on Anthropology and Sociology appears among the appendices' disciplines. It is clear that this curriculum is likely to prepare local church administrators and philosophers and not church-planters or any other missionaries to be sent to the frontline for strategic missions.

An interview done in Goma in July, with Paul Kamuha Musolo W'Isuka who is the Mission course lecturer revealed that 'The five years BTh programme offers only a single two-credit/hours course of Missiology, which cannot prepare students for Missions.' Furthermore, he revealed in his thesis that 'the entire university library has only five missiology books out of the 8,000 volumes, including reviews and journals' (Wisuka 2009:114).

It is clear that alumni from this theological faculty will not be ready to be sent far from the city for missionary service, because they are neither ready for missions nor prepared for it. And when they are pastoring churches already planted they are likely not to insert missions in the church budget plan. Missionary work is seen as a lower-status profession, with limited legitimacy and lower (or no) funds. So, only amateurs and Bible schools' alumni are ready to take the risk and plant churches without the support of the Department in charge which is led by theologians supposed to plan and implement the non-existing mission strategy. During a church seminar I ran on 'missions' in Goma in September 2013, I asked

what percentage of the church budget missions and evangelism takes. The pastor responded that there is no budget planned for that, because even the evangelism commission does not submit a budget for their department. Money and missions are not going together in churches within the Baptist Church in Central Africa.

7. Conclusion

The imbalance in wealth distribution between the West and Africa is not the reason why, though it is the fastest growing church in the world, the African Church and particularly that in Eastern Congo, is still a minor contributor to the universal church, and struggles to fund missions.

Rather than mission being known in its holistic character, the CBCA has a serious misunderstanding, and views mission in its evangelical dimension only. The misunderstanding started way back at the beginning of the church, caused by missionaries who presented the gospel as good news of Jesus from a foreign people to Congolese, which required a shift from their past, their history.

From the time of the arrival of Western missionaries up to the present, mission is not understood as 'everything the church is sent in the world to do' (Wright 2006:29) but rather is believed to be evangelism carried out by a very particular team within a local church overseen by the department called 'Mission and Evangelism and Life of the Church'. Furthermore, the missionary has first been understood as being from the West, then as any church-planter sent to distant places to spread the gospel and as someone with an inferior status to pastors, rather than being understood as every Christian 'learning and adapting to the culture around while remaining biblically sound' (Wright 2006:31). For that reason the church has not been on missions, neither has it been able to plant mission-minded churches in the challenging context of war and ethnicity. Therefore, this paper calling for a holistic approach to mission advocates that 'mission' should be contextualised in Eastern Congo.

Accepting that the church in the West continues to support the African church based on the principle of the imbalance of wealth distribution between Africa and the West, this is 'distorting the transmission and enculturation of the Gospel,' (Bonk 2006:xi) and does not encourage a church-planting movement to be a reality by planting self-supportive, self-governing, self-propagating, and self-theologizing churches. Therefore, the allocation of funds to the African church 'is to be done with full knowledge that that avoids corrupting the cross-cultural dimension of mission

work' (Bonk :xi). This is only possible when the mother church transfers its missional nature, character and identity to the daughter church rather than creating dependencies. It is important that dependency should be avoided in mission work. Is the continuation of funds from the West related only to the perceived wealth disparity, or is it more a matter of controlling the theology and ideology of mission by the West? Mission boards in the West/North also need to rethink their theologies, cultural perceptions and strategies concerning mission, in dialogue with churches from the South. Further, the daughter church needs to learn from the mother church and be able to evaluate possibilities for it to give back as it continues the process of church-planting.

The CBCA, in Eastern Congo, has not yet been able to fund missions because it has no experience and has not been initiated into fundraising and funding missions. The Western missionaries had various approaches to mobilise support from individuals and families, and churches and boards of missionary societies, or self-support through 'tent-making'. They neither transferred skills in fundraising and funding missions to African believers who they considered immature, nor did they involve them in the business of the leadership of the running of missions.

The Western missionaries only taught suffering and evangelism to the church and created therefore a new culture of free work for church ministry. This mindset has affected the view that family members of ministers hold concerning church ministry, to the extent that the Baptist Church is going to suffer a shortage of forty percent of its pastoral staff workers in the next ten years, if the youth continue to refuse to join in theological education.

Our research conducted in Goma identified that the CBCA has not had any mission strategy for the last eighty-five years. Its Department of Mission and Evangelism and Life of the Church trains its pastoral force in a selected university founded by the church. The theological curriculum which is followed is not suited to preparing theologians who will face the missionary and financial challenges of church planting in the region and beyond. Consequently there are serious disparities of workers within the church as far as skills go; theologians take leadership of churches already planted, and the strategic mission field is left to church-planters with a poor educational background and to volunteer lay Christians. Therefore, the fact that the Church lacks a mission strategy is the reason why it is still unable to send missionaries and fund them after eighty-five years of fruitful ministry, the few

sent missionaries still being funded from the West. The local believers have not yet owned the church fully.

Throughout this article we have argued that poverty in the South is not a reason hindering African churches from supporting missions and thus making them dependent forever on support from the assumed wealthy West. The true reason is that the CBCA in Eastern Congo has not been taught how to raise funds and support missions. Pastors wait for their eternal rewards as they struggle to serve, while when the church leadership cannot locally fund a project it relies on the West rather than exploiting available potential sources hidden by the lack of local fundraising. The problem is the poverty of mind of the church in viewing mission, missions, and money; this hinders the church from contributing to the universal church in a way proportionate to its size and recent growth, and also stops mission being perceived as a ministry vocation within the church.

It is therefore imperative to re-think fundraising for mission and funding mission strategies. A new direction towards missions is highly recommended with the emphasis on every local church developing a mission strategy aimed at planting missional churches based on its holistic mandate.

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Epistemic, Historical and Theological Backtrackings of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority in relation to the Ukrainian-Russian Heritage and Modernity¹

Oleksandr Lykshosherstov and Bill Domeris

Abstract

The life and ministry of every Christian are profoundly shaped by a particular ecclesial tradition. Different interpretations of the extra-canonical teaching of the church tradition have remained a debated topic since Reformation, raising a question of the relative spiritual authority for believers. Adopting the fundamental affirmation of the authority of the universal Christian tradition as that which had been believed ‘everywhere, always, by all’ [*ubique, semper, ab omnibus*], the research investigates a threefold paradigm of ‘universality-antiquity-consensus’ (Pelikan 1971:333) of the Orthodox Church tradition as authority in relation to the Ukrainian-Russian heritage and modernity. Embracing the perspective of Evangelical theology, the study goes beyond a mere phenomenological analysis, identifying theoretical premises, praxeological incongruences and authoritative formulations of the Eastern Orthodox tradition on the epistemological, historical and theological levels.

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Keywords

Eastern Orthodoxy, Authority of Tradition, Epistemology, Continuity and Discontinuity, Search for Consensus

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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.

1. Introduction

The demise of the USSR and sweeping radical changes in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) greatly affected the Orthodox spiritual landscape through the spontaneous development of theological, sacramental, and ecclesiastical forms of authority. Orthodox Church Tradition was rediscovered as one of the principal authority agents and re-employed in the process of spiritual restoration of collective and individual religious identities. This authoritative notion of ecclesial tradition has always been the central normative and symbolic core of the Orthodox faith, presenting for scholars *a sui generis* within the modern theological trajectory in the post-communist society. In the twentieth century, Christianity experienced, ‘somewhat paradoxically, both the thirst for unlimited freedom and authority’ (Negrut 1994:1). As a result, ‘one of the basic problems theologians confront today is knowing how to discern between the holy tradition of the Church – the expression adequate or appropriate to Revelation - and mere human traditions which only express Revelation imperfectly and, very often, which even oppose and obscure it’ (Meyendorff 1960:ix). Overcoming the state-promoted atheism and communism in Eastern Europe, many Christian churches in the Commonwealth of Independent States have discovered that ‘authority lies at the heart of the issues that separate the Eastern Orthodox Church from Roman Catholics and Protestants’ (Nassif 2010:36). Unprecedented freedom of institutional autonomy and freedom of religious expression of other Christian denominations became the main challenge for the Russian Orthodox Church, which has always considered itself ‘the organic and extended body of Christ and the divine mystery of renovation by the power of the Holy Trinity’ (McGuckin 2011:44). The point is perhaps best illustrated by the negative response of the Russian Orthodox Church to western globality since it violated the ancient Byzantine formula of church and state ‘*symphony*’ that had been accepted and enforced in Eastern Christianity. Accordingly, the religious legitimization of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority in the postmodern context aimed to restore the traditional understanding of the national Church as a conservative social force. Exploring given relations between Scripture and Tradition, the main objective of the study was to investigate the complicated issue of authority in various strains of the postmodern notion of orthodoxy and to provide a scholarly critical but theologically sound exposition of the contested concept of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority from the perspective of contemporary Evangelical theology.

2. The Search for Epistemological Universality of Orthodox Church Tradition as Authority

The conspicuity of the methodological pluralism in the modern theological epistemology critically recognises that ‘our doctrine of God affects the way we interpret the Scripture, while simultaneously acknowledging that our interpretation of Scripture affects our doctrine of God’ (Vanhoozer 2002:10). In terms of epistemic backtracking of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority, the study sought to provide a cogent, sustainable and biblically nuanced solution to the core epistemological inquiry: how to regard the weight we give to a specific ecclesial tradition on the grounds of its being endorsed not by scriptural (proximal), but by confessional (subsidiary/auxiliary) authority. Furthermore, once the problem of definition and trust of Orthodox (or Protestant) traditions is solved, and its authoritative endorsement is determined, how can we integrate this theological attitude into a strictly confessional epistemic outlook? For confessional evangelicals, like Michael Horton, ‘Orthodoxy is no more successful than Rome in explaining (1) how Scripture justifies extracanonical norms and (2) how such practice obviates the difficulties of interpretative multiplicity’ (Horton 2004:127).

Eastern Orthodox theological epistemology begins with a humble presupposition that humans can barely articulate, with the help of our language, apostolic dogma and kerygma regarding the historical crucified Jesus and the transcendently glorified Christ, whose great *Missio Dei* has been handed down to us in mystery (*εν μυστηριο*). In terminology of Lossky (2004:133) it starts with ‘the faculty of hearing the silence of Jesus’, with divine assistance of the true and holy tradition, which ‘does not consist uniquely in visible and verbal transmission of teaching, rules, institutions and rites’, but, rather, in ‘an invisible and actual communication of grace and of sanctification’ (Florovsky 1937:178).

The concept of traditional Orthodox theological episteme presented by Ouspensky (2004:38) describes a man as ‘a microcosm, a little world. He is the centre of created life; and therefore, being in the image of God, he is the means by which God acts in creation’. For that reason, Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, in *Orthodox Psychotherapy: The Science of the Fathers* (1994), suggests an epistemological inquiry should be entered into with a proper conversion of mind (*metanoia*) and ‘the eye of the heart’ attitude. Therefore, even though personal gnosis with God is theoretically possible, the Orthodox methodology works in the context of a metaphysical assumption about ‘incomprehensibility’ of God, importing the same apophatic attitude to the epistemic structures

of philosophical theology. It means that ‘the Bible is not used by the Orthodox as a system of belief or as a *summa theologiae* but as the authentic record of the divine revelation which leads to deification’ (Negrut 1994:12).

2.1. Synchronic level of authority: divine charisma versus ecclesial office

Another distinctive conviction of Eastern theological epistemology reflects its pivotal ecclesiological axiom—a strong affirmation and belief that the superior apprehension of the revealed truth (in doctrines, worship, mission and office of authority) rests ultimately with the whole Church. This understanding of the synchronic level of authority is centred on a hierarchical status and hierocratic authority of the Church itself since Eastern Orthodoxy recognises no single person or single office as having final authority in doctrinal matters. It regards its whole body (*ολον το πληρωμα*) as bearers of the true apostolic tradition and as protectors of Orthodoxy. This model of collective wisdom suggests that ‘the hierarchy, which meets at the ecumenical councils, is the voice of the Church; the ecumenicity (the ecumenical character) of these councils, however, and the infallibility of their decisions, are to be tacitly recognised by the whole body of the Church’ (Bratsiotis 1951:22). In his book *The Orthodox Church*, Ware notes that ‘the Orthodox idea of the Church is certainly spiritual and mystical in this sense’, and therefore, ‘Orthodox theology never treats the earthly aspect of the Church in isolation but thinks always of the Church in Christ and the Holy Spirit’ (Ware 1993:239–245). It means that Orthodox presuppositions about the Church start with a special relationship between the Church and God, being manifested primarily in three-mode relations: ‘(1) the image of the Holy Trinity; (2) the Body of Christ; (3) a continued Pentecost’ (Ware 1993:245). Thus, the entire dialectic of the Eastern Orthodox epistemological interpretation presents the Church as a *new milieu* where the content of scripture is being engraved and interpreted through Tradition and illumination of the Holy Spirit (Staniloae 1980:41).

2.2. Diachronic Level of Authority: Tradition and traditions

Another major factor in Eastern Orthodox epistemological attempt to determine what is authoritative for faith and morals employs the notion of tradition as a unique diachronic mode of *episteme* in the expression of the static-dynamic relation between theological *gnosis* and religious *praxis*. For Orthodox believers, tradition is the source of all their doctrines and practices in the Church. Some Orthodox scholars argue that, ‘according to Orthodox theology, the

Church is the guardian (Θεματοφυλαξ) of supernatural revelation – in its historical development, and the store (Ταμείον) (of supernatural revelation) is the Bible on the one hand and the apostolic tradition on the other hand; the Bible constitutes the written, and by tradition the spoken, Word of God, yet both are the authoritative source of Christian teaching’ (Bratsiotis 1951:19–20). As a living experience of the Holy Spirit in the Church, such Tradition must always be open to new interpretations (Fahlbusch and Bromiley 2008:518). However, there has not yet been a successful attempt within Eastern Orthodoxy to investigate and develop a proper theology of biblical inspiration that would provide a reliable differentiation between Tradition and a tradition. In simple terms, ‘the canons of the Orthodox Church... form a huge body of material, and in any age, there are never more than a few people who master it in detail’ (Ellis 1986:67). The very discourse of Orthodox Tradition as authority has been facing a significant interpretive pitfall: ‘how to speak well of tradition's continuity in light of the real development (often a religious euphemism for “change”) that all things historical undergo while respecting the facts of historical research?’ (Thiel 2000:vii). This diachronic inquiry into the process of formation of church tradition reflected in Orthodox theology is similar to the Catholic presupposition that ‘the Church precedes chronologically the writings of the New Testament. They [Catholics] see the fixation of the canon as an act of Apostolic Tradition’ (Creemers 2015:217). In *Doing Theology in an Eastern Orthodox Perspective*, Meyendorff (2004:83) suggests that ‘biblical science does not possess its own proper integrity and methodology,’ therefore in a long-standing relationship between *gnosis* and *episteme*, ‘tradition becomes the initial and fundamental source of theology’.

2.3 Authority of Tradition in Theory and Action: Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy

The dynamism of the philosophical, theological and historical reconstruction of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority, as a theoretical and practical phenomenon, resides in the dissemination of the same message of the gospel within different historical, geographic and cultural contexts, through the duality of orthodoxy (correct opinion or belief) and orthopraxy (correct practice) within a faith matrix. According to Pomazansky, ‘From the first days of her existence, the Holy Church of Christ has ceaselessly been concerned that her children, her members, should stand firm in the pure truth’ (Pomazansky 2005:2). What is paradigmatically important for the Eastern Orthodox epistemology is not just Scriptural exegesis but the manner in which the highest truth of

revelation (orthodoxy) exercises its authority in the tradition of the Church (orthopraxy). In his *Introduction to Three Views on Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism*, Stamolis explores what comprises first theology for Eastern Orthodoxy:

While theology is important to the Orthodox, it is also true that the forms have a deep meaning. The etymology of the word orthodoxy is 'right [ortho] praise [doxia]'. Thus, while Western churches have tended to use the term 'orthodoxy' to mean 'correct doctrine', the Orthodox Church is concerned with getting worship right. The Orthodox Church focuses more on God than on the individual. Timeless truths and practices become the vehicle to communion with the triune God. (Stamolis 2004:15)

Such a praxeological description of Orthodox theological method finds support in a famous statement of Evagrius of Ponticus, disciple of Cappadocians, who 'transformed Christian apophaticism into a theology of prayer' (Lasser 2011:39), declaring that 'If you are a theologian, you will pray truly; if you pray truly, you will be a theologian' (Casiday 2006:185).

2.4 Orthodox Conservative Substance and Protestant Corrective Principle

The theological interplay between orthodoxy and orthopraxy in Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism can be illustrated by the application of a famous Tillich's paradigm about 'Catholic Substance and Protestant Principle'. In his theological treatise *The Protestant Era* (1948), Tillich was able to recognise a basic ontological fact: 'without striving for doctrinal or practical correctness, faith wanders astray. However, absent the proper orientation of the heart, orthodoxy turns cold and sterile while orthopraxy becomes legalism and empty ritual' (Wilkins and Thorsen 2010:20). Therefore, 'a disproportionate emphasis on one of these elements at the expense of the other usually indicates a disturbed and strained situation on the verge of the conflict' (Von Campenhausen 1969:1). Protestant Principle (or Protestant Corrective) appears as a continuation of Tillich's theology 'on the boundary', delimitating the conditioned and unconditioned:

Protestant principle demands a method of interpreting history in which the critical transcendence of the divine over against conservatism and utopianism is strongly expressed and in which, at the same time, the creative omnipresence of the divine in the course of history is concretely indicated... It continues the Protestant criticism of Catholic historical absolutism; it prevents the acceptance of any kind of utopian belief, progressivistic or revolutionary (Tillich 1948: xvi).

The positive emphasis of *Orthodox Conservative Substance* relates to the fact that through the centuries, 'Eastern Orthodoxy has maintained its tradition in spite of opposition and immeasurable suffering. The Eastern Church has faced many challenges and has suffered considerably, but it continues to survive and bear witness to its rich heritage' (Calian 1992:1). The dichotomization and fragmentation of individual experience, described by Tillich as a critical and creative power, which is the measure of every religious and cultural reality, has been a valid point of criticism on the part of many Orthodox scholars. The positive contribution of *Protestant Corrective Principle* and its typological applicability demonstrates that, in this setting, the Orthodox Tradition is still vulnerable in its dedication to a specific cultural faith matrix while in Tillich's words 'Protestantism neither idealises nor devaluates religion... In this way, the Protestant principle denies to the church a holy sphere as its separate possession, and it denies to culture a secular sphere that can escape the judgment of the boundary-situation' (Tillich 1957:205). In line with the global trend of this *Corrective Principle*, Protestants do not attempt to ground their authority and certainty in some indubitable principle outside of scripture because our God has communicated his perfect will to the whole humanity and Christians should always examine themselves on their spiritual journey to the truth.

3. Historical Backtrackings of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority in relation to Ukrainian-Russian Heritage and Modernity

The universal implication of any ecclesial tradition is inevitably connected with the question of its historical development. The Eastern Orthodox Tradition as authority is not a self-explanatory exposition. The research descriptively emphasises that historical preconditions of Eastern Orthodox worldview on the problem of ecclesial authority of tradition reflect the whole complexity of interrelatedness between biblical doctrines (*gnosis*), theological methods (*episteme*), church practices (*praxis*) and a respective logical progression—from the Hellenic history of the Byzantine Church to the modern Eastern Orthodoxy in a global age. The historical research of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority investigates the development of orthodoxy and heresy in Early Christianity, the emergence of unwritten (oral) tradition in post-apostolic era, the origin of autocratic Orthodox Tradition in Muscovite Russia, autocratic amalgamation of the great Russian princes (1452–1613) and the hermeneutical debate: a brief case

study of St Basil's treatise *De Spiritu Sancto (On the Holy Spirit)* in the analysis of George Florovsky.

3.1 The Concept of the Ecclesial Authority in the Early Church

Initially, there was no real separation between scripture and tradition in the early Church. The tradition of that period not only was related to the process of transmission of God's message but also was the very content of that message. It was also a time when the apostolic witness held the highest authority for the church. The main function of the primitive church and tradition at this stage was to preserve and transmit the apostolic witness in full 'integrity and totality,' both for 'an authoritative interpretation of the Old Testament and for the message concerning Christ and his teaching' (Hascup 1992:20). Hence apostolic preaching was founded on the Old Testament Scriptures and on the living tradition of Jesus, passed from mouth to mouth, 'the tradition was not something dead, but a vital reality to be discovered from living persons. Yet the corruptions to which oral tradition was subject soon necessitated the writing of Christian books' (Richardson 1970:21–22). The further development of the New Testament canon in the first four centuries AD demonstrates that apostles authorised a proper theology of the primitive church. The qualitative uniqueness of that revelation was that 'the Church itself recognised an essential difference between the tradition before and the tradition after the establishment of the canon' (Cullmann 1966:87).

In response to the Gnostics' claims to have a secret truth handed down to them from the apostles themselves, the early Church developed a dual concept of authority based upon the apostolic witness (canon) and apostolic succession (tradition). By the end of the second century, some fundamental changes were introduced to the Christian concept of authority. The concept of the ecclesial authority of the ministerial office was gradually linked not only to a community but also to a professional hierarchy in the New Testament—the priesthood. The temptation to extend the apostolate beyond the apostle generation put bishops forward on the historical stage as a new authority and 'apostolic heirs', who received their teaching and, to some extent, their office. Irenaeus (AD 130–202) further articulated the relation between the bishops' role as protectors of faith and their authority as Kingdom's key-keepers and the succession of tradition, linking such authority to the teaching office of the Church and the apostolic tradition transmitted and preserved in the anointed succession of the faithful. Clement of Alexandria (AD 150–215), a respectful theologian and a head of the Catechetical school in Alexandria,

also delineated authority in the succession of the apostolic message, while Origen (AD 184–254) found authority in the whole church and especially its teachers, who worked together in accordance with the apostolic witness, preserved in scripture.

The Early Church needed a way to assert its authority and Tertullian's formula '*primum*' is the '*verum*' was effectively employed to justify centralised ecclesial authority. In the light of new evidence regarding the organizational structure, no definite patterns of authority (vertical or horizontal) can be found within a primitive church to delineate official rights and duties of the hierarchy. Various theological attempts to attribute a special primacy over the Twelve to Peter were unconvincing. Initially, the apostolic unity was not a unity of an organised church, but, rather, the unity of their witness (vocation) to Christ. Thus, the transformation of the Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy into a power structure was not the confirmation of authority, but an indication of its perversion. The autocratic (authoritarian) model of authority is foreign to every line of the New Testament in which authority is mentioned. As Christianity began to separate from its Jewish heritage and visible ecclesiastical power structures gradually evolved, all kinds of questions and disputes arose regarding religious authority. At this stage 'the development of authority among the ancient churches was not uniform' (Stagaman 1999:40).

The Hellenic reconfiguration of theological truth in Eastern Orthodoxy began to treat the new body of Orthodox traditions as a *de facto authority* equal to other primitive Christian writings. Appeals began to be made more often to tradition than to scripture. As a result, 'extra-biblical doctrines were canonised, and a body of opinion that found no support in scripture began to be asserted as infallibly true' (MacArthur 1995:157). Thus, Church tradition very soon manifested itself as a supreme regulative norm '*regula fidei*' or (*norma normata primaria*), directly instituted by Christ himself through apostles with a status of sacred legacy, where 'authority and doctrinal orthodoxy became intertwined; catholicity pointed to universality' (Blanchfield 1988:21). In this way, theology itself contributed to the centralization of authority, 'as bishops monitored publications for orthodoxy and developed uniform creed' (Warwick 1974:113). The excessive language of classical Greek philosophy impacted many Protestant scholars who agreed 'with those liberal and neo-orthodox theologians who believed that classical theology's use of Greek philosophy, especially Aristotle, had distorted Christian faith' (Griffin and Hough 1991:230–231). Meyendorff notes that the theological

speculation of Church Fathers ‘often went wrong when it was used as an end in itself and not as a creative tool to answer the questions posed to the church by the surrounding world’ (Meyendorff 2004:91).

The growing Church realised its need in a further institutionalised organization, therefore, inherited power patterns ‘inevitable took social and political models from the surrounding world in which to incarnate their authority from God and Christ’ (Boff 1985:40). Through the centuries, particularly after Constantine, when centralised ecclesial authorities became tightly intertwined with the imperial power of the state, Christianity encountered and attempted to resolve the same theological issue: how to identify and approve the existing models of authority in present ecclesiastical structures, which directly claim their divine origin. Blanchfield argues in this regard, that, ‘for centuries, popes and kings struggled for supremacy, temporal and spiritual. The ecclesial authority of the Middle Ages, using the model of the feudal system, was far removed from *the diakonia* of Jesus. Both Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism cemented its power toward absolutization’ (Blanchfield 1988:262). In addition to that, the ever-present danger of the historical development of ecclesial tradition as authority is that ‘fidelity to the Fathers’ can easily ‘degenerate into bondage to formulas’ (Lossky 1981:144).

3.2 The Origin of Autocratic Orthodox Tradition in Muscovite Russia

The emergence of Orthodox Patriarchate in Moscow occurred during the time when the Constantinople patriarchate was in a vulnerable state of utter disorder, being on the verge of an institutional breakdown and inevitable resubmission to the sultan. After a period of prominent territorial growth and power consolidation in the XV–XVI centuries, Muscovite rulers emulated the Byzantine imperial model, according to which the Orthodox Church was inseparably tied and placed under the stewardship of secular authorities. The autocracy of the Muscovite sovereigns in their struggle for the establishment of state hegemony (*edinoderzhavie*) facilitated exclusivist tendencies in the Eastern Orthodox theological approach, which resulted in the Third Rome agenda. This single example demonstrates how easily Orthodox rulers and ecclesiastical authorities could delegitimise numerous constraints of their Orthodox Tradition for the sake of a new historical-eschatological entity called the ‘Third Rome’ Christian Empire. The creation of the Patriarchate of Moscow involved many canonical irregularities and obstacles, including coercive negotiations and bargaining, open intimidation and even an eleven

-month oppressive detention of Constantinople Patriarch Jeremiah II, who was held in Moscow much longer than he desired, against his will. From an Orthodox conciliar point of view, the entire procedure of a patriarchate installation in Moscow was uncanonical, since the patriarchate was created without the convocation of a pan-Orthodox synod of three other patriarchates (Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem), there was no real election among the candidates, and the very sacramental integrity of the patriarch ordination in Moscow had been violated. Therefore, 'the elevation of the metropolitan of Moscow was not an act of patriarchal authority, but one of patriarchal submission' (Gudziak 1992:300). At the very moment of its emergence, the Russian Orthodox Church violated not only its ancient traditions but also a more fundamental relation between history and eschata, losing its ontological space and collapsing under the authoritarian power of the state.

4. Authority of Orthodox Church Tradition in Postmodern Context: The Problem of Theological Synthesis and Conciliar Consensus

The present study recognises the problem of consensus in Eastern Orthodoxy with regard to the authority of tradition as an 'ongoing concern' (Casiday 2012: xviii) and 'the long-term perspective' (Letham 2007:291), that is, ongoing search for correct theological paradigm and patristic advancement. The contemporary contours of Orthodox theology of tradition emerged from a complex framework of theoretical trajectories embedded in differentiated patterns of social exclusion and sometimes expressed in oppositional thought structures. The authoritative and centralised character of modern Orthodox Tradition was the product of a gradual historical development over more than a millennium (Allison 2011; Andreopoulos 2011; Benz 2009; Berger 2005; Hobsbawm 1983; Makrides 2012; Prisel 1998). In this perspective, the Orthodox consensus regarding ecclesial Tradition as authority can be considered as a dynamic and iterative discussion process of ecclesiological reality that brings the participants' opinions as close as possible to the appropriate epistemological and theological solution. It is suggested that some of the undermentioned consensus trends, being necessary ingredients for the correct understanding of the Orthodox approach to the issue of Tradition as authority, still reflect a significant need for theological development and further theoretical articulation. The modern appropriation of Orthodox consensus regarding theology as *per se* refers to the intellectual

tradition of Eastern Orthodox Christian churches, which primarily, though not exclusively, includes those Christian communities with historical ties to the Byzantine tradition. There are at least two basic theological trajectories in the Byzantine Tradition: the first one concerns well-known Christological controversies that occasioned the convening of the seven ecumenical councils, and the second trajectory is normally defined as understanding God in terms of what God is not (Papanikolaou 2011:358–359).

Fundamental to the Orthodox consensus was an affirmation of the authority of tradition as that which had been believed ‘everywhere, always, by all’ (the formulation of St Vincent of Lérins, AD 434). However, in focusing a particular attention on the communal character of the early transmission of ‘Jesus’ Tradition’, the Orthodox Church over-emphasises the control factor that was exercised by the primitive Christian community. For narratives about Jesus never began with Jesus; at best they began with eyewitnesses. Dunn argues that ‘the idea that we can get back to an objective historical reality, which we can wholly separate and disentangle from the disciples’ memories and then use as a check and control over the way the tradition was developed during the oral and earliest written transmission, is simply unrealistic’ (Dunn 2003:131). The Papias’s emphasis on the ‘living voices’ in his *Exposition of the Logia* (AD 109) assumes that the value of oral traditions depends on their derivation from still-living witnesses who are still themselves repeating their testimony. Therefore, ‘the need to account for the source became urgent as soon as no ancient author felt distanced by time to [*sic*] the events of interest’ (Byrskog 2000:252).

In this light, the problem of theological incongruence between two entities ‘Scripture’ and ‘Tradition’ remains insoluble as long as it is not expanded to understanding that ‘we are in process of moving too far from the time of the apostles to be able to watch over the purity of tradition, without a superior written authority’ (Cullmann 1953:44). Tilley has made a comprehensive study to demonstrate that certain beliefs and practices deemed ‘traditional’ by the church hierarchy are not found in the previous ages of the church in their present form or have no precedent at all: ‘If that which is passed on as a tradition has to be passed on “unchanged and uncorrupted” over long periods of time, then there are no concrete traditions that will pass the test’ (Tilley 2000:27). In relation to a possible consensus with Protestants and finding the ‘lowest common denominator’ between Orthodoxy and evangelicalism, Nassif assumes that consensus regarding ‘the core principles’ of that which constitutes Protestant evangelical identity

is possible, however, from the Orthodox perspective, evangelicalism is seen 'as deficient in the outworking of those commonly-held evangelical principles, particularly in the church's vision of the relation between Scripture and tradition, the sacraments, iconography, spirituality' (Nassif 2004:108).

5. Conclusion

The preceding analysis of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority can, with a high degree of plausibility, claim that such scripture-versus-tradition conflict is still vital and present amongst Eastern Orthodox and Evangelical Christians in Russia and Ukraine. The threefold deconstruction undertaken in this thesis (universality, antiquity, and consensus) presents a different spectrum of responses thematised and considered within a contemporary notion of Orthodox Tradition. Theoretical hypotheses of the research may be applicable and generalizable to any church structure or para-Christian organization in which dogmatic statements, mutual vision, team service and spiritual empowerment of followers shape respective group norms and serve as guiding principles for religious practices or innovations. Based on the research analysis, the conclusions are shaped and organised by three broad sets of considerations:

Firstly, the study of the theological epistemology of tradition is interdisciplinary and inter-confessional in nature. There is no pure Protestant or Orthodox 'theory of knowledge.' The correlation point for theological epistemology is that 'historically Christianity claimed to be and was received as *revealed truth*, not truth discovered via human insight or ingenuity' (Sproul 1997:11). In terms of authority, this revelation of God in Christ does not require human agents for support or a specific cultural environment for its approval. It points and maintains itself in sublime majesty of *Sola Scriptura*. Its authority is normative as well as causative, 'It fights for its own victory. It conquers human hearts for itself. It makes itself irresistible' (Van Den Belt 2008:269). The veracity of Eastern Orthodox theology is rather believed by the Orthodox existentially, as they interact within the framework of one and only 'living tradition' which is assumed to be the highest ground for authority in the Orthodox Church, including Unwritten (Oral) Tradition, Scripture, Writings of the Church Fathers, Great Councils, Canonical law, liturgy, etc. In the Eastern Christian view, theology, as we use the term today, is an 'intellectual contour of the revealed truth, a "noetic" testimony to it' (Florovsky 1979:17–18), resulting from man's communion with God through faith. In this way, Orthodox theology is the product of

the ascetic, mystical, liturgical and spiritual life of the Church (Hopko 1982:7–8) in which Orthodox Tradition is ‘the gateway to the theology of revelation’ (McGuckin 2011:90). According to the general postulate of contemporary theological epistemology, no Church’s teaching or tradition can monopolise Christian theology and present itself as ‘The Theology’. The historic Orthodox Tradition belongs to the Christian Church as a whole, not just to the Roman Catholic Church or to the Eastern Orthodox Church (Avis 2006: xiv). The noetic faculty itself is primarily supernatural (Logos as He is) and the second is natural (creative reasoning). This corresponds to a clear distinction between the Uncreated and the created, between God and creation. The acceptance of these limits as an obligatory component in the knowledge of God may help a theorizing mind to avoid all that over-simplification, absolutism and one-sided dogmatism by which both philosophy and theology have always been infected.

Secondly, a historical exploration of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority does not take a sufficient account of the legitimate antiquity of Orthodox tradition (*Predanie-Paradosis* concept) regarding its norm-generating and faith-keeping authority. The Orthodox emphasis on the historical continuity is rooted today not in the eternal authority of the gospel and its teaching, but, rather, in the authoritative logic of dominance, a self-protective ethnonationalism of sacred ‘canonical territories’ and in the narrow concept of geopolitical advance of the *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World) ideology. As a result of these inclinations, Eastern Orthodoxy confronted the neo-liberal globality and individualism, aiming to restore a traditional monopoly of the Orthodox Church Tradition as a conservative social force capable of preserving the sacred content of the Orthodox faith and practices. Remaining largely a peripheral denomination with respect to the main body of Christendom, the Orthodox Church has, through the centuries, been satisfied with a very limited theology of tradition and mentality of community insiders where the clerics could not speak of their gifts nor of anointing, but, rather, with Church Fathers creeds and Councils formulations. The contemporary Orthodox Church Tradition is often identified with rigid ecclesiastical structures and nationalistic agenda, being the very opposite of eclectically all-embracing vision of the first-century Apostolic Church. Although accepting a limited pluralism under new post-Soviet laws, the Moscow Patriarchate still requires a substantial imperial uniformity in which the culture of a respectful dialogue is not a priority.

Lastly, Orthodox Church Tradition, as a theological category, is undeniably diverse. The theoretical discourse of the potential

consensus within Orthodox Church Tradition demonstrates that at the heart of all discussions regarding authority of tradition described in the research lies a dichotomous nature of ongoing conflicts: scripture versus tradition, structure versus liminality, office versus charisma, institutions versus pilgrim people of faith, hegemonism versus a culture of dialogue, oppression versus persuasion, and so on. The presumption of truth within theological premises of Orthodox Church Tradition does not render the authoritative domain of the aforementioned tradition immune to questioning. A new dialectic of consensus requires a new paradigm shift from an oppressive to an enabling concept of authority based on the gospel foundation. If religious leaders of ancient Israel in the Old Testament exercised their spiritual authority in the name of Yahweh, who was the ultimate source of all power, Jesus Christ, contrary to popular assumptions of his days, spoke strongly to his disciples concerning a new pattern of authority, which intended to be a mutual loving service, rather than oppressive submission: 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant' (Matthew 20:25–26 NIV). He offered his followers not a hierarchical position, but a towel: 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45 NIV).

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The semantic field of the Hebrew word נֶפֶשׁ in the OT¹

Hui Er Yu and Johannes Malherbe

Abstract

The Hebrew anthropological term נֶפֶשׁ occurs 754 times in the Old Testament. It was rendered stereotypically as ψυχή in the LXX and later into English as ‘soul’. The later was viewed as a poor translation since it motivated Christians to develop a dichotomous conception of the human constitution. This has led to centuries-old controversy concerning the Hebraic conception of the person. Although the word נֶפֶשׁ is as hard to define as it is to translate, this article aims to determine its semantic field through a brief literature review of נֶפֶשׁ and its Greek equivalent ψυχή. The result indicates that the meanings of נֶפֶשׁ in the OT are more related to the physical aspects of human beings and that its translation as ‘soul’ calls for re-examination.

Keywords

נֶפֶשׁ, ψυχή, soul, anthropology, dichotomy

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1. Introduction

The word **שׁוּפָּ**, occurring 754 times in the MT³ of the OT, is ‘as hard to define as it is to translate’ (Jacob 1974, 9:617). For instance, KJV renders it variously as follows: ‘soul’ (475 times); ‘life’ (120 times); ‘person’ (26 times); a reflexive pronoun (20 times); ‘heart’ (16 times); ‘mind’ (15 times); ‘creature’ (ten times); the personal pronoun (nine times); ‘dead’ (five times); ‘body, dead body, pleasure’ (four times each); ‘desire, will’ (three times each) ‘man, thing, beast, appetite, ghost, lust’ (two times each); ‘breath’ (once), and so on. In 14 cases, KJV gives no English equivalents for **שׁוּפָּ** (Murtonen 1958:9–10). In the example of its lexical meaning, DCH regards the sense of **שׁוּפָּ** in Psalm 23:3 as belonging to the category of ‘soul, heart, mind’ (Clines 2001, 5:725), which contradicts its rendering as a ‘whole person’ in TDOT (Seebass 1998, 9:510). In fact, the DCH offers twelve⁴ different lexical meanings of **שׁוּפָּ**, the TDOT only six meanings.⁵

Such differences may result from the fact that lexicographers get their meanings from different existing sources, such as those found in grammar books and various translations (Silva 1994:137). This implies that lexical meaning is profoundly affected by the lexicographers’ choice of references (e.g. different versions of translations) and that correct translations are essential for compiling lexicons. Furthermore, the accuracy of translation is indispensable for correct interpretation of the Bible. For example, the translations of the Hebrew anthropological term **שׁוּפָּ**, rendered stereotypically as $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ in the LXX and later into English as ‘soul’, have been motivating Christians, influenced by Greek philosophy, to develop a dichotomous conception of the human constitution. This has led to centuries-old controversy concerning the Hebraic conception of the person (Murphy 2006:17). Murphy (ibid.:36) points out that ‘most of the dualism that has appeared to be biblical teaching has been a result of *poor translation*’ (italics added). Considering the *poor translation* of **שׁוּפָּ** as ‘soul’ already in the 16th century, Parkhurst (1778:408) argues,

שׁוּפָּ hath been supposed to signify the *spiritual part* of man, or what we commonly call his *soul*: I must for myself confess, that I can find no passage where it hath *undoubtedly* this meaning.

Briggs (1897:30) also argues that ‘soul in English usage at the present time conveys usually a very different meaning from **שׁוּפָּ** in Hebrew’. Brueggemann (1997:453) points out that it is ‘unfortunate that “living being” (**שׁוּפָּ**) is commonly rendered “soul”’.

3 The abbreviations in this study follow those in *The SBL handbook of style* 2014.

4 The meanings of **שׁוּפָּ** in DCH include: (1) palate, throat, gullet, (2) neck, (3) appetite, hunger, desire, wish, (4) soul, heart, mind, (5) breath, last breath, soul, (6) life, lives, eternal life, (7) being, creature(s), (8) person, individual, dead body, slave, (9) personal pronoun, reflexive pronoun (oneself), possessive pronoun (10) sustenance, (11) perfume, and (12) sepulchre, funerary monument (Clines 2001, 5:724–734).

5 The meanings of **שׁוּפָּ** in TDOT include: (1) throat, gullet, (2) desire, (3) vital self, reflexive pronoun, (4) individuated life, (5) living creature, person, and (6) the **שׁוּפָּ** of God (Seebass 1998, 9:497–517).

6 In Chinese Union Version (CUV), $\psi\text{q}\ddot{\text{u}}$ is rendered as ‘靈魂 *líng hún* (spirit-soul)’ 23 times or ‘靈 *líng* (spirit)’ four times. This is criticised by Watchman Nee (2006[1928]:28-29) who argues that ‘魂 *hún* (soul)’ is the only meaning of $\psi\text{q}\ddot{\text{u}}$. CUV is the most popular, authoritative and influential Bible version in contemporary Chinese Christian communities (Zhuāng 2010:41).

7 Green (2009, 5:359; 2008:32-33) notes that biblical studies and neuroscience are two fronts that query the traditional body-soul dualism. The former ‘almost unanimously supported a unitary account of the human person’ since the early 20th century. The latter, since the 1600s, had evidenced repeatedly ‘the close mutual interrelations of physical and psychological occurrences, documenting the neural correlates of the various attributes traditionally allocated to the soul’.

Chinese Christian scholars are not exempted from this kind of controversy. For example, Watchman Nee (1903–72), the most influential figure in the Chinese Christian community of the 20th century (Zēng 2011:161), misconstrues the principle of literal translation and thus maintains that $\psi\text{q}\ddot{\text{u}}$ as ‘魂 *hún* (soul)’⁶ is the only appropriate rendering. This is one of the reasons that leads to his teaching on tripartite anthropology (Nee 2006[1928]:47–48), which is a dominant perspective very much alive in the church in China today (Xú 2013:39). A good majority of Chinese Christians are directly or indirectly influenced by Nee’s theology (Lǐ 2004:309). In his two crucial works, *The Spiritual Man* and *The Release of the Spirit*, Nee asserts that Christians should subjugate the soul and the body so that the spirit can be released. This gives rise to the negative attitude towards this world among Chinese Christians and leads to extensive controversy among contemporary Chinese theologians (Zēng 2011:160, 162).

The foregoing cases verify Eugene A Nida’s argument (1952:65–66): if the Hebrew $\psi\text{q}\ddot{\text{u}}$ is consistently rendered as ‘soul’, it will ignore the literary or situational context. Diminishing the word’s wealth of referents (e.g. breath, life, mind, living thing, person, self) leads to inaccurate interpretation and misunderstanding.

Nowadays, the majority of biblical scholars agree that ‘at least the earlier Hebraic scriptures know nothing of body-soul dualism’ (Murphy 2006:17).⁷ This can be traced back to John Laidlaw’s proposition (1895:58) that ‘[t]he antithesis soul and body...is absent from the Old Testament’. H Wheeler Robinson (1926:69) also maintains that ‘the Hebrew conception of personality on its psychological side is distinctly that of a unity, not of a dualistic union of soul (or spirit) and body’. Three decades after Robinson writing, C Ryder Smith (1951:3) observed that ‘some recent psychologists seem to teach that the Hebrew was right in emphasizing the unity of man’. Owen (1956:167) notes that $\psi\text{q}\ddot{\text{u}}$ ‘has scarcely any of the connotations of the word “soul” in radical body–soul dualism’. In his interpretation of Genesis 2:7, Brueggemann (1997:453; see also Laurin 1961:132; Laidlaw 1895:53) notes that ‘[t]he articulation of “breathed on dust” in order to become a “living being” [הָיָה $\psi\text{q}\ddot{\text{u}}$] precludes any dualism’. Amos Hakhham (2003:29; see also Di Vito 1999:228) suggests that $\psi\text{q}\ddot{\text{u}}$ ‘always refers to the body and soul as a single unit’, rather than ‘soul’ only.

Given the significance of correct translation, this article conducts a brief literature review of $\psi\text{q}\ddot{\text{u}}$ in order to determine its semantic

field. The following sections are dedicated to fulfilling the purpose through (1) the discussion on etymological issues, (2) a brief survey of the etymological study of $\psi\text{נָּךְ}$, (3) the exploration of $\psi\text{נָּךְ}$ in the Hebrew OT, and (4) $\psi\text{נָּךְ}$ and its Greek equivalent $\psi\text{υ}\chi\eta$ in the LXX and the NT.

2. Etymological issues

Etymological study has played an important role in the determination of words' meaning in the Hebrew OT, especially when the OT contains no less than 1,300 *hapax legomena* and 'about 500 words that occur only twice out of a total vocabulary of about 8,000 words' (Silva 1994:42; see also Eng 2011:27; Carson 1996:33). But in the past decades many have pointed out the dangers of uncritically deriving meaning from etymology (Barr 1961, Ch. 6; Silva 1994, Ch. 1; Carson 1996:28–33). As Vendryes (2013[1925]:176) argues in his *Language: a linguistic introduction to history*:

Etymology...gives a false idea of the nature of a vocabulary for it is concerned only in showing how a vocabulary has been formed. Words are not used according to their historical value. The mind forgets—assuming that it ever knew—the semantic evolutions through which the words have passed. Words always have a *current* value, that is to say, limited to the moment when they are employed, and a *particular* value relative to the momentary use made of them.

Put simply, etymology is not a reliable or an appropriate approach in determining the meaning of a word (Carson 1996:32).⁸ This echoes Ferdinand de Saussure's arguments (1986:81):

The first thing which strikes one on studying linguistic facts is that the language user is unaware of their succession in time: he is dealing with a state. Hence the linguist who wishes to understand this state must rule out of consideration everything which brought that state about, and pay no attention to diachrony.⁹ Only by suppressing the past can he enter into the state of mind of the language user. The intervention of history can only distort his judgment.¹⁰

Silva (1994:42) points out that '[t]he relative value of [the] use of etymology varies inversely with the quantity of material available for the language'. That means, while lacking comparative material, the determination of the meaning of the *hapax legomena* in the OT

⁸ Though etymology is 'a clumsy tool' for discerning meaning, Carson (1996:33) suggests, it is critical in the diachronic study of words, in the study of cognate languages, and in the understanding of the meanings of *hapax legomena*, etc.

⁹ Of Saussure's influences upon the field of biblical studies, one is that he pioneers 'the distinction between 'diachrony' (the history of a term) and 'synchrony' (the current use of a term)' (Osborne 2006:87; see also Eng 2011:13). For Saussure (1986:90), the synchronic viewpoint has the priority to define a word's meaning. For full discussions on synchronic and diachronic linguistics, see Saussure 1986, part II and part III.

¹⁰ Osborne (2006:87) observes that 'Saussure did not deny the validity of etymology together; rather, he restricted it to its proper sphere, the history of words'.

heavily relies on etymological study even if ‘specification of the meaning of a word on the sole basis of etymology can never be more than an educated guess’ (Carson 1996:33). Since **נַפְשׁ** occurs 754 times in the MT, etymology has little value for discerning its meanings according to Silva noted above. In brief, the meanings of **נַפְשׁ** gleaned from etymological considerations are nothing but ‘an educated guess’, which call for re-examination.

Silva (1994:43) observes that OT scholars have spent ‘a remarkable amount of energy searching for cognates and proposing new meanings’. Thus, a brief survey of the etymological study on **נַפְשׁ** is helpful for understanding its divergent translations in various Bible versions and dictionaries.

3. A brief survey of the etymological study on **נַפְשׁ**

נַפְשׁ has many cognates in the Semitic languages, among which Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Arabic cast most light on Hebrew usage (Fredericks 1997, 3:133).

The corresponding Akkadian word for **נַפְשׁ** is *napištu*, which means (1) neck, throat, gullet, (2) life, (3) living being, self, (4) person, (5) living, livelihood, subsistence, (6) sustenance,¹¹ (7) slaves, domestic animals, (8) corpse, (9) breath, (10) any kind of opening, neckerchief, (11) capital case (cf. Tawil 2009:244–246; Black, George and Postgate 2000:239; Brotzman 1987:203–206).

In Ugaritic, the word *npš* is cognate to **נַפְשׁ**. It means (1) throat, (2) appetite, (3) person, people (collectively), (4) soul, (5) funerary monument, stela,¹² (6) offering (Gordon 1998:446; Brotzman 1987:206–207).

The Arabic equivalent for **נַפְשׁ** is *nas*, whose meanings comprise (1) soul, mind, (2) inclination, (3) life, (4) person, self (Waltke 1999:588).¹³

This short investigation of cognates of **נַפְשׁ** in the Semitic languages provides one of the reasons why **נַפְשׁ** is sometimes rendered so differently in various Bible versions or dictionaries. The composition of the Bible versions and dictionaries is probably influenced by the extent to which etymology is applied. This seems to account for the divergence in the meaning of **נַפְשׁ** between TDOT and DCH (see footnote 1, 2). For example, TDOT does not include the sense of **נַפְשׁ** as sustenance, perfume, funerary monument; but DCH does.

11 According to his observation on the usage of the Akkadian term *napištu* as sustenance, Hurowitz (1997:52) maintains that **נַפְשׁ** in Isa 58:10 has the same sense. However, as discussed above, etymological studies is not an appropriate approach in determining a word’s meaning, especially for a word with many occurrences, such as **נַפְשׁ**.

12 **נַפְשׁ** as a funerary monument is not a biblical usage. It seems to originate in some pagan cult and the whole idea is foreign to Judaism. ‘In post-biblical times it was mentioned only three times in the Mishna’ (Gottlieb 1976:80).

13 Both Ugaritic *npš* and Akkadian *napištu* have the meaning ‘throat’. But this is not the case in Arabic *nas* (Waltke 1999:588).

As mentioned above, while etymological considerations can be of interest, they often represent nothing more than ‘an educated guess’. Thus, a better way to find out what **נְפֻשׁ** means in the Hebrew OT is to examine its usage in the Hebrew OT (Tomas 1986:3). This semantic approach is the enterprise to which the present study now turns.

4. **נְפֻשׁ** in the Hebrew OT

4.1 Introduction

The Hebrew word **נְפֻשׁ** is a key term in the OT. **נְפֻשׁ** is probably ‘a primitive noun that does not derive from a verbal root’ (Seebass 1998, 9:498).¹⁴ It is feminine; Zimmerli (1979:289) regards the masculine plural **נְפֻשִׁים** in Ezekiel 13:20 as an obvious mistake. In the OT text, this word has various meanings, including ‘breath, ‘living creature’, ‘person’, ‘life’, ‘appetite’, ‘corpse’. Though it can be utilised to refer to animals or God, over 700 of its appearances refer to man (Tomas 1986:1). As noted above, ‘soul’ is an unfortunate, poor translation of **נְפֻשׁ**. Then, what does **נְפֻשׁ** mean in the OT?

4.2 **נְפֻשׁ** as breath

The basic, concrete meaning of **נְפֻשׁ** in the OT is probably ‘breath’¹⁵ (Waltke 1999:588; Fredericks 1997, 3:133). While interpreting **נְפֻשׁ**, ‘the Hebraic trait of thinking concretely must be kept foremost in mind’ (Warne 1995:62). Instead of abstract soul, Wolff (1974:10) notes that **נְפֻשׁ** is ‘designed to be seen together with the whole form of man, and especially with his breath’. For example, Genesis 35:18 describes Rachel’s physical death right after giving birth to a son with great difficulty as ‘the going out of the **נְפֻשׁ**, that is, the breath’ (Brotzman 1987:146). In 1 Kings 17:21–22, after Elijah’s prayer to raise the widow’s son, the child’s **נְפֻשׁ** that is, breath, returned upon his inward parts, and he lived (Robinson 1921:80). Brotzman (1987:148) connects these two verses and concludes that ‘death is described as the “going out of the breath” while the restoration of life is described as “the returning of the breath”’. The idea is unambiguously that of ‘the breath as animating the physical organs of the body’ (Robinson 1921:80). Conversely, its departure brings death (Warne 1995:63).

The connection between **נְפֻשׁ** and breath is also found in Genesis 2:7, where the Lord breathed (**נָפַח**) into Adam’s nostrils the breath (**נְשָׁמָה**) of life;¹⁶ and he became a living person/being (**נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה**)

14 The verb **נָפַח** is probably a denominative from the substantive (Brown, Driver and Briggs 2000:661; Waltke 1999:588; Westermann 1997:743). It appears only three times in the OT (Exod 23:12; 31:17; 2 Sam 16:14), ‘significantly always in the reflexive *niphāl* with the secondary meaning of “rest, relaxation”’ (Gottlieb 1976:71). HALOT (Koehler, Baumgartner and Stamm 1994-2000:711) has ‘to breathe freely, to recover’.

15 Some maintain that the concrete meanings of **נְפֻשׁ** related to ‘breath’ includes ‘throat’ or ‘neck’ (or even ‘gullet’) (Bruckner 2005:10; Waltke 1999:588; Seebass 1998, 9:504; Westermann 1997:744; Warne 1995:62, 72; Brotzman 1988:405; 1987, Ch. 9; Peacock 1976:216-217; Wolff 1974:11-15; Johnson 1964:4; etc.). However, Smith (1951:8 n. 1) argues, these renderings are based on ‘rather remote Semitic languages’ (an etymological fallacy as noted above) and demonstrate unnatural translations of **נְפֻשׁ** in Isa 5:14; Jonah 2:5-7; Ps 69:1; etc. In these texts, as elsewhere, the LXX takes **נְפֻשׁ**; it never translates **נְפֻשׁ** as ‘neck’ or ‘throat’ (ibid.). For more discussions on the objection of the translations of **נְפֻשׁ** as ‘neck’ or ‘throat’, see Gottlieb 1976:73; Jacob 1974, 9:618; Seligson 1951:58ff; etc.

16 Based on Job 27:3; 33:4, Laurin (1961:132) asserts that the breath (**נְשָׁמָה**) of life here is identical to God’s spirit (**רוּחַ**). For further discussions, see footnote 14.

17 Hamilton (1990:158-159) states that both *נְשָׁמָה* (25 times in the OT) and *רוּחַ* (ca. 400 times in the OT) mean ‘breath’. The former is applied only to God and to humanity; the latter is applied to God, humanity, animals, and even false gods. The reason why Gen 2:7 uses the less popular *נְשָׁמָה* for breath is because ‘it is man, and man alone, who is the recipient of the divine breath’ (ibid.). (On the contrary, there are scholars who note that *נְשָׁמָה* can be ascribed to animals too, such as Seligson 1951:73, Stacey 1956:90).

18 Porter (1908:252) maintains that the divine breath is ‘individualised... when the time comes for [a person] to be raised from the dead, God will give back the same *נְשָׁמָה* to the same body’, and ‘the same person will live again’.

19 Delimited by its connection with a body, *נְשָׁמָה* is ‘never used of a disembodied spirit or being after death; the inhabitants of Sheol are never called “souls”’ (Laurin 1961:132).

20 *נֶפֶשׁ* as person ‘gives the term priority in the anthropological vocabulary, for the same cannot be said of either spirit, heart, or flesh’ (Jacob 1974, 9:620).

(Waltke 1999:588). The association of *נְשָׁמָה*¹⁷ with *נְפֻשׁ* here demonstrates the human being’s distinctive status. Humanity is ‘unique and superior to the animal creation in that his existence is the result of a divine animation’ (Warne 1995:65). On the contrary, the withdrawal of *נְשָׁמָה* causes death. At death, the human being taken out of the earth goes back to earth again (Gen 3:19), but the divine breath that animates and preserves a person’s body during his/her earthly life ‘returns to the heavenly regions’ (Porter 1908:212, 251).¹⁸ Indeed, everything related to humanity is ‘earthly and material’, even if it is created by God himself. And the reality is that humanity’s existence as a living person is due to God’s ‘infusion of the breath of life’ (Wolff 1974:60).

The comparison of *נְפֻשׁ* and *נְשָׁמָה* warrants further investigation here. One might say that *נְפֻשׁ* is employed ‘to define the animation of the human as a living person’ as explored below; while *נְשָׁמָה* is employed ‘to define more precisely a human person’s dependency upon God for his or her life’ (Warne 1995:64; see also Stacey 1956:90). Jacob (1974, 9:618) observes that *נְפֻשׁ* always includes *נְשָׁמָה* but is not limited to it. Finally, a human being does not have *נְפֻשׁ*, he is *נְפֻשׁ* (Wolff 1974:10); whereas, a human being is not *נְשָׁמָה*, but has it (Smith 1951:6).

Put simply, ‘breath’ is the basic, concrete meaning of *נְפֻשׁ* in the OT.

4.3 *נְפֻשׁ* as living creature, person

Given the fact that the cessation of breathing means the end of life (Jacob 1974, 9:618), *נְפֻשׁ*, then, does not designate ‘an immaterial principle within the human person, which could have its own independent existence apart from the person’ (Warne 1995:62). Rather, *נְפֻשׁ* is ‘an integral part of the human organism, and [is] perceived as inseparable from the concretely existing human person’ (ibid.:62–63).¹⁹ Interpreted in these terms, *נְפֻשׁ* can be related to ‘living creature, person’²⁰ (Seebass 1998, 9:515) that lives by breathing (Parkhurst 1778:408).

The *locus classicus* of this use of *נְפֻשׁ* is probably Genesis 2:7, where the combination of the material (the dust of the ground) and the immaterial (the *נְשָׁמָה* ‘breath’ of life from God) makes the man become a living *נְפֻשׁ*. That means, ‘man is, in his essential nature, a *נְפֻשׁ*, a person, an individual’ (Brotzman 1987:27). This gender-inclusive usage is very suitable for legal texts and lists of persons (Seebass 1998, 9:515). Two examples of the former (legal texts) are Leviticus 17:10, where ‘Every man...who eats any blood...I will set my face against the *נְפֻשׁ* [person] that eats blood’, and Leviticus

23:30, where ‘Every **שָׂרָף** [person] who does any work on this same day, that **שָׂרָף** [person] I will destroy from among his people’ (Wolff 1974:21). Examples of the latter (lists of persons) include Exodus 12:4: ‘according to the number of **אֲשָׁרָף** [persons]’ and Jeremiah 52:29: ‘in the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar, 832 **שָׂרָף** [people] from Jerusalem’ (Westermann 1997:755).

The preceding examples demonstrate that **שָׂרָף** can be used to designate a single person (Lev 17:10; 23:30), a plural (Exod 12:4),²¹ or ‘a collective expression for a whole group of individuals’ (Jer 52:29; Wolff 1974:21). One more instance of the collective use of **שָׂרָף** is found in Genesis 12:5, where the people Abram took with him to Canaan are called [**שָׂרָףִים**]. Wolff observes (ibid.): ‘This collective use of **שָׂרָף** is shown very clearly where numbers are mentioned: the offspring of Leah number 33 **שָׂרָף** (Gen 46:15), of Zilpah 16 **שָׂרָף** (v.18), of Rachel 14 **שָׂרָף** (v. 22) and of Bilhah 7 **שָׂרָף** (v.25); all the offspring of Jacob who came to Egypt were 66 (v. 26) or 70 **שָׂרָף** (v. 27).’

In a word, **שָׂרָף**, along with its meaning ‘breath’, means ‘living creature, person’ and can be used as singular, plural, or collective.

4.4 **שָׂרָף** as vital self

After interpreting **שָׂרָף** as ‘living creature, person’, it is obviously easy for the emphasis to shift to more abstract concepts such as ‘vital self’ (Seebass 1998, 9:510; Von Rad 2001, 1:153) in this section and ‘life’ in the following section. Seebass (1998, 9:512; Westermann 1997:752) points out that a crucial distinction between **שָׂרָף** as vital self and **שָׂרָף** as life resides in the fact that **שָׂרָף** is usually the subject in the former, while it usually is the object in the latter.

Seebass (ibid.:510) maintains that many texts show that ‘humans have a relationship with themselves as individuals; this is unmistakably the case when **שָׂרָף** denotes the vital self’. Seebass’s argument refers to the pronominal use of **שָׂרָף**, which is found in both prose and poetry. The regular pronominal use of **שָׂרָף** in prose is found in Genesis 12:13, where Abram says to Sarai: ‘Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you and my **שָׂרָף** [i.e. I] may live on account of you’ (Brotzman 1988:403). In poetry, **שָׂרָף** with a personal suffix (e.g. ‘my **שָׂרָף**’ or ‘your **שָׂרָף**’) is usually employed to parallel a simple pronoun (ibid.), or that involved in the inflection of the verb, and so on. (Johnson 1964:16). For example, Job 30:25 reads:

²¹ **שָׂרָף** in its plural form only occurs 52 times in the OT. Ezek 13:18-20 comprises a number of the plural forms of **שָׂרָף**, and in some cases the notion clearly expressed is ‘persons’ or ‘individuals’ (Brotzman 1988:402).

Have I not wept for him who was having a hard time?

Did not my **אני** [I myself] grieve for the poor? (ibid.)

Johnson (1964:18; cf. Brotzman 1988:403) calls this a '*pathetic periphrasis*' (italics added), asserting that 'the use of this term as a substitute for the personal pronoun often betrays a certain intensity of feelings' (ibid.). Johnson (ibid.) further notes in regard to Isaac's blessing of his son in Genesis 27:4, 19, 25, 31: 'Thus, when [**אני**] is used of the subject of the action in bestowing a blessing, it appears to spring from and certainly serves to accentuate the view that the speaker needs to put all his being into what he says, if he is to make his words effective.'

Samson's sacrificing himself to destroy his enemies is another example (ibid.).

The rendering of the English Version (i.e. 'Let me [**אני**] die with the Philistines' [Judg 16:30]) is far from doing justice to the emotional content of the original, and one is forced to admit that the Hebrew really defies anything like a satisfactory translation.

Following Johnson's accent on the intensity of feelings, Goldingay (2007:257) interprets **אני** along with a personal suffix 'as a whole being, and specifically a being with longings'. Thus, Psalm 63:1 may be rendered as 'God, you are my God, I search for you; *my whole being* [**אני**] thirsts for you'; verse 5 as 'As with a rich feast *my whole person* [**אני**] is full...'; verse 8 as '*My whole person* [**אני**] has stuck to you; your right hand has upheld me' (ibid.:254; emphases added). Again, the intensity of feelings and emotions can be grasped in the texts where the **אני** is the precise subject of the psalms of lamentation; it is frightened (6:3), it despairs and is disquieted (42:5f., 11; 43:5), it feels itself weak and despondent (Jonah 2:7), it is exhausted and feels defenseless (Jer 4:31), it is afflicted (Ps 31:7; cf. Gen 42:21) and suffers misery (Isa 53:11). The **אני** is often described as being bitter (**מר**), that is to say embittered through childlessness (1 Sam 1:10), troubled because of illness (2 Kgs 4:27), enraged because it has been injured (Judg 18:25; 2 Sam 17:8) (Wolff 1974:17).

Moreover, **אני** rejoices (Isa 61:10) and loves (Song 1:7) (Briggs 1897:27). For Seebass (1998, 9:511), **אני** as vital self 'makes expressions denoting repulsion appear even more vivid'. For instance, it abhors (Lev 26:11), detests (Num 21:5), and loathes (Job 10:1).

As to the reflexive pronominal use²² of **אני**, an interesting example is seen in Leviticus 11:43–44, which 'deals with ritual uncleanness,

²² Biblical scholars do not reach a consensus in terms of the pronominal use of **אני**. For Briggs (1897:21-22), there are 53 texts where **אני** is used as a reflexive pronoun and 70 texts where **אני** is used as a personal pronoun, i.e. 123 in all. Becker (1942:117 in Johnson 1964:15 n.3) locates a total of 135. While Robinson (1926:16) points out that there are 223 in total. Johnson (1964:15 n. 3) comments that there exist difficulties in making a precise analysis on this issue.

and this uncleanness is expressed in terms of reflexive action' (Brotzman 1988:403). In Hebrew, reflexive action is expressed either with Hithpael stems (אֲלֵא תִטְמְאוּ בָהֶם 'Do not make yourselves unclean by means of them' (v. 43) and הִתְקַדְּשׁוּ 'consecrate yourselves' (v. 44)) or with Piel stems plus 'your שְׁנֵי (plural)' (אֲלֵא תִשְׁחַדְּשׁוּ אֶת־שְׁנֵיכֶם 'Do not defile yourselves' (v. 43) and אֲלֵא תִטְמְאוּ 'Do not make yourselves unclean' (v. 44)) (cf. Runge, Westbury, and Lyle 2014, Lev 11:43–44; Brotzman 1988:403).

Briefly, the pronominal use of שְׁנֵי both in prose and poetry manifests שְׁנֵי as vital self. Indeed, a person does not *have* a vital self but *is* a vital self (cf. Köhler 1957:142).

This study will now turn to a discussion of שְׁנֵי denoting God's vital self.

As has been seen, over 700 out of 745 appearances of שְׁנֵי in the OT are related to humanity, that 'aspires to life and is therefore living (which also makes [humans] comparable with the animal)' (Wolff 1974:25). It is rarely used to refer to God. This is because God does not have the bodily, physical appetites and cravings common to humans,²³ nor is his life restricted by death (Waltke 1999:591; see also Marter 1964:104). Thus, one can find that substantial strata of the OT avoid referring to the שְׁנֵי of God, such as 'the older strata of the Pentateuch, up to and including Deuteronomy' (Wolff 1974:25). Merely 21 occurrences can be seen in later language, mainly prophetic and poetic (ibid.:25, 232, n. II.6).

In some passages, שְׁנֵי is used of God in conveying 'forcefully his passionate disinclination or inclination toward someone' (Waltke 1999:591). More frequently, God's שְׁנֵי is employed as the subject of the act to depict God's aversion to his disobedient people with intensity and passion (Westermann 1997:756; cf. Harvey 1973:171). For example, Jeremiah 6:8 reads, 'be warned, O Jerusalem, lest my [שְׁנֵי] be estranged from you'; Jeremiah 5:9, 29; 9:8 report, 'should my [שְׁנֵי] not take vengeance on such a people?' (Westermann 1997:756). But as for a positive reading, Westermann (ibid.:757) notes that 'the positive counterpart occurs only rarely with שְׁנֵי as the subject'. For example, Isaiah 42:1 reads 'in whom my [שְׁנֵי] is well pleased'. Jeremiah 12:7 has 'I will give the one I [שְׁנֵי] love into the hands of her enemies' (Wolff 1974:25). In other cases, שְׁנֵי is used as God's unfettered desire in Job 23:13, or appears merely as a reflexive pronoun, such as Amos 6:8; Jeremiah 51:14, where God swears by himself (ibid.; Seebass 1998, 9:516).

²³ Marter (1964:104) writes, the reason why physical appetites were never attributed to God is because 'the pagan neighbors of Israel consistently attributed the grossest bodily appetites to their gods'.

In conclusion, Marter (1964:101) notes that '[d]oubtless these passages may be considered as examples of anthropomorphism, but if so they emphatically illustrate that in the Hebrew mind the identification of **חַיָּה** with the human individual was so complete that the Hebrews could even attribute [**חַיָּה**] to God as an individual'.

4.5 **חַיָּה** as life

In more than 200 instances the word **חַיָּה** means 'life' (Brotzman 1987:45). Seebass (1998, 9:512) points out that 'the word denotes not life in general but life instantiated in individuals, animal or human'. These uses can be relegated into two categories: **חַיָּה** as individual life (ibid.) and **חַיָּה** related to blood (Brotzman 1987:45).

4.5.1 **חַיָּה** as individual life

Due to the many appearances of **חַיָּה** in this sub-category, grouping its main uses according to certain common features is helpful in understanding its meaning as 'life'. In such usage, **חַיָּה** is usually the object in sentences as noted earlier. First of all, **חַיָּה** is related to 'threats to life' (Seebass 1998, 9:513; Westermann 1997:753; Brotzman 1987:45). The first instance is the use of **חַיָּה** 'life' as the direct object of **בָּקַשׁ** 'seek', i.e. 'to seek the life of someone' (ibid.). One of the 18 texts (Logos bible software, word study **חַיָּה**) that represent this usage is Exodus 4:19, where 'the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead"' (NASB1995). Another example is the use of **חַיָּה** as the object of **לָקַח** 'take'. Ezekiel 33:6 reads that the sword comes and takes life from them, i.e. the sword kills them (Brotzman 1987:48); both Elijah (1 Kgs 19:4) and Jonah (Jonah 4:3) request the Lord to take their life from them (ibid.).

Secondly, **חַיָּה** as life occurs in the *talion* formula of '**חַיָּה** for **חַיָּה**' (Waltke 1999:590; Seebass 1998, 9:513; Westermann 1997:753; Brotzman 1987:48–49). The earliest version of this use is probably Exodus 21:23 (Stuart 2006, 2:492; Seebass 1998, 9:513), 'But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life [**חַיָּה** for **חַיָּה**]'. Though ransom is permitted in cases of accidental killing of the **חַיָּה**, it is unambiguously prohibited in cases of murder (Num 35:31; Seebass 1998, 9:513). In Deuteronomy 19:21, the principle of '**חַיָּה** for **חַיָּה**' applies in cases of false witness as well. Moreover, 1 Kings 19:2 'has Jezebel say that she will make Elijah's life like that of one of the prophets of Baal: life for life' (ibid.). The collocation '**חַיָּה** for **חַיָּה**' is even employed in the OT once to refer to the life of animals:

‘Anyone who takes the life of someone’s animal must make restitution—life for life’ (Lev 24:18; Brotzman 1987:50).

Thirdly, **נַפְשׁ** is related to risks ‘in battle or in other, more general, circumstances’ (ibid.:61). An instance of this usage is found in 2 Samuel 23:17 (see also 1 Chr 11:19), where David was unwilling to drink water brought by his followers at the risk of their lives (Seebass 1998, 9:512). Similarly, Judges 9:17 reports that Gideon cast his **נַפְשׁ** in the battle, i.e. he ‘exposed his life to the danger of fighting for the sake of Israel’ (Brotzman 1987:61–62). Even more drastic is the very archaic, poetic composition in Judges 5:18, where Zebulun and Naphtali had fought valiantly and well; the former is especially depicted as a people who risked their lives (**נַפְשׁ**) to the point of death (ibid.:61; Seebass 1998, 9:512).

Fourthly, many passages with **נַפְשׁ** have to do with ‘the deliverance of life’ (Westermann 1997:752; see also Waltke 1999:590; Seebass 1998, 9:512). Almost all the verbs within this semantic domain have **נַפְשׁ** as object. For example, with **נָצַל**, ‘and deliver our lives from death’ (Josh 2:13; Isa 44:20); with **מָלַט**, ‘if you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be put to death’ (1 Sam 19:11); with **חָלַץ**, ‘rescue my life’ (Ps 6:5); with **יָשַׁע**, ‘he will save the lives of the needy’ (Ps 72:13; Waltke 1999:590). Finally, In Psalm 49:15, the poet is confident that God will **פָּדָה** ‘redeem’ his life out of the grave (ibid.).

In sum, **נַפְשׁ** as ‘life’ refers not to life in general, but to life in individuals, with seemingly more emphasis on physical life.

4.5.2 **נַפְשׁ** related to blood

Genesis 9:4, Leviticus 17:11, 14 and Deuteronomy 12:23 are ritual texts which ‘most clearly illustrate the connection between **נַפְשׁ** and blood’ (Jacob 1974, 9:619). In these texts **נַפְשׁ** ‘has nothing whatever to do with a breath-soul or a blood-soul;²⁴ it simply denotes the vital force’ (ibid.). Just as Seligson (1951:28) notes, it is a common conception that humanity ‘at an early stage of culture identified blood with the vital force’, as represented in the OT. In the same vein, Johnson (1964:22) views vitality as the defining characteristic of **נַפְשׁ**.

Pedersen (1926, 1:171–176) goes further to suggest that in the OT each body part, including blood, represents a ‘principal denomination’ of the vital life, or **נַפְשׁ**, which manifests itself in and through various body organs. For Laurin (1961:132), this is ‘simply the principle of synecdoche’,²⁵ given that **נַפְשׁ** is the individual in his/her totality. Thus, the OT does not understand **נַפְשׁ** as being

24 The **נַפְשׁ** as not a breath-soul or a blood-soul means that it is not perceived as a ‘separate, distinct “part” of the person’ (Warne 1995:69).

25 cf. Johnson 1964:37, 69.

equated with the blood, but perceives the vital life-force as being manifested through various physical parts, such as blood in this case (Warne 1995:69–70).

Finally, Jacob’s observation (1974, 9:619) on the relation between **נְפֶשׁ**, blood and breath is worth noting: ‘The relation between **נְפֶשׁ** and blood is probably along other lines which are independent of the relation between **נְפֶשׁ** and breath. Basic to both, however, is the idea of the body as a living organism. When breath and blood leave the body, then every form of life disappears.’

4.6 **נְפֶשׁ** as desire, appetite

The meaning of **נְפֶשׁ** can readily be figuratively extended from the life principle to refer to one’s desire or appetite. The physical desire ranges ‘from the sexual drive of a wild donkey in heat (Jer 2:24), to the physical appetite (Prov 23:2; Eccl 6:7)’ (Fredericks 1997, 3:133). Thus Jeremiah 2:24 reports, ‘a wild donkey accustomed to the desert, sniffing the wind in her craving [**נְפֶשׁ** **תִּבְאֶנָּה**]²⁶ —in her heat who can restrain her?’

In other cases, **נְפֶשׁ** signifies the desire for food: ‘you may eat grapes according to your appetite [**נְפֶשׁ**], until you are satisfied’ (Deut 23:24; cf. Psalm 78:18; Waltke 1999:588). Isaiah 56:11 reads, ‘They are dogs with mighty appetites [**נְפֶשׁ**]; they never have enough’ (Brown et al. 2000:660). Proverbs 12:10 states that a righteous man is one who knows the **נְפֶשׁ** of his beast, i.e. he is ‘a person who provides for his animal’s need for food and drink’ (Brotzman 1988:401).

4.7 **נְפֶשׁ** as corpse, body

As has been discussed earlier, **נְפֶשׁ** refers to vitality. Thus, **נְפֶשׁ** as a deceased or a corpse, for Westermann (1997:756), is difficult to explain. He argues: ‘The usage probably derives from the general meaning ‘person’; one could regard this designation as a euphemism²⁷ designed to avoid direct reference to the corpse (ibid.).’

However, for Wolff (1974:22), the shift of meaning of **נְפֶשׁ** from vitality to corpse is understandable. He argues: ‘The semantic element ‘vitality’, which also applies to the animal, has largely contributed to the fact that **נְפֶשׁ** can be a term for the person and the enumerable individuals, from which, in extreme cases, the meaning ‘corpse’ follows (ibid.:25).’

Commenting on Ezekiel 13:19, Wolff (ibid.:22) further notes that ‘Ez. 13:19 distinguishes **נְפֶשׁ** who ought not to die from those who

26 Johnson (1964:13) asserts that the frequent association of **נְפֶשׁ** with **הָאֵשׁ** can express ‘a wide range of activity from the simple desire for food...to the worshipper’s longing for fellowship with God’.

27 For Westermann (1997:756; cf. Seligson 1951:78ff.), semantic polarization (a feature of the Semitic languages) proposed by Johnson (1964:22) is not a satisfactory explanation for the usage of **נְפֶשׁ** as corpse.

ought not to live...This statement suggests a detachment of the concept *שָׁרֵפֶת* from the concept of life; stress lies on the individual being as such. This makes the extreme possibility of speaking of a *מֵת שָׁרֵפֶת* (Num 6:6) comprehensible’.

The use of *שָׁרֵפֶת* to denote a corpse only appears in 12 texts²⁸ in the OT, and is confined to the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Haggai (Brotzman 1987:131). These texts are related to ‘a series of legal ordinances concerned with pollution through contact with a corpse’ (Westermann 1997:756). For example, according to Numbers 6:6, the Nazirite must not go near ‘a person who has died—a dead individual, a corpse’ (Wolff 1974:22). Here the author of Numbers ‘is not thinking of a ‘dead soul’, or of a ‘slain life’, but simply of...a corpse’ (ibid.), a dead body (*מֵת שָׁרֵפֶת*) (NIV2011; ESV). In the combination of *מֵת שָׁרֵפֶת*, *שָׁרֵפֶת* is understood as ‘body’. Wolff (ibid.) goes further to accentuate that even without the addition of *מֵת*, *שָׁרֵפֶת* can still mean the corpse of a human individual in certain cases, such as Numbers 5:2; 6:11.

4.8 Conclusion

The investigation in this section has shown that *שָׁרֵפֶת* can have the following possible meanings: (1) breath, (2) living creature, person, (3) vital self (pronominal use, the whole being/person), (4) life, (5) desire, appetite, (6) corpse, body.

It has also shown that the meanings of *שָׁרֵפֶת* in the OT are more related to the physical aspects of human beings (Waltke 1999:591).²⁹

5. *שָׁרֵפֶת* and its Greek equivalent *ψυχή* in the LXX and the NT

5.1 Introduction

Among the anthropological terms, *ψυχή* has been the centre of controversies since the beginning of the early church (Jewett 1971:334). To make things worse, OT scholars with great unanimity view the rendering of *שָׁרֵפֶת* with *ψυχή* as ‘insufficient or even misleading’ because of its introducing the ‘Greek doctrine of the soul’ or Greek spiritualism or dualism (Westermann 1997:759). However, Bratsiotis (ibid.) maintains that there is ‘an astonishing correspondence’ between the Hebrew word *שָׁרֵפֶת* and the Greek word *ψυχή* if one can commence with the pre-Platonic usage of *ψυχή*.³⁰ If this is the case, the semantic range and usage of *שָׁרֵפֶת* in the OT could be further illuminated by its Greek equivalent *ψυχή*. In what

28 The occurrences are as follows: *שָׁרֵפֶת* or *שָׂרֵפֶת*: Lev 19:28; 21:1; 22:4; Num 5:2; 6:11; 9:6,7,10; 19:13; Hag 2:13; *מֵת שָׁרֵפֶת*: Lev 21:11; Num 6:6 (Brotzman 1987, Ch. 8).

29 This is not to say that ‘the OT presents man as physical only’ (Waltke 1999:591). There are other OT ideas conveying the psychological dimension of humans, such as ‘the “spirit” of man’, ‘the heart [לֵב] of man’, humans in the image of God, and a human’s relation to God (ibid.).

30 Bratsiotis (cited in Westermann 1997:759) suggests, ‘breath’ is the basic meaning of *ψυχή*, which also means: life, person, the seat of desire and emotions, the centre of religious expression, etc.

follows the researcher examines the use of $\psi\chi\eta$ in the LXX and the NT respectively.

5.2 The use of $\psi\chi\eta$ in the LXX

According to Lys (1966:186–187), out of 754 occurrences with $\psi\chi\eta$ in the OT, 680 are rendered as $\psi\chi\eta$ in the LXX. Though the stereotyped rendering of $\psi\chi\eta$ in the LXX fails to provide a significant clue for the understanding of this term, Lys finds that the more frequent use of the plural in the LXX denotes the tendency to individualise, that can be observed elsewhere in the LXX. He writes:

It is clear from this that the LXX has a tendency to consider the ‘soul [$\psi\chi\eta$ ’] in a more individualistic way than does the Hebrew text; the latter was still under the influence of the collective soul; the LXX is more respectful of the reality of each being as an individual person to be distinguished from another (ibid.:188).

For Lys (ibid.:194–202), more crucial clues for understanding the various senses of $\psi\chi\eta$ can be found through the investigation of its translations with something other than $\psi\chi\eta$. He observes the LXX does not utilise any other word with such regularity. The divergent Greek renderings of $\psi\chi\eta$, when explained in terms of the context, remain within the range of senses that $\psi\chi\eta$ has in the OT, with ‘person’ and a pronoun (‘self’) outnumbering all the other renderings.

It is also important to note that the LXX uses $\psi\chi\eta$ 62 times for words other than $\psi\chi\eta$, such as for $\gamma\beta\eta$ ‘belly’ (ibid.:207–216). For Lys (ibid.:216), this interesting phenomenon shows that ‘the LXX... did not understand $\psi\chi\eta$ in a Platonic way at all’.

Commenting on the preceding investigations, Lys (ibid.:227) writes: ‘[I]t is obvious that where the LXX avoids translating $\psi\chi\eta$ by $\psi\chi\eta$, it is not in order to reserve $\psi\chi\eta$ for a dualistic meaning, since elsewhere $\psi\chi\eta$ follows the various Hebrew meanings of $\psi\chi\eta$ (even when $\psi\chi\eta$ is absent). The LXX never goes in the direction in which ‘soul’ would be understood as opposite to ‘body’ (as in Platonic dualism).’

In sum, the LXX employs $\psi\chi\eta$ in much the same way as the Hebrew uses $\psi\chi\eta$. The Greek rendering of the Hebrew term appears to ‘carefully avoid dualism and is an excellent, faithful understanding and interpretation of $\psi\chi\eta$ ’ (ibid.:228).

5.3 The use of ψυχή in the NT

In investigating ψυχή in the NT, the first fact to notice is the surprising infrequency of this term, especially when compared to other anthropological terms in the NT. For example, in the MT, נַפְשׁ (754 times) is roughly twice as common as נִיָּר, but in Paul the corresponding word ψυχή appears merely 13 times, while πνεῦμα appears 146 times (Stacey 1955:274). Despite his rare use of ψυχή, Paul's anthropology has been misunderstood as dichotomy (body and soul) or trichotomy (body, soul and spirit), which has prevailed in Christian traditional interpretation. However, new criteria for evaluating Paul proposed by Lüdermann in the late 19th century became determinative for doing justice to Pauline anthropology (Warne 1995:157). For example, Lüdermann (in Jewett 1971:336) interprets ψυχή as that which 'enlivens the outer person', and which is 'intimately connected' with the physical dimension of human. He further states: 'The word ψυχή always appears...in a connexion which shows the human being in a situation of inferiority, and is not to be brought into agreement with the all-embracing and loftier idea of ψυχή found elsewhere in the classical and Hellenistic usage' (Lüdermann in Stacey 1956:125; 1955:276).³¹

Since Lüdermann, the concept of ψυχή has been understood as similar to the Hebrew term נַפְשׁ, and 'an interpretation of Pauline anthropology in Hebraic terms has become much more common' (Warne 1995:157–158).

Then, how is the term ψυχή employed by Paul and other NT authors? To this question the present study now turns. Of the 103 occurrences of ψυχή in the NT, none is found in Galatians, Philemon, 2 Thessalonians, the Pastorals, or 2 John. ψυχή is seen relatively frequently in the Synoptics and Acts (53 times). The statistics prove 'no particular preference by any one NT author' (Sand 1990, 3:501).

A quick review of the usage of ψυχή in the NT is conducted according to the following groupings: (1) Paul and the deutero-Pauline writings,³² (2) the Synoptics and Acts, (3) the Johannine corpus, and (4) other writings (ibid.:500).

5.3.1 ψυχή in Paul and the deutero-Pauline writings

ψυχή in Paul and the deutero-Pauline writings is used rarely (13 times) in comparison with the OT as noted above. In the few texts where it occurs, Paul follows 'the Hebraic conception of man³³ as an intrinsic unity, with a diversity of aspects' (Stacey 1955:276).

31 In the same vein, Hicks (2003:107) asserts that 'what is definitely lacking in the New Testament is any concept of the soul as something to be set over against the body, something superior to it and longing to be free of it, and something that can exist independently of it. Though these concepts would have been well known in New Testament times and were appearing in contemporary Jewish writings including Philo, the New Testament writers clearly rejected them'.

32 The reason for reviewing this grouping first is that Paul's anthropology has been misunderstood as dichotomy (body and soul) or trichotomy (body, soul and spirit).

33 Jewett (1971:449; see also Zerbe 2008:173) points out that there are two instances within the Pauline corpus 'where the basic Judaic uniformity in the use of ψυχή is temporarily broken', for example, Paul's reformulating the ψυχικός-πνευματικός distinction in 1 Cor 15:44, 46 in order to repair the damage caused by Gnosticism (Reis 2009:590-591). Heckel (2006:125) argues that Paul is not teaching a body-soul dualism, but a

transformation of the body similar to that of the resurrected Christ. That is, at the final judgment, Christians will receive a 'spiritual body'. Worth noting is that 'as soon as [Paul] has made use of the term as a weapon against its originators, he drops it entirely. *ψυχικός* never appears again in the Pauline epistles, and its dualistic implications have no influence whatever upon the subsequent use of *ψυχή*' (Jewett 1971:449).

34 Rom 11:3; 16:4; Phil 2:30; 1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 12:15; 1 Thess 2:8.

35 Rom 2:9; 13:1; 2 Cor 1:23.

36 Eph 6:6; Phil 1:27; Col 3:23; 1 Thess 5:23.

37 The trio *πνεῦμα—ψυχή—σῶμα* used here is simply, but significantly in pragmatic terms, a rhetorical flourish at the conclusion of the epistle.

38 For example, Matt 2:20; 6:25; Mark 3:4; 10:45; Luke 12:20; 14:26; Acts 15:26; 20:24.

39 For example, Matt 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35-36; Luke 9:24; 17:33.

40 For example, Matt 11:29.

41 For example, Matt 12:18; 26:28; Mark 14:34; Luke 2:35.

He also perceives *ψυχή* as 'the vitality or life-force that makes a living being, or a being living' (Zerbe 2008:172; see also Bultmann 2007:204; Harvey 1973:169). Thus, *ψυχή* in Paul means 'whole natural life of the person',³⁴ 'the individual person as subject',³⁵ the seat of feelings, thought and will³⁶ (Warne 1995:158–202; see also Stacy 1956: 122–123).

1 Thessalonians 5:23 has been used to support the trichotomous view of the human person and needs further investigation. In Christian tradition, Paul's trio *πνεῦμα—ψυχή—σῶμα* has been understood as the formulation of anthropological trichotomy (Sand 1990, 3:502). Nonetheless, the threefold connection of spirit, soul and body is 'confined to this text alone in Paul and, therefore, cannot provide an adequate basis for a conclusive statement concerning Pauline anthropology' (Warne 1995:199). Furthermore, it is the terms *όλοτελής* and *όλόκληρος* that point to the real meaning, instead of the trio *πνεῦμα—ψυχή—σῶμα* (Stacey 1956:123; see also Green 2009, 5:359). Stacey (ibid.) argues that Paul is accentuating the whole person to be preserved to the Parousia. Bultmann (2007:205) also suggests that this text 'evidently means only that the readers may be kept sound, each in his entirety'. Similarly, Jewett (1971:347) states that Paul's insistence in the benediction is to manifest that 'God works to sanctify the whole [person]'.³⁷ Sand (1990, 3:502) further notes that 'if one considers the apostle's other anthropological statements, one sees that the three words are used in 1 Thess 5:23 against adversaries who incorrectly see and evaluate human beings dualistically.'

Finally, Robinson (1926:108) contends: the triad of *πνεῦμα*, *ψυχή* and *σῶμα* is far from a systematic dissection of the different constituents of humanity; 'its true analogy is such an Old Testament sentence as Deuteronomy 6:5, where a somewhat similar enumeration emphasises the totality of the personality'.

Accordingly, *ψυχή* in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 is better understood as the seat of feelings, thought and will, as suggested by Warne (1995:199).

5.3.2 *ψυχή* in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

In the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, *ψυχή* (53 occurrences) means earthly, natural physical life,³⁸ true life (in distinction from purely physical life),³⁹ the whole being,⁴⁰ the seat of emotions and feelings,⁴¹ and human vitality in the widest sense (cf. Sand 1990,

3:502; Schweizer 1974, 9:637–647). In this grouping, one problem passage needs to be discussed briefly here:

Matthew 10:28 juxtaposes God, who can destroy both *σῶμα* and *ψυχή*, and humans, who can destroy the *σῶμα*, but not the *ψυχή*. Jeeves (2006:104) notes that for some, the face value of this pericope could certainly be seen as a proof text to assert the survival of the separate soul at death. As such, the doctrine of the immortal soul seems to be alluded to here. However, ‘the reference to God’s power to destroy the *ψυχή* and *σῶμα* in Hades is opposed to the idea of the immortality of the soul’ (Schweizer 1974, 9:646; see also Nolland 2005:436). For Schweizer (ibid.), a human being ‘can be thought of only as a whole, both *ψυχή* and *σῶμα*’. Associating this text with Mark 8:35, where true life preserved by God is distinguished from purely physical life, Schweizer (ibid.:643, 646) further elucidates that the *ψυχή*, that is, ‘the true life of man as it is lived before God and in fellowship with God’, is not influenced by the cessation of physical life. He concludes: ‘God alone controls the whole man, *ψυχή* as well as *σῶμα*...man can be presented only as corporeal, but what affects the body does not necessarily affect the man himself, for whom a new body has already been prepared by God (ibid.:646).’

The body-soul dualism is rejected by Lucan writings as well. Luke 16:22 and 23:43 denote that after death the human being as a whole will either abide in Hades or in Paradise. The resurrection appearances of the risen Lord are also delineated with great bodily realism in Luke. In Acts 2:31, Luke avoids referring to the *ψυχή* not being left in Hades as read in Psalm 16:10, but notes that the *σὰρξ* of Jesus does not see corruption. All these demonstrate that Luke is unambiguously teaching a corporeal resurrection (the continued life of the whole person), rather than the Hellenistic immortality of the soul (ibid.:646–647; see also Sand 1990, 3:502).

5.3.3 *ψυχή* in the Johannine corpus

ψυχή occurs 20 times in the Johannine corpus. In most appearances (13 times), it means physical life of Jesus,⁴² of any other person,⁴³ or even of creatures in the sea.⁴⁴ In other cases, it simply means human being (Rev 18:13), the seat of emotion/thought/will (John 12:27), or appetite/desire (Rev 18:14).

The remaining four occurrences of *ψυχή* in this grouping are problematic and are therefore briefly explored here. In John 10:24a, the Jews asked Jesus, *ἕως πότε τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῶν αἴρεις*, which is rendered as ‘How long will you keep us in suspense?’ in popular

⁴² John 10:11, 15, 17; 1 John 3:16a.

⁴³ John 12:25 (two times); 13:37, 38; 15:13; 1 John 3:16b; Rev 12:11. John 12:25 associates *ψυχή* with *ζωή* to avoid ‘any strict dichotomies between earthly/heavenly, this life/next life’ (Clark-Soles 2006:122).

⁴⁴ Rev 8:9; 16:3.

English versions (NIV, NASB, ESV, NRSV, etc.). Michaels (2010:596) notes that though this rendering ‘makes excellent sense in the context, no such meaning is attested in biblical, classical, or Hellenistic Greek’. He (*ibid.*; see also Morris 1995:461, n. 71) examines the context and finds a similar construction in verse 18a (οὐδεὶς αἶρει αὐτὴν ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ), where αὐτός is the pronoun for τὴν ψυχὴν μου, meaning that ‘no one takes it [Jesus’ life] from me [Jesus]’. Therefore, the appropriate translation of John 10:24a, for Michaels, seems to be ‘How long will you take away our life?’ or ‘kill us’. He explains:

It appears that the language of ‘killing’ or ‘taking away life’ is used here metaphorically, as in our colloquial English expression, ‘the suspense is killing me’...In the wake of the ‘split’ dividing them (v. 19), they [the Jews] are uncertain what to expect, for they are no longer in control. The notion of ‘killing’ or a prolonged death, therefore, is by no means inappropriate as a metaphor for their frustration (*ibid.*).

Michaels’s argument seems to be reasonable. ψυχὴ in John 10:24a means ‘life’, which is consistent with Johannine usage of ψυχὴ (13 out of 20 occurrences as ‘physical life’).

The second problem text is found in 3 John 2, which seems to indicate a distinction between the physical and the spiritual life. Nevertheless, Schweiser (1974, 9:652) suggests that ψυχὴ is not an antithesis to the bodily dimension here. As noted earlier, ψυχὴ means the true life before God and in fellowship with God; thus, it might be sound even when one is sick in body. ‘The hope is that the two [true life and body] will be in harmony, not that they will be separated from one another’ (*ibid.*:651–652).

The last two difficult passages are Revelation 6:9 and Revelation 20:4. In both cases, ψυχὴ is translated ‘soul’ in the majority of English popular versions (NIV, NASB, ESV, NRSV, etc.). Defying the foregoing rendering, Schweizer (*ibid.*:654) contends that here ψυχὴ is the person who ‘survives death prior to his resurrection’, who is conscious and corporeal. However, ‘this intermediate state is not a true life; this will come only with the new corporeality at the resurrection’ (*ibid.*).

In Revelation 20:4, ψυχὴ is the person in ‘the final state after the first resurrection’ (*ibid.*). Obviously, here ψυχὴ is not referring to ‘a purely provisional and definitely non-corporeal state’ (*ibid.*). This is substantiated by ‘the relation of the word to the relative masculine pronoun, which shows how much it embraces the whole person’ (*ibid.*). Thus, ψυχὴ is now a word for a person living in

eschatological salvation. Again, *ψυχή* does not convey ‘any clear distinction between a non-corporeal and a corporeal state’ (ibid.).

If Schweizer is right, *ψυχή* in Revelation 6:9 and Revelation 20:4 refers to the ‘person’ in the intermediate state and in the final state after the first resurrection respectively.

Thus, the meanings of *ψυχή* (20 times) in the Johannine corpus consist of physical life (14 times), true life (once), human being/person (three times), the seat of emotion/thought/will (once), or appetite/desire (once).

5.3.4 *ψυχή* in other writings of the NT

This section examines statements using *ψυχή* in other writings of the NT. *ψυχή* in Hebrews is largely traditional and refers to the person himself (Sand 3:503),⁴⁵ or to the true and authentic life before God (Schweizer 1974, 9:650–651).⁴⁶ The problem pericope is Hebrews 4:12, where the word of God can pierce ‘as far as the division of soul [*ψυχή*] and spirit [*πνεῦμα*], of both joints and marrow’ (NASB1995). One may interpret this text as a support for anthropological trichotomy. However, Ellingworth (1993:263) asserts: ‘It is probably misconceived to seek precise definition in such a poetic passage. The general meaning is clearly that the active power of God’s Word reaches into the inmost recesses of human existence’.

Besides, as noted already, the majority of occurrences of *ψυχή* in Hebrews denote ‘person’ or ‘life’. Thus, the rendering of it as ‘soul’ seems to be inappropriate in this text. This is why Cockerill (2012:216) translates it as ‘life’. In sum, there is no definite trichotomy in view here (Schweizer 1974, 9:651).

The remaining appearances of *ψυχή* in James,⁴⁷ 1 and 2 Peter,⁴⁸ Jude⁴⁹ all refer to the whole person, or self.

5.4 Conclusion

After examining the usage of *ψυχή* in the LXX and the NT, one finds that both utilise *ψυχή* along with the Hebrew conception of *נַפְשׁוֹ*. The translators of the former interpret *נַפְשׁוֹ* into Greek terms faithfully, and seem to avoid dualism carefully. Surprisingly, compared to the occurrences of the word *נַפְשׁוֹ* in the OT (754 times), NT authors employ *ψυχή* much less—only 103 times. When *ψυχή* is used in the NT, its meanings still fall within the semantic range of *נַפְשׁוֹ* of the OT, such as life, which comprises physical life and true life before God and in fellowship with God, individual person, the whole being or self, the seat of emotions, thought and will, appetite/desire, and human vitality in the widest sense.

⁴⁵ Heb 10:38; 12:3; 13:17.

⁴⁶ Heb 6:19; 10:39.

⁴⁷ Jas 1:21; 5:20 denote the salvation of the whole person (Davids 1982:95).

⁴⁸ The usage of *ψυχή* as the whole person or the self ‘is characteristic of Peter and Luke’ (six times in 1 Pet: 1:9,22; 2:11, 25; 3:20; 4:19, and 15 times in Acts, e.g. Acts 2:41, 43) (Davids 1990:60). The two occurrences of *ψυχή* in 2 Pet 2:8, 14 also mean the person (Schweizer 1974, 9:653).

⁴⁹ The only appearance of *ψυχή* in Jude is in v. 15, which refers to every person (NRSV).

6. Conclusion

In the past, etymology has been widely used to propose meanings of 𐤆𐤏𐤍 in the OT, such as neck, throat, sustenance, and perfume. However, because of its high occurrences in the OT, etymological studies are not an appropriate approach to define its senses. Thus, examining its meaning and usage in the OT itself is indispensable in defining its semantic range. This was the goal of section 4 in this study and the result demonstrates that the possible meanings of the OT 𐤆𐤏𐤍 are (1) breath, (2) living creature, person, (3) vital self (pronominal use, the whole being/person), (4) life, (5) desire, appetite, (6) corpse, body.

Next, this study delved into the usage of $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$, the Greek equivalent of 𐤆𐤏𐤍, in the LXX and the NT. The findings derived from such investigations make it obvious that both the LXX and the NT faithfully follow the denotation of 𐤆𐤏𐤍 in the OT and cast some insights on its usage. For example, the translators of the LXX never translate $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ with ‘throat or neck’ and avoid bringing about the implication of dualism when interpreting it. Similarly, it was found that the NT writers never use $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ ⁵⁰ to convey the idea of dichotomy or trichotomy. This implies that ‘soul’ is an inappropriate rendering of $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ in the NT. If the meaning of $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ in the NT is similar, if not identical, to that of 𐤆𐤏𐤍 in the OT, then, the translation of 𐤆𐤏𐤍 with ‘soul’ calls for re-examination.

For further study, the author suggests using the possible meanings of 𐤆𐤏𐤍 listed above to re-examine its 754 occurrences in the OT.⁵¹

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50 One development of the meaning of $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ in the NT is worthy of notice. That is, it refers to both physical life and true life before God and in fellowship with God. This is slightly different from the usage of the OT 𐤆𐤏𐤍, which is almost restricted to physical life.

51 The author has re-examined all occurrences of 𐤆𐤏𐤍 in the Psalms and found that its appropriate translations fall within the semantic field proposed by the author. For the details of the examination, see the author’s original dissertation, ‘Translating *Nephesh* in the Psalms Into Chinese: An Exercise in Intergenerational and Literary Bible Translation’ (Doctoral dissertation, South African Theological Seminary, 2017), Appendix I.

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A Wesleyan Theology of Politics for the Ghanaian Context¹

William A. Mpere-Gyekye and Robert W. Brodie

Abstract

This journal article offers a Wesleyan theological framework based on a renewed Wesleyan notion of the political image of God in humanity for political engagement in the Ghanaian context. First, the essay considers the meaning of the notion and its biblical and theological basis. Second, the essay offers two reasons for recovery, that is, the effects of sin, and the non-integration of the notion into Wesley's evangelical theology. Third, the process of recovery is stated and implemented—drawing politics into Wesley's order or way of salvation. Fourth the contours of a Wesleyan theology of politics, based on the renewed and restored political image in humanity is formulated and applied to the Ghanaian context.

Keywords

Creation, God, Ghanaian, Governance, Grace, Humanity, Image of God, Political Image, Theology of Politics

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1. Introduction

Faith communities do normally develop doctrines to guide and order the life of their members. These doctrines, apart from defining appropriate conduct required of members, also serve as catechetical tools, and delineate community boundaries. Instances of these are the Roman Catholic theory of Natural Law and the Lutheran doctrine of the Two Kingdoms. These provide for their followers theological rules of faith for political discourse.

Unlike Catholics and Lutherans, Wesleyans have no theological theory for political engagement both on the world stage (Weber 2000:19), and particularly in the African context (Ilesanmi 2009:700). This implies that there is no guided and uniform Wesleyan perspective in doing politics in Africa (Ilesanmi 2009:19), including Ghana. To correct this anomaly, the following essay seeks to provide a Wesleyan theological framework for political engagement in the Ghanaian context, using the Wesleyan theological notion of the political image of God as the main resource.

2. The meaning of the political image of God

The understanding of Wesley of what it means to be created in the image of God and particularly in the political image of God rested on three bases. The first is, it is rooted in the biblical narratives of creation and also restoration and renewal in both the Old and New Testaments. He regarded the biblical idea of the image of God as one theme, if not the dominant theological theme of the Church's history. For this reason, Wesley did not regard the notion as novel (1730:14). Second, Wesley's theological thoughts on the image of God were not influenced by either philosophical or scientific speculations. Instead, he regarded the term as a spiritual and moral entity with implications for the major theological themes of the Bible, particularly salvation. For Wesley, therefore, discourse on what it means for humanity to be created in the image of God, is almost always in reference to one aspect or the other of the *ordo salutis*. Finally, Wesley understood and described the image of God under the categories of natural, political and moral (1760:336–37).

2.1. Wesley's definition of the political image of God

According to Wesley, God created humanity in the divine image (1760: 157). This image is reflected in three categories – the natural image, the constituents of which are understanding, freedom of will and various affections; the political image which designated humanity as the 'governor of this lower world', having

dominion over all creation; and the moral image, the constituents of which are righteousness and holiness (1760:157). The focus here is the political image and its meaning in the thought of Wesley.

Theologically, Wesley believed that for humanity to have been created in the political image of God implies the following: (i) that humanity is God's representative and governor of the earth (1781:628). By this Wesley meant that a constituent of the political image of God in humanity was the exercising of dominion over God's creation. In other words, humanity as a political image of God is a steward of God's creation; (ii) that humanity is a channel of blessing between God and the rest of creation, and (iii) that the political image of God in humanity establishes human self-government as normative in creation. These have vast theological and practical implications for politics and governance, which will be explored later.

2.2. The meaning from Wesley's interpreters

Almost all the interpreters of Wesley's notion of the political image of God affirm it as being constitutive of Wesley's interpretation of what it means for humanity to be created in the image of God (cf. Runyon 1998; Bartels 2003; Harlow 2009; Bryant 1992a, 2009; Collins 1997, 2007; Lodahl 2010; Weber 1990, 1997, 2001, 2002). The only notable exception is Maddox, who contends that although Wesley points to three dimensions of the image of God in humanity—the natural, the political, and the moral images—he did this on occasion only, choosing to focus more often on the natural and moral images (1994:68). According to Maddox, this corresponds to Wesley's differentiation between God's natural and moral attributes—the natural image of God in humanity being descriptive of the traits that pertain to being human, while the moral image describes the character of holiness and love that God intended for humanity.

Maddox's position has been challenged, though tacitly, by many Wesleyan scholars including Runyon (1998), Weber (2001) and Lodahl (2010). The works of these scholars evidence an assumption suggesting that the political image is an undeniable constituent of Wesley's analysis of the image of God in humanity. Collins appears to be the only Wesleyan scholar who has explicitly challenged Maddox on his claims. According to Collins, Maddox not only fails to realise the presence of the political image in Wesley's sermon, 'The General Deliverance', but also that the date of the sermon, 1781, follows the sermon in which the political image does not appear (1997:210). Based on evidence from his writings, therefore,

the political image for Wesley is affirmed as a constituent aspect of the image of God in humanity.

3. The Biblical and theological basis of the political image of God

The political image of God is rooted in the divine mandate for humanity to have dominion and rule over the rest of creation (Gen 1:26, 28). For Wesley, that mandate constitutes the political aspect of what it means for humanity to be created in the image of God. Interpreting Genesis 1:26–28 in his *Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament*, Wesley avers that God’s image upon humanity consists in humanity’s place and authority, in that God created humanity in the divine image and gave the authority to rule, therefore, making humanity God’s representative on earth (1765c:599).

Exegetical analysis of the Hebrew terms employed to denote rule (*radah*) in Genesis 1:26, 28, and subdue (*kabas*) in 1:28 concludes that they have political connotations. According to Limburg, most occurrences of *radah* are in political contexts, having to deal with the rule of one nation over another (1991:126). Similarly, Hiebert claims that *radah*, which is the basis for the divine mandate for humanity to rule in the context of Genesis 1:26, grants humanity the right and responsibility to rule, administer and manage the rest of creation. This institutes an order of power and authority that positions humanity above the rest of the natural order (1996:18).

In Genesis 1:28, subdue (*kabas*) is added to rule (*radah*) as an element of the divine mandate to humanity to exercise authority over the rest of creation. This term, Hiebert claims, portrays an ordered relationship in which humanity is placed above the rest of creation and assigned to exercise power and control over it (1996:18–19). In a similar submission, Walton observes that the usage of the verb *kabas* (subdue) is usually in political contexts (2003:132). All these suggest that the divine mandate for humanity to rule and subdue the earth is clearly defined as having political connotations.

The foregoing, coupled with exegetical evidence from Psalm 8 constitutes further evidence that God has given humanity a divine mandate to have dominion over the rest of the created order. Psalm 8 points clearly to the political image of God as biblically rooted. Gardoski (2007:7) observes that the psalm declares the majesty and dignity of humanity as God’s appointed ruler over creation. Hart affirms this when he states that humanity’s royal

rule of the earth and its position as the divine representative are clearly emphasised in Psalm 8 (1995:320). It is quite clear that Psalm 8 echoes the dominion theme of Genesis 1:26, 28.

Bringing all these together, one cannot help but agree with Lioy (2013:219), following Witherington and Hart (2004:234) that because humans are the only living beings made in God's image, the Creator put them in charge of everything else (cf. Genesis 1:26–30). As Psalm 8:6–8 reveals, the human race has dominion over 'subhuman creatures and nature'. Again, Lioy (2013:219), referencing Nel (1997:1137), Soggin (1997:689–690) and Gross (1998:68) reinforces this conclusion by surmising that the term translated 'rulers' in verse 6 carries the idea of oversight, administration, and government, with the extent of authority dependent on the context in which the term is used. This is the basis for the political aspect of the image of God. It is this biblical truth of God creating humanity with the mandate to serve as the divine vicegerent² that Wesley identifies as humanity imaging God politically.

² Vicegerent—This is a term that carries the connotation of one appointed to act in the stead of a ruler, as opposed to a vice-regent who is a deputy or assistant to the ruler.

4. The need for recovering the political image

Essentially, two reasons make up the need for the recovery of the political image of God. These are, the impact of the Fall on the notion, and Wesley's failure to integrate the notion into his evangelical theology. Wesley himself variously indicated that, following the Fall, and as part of God's new creation, God would renew humanity into the whole image of God (1741:414; 1759:19; 1788:230). So pervasive is this theme in the soteriology of Wesley that Khoo claims it as Wesley's soteriological *telos* (2010:12).

4.1. The Fall and the political image of God in humanity

Because humanity was created by God to function as the political image, there should be certain givens for humanity to properly function as such. These consist of, but are not limited to, the maintenance of an intimate, unbroken and loving relationship with God in which humanity exhibits dependence on, as well as obedience, loyalty, and faithfulness to God. These will ensure an uninterrupted flow of God's blessings through humanity to the rest of creation, and thus the right ordering of the entire created order for the glory of God. The Fall distorted these tenets of right relationship between the Creator and the creature, leading to a marring of the political image of God in humanity. Runyon clarifies this by submitting that, while humanity retains the capabilities of the political image, they are corrupted and turned to perverse

ends. Continuing, Runyon contends that as governor of the earth, humanity became self-centred, exploiting the resources of the earth selfishly for present needs and desires without thought for other creatures and future generations (1998:21).

The marring of the political image also affected the relationship of humanity with God in the first instance. Instead of being an obedient, dependent and loyal representative of God on earth, humanity became a rebellious rival to God; instead of being a channel of communication and blessing between God and the rest of creation, humanity became the source of conflict and animosity towards the rest of creation; instead of being a good steward of the created order, humanity became self-centred, exploiting the rest of creation for its selfish and perverted interests; instead of rightly ordering creation for the common good and the glory of God, chaos and disorder became the order of the day. In the end, all creation became susceptible to death.

4.2. The political image of God in Wesley's political thought

Wesley's theological notion of the political image of God is derived from the creational mandate of God to humanity to rule over the rest of creation. This means humanity as a whole is divinely mandated to rule over the created order. The implication is that the people in a political community should be at the centre of the political process. However, the basic tenet of Wesley's political thought has no place for the people in the political process (Weber 2001:391). In positing that the authority to rule originated from God, Wesley defended a hierarchical, top-down concept of political authority which excluded the people from the political process. One would have expected that, given the divine mandate for humanity to rule, which also implies that the authority to rule has been delegated to humanity as a whole, the people in any political process will be not only the mediators of authority to rule, but also the authorising agent in that process. This state of affairs is attributable, according to Weber, to Wesley's non-integration of the political image into his evangelical theology (2001:35).

5. Recovering the political image of God in humanity: Bringing Politics into the *Ordo Salutis*

According to Weber, the process for recovering the political image is its integration into Wesley's evangelical theology, particularly, the *ordo salutis* which proceeds along three movements of grace—prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace.

Prevenient grace is the first movement of God's grace in Wesley's way of salvation. Through it, God partially restores the natural image of God in humanity, and extends grace universally to humanity for the purpose of eradicating the inherited guilt of Adam's sin (Wesley 1744:139), awakening humanity to its need for reconciliation with God and enabling a response to God's gracious offer (Wesley 1785:66). These overtures of grace, once embraced, lead to a grace-enabled relationship of co-operative and progressive transformation. Participation in such a relationship, though universally available, is not inevitable, because grace is resistible (Maddox 1994:90).

When politics is introduced into this movement of grace by way of the political image, what emerges is that, in and through prevenient grace, God initiates a consciousness of good governance patterned on the divine care for creation. Through that humanity is enlightened enough to recognise its deviation from the divine pattern inherent in the political image of God. A positive response to this generous offer leads to further works of grace in the political process towards good governance. This for Weber means God's work in caring for creation establishes a setting of grace in which humanity receives its nature as the political image of God. Consequently, God acts politically in governing the world with humanity responding by fulfilling its God-given political vocation (2001:412).

The movement of grace progresses to justifying grace or justification. Justification offers forgiveness based on Christ's atoning work, and leads to God's acceptance of persons who avail themselves of it. When this is applied to the political process, justification denotes God's acceptance and restoration of humanity to be the political image and the fulfilment of the divine vocation. This is inclusive of the power God confers through the Holy Spirit to enable humanity to will and do that which is pleasing to God and participate in the divine purpose (Wesley 1746:230; Markham 2006:82–83). Applied to the restoration of the image of God, this among other things implies that justified humanity is strengthened to not acquiesce needlessly to any form of dehumanising restrictions that distort the image of God, but to resist them and cooperate with God for their removal or positive transformation.

The final movement of grace in Wesley's *ordo salutis* is sanctifying grace which issues out in sanctification. Sanctification in Wesleyan theology denotes a process of growth, the *telos* of which is renewal into the whole image of God in which love for God and neighbour is perfected (Wesley 1770:416). There is, therefore, both a personal

and social dimension to it. A constituent of the political image of God in humanity embraces social involvement in that humanity is to be a channel of blessing to the rest of creation (Wesley 1781:244). This, among other things, implies that humanity has a mandate to ensure the flourishing of the rest of creation, which can only happen with intentional human involvement with the rest of creation. Thus while the personal dimension represents changes in personal attitudes and behaviour patterns, the social aspect, with the political image at the core, denotes development of social relations, socio-political and economic institutions that nurture and promote good governance. This should be viewed in regard to the process of humanity fulfilling its vocation of becoming the bearer of the renewed political image of God. As humanity cooperates with sanctifying grace, mediated through the Holy Spirit, to participate in God's purposes, we should also seek God's will for creation and position ourselves to fulfil our vocation of being vicegerents of God on earth. Progressively, therefore, sanctification enables the capacities of the political imaging of God to be focused on the implementation of a caring and compassionate stewardship in the governance of the earth.

The foregoing introduced politics into Wesley's order of salvation, thereby connecting his evangelical theology and the undeveloped aspects of his political thought. Consequently, humanity as the bearer of the political image of God is restored to the centre of political activity.

6. Towards a Wesleyan theology of politics for the Ghanaian context

Formulating a Wesleyan theology of politics for the Ghanaian context will involve mapping out its contours through an analysis of Wesley's theology of politics and plotting its outline.

6.1. Mapping out the contours of a Wesleyan theology of politics

To map out the contours of a Wesleyan theology of politics for application in the Ghanaian context, certain steps need to be taken. First, there is need to examine Wesley's theology of politics, if any, and its interpretations; second, whether it is possible to construct a framework based on resources within Wesley's theological thought.

6.2. Wesley's theology of politics

Wesley did not formulate any known theological framework for political engagement. Apart from his theological notion of the

political image of God, by which he described the divine mandate for humanity to rule and govern the earth, there is nothing that can be remotely designated as a theology of politics in Wesley. Even the notion of the political image of God was not developed as it ought to provide a political language for the theological heirs of Wesley.

At various points in his career Wesley insisted he had no interest in politics (1768:14). Repeatedly, however, he engaged in political dialogue, thus contradicting both his self-representation and his position (Hynson 1984:30; Weber 2001:41, 125). Wesley's political views have been variously interpreted and categorised as traditional and modernist.

6.2.1. The traditional view

Traditionally, Wesley has been tagged as an intensely conservative High Church Tory, totally devoted to king and country (Sweet 1922:255–258; Norwood 1956:165; Cameron 1961:42–46). The depiction is re-echoed in modern times by Harold L Howard (1992:46). In an essay responding to Hynson's suggestion that Wesley should be understood more as a democrat than a Tory, Howard referred to Wesley as 'a typical Tory of his day' (1992:46), a designation given credence by some of his own political writings (38). Though Coates suggests that such representations of Wesley are facile (2013:9), he nonetheless points to pervasive evidence in Wesley's own writings as warranting such a portrait (2013:8). An instance of this is Wesley's own popular saying: 'I am a High Churchman, the son of a High Churchman, bred up from my childhood in the highest notions of passive obedience and non-resistance (1775:156).

In spite of this, however, and given the diversity of thought within Toryism in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, there may be room, according to Howard, for some democratic tendencies, especially at the time Wesley was writing (1992:45). This notwithstanding, Howard concludes that Wesley was a typical Tory of his day (p. 46).

6.2.2. Modern interpretations

Beginning from the early 1970s, scholars have challenged the traditional portrayal of Wesley's politics as Toryism, arguing for a more nuanced view. Towards this end, scholars have represented Wesley as a liberal democrat committed to natural rights (Hynson 1972:36–46; 1973:34–42; 1983:57–85), a liberation theologian dedicated to the liberation of the poor and the shared ownership of resources (Jennings 1990), and an organic constitutionalist who

championed the cause of loyalty to God, Church and country (Weber 2001).

What comes out clearly with these modern interpretations is that, Wesley's political thought was complex, not easily accessible, and prone to a wide variety of interpretations. Within the context of the current task, the issue is not whether Wesley was a Tory, a liberal democrat or a liberation theologian, but rather, what will a theological theory for politics rooted in the Wesleyan theological tradition look like, given the analysis and conclusions of section 5 above?

6.3. An outline of a Wesleyan theology of politics

Theological doctrines have political implications (Tanner 1992:9, 19; 1997:70, 97; 2007:319, 320; Wogaman 2000:174), just as all politics is theological (Katongole 2011:22). However, some doctrines illustrate certain political issues more clearly than others (Wogaman 2000:164). Given these conclusions, I propose the following as contours of a Wesleyan theological theory for political engagement, especially for the Ghanaian context.

6.3.1. The sovereignty of God

In Wesleyan theology, government originates in the creative purposes of God. God as Creator of the earth (Wesley 1786:315), reveals the divine self as Governor and Sovereign (1777:361), to whom belongs all power (1772:53). This means that all human sovereignties are subordinate to that of God. Also, as governor of all creation, God is the origin of all governments, and no government can exist outside of divine government. Furthermore, as the source of all authority, the authority to govern belongs to, and is delegated to humanity (Gen 1:26, 28; Wesley 1760:336–337) by God. The essential summary here is that, the notion of the political image establishes government theologically in the doctrine of God (Weber 2001:396).

6.3.2. The people as the political image of God

A Wesleyan theology of politics, though rooted in God, revolves around humanity as the bearer of the political image of God (Wesley 178:628). This is because, in the creational purpose, humanity serves as 'God's vicegerent upon earth, the prince and governor of this lower world' (Wesley 1781:244), and has 'dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth' (Wesley 1760:336-337), and also functions as the channel of blessings to the entire creation (Wesley 1781:628, 629). With this creational mandate, the political image

becomes the governing principle, which Weber defines as a commanding obligation and stewardship in which all humanity represents God in the governing of the rest of creation (2001:393). This means governance must ordinarily be inclusive of all people in every aspect of the political life and governing process in a political society.

6.3.3. The Church and governance

The Church as the community of God's redeemed has a socio-political mandate to influence society for the common good towards the realisation of the purposes of God for the entire creation. Wesley explained the calling of Methodism as a call to reform the nation, particularly the Church, and to spread scriptural holiness over the land (1791:299). Wesley, therefore, understood the task of Methodism as the formation of a holy people whose presence and praxis would reform both Church and society. Within the Wesleyan theological theory for political engagement, the Church functions as a social prophet in upholding public morality by encouraging virtue and denouncing vice in the public arena. This is in addition to preparing the faith community through its catechesis to become model citizens, and also assume public office. The Church's constructive role in ensuring accountable and good governance for the flourishing and transforming of society is very significant. The church rather than the state should be occupied with the task of establishing the Kingdom of God in society (Forster 2012:78).

6.3.4. Institutions of governance

The place of institutions in government is to aid in the right ordering of society for the realisation of the goal of government, and to serve the ultimate purposes of God. They are the instruments for the discharge of roles that include the strategies of caring policy, and the application of power to implement the strategies.

A Wesleyan theological theory of government prescribes the establishment of institutions of governance to facilitate an organised and harmonious governance system. Although, Wesley may not have explicitly indicated the need to establish institutions to aid in governance in any of his writings, his assent to the institutions and traditions which placed checks and balances on King and Parliament pointed in this direction.

According to Weber, Wesley did not believe that the king could rule without Parliament, or that the king's will was valid apart from a supporting and confirming parliamentary law, and that rulers should act in violation of the ancient constitution with its mutually

limiting political institutions, its prescriptive rights, and its constraining traditions (2001:401–402). The implication here is that, by the acceptance of these socio-political institutions, Wesley tacitly placed institutions of governance as imperative in a Wesleyan theory of governance.

7. Towards a Wesleyan theology of politics for Ghana

De Mesa and Wostyn claim that our understanding of theology should be culturally intelligible, situationally relevant and pastorally meaningful (1990:4). Consequently, it is imperative for each era to reflect on, reinterpret and apply the basic tenets of a theological doctrine or theory. Such an undertaking is significant because it grounds the truths of the doctrine or theory in particular socio-cultural contexts. Herein lies the appropriateness of bringing the Wesleyan theology of politics into engagement with the Ghanaian context to make it authentically Ghanaian.

The application of the Wesleyan theological theory to politics and governance in the Ghanaian context will begin with a very brief look at the Ghanaian political context, following which, four broad areas will be focused on, namely, the sovereignty of God and the governing process, the role of the people in the political and the governing process, the place of the church in politics and governance, and the role of political institutions in the process of governance. These broad areas will be explored in the light of the politics and the governing process, particularly, of the fourth republic.

7.1. The Ghanaian political context

Ghana's modern political history, which began with independence in 1957, had been anything but stable until the promulgation of the fourth Republican Constitution in 1992. From 1992 to the present, seven successful elections have been held and the reins of government changed three times between the two dominant political parties – the National Democratic Congress and the New Patriotic Party.

7.2. The Sovereignty of God and the governing process

God as sovereign in Ghanaian politics means God is recognised as the ultimate governor of the nation, thus those who rule do so in the stead of, and are accountable to God. The implications here include, first that Ghanaian politics and governance should be patterned after God's governance. Divine politics and governance

entail caring for, and sustaining the entire creation through nurturing and developing and thus ensuring the flourishing of creation for the common good. This means that politics and governance in Ghana should be for the advancement of the well-being and flourishing of Ghanaians, as well as the development of the rest of creation on behalf of God and for the glory of God. Consequently, laws, policies and programmes that do not promote human well-being and the improvement of the rest of creation should have no place in the political and governance practices within Ghana. Politics and governance as prescribed by the Wesleyan theology of politics are means of serving God through serving the creation and creative purposes of God. Second, that because God is sovereign and the originator of politics and governance, such political and governance processes as the registration of the electorate for electioneering, selection of candidates for political office, campaigning for votes, as well as political education of Ghanaians must be devoid of discrimination, coercion and intimidation as well as corruption through vote buying and rigging, and abuse of incumbency, among other vices. Political and governance processes should be transparent, free and fair with equal opportunity for all involved.

7.3. The role of the Church in the political and governing process

The role of the Church in Ghanaian politics as prescribed by the Wesleyan theology of politics includes the following: first, the Church should be mindful of its calling to form a people of God whose presence and praxis will reform and renew society towards the will and purposes of God. Consequently, the Church in Ghana should be intentional and purposeful in the formation of its ministers to not only be leaders of worship, but also, agents for the transformation of society. Second, the Church should focus on nurturing model citizens dedicated to serving as stewards of God for the holistic transformation of society and the nurturing of the entire creation. The Church should empower its members through moral formation and political education to be able to interpret their faith in concrete terms with the ability to contest public space for the kingdom of God; and third, the Church as a social prophet should commend and encourage acts of justice, truth and all that promotes human flourishing. At the same time, it should critique and denounce injustice, oppression and everything that dehumanises and thus stands against the realisation of the kingdom of God in Ghanaian society.

7.4. The role of the people in the political and the governing process

Politics defined by the political image of God puts the entire Ghanaian people in the centre of the political process. This means all Ghanaians within the parameters of the rule of law are qualified to vote and be voted for to hold political office provided they are qualified. In practice though, not all will be capable of holding office, and competent to do so. It also means Ghanaians should be allowed to willingly choose political office holders to not only authorise such officers, but also make them accountable. It also means vote buying, election rigging, intimidation of electorates, abuse of incumbency and all such acts that obstruct free and fair electioneering processes should be abjured.

7.5. Political institutions in the Ghanaian political and governing process

Within the framework of the Wesleyan theology of politics, political institutions have the ultimate purpose of advancing the governing work of God. This involves caring for the earth and its creatures, preserving them and enabling their development and prosperity. Political institutions are thus to be evolved as instruments for the formulation of strategies of caring policies and the application of power to implement the strategies (Weber 2001:405). Ghana's fourth Republican Constitution (1992) provides the legal framework for institutions of state and certain political institutions, such as political parties, to be established. It also defines the framework for the performance of their functions. The most conspicuous of these institutions are the Executive, the Legislature, the Judiciary, the Electoral Commission and the Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), and political parties. If these institutions are resourced and allowed to work independently and transparently, they will contribute to realising the objectives of the Wesleyan theology of politics.

Though these institutions were not established with the Wesleyan theology of politics in mind, their purposes and functions are in accord with the mandate of such institutions within the Wesleyan theory, except for the excessive powers granted to the Executive, and CHRAJ's lack of power to enforce its decisions among others. These may lead to certain anomalies, principal among which is Executive tyranny.

8. Conclusion

This article was an attempt to provide a Wesleyan theology of politics for political engagement in Ghana. Towards this end, the essay considered the Wesleyan notion of the political image of God as the primary resource. The notion was defined, rooted in the Bible and theology, and worked through the movements of grace as delineated in the Wesleyan way of salvation for the purposes of restoration and renewal. The outcome, which was applied to the Ghanaian context, far from being an idealistic conception of truth (Yung 2009:8), was a theologically sound, practically relevant and workable framework for contextual political engagement towards the fulfilment of God's redemptive and transformative governance of the entire creation.

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The Interface Between the Doctrines of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will: Judas Iscariot as a Test Case¹

James Partee Toga and Annang Asumang

Abstract

The New Testament indicates that Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Jesus was foreknown by God and by Jesus, and that it was in fulfilment of Scripture, and yet at the same time it judges him culpable for his actions. In that case, to what extent is divine foreknowledge compatible with human free will? Through exegetical, philosophical and theological analyses of the relevant passages, the study arrives at a number of conclusions about the nature and pastoral function of compatibilism in the specific test case of Judas Iscariot. It is observed for example, that all the New Testament passages in relation to Judas Iscariot underline the interplay between divine foreknowledge and human free will in a non-contrastive transcendent manner, even though they place different emphases on the degree of this compatibility, while others underline a complicated role for even Satan.

Some of the differences in emphases between the Gospels with regard to Judas Iscariot are also shown to reflect respective socio-

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Keywords

Human Free Will, Divine Foreknowledge, Betray, Compatibilism, Incompatibilism

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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.

pastoral contexts of their first readers. The article concludes that God held Judas Iscariot culpable for his action, though God foreknew it and that it fulfilled scripture.

1. Introduction

The New Testament presents four apparently conflicting views about Judas Iscariot's role in Jesus' betrayal. Firstly, it suggests that Judas Iscariot freely and determinedly betrayed Jesus (Matt 26:14–16; Mark 14:10, 11; John 13:18). Secondly, it suggests that Satan entered into Judas Iscariot and prompted him to betray Jesus (Luke 22:3–6; John 13:2, 27). Thirdly, it suggests that Jesus himself chose Judas Iscariot to betray him (John 6:70, 71; cf. 17:12). Lastly, it suggests that Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Jesus was necessary to fulfil the divine plan (Matt 26:24; Mark 14:21; Luke 22:22). These four views evidently relate to the question of the interaction between human free will and agency and divine foreknowledge. This article therefore attempts to answer one main question, namely: how do the New Testament's accounts on Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Jesus shed light on the philosophical and theological arguments posed by the interface between divine foreknowledge and human free will?

Scholars have disagreed about whether Judas Iscariot could be justly labelled as betrayer, because of the Gospels' use of *παράδιδωμι* to describe Judas Iscariot's actions instead of *προδίδωμι* or *προδοτής*. Klassen (1996:47, 49) particularly argues from a lexicographical analysis of *παράδιδωμι* that all of the citations of *παράδιδωμι* in the New Testament have the concept of 'hand over' rather than 'betray' or 'treachery'. Furthermore, Klassen and like-minded scholars contend that first-century Greek literature had no example of *παράδιδωμι* meaning 'betrayal', 'disloyalty', or 'deceit' (Klassen 1996:47–74; cf. Carlson 2010:472–474; Derrett 1980:3–4). Instead, Klassen (1966:47–58) asserts that the words they used for 'betray' and 'traitor' were *προδίδωμι*² and *προδοτής*³ respectively.

An objective of this article is to perform a biblical examination of how the interaction between divine foreknowledge and human free will is exemplified in how the Bible characterises the particular case of Judas. While it is unlikely to address this translation issue conclusively, understanding the theological underpinnings of the characterization of Judas Iscariot will likely contribute to evaluating which of the scholarly interpretations appropriately define him.

The article is divided into four sections—(a) a summary of philosophical and theological solutions to compatibilism, (b) a brief account of compatibilism in the OT and Literature of Second

² *προδίδωμι* means, 'to turn over in a treacherous manner, betray' (Ibid.:867).

³ *προδοτής* means, 'traitor, betrayer' (Ibid.).

Temple Judaism, (c) exegetical summary on the characterization of Judas Iscariot in the NT and (d) theological reflections on compatibilism and Judas.

2. Philosophical and Theological Solutions to Compatibilism

Both philosophically and theologically, the interface between divine foreknowledge and human free will has been conceived around two broad schools of thought, namely, compatibilism and incompatibilism. The Compatibilism School believes that human freedom is compatible with divine omniscience and divine foreknowledge (Helm 2011:184–205; Nartey 2016:135–155). On the other hand, the Incompatibilism School believes that human freedom is incompatible with divine foreknowledge and divine determination (Nartey 2016:135–155; Mele 2015:297–309). Between these two schools, especially within the compatibilism school of thought, there are various degrees of approaches, leading to several different shades of conceptualization of the interface.

2.1. Philosophical Solutions

Philosophers such as Aristotle (Fieser 1998:47–50; cf. Shedd 1999:21; Josephus *War* 2.163; *Ant.* 13:171), Boethius (Wood 2010:41), Frankfurt (McKenna 2008:771–773; cf. Babcock 1988:28–55), and Ockham (Wood 1999:72–84) on compatibilism between divine foreknowledge and human free will held to compatibilism wholly or partly. For instance, Aristotle held that humans are living souls who possess reasoning ability, and that ‘Reason is the source of the first principles of knowledge’ (Fieser 1998:47).

Aristotle divided ‘reason’ into two kinds, passive and active. Passive reason is the act of receiving, combining and comparing ‘the objects of thought’. Active reason, on the other hand, ‘makes objects of thought...makes the world intelligible, and bestows on the materials of knowledge those ideas or categories which make them accessible to thought’ (ibid.). He believed that humans are rational beings, and possess a well-defined ability to evaluate, contemplate and control their emotions and desires (Fieser 1998:48). Aristotle termed this reasoning ability to control the emotions and desires as ‘moral virtue’ (ibid.).

Moreover, Aristotle argued that humans are able to control their desires because of their ‘character traits’ (ibid.). Furthermore, Aristotle stated, ‘Actions are voluntary when the originating cause of action (either virtuous or vicious) lies in [humans]’ (Fieser 1998:50). Aristotle’s arguments suggest that humans are able to choose their actions freely, in view of the fact that God gave them

the ability to reason (cf. Shedd 1999:21; Josephus: *War* 2.163; *Ant.* 13:171).

Boethius (Wood 2010:41) argued that God does not fully control what happens within his foreknowledge, in order that he might not deny humans of ‘the power of contrary choices’ (Wood 2010:41). Frankfurt (McKenna 2008:771–773; cf. Babcock 1988:28–55) argued that humans are liable for their actions even if they do not choose between alternative actions. Finally, Ockham (Wood 1999:72–84) held that doers of wicked acts do not act out of ignorance necessarily; they do understand what they do and allow their will to guide them (Wood 1999:74, 84). In fact, Ockham argues that people who carry out wicked acts ‘have a well-developed understanding of the universal principles of moral science’ (ibid. 75). Ockham’s view implies that divine foreknowledge does not annul human liability.

2.2. Summary of Theological Solutions

The different Christian theological traditions also propose different solutions to the problem of the interface between divine foreknowledge and human free will review. Even though they hold generally to incompatibilism between divine foreknowledge and human free will, and that divine foreknowledge annuls human freedom, the Reformed tradition admits that humans have some level of free will. For example, Calvinists, including John Calvin himself (Cunningham 1994:581) accept that divine foreknowledge does not completely eliminate human free will. Calvin (King 1988–2007:n.p.) accepts Jesus’ words in John 3:18 that God will condemn people because of their unbelief in the name of his Son rather than because of predestination. In addition, the Westminster Confession (Article XII; cf. Article XX.29) teaches about sinners repenting and exercising faith for salvation, even though it teaches also that God predestines and foreordains certain people unto eternal life or to eternal damnation. Reformed scholars such as Turrentin (Helm 2010:187–199; cf. Kim 2017:36), Reymond (1998:721–725) and Grudem (2009:10–12 cf. Peckham 2014:198), admit that humans do exercise their ‘willing choices’, though in a limited way.

The Arminian Tradition on the other hand, holds to the compatibilism view, even though some proponents accept the Reformed doctrine of the total depravity of the humanity and the perseverance of the saints. Arminian theologians affirm divine foreknowledge of the future choices of humans and the actions that those humans will take (cf. Studebaker 2004:471, 472; Coppedge 1987:133, 134). God does work sovereignly. However, he neither annuls nor interferes with the freedom of the human agent or

limits that freedom (Barclay 2006:6, 7). It seems evident that the ability of humans to think and act freely, in relationship to the foreknowledge and election of God, is both scriptural and innate (cf. Taylor 1985:31–33; Helm 2010; Kim 2017)—God created humans in his own image (*imago Dei*).

The doctrines of Middle Knowledge and Open Theism support humans using their free will. For instance, Middle Knowledge holds that even though God foreknows what any of his creatures would do or not do at various times, he himself does not cause any of his creatures to act (Campbell 2006:3, 4; cf. Bryant 1992:95). Similarly, Open Theism teaches that God has given humans libertarian freedom to choose their actions (Sanders 2003:96; cf. Sanders 2012:147). Boyd (2009:43) argues that God does not control everything that humans do and neither does everything happen according to his will.

The Scriptures indicate that fundamental nature of the *imago Dei* remained fully functional after the fall. For example, Yahweh admitted that ‘the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’ (Gen 3:22). This passage implies that Adam retained Yahweh’s attribute of knowing the difference between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ after his fall. Secondly, the passage implies that Adam retained Yahweh’s attribute of making a choice. Human choices and their subsequent actions and results show that humans do possess and exercise their free will. For instance, humans do plan and execute various actions—some are noble and others are ignoble. Oden (1987:91) points out that humankind’s capacity to think freely and to act freely are ‘definitive of personal existence’. This freedom to choose, though finite, and often self-centred, ‘shares in [the] divine freedom’ (ibid.).

3. Compatibilism in the OT and Literature of Second Temple Judaism

3.1. Compatibilism in the OT

The Old Testament does teach that there is interplay between divine foreknowledge and human free will. The story of the Pharaoh of Egypt in the book of Exodus (Exod 9:16) depicts compatibility between the foreknowledge of God and human free will. Exodus shows Yahweh’s involvement in the life of Pharaoh in order to achieve his divine plan. The early chapters of Exodus present the ironic account of the interplay between God’s hardening of Pharaoh’s heart and Pharaoh hardening his own

heart in order to accomplish the divine purpose of Yahweh (Gilbert 2001:76, 77, 80, 81). Thus the book reveals that Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh ten times (Exod 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8; cf. 4:21; 7:3; 14:4) and Pharaoh hardened his own heart ten times (Exod 7:13, 14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34, 35; 13:15). It is worth noting that both the hardening by Yahweh and Pharaoh are described with words which come from two main Hebrew verbs—*hāzaq* and *kābēd*. *Hāzaq* means, ‘to stand firm’, ‘to fortify’, ‘to prevail’, ‘to hold one’s own against’ as in a military context (Gilbert 2001:80). In addition, Saul willfully disobeyed Yahweh’s command. God held him liable and dethroned him (1 Sam 15:1–23). Israel rejected Yahweh and Yahweh appointed the Chaldeans to treat them harshly (Amos 6:14).

3.2. Literature of Second Temple Judaism

Even though Second Temple Jewish literature underlines a diversity of approaches to the subject of compatibilism in some of its key texts, an examination of Josephus’ works, the Qumran Literature and the Sapiental Literature, indicates that they explicitly and implicitly point out some level of compatibility between divine foreknowledge and human free will. For example, an examination of Josephus’ historical accounts of Adam, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes and King Cyrus explicitly and implicitly acknowledge compatibilism between divine foreknowledge and human free will (*Ant.* 2.1.1.3, 4; 13.171; *War* 2.163–165; cf. Klawans 2009:47).

Like Josephus’ writings, the Qumran Literature is replete with implicit and explicit references to compatibilism between divine foreknowledge (manifested in divine predestination and divine foreordination) and human free will. For example, the tract, 4Q255, III states that God ‘has created man to govern the world, and has appointed for him two spirits in which to walk until the time of his visitation’. This statement appears to attribute all humankind’s actions to God. However, it also attributes humankind’s actions to their own choices (Moerschbacher n.d:6). Moerschbacher thinks God might have established the two ‘spirits’ (the spirits of truth and injustice) in order to give humankind the opportunity to choose between them. For example, 4Q473 (ibid.) states, ‘[God] has placed [before you] t[wo] ways one which is goo[d] and one which is evil. If you choose the good [way], he will bless you. But if you walk in the [evil] way, [He will curse you]’ [sic]. This implies that God does not control or influence the choices or activities of his creation absolutely. It also implies that God has given humankind freedom to choose their preferred manner of life.

There are indications in the Dead Sea Scrolls that ‘covenant members’ within the Qumran Community exercised their free will about observing the precepts of God. For instance, the community required every adult to deliberately and personally commit to the sect to which God elected them (Vermes 2004:103, 104). They were to seek God whole-heartedly (1QS1, 1–2), separate themselves from ‘the habitation of unjust men’ (1QS VIII, 13) and devote themselves completely to what they believed to be the cause of God (Vermes 2004:121). Their acts of seeking God, separating themselves from ‘unjust men’ and wholly devoting themselves to God point toward the use of human free will.

The relationship between human free will and divine foreknowledge is therefore in a non-contrastive transcendent relationship. In other words, they are in direct and not inverse proportion (Barclay 2006:7). Barclay argues that ‘Even if God is regarded as the originator of the causal chain, the human respondents act from their own self-initiated will, since integrity of that will can be maintained only if it is in some respects or at some points independent of the direct creative will of God’ (ibid:6).

As with the Qumran literature, a number of the key passages in sapiential Jewish literature of the Second Temple Period reflect on the interface between divine foreknowledge and human free will. For example, Sirach (15:11–20) stresses human free will and liability for evil doing, notwithstanding God’s sovereignty and foreknowledge of ‘all things’:

Say not thou, ‘It is through the Lord that I fell away’: for thou oughtest not to do the things that he hateth. Say not thou, ‘He hath caused me to err’: for he hath no need of the sinful man...He himself made man from the beginning, and left him in the hand of his counsel; If thou wilt, to keep the commandments, and to perform acceptable faithfulness.

He hath set fire and water before thee: stretch forth thy hand unto whether thou wilt. Before man is life and death; and whether him liketh shall be given him. Before man is life and death; and whether him liketh shall be given him. For the wisdom of the Lord is great, and he is mighty in power, and beholdeth all things: And his eyes are upon them that fear him, and he knoweth every work of man. He hath commanded no man to do wickedly, neither hath he given any man licence to sin (cf. Sir. 11:14–16).

The above passage underlines two facts. Firstly, it recognises the conflict between divine foreknowledge and human free will. On the one hand (and briefly), it shows that God had absolute foreknowledge of all things and peoples prior to creating them, and

that he commanded them to avoid doing wickedness. On the other hand (and extensively), the passage shows that God gave people the freedom of choice. Sirach (10:4, 5), however, it acknowledges the sovereignty and foreknowledge of God. It seems as if the passage resolves the conflict in favour of human free will.

4. Exegetical summary on the characterization of Judas Iscariot in the NT

4.1. Examination of Relevant Passages of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

The examinations of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts show that they all agree on Judas Iscariot being a prominent disciple and an apostle of Jesus (Matt 10:1–5; Mark 3:13–19; Luke 6:13–16; Acts 1:17, 25). They also agree that Judas Iscariot's action was predicted, as well as it fulfilled Scripture (Matt 26:24; Mark 14:21; Luke 22:22; Acts 1:15–20). This fulfilment of scriptures suggests that God had foreknowledge of his action; yet, it does not infer that God's foreknowledge annulled Judas' action. The passages also show that Judas Iscariot guided those who arrested Jesus (Matt 26:48–50; Mark 14:44–46; Luke 22:47, 48; Acts 1:16).

Furthermore, the Synoptic Gospels record that Judas initiated the bargaining with the chief priests about betraying Jesus to them (Matt 26:14; Mark 14:10; Luke 22:4) and that Judas determinedly sought to betray Jesus (Matt 26:16; Mark 14:11; Luke 22:6). This determination indicates Judas Iscariot's wilfulness to achieve his own objective. It is worth noting that these books differ on certain minor details regarding Judas Iscariot. For example, Luke indicates in his gospel that Satan influenced the role that Judas played in betraying Jesus (22:3, 4); however, he indicates in Acts that Judas was completely responsible (Acts 1:15–20). Also, unlike the Synoptic Gospels, Acts reports that the remuneration that Judas Iscariot received was the result of his wicked action (1:18). The reference to Judas Iscariot receiving a reward for his wickedness makes him liable for his action.

The Synoptic Gospels and Acts do portray Judas Iscariot's character negatively as a greedy traitor who willfully betrayed Jesus, even though Luke suggests a satanic influence. Furthermore, these books indicate that Judas Iscariot was guilty of betraying Jesus in spite of Jesus' foreknowledge that he would betray him, and in spite of Jesus choosing Judas Iscariot as a choice disciple/apostle. Matthew especially shows that Judas

Iscariot regretted his action and subsequently hanged himself. These actions show his culpability.

For instance, Matthew says of Judas, *Τότε πορευθείς εἰς τῶν δώδεκα ὁ λεγόμενος Ἰούδας Ἰσκαριώτης, πρὸς τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς* ('Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests', Matt 26:14abc). The phrase, *Τότε πορευθείς* that Matthew uses with Judas Iscariot infers that Judas was the one who took the initiative to go to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them, rather than their seeking him out or coercing him to betray Jesus (cf. Carlson 2010:474, 475; McCumber 1975:197; Robertson 2011:227). This is the probable reason why Matthew chose to use *πορευθείς* as aorist middle participle (cf. Zerwick and Grosvenor 1993:85). The action of Judas marred his character and portrayed him as heartless and deceitful (cf. Carlson 2010:472–478). Davies and Allison (Turner 2008:621) describe Judas Iscariot's action as pathetic 'and enigmatically evil, and his motivation in betraying Jesus is inscrutable'.

Furthermore, Matthew records Judas' response to Jesus' disclosure that one of them would betray him as, *Μήτι ἐγώ εἰμι, ῥαββί;* (Matthew 26:25). This question appears to be rhetorical. Judas might have intended to elicit a negative response from Jesus (cf. Blomberg 1992:389). Thus, the translation by NLT ('I'm not the one, am I?'), reflects this well. Jesus' response to the other disciples vindicated them, while it indicted the one who 'dipped his hand in the bowl' with Jesus (Matt 26:23). Jesus' answer to Judas, 'You have said so' (26:25) implies he had foreknowledge of Judas' action. While Jesus' response to Judas may not have exposed him as a betrayer to the other disciples, Matthew's audience may have understood it so (Greene 2016:198).

4.2. Examination of Passages Related to Judas Iscariot in the Gospel of John

The Gospel of John presents Judas Iscariot, explicitly and implicitly, in at least nine noteworthy ways: (1) John presents Judas as an unbelieving disciple and 'a devil' who, being 'one of the twelve', would later betray Jesus (6:70, 71; cf. Wright 2009:544–559). (2) John presents Judas Iscariot as 'a thief' who would betray Jesus (12:4–6). (3) John presents Judas Iscariot as the disciple whose heart 'the devil' induced to betray Jesus (13:2). (4) John presents Judas Iscariot as the disciple to whom Jesus gave a piece of bread in order to identify him as his betrayer (13:21–26). (5) John presents Judas Iscariot as the disciple into whom Satan entered 'after he received the piece of bread' (13:26b, 27). (6) John presents Judas Iscariot as the disciple who apostatised after he

received the piece of bread from Jesus (13:30). (7) John presents Judas Iscariot as the disciple who 'lifted his heel' against Jesus (13:18, 19). (8) John presents Judas Iscariot as 'the son of destruction' (17:6–12). (9) John presents Judas Iscariot as the one who took a detachment of soldiers and police into the garden to arrest Jesus (18:1–5).

The Gospel of John appears to compare Judas Iscariot's act of betrayal with that of David's trusted counsellor, Ahithophel (John 13:18; cf. Psa 41:9; 2 Sam 15:12). John states that Judas fulfilled Scripture by this action (13:18). Additionally, John indicates that Jesus did not protect and keep Judas from becoming lost, because Judas was already lost and that this fate was in fulfilment of Scripture (17:12). The reference to scriptural fulfilment implies divine foreknowledge, whereas the ways in which John portrays the character of Judas and his act of betrayal suggest that he holds Judas liable for his character and his action (cf. Kelly 1995:38–40). John's dual presentation of these issues therefore indicates the interplay between divine foreknowledge and human free will (cf. Oropeza 2010:345–349).

5. Conclusion: Theological reflections on compatibilism and Judas

This article has summarised the exegetical findings on the interactions between divine foreknowledge and human free will, which are exemplified in how the Bible portrays the particular case of Judas Iscariot. Various passages of the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, and the Gospel of John have indicated that Judas Iscariot willfully chose not to believe in Jesus (cf. John 6:64), as well as that he chose willfully to betray Jesus (cf. Matt 26:14–16; 27:3, 4; Mark 14:10, 11; Luke 22:3–6). Additionally, these passages have shown that even though God may have had a hand in Judas' role (indicated by Jesus choosing Judas and Judas' action fulfilling Scripture) Judas used his free disposition to betray Jesus. The Gospel of John in particular, suggests that Judas Iscariot's bad character caused him to betray Jesus (John 12:4–6; 6:70). I think Judas Iscariot's determination to betray Jesus, to the extent that he disregarded Jesus' prediction that one of the twelve would betray him (Matt 26:21, 23; Luke 22:21–23; John 13:18), may have been due to Judas' character of greed (cf. Matt 26:15; John 12:6) or because he was already lost (John 17:12).

Thus, Judas Iscariot's act of betrayal may not have been the result of divine foreknowledge or of Jesus choosing him, or of Satan entering him and influencing him. All the New Testament

passages in relation to Judas Iscariot underline the interplay between divine foreknowledge and human free will in a non-contrastive transcendent manner, even though some place different emphases on the degree of this compatibility, and others underline a complicated role for even Satan himself.

At the pastoral level, this study offers two main implications. Firstly, it implies that an individual could be following Jesus without believing in him like Judas did. Secondly, it implies that an active, divinely gifted church leader or church member might apostatise because of a greedy, diabolical character and refusal to heed repeated warnings by God's Spirit.

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The Axiology of Qohelet and Life ‘Under the Sun’: What is Good for Us to Do?

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Abstract

Many readers of the Book of Ecclesiastes have concluded that Qohelet (the ‘Preacher’) teaches that life ‘under the sun’ is meaningless or worthless. The aim of this paper is to show why that assessment is mistaken. In the first place, if life is as Qohelet describes it—as enigmatic and fleeting, most often frustrating, uncertain, incomprehensible, beyond human control, and subject to evil—then it makes sense to ask, as he did, what is to our advantage and good for us to do? To support this claim, Qohelet’s axiology—his view of the kinds of things that are good or valuable, what it is that makes them valuable, the kinds of value there are, and the relationship between ‘good’ and ‘right’—is clarified and described from a theological perspective. The analysis reveals that life ‘under the sun’ now requires prudence, and the most prudent thing to do is to fear God and obey his revealed moral will. This is not only the essence of wisdom; it is the only value that has implications for our present life and the afterlife. The paper also shows that Qohelet’s axiology is consistent with the teachings of Genesis 1–3, Deuteronomy 6, and the New Testament. It concludes that Qohelet deeply cares about our good, well-being, and happiness, and that the ultimate source of that care is ‘one

Keywords

Axiology, Ecclesiastes, Ethics, Good, Qohelet, Right, Value

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Shepherd’, which makes it impossible to think that life is meaningless or worthless.

1. Introduction

It is commonplace in the literature on Ecclesiastes to find that commentators think that it is ‘not a theological work but a philosophical treatise’ (Seow 2008:54). RBY Scott (1965:196) puts it thus: ‘What we have before us here is primarily a philosophical work rather than a book of religion’. Peter Kreeft (1989:15) writes that ‘Ecclesiastes is the only book of philosophy, pure philosophy... in the Bible’. He also refers to King Solomon as a philosopher (p. 38) and believes that the ‘whole point of this book is “vanities of vanities”, the meaninglessness of human life’ (p. 22; cf. Bartholomew 2009:107; Berger 2001:173–174, 179; Longman III and Dillard 2006:278–288; Ryken 2010:37). In contrast to Kreeft, others believe that the main idea of the book is ‘not life’s meaninglessness or incomprehensibility, but its ultimate worthlessness’, which means that Qohelet teaches his readers that nothing in our world has any absolute value (Gericke 2012:6; cf. Berger 2001:176; Fee and Stuart 1993:234; Gale 2011:157; Scott 1965:206). Still others believe that Qohelet viewed life through a ‘God-centred theology’ (McCabe 1996:85–112) while he also ‘recounts his search for meaning and purpose in life’ (McCabe 2013:61).²

These claims raise for readers of Ecclesiastes a problem I wish to address.

2. The Problem: Did Qohelet Believe that Life is Meaningless and Worthless?

Many commentators have realised that it would be a mistake to think that the word *hebel* —translated as ‘vanity’³— in Ecclesiastes 1:2 has a single meaning (DeRouchie 2011; Fuhr 2013). Although Graham Ogden’s (1987) semantic analysis of the word indicates that it cannot mean ‘meaningless’, ‘valueless’ or ‘empty’, it is instructive to note at least three reasons why readers of Ecclesiastes may conclude that Qohelet believed that life is meaningless or worthless.

The first is because of wrong English translations of *hebel*, for example, as ‘meaningless’ in the NIV and NIVII. Jason DeRouchie (2011:6–7) noted that ‘vanity’ in most English translations is likely due to the ‘1611 King James Version, which took its lead from

2 Writers such as Longman III and Dillard (2006) refer to Qohelet’s search for ‘meaning in life’ (p. 281, 283) and the ‘meaning of life’ (p. 282) without indicating why we should think it means the same thing. According to Fuhr (2013:53, fn. 97), ‘Qohelet does not contend that life or anything else is without purpose, nor does he imply that his quest is for purpose’. Fox (1986a:409) thinks that *hebel* means ‘absurd’, thus that Qohelet claims that ‘everything is absurd’, irrational and meaningless (cf. Fox 1989:11). For Seow (2008:59), Qohelet ‘does not mean that everything is meaningless or insignificant, but that everything is beyond human apprehension and comprehension’. Haden (1987:52, 54) writes that Qohelet wrestled with ‘man’s aloneness’ or alienation ‘from the universe at large, from society, and from one’s own self’, and that he dealt with this problem ‘with philosophical dexterity’. For Fee and Stuart (1993:235), Qohelet’s perspective ‘is the secular, fatalistic wisdom’ that ‘atheism produces... Ecclesiastes is the result’. For Piper (2011), ‘The writer of Ecclesiastes is speaking the words of a despairing man, not a man of faith... This is bleak theology’. Doukhan (2006:11) states that Qohelet could ‘see no sense to this life’, and then goes on to say that ‘Ecclesiastes affirms the value of work, wisdom, life and happiness, including religion and even righteousness’ (p. 12). It has not occurred to the latter writer how odd his statements would have appeared to Qohelet.

3 Its literal meaning is ‘breath’, ‘whiff’, ‘puff’, ‘steam’ (Seow 2008:47). ‘The idiomatic phrase *hebel hebalim* ‘breath of breaths’ expresses the superlative and may be translated ‘ultimate breath’ or ‘utterly breath’ (DeRouchie 2011:18–19). *Hebel* is used the thirty-eight times in Ecclesiastes: 1:2 (5x), 14; 2:1, 11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26; 3:19; 4:4, 7, 8, 16; 5:7, 10; 6:2, 4, 9, 11, 12; 7:6, 15; 8:10, 14 (2x); 9:9 (2x); 11:8, 10; 12:8 (3x). DeRouchie (2011:6) points out that interpreters are likely correct to maintain continuity of meaning for all the *hebel* texts—at least those wherein conclusive judgements are

made. Of all the *hebel* texts, only the following ones exclude statements of judgement: 6:4, 11, 12; 7:15; 9:9; 11:10. In 1:3, Qohelet asks what is referred to as his 'programmatic question': 'What advantage [or gain, benefit; *yitron*] does man have in all his work which he does under the sun?' It is noteworthy that it is never used in Ecclesiastes with a material sense (DeRouchie 2011:20). Cf. the noun *yitron* (1:3, 2:11, 13 [twice]; 3:9; 5:9, 16; 7:12; 10:10, 11; the noun *motar* (3:19), and the participle *yoter* (6:8, 11; 7:1), which is sometimes used as an adverb (2:15; 7:16; 12:9, 12).

4 Fox (1989:68) states that pleasure was Qohelet's 'supreme value'. Fee and Stuart (1993:234) put it thus: '[T]he "Teacher's" advice is existential in character: Enjoy life as much as you can while you are alive... there is nothing else'. Ryken's (2010:46) reading of Ecclesiastes 2:1 leads him to conclude that Qohelet became a 'self-centered pleasure' seeker or 'experimental hedonist'. Qohelet would not have agreed with these writers. He says, for example, only 'the mind [lit. heart] of fools is in the house of pleasure' (Eccl 7:4). When he sought to 'explore how to stimulate my body with wine', he said that he did so 'while my mind [lit. heart] was guiding me wisely' (2:3), which is unlike leaders who prefer feasting and drinking rather than fulfilling their duties (10:17-19).

Jerome's use of *vanitas* in the Vulgate—a Latin term that limited the semantic range to a value statement, such as "emptiness, worthlessness, unreality, vanity", but not "transitory" or "enigmatic".

The second reason is because of the rendering of the Hebrew word by different commentators. The most unfortunate result is that the rendering of *hebel* as 'vanity', 'futility' or 'absurdity' induces many readers to read Ecclesiastes 'with a deprecatory slant, thus requiring great efforts to redeem or correct his theology' (DeRouchie 2011:7; see also fn. 1 above), which cannot be dismissed as an overstatement.

A third reason why someone may conclude that Qohelet teaches that life is worthless is that the commentators filter Qohelet's message through their own pessimistic, sceptical or atheistic worldview. For instance, theologian Jaco Gericke (2012) concludes that Qohelet was a naturalist and subjectivist, that Qohelet recommended the pursuit of sensual pleasures,⁴ that Qohelet thought that nothing had intrinsic or absolute value, and that Qohelet's assumptions are not coherent. Thus, he believes that 'Qohelet teaches a form of active nihilism (cf. Nietzsche)' (Gericke 2012:6; cf. Scott 1965:191–192). The problem is exacerbated when commentators fail to bring the rest of scripture to bear on their hermeneutical approach or method.

DeRouchie (2011:7) advances three reasons why these beliefs cannot be sustained, to which I wish to add a fourth. Firstly, if the true rendering of *hebel* in the book is 'worthless', then one would expect to find other words or phrases in the Old Testament that denote 'vanity', 'meaninglessness' or 'worthlessness' alongside Qohelet's use of the word in Ecclesiastes. Put another way, if *hebel* denotes 'worthless' or 'valueless', then the meanings of the following list of words—used nearly one hundred times outside Ecclesiastes—are to be expected in Qohelet, but they are not: *ayin* ('nothing', 'naught'), *req* ('empty', 'idle', 'worthless'), *riq* ('emptiness'), *siwe* ('worthless', 'without result'), and *tohu* ('nothingness'). Secondly, if 'everything [*kol*, "all"] is *hebel*' (1:2; 12:8) means 'all is meaningless, absurd or senseless', then Qohelet's claims that 'nothing is better than...' (2:24; 3:12, 22) and that 'x is better than y' (4:9; 5:1; 7:1–10; 9:4, 16–18) would mean that something that is meaningless, absurd or senseless could be more meaningless, absurd or senseless than it already is, which is unintelligible. Finally, if all things 'under the sun' are meaningless, worthless or senseless, on what basis should we accept that what Qohelet claims are not also meaningless, worthless or senseless?

The fourth reason is consistent with the aforementioned reasons: a lack or an inadequate understanding of Qohelet's axiology. I wish to submit that Qohelet's point about his message is straightforward: if life on earth since the Fall and God's curse on his Creation is as he describes it—as enigmatic and fleeting, most often frustrating, uncertain, incomprehensible, beyond our control, and subject to evils such as injustices, suffering and death—then he asked a question every person should ask himself or herself: What 'advantage' (gain, profit, benefit) does a person have in all his or her work 'under the sun' (1:2; cf. 3:9; 5:16; 6:8, 11)?⁵

Qohelet indicates that there is only one sure way to know what is to our advantage or benefit, and that is to know what is good for us to do. He not only used the phrase 'x is better than y' about 25 times, 'good' 51 times and 'bad' no less than 30 times in Ecclesiastes; he also clearly expressed his interest in valuing things in the following words: 'I explored with my mind [lit. heart] ... until I could see [know, understand] what good there is for the sons of men to do under heaven the few years of their lives' (2:3). If considered from a theological perspective, that is Qohelet's central concern in Ecclesiastes, or so I will argue.⁶ By clarifying his theological axiology, I hope to show that life 'under the sun' is neither meaningless nor worthless. It will become apparent that pleasure was indeed a value for Qohelet, but far more valuable to him is to 'fear God and keep his commandments' (12:13). That is the essence of Qohelet's wisdom. Not only is that wisdom most consistent with that of Moses in Deuteronomy 6, Qohelet's axiology is also consistent with the teachings of Genesis 1–3 and the New Testament. Thus, despite the disastrous effects of God's curse on his Creation, as we will see, not a single thing of what God created has lost any of its intrinsic or absolute goodness. In conclusion, I hope to show that Qohelet cared deeply about our good or well-being and happiness, and why that is so.

3. Qohelet's Theological Axiology

Axiology (Greek *axio*, 'value') is the theory of value or good. The aim of those who work in this field of ethics is to study things that are valuable or good, including what it is that makes them good, the kinds of value there are, how we can know value claims are true, and the relationship between value and the moral rightness of actions (Hirose and Olson 2015:1; Schroeder 2016). It will, therefore, be useful to first make a few introductory observations about Qohelet's axiology. I will then identify and describe the kinds of things that are good or valuable, what it is that makes

5 All references are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless otherwise indicated.

6 In addition to Gericke (2012) referred to above, Jones (2014:21) accepts that 'Ecclesiastes is a book of values'. Despite this insight, Jones' elucidation is elementary at best.

them valuable, as well as the kinds of value there are in Ecclesiastes. What we shall see is that Qohelet's view of what is to our advantage and good for us to do is not a view from nowhere. Finally, I will clarify what I believe to be the relationship between 'good' (evaluations) and 'right' (prescriptive) actions.

3.1. General observations

3.1.1. Qohelet's semantics of value

To ask what is to our advantage or benefit and is good for us to do, as Qohelet did, is to ask about what is valuable. It means that Qohelet used 'good' as a general standard for the evaluation of things. In fact, words such as 'good', 'better', 'best', 'bad', and 'worse', and words such as 'courageous', 'generous', 'gracious', 'kindness', 'oppression', and 'shameful' are all evaluative words. When we use them, we express an evaluative judgement of the worth (value and importance) of something. However, it is not always necessary to use 'good' or 'bad' when evaluating a thing. Qohelet says, for instance, that 'a bribe corrupts [lit. destroys] the heart' (7:7), which implies that it is bad for both oneself and others.

All that leads to the following important question. What did Qohelet mean when he said he set his heart on seeing and exploring with wisdom (2:3) what is good for us to do? The short answer is: he believed that wisdom is all about how to live one's life 'under the sun' (cf. Frydrych 2002:16, 18; Zimmerli 1964:150). Or, in different words, he believed that there are some ways of living that are better than others, which best promote our well-being. If that is an intelligible position to hold, then we need to understand the relation between living rightly and living well. I hope to show it is crucial to understanding Qohelet's wisdom.

We can discern at least six ways in which Qohelet used sentences to make evaluative claims or value judgements:

- (1) He often uses 'good' to express or imply a general value. For example, 'It is good that you grasp one thing, and also not to let go of the other' (7:18). The sense is that of 'intrinsic goodness' ('just plain good' or 'being good', period).
- (2) When he claims that 'x is good for' us, he refers to what is good for our lives or well-being. The sense is that of 'prudential value'.
- (3) When he claims that 'x is beautiful', he expresses what is aesthetically valuable.

- (4) When he says that ‘a wise man’s words are gracious’ (10:12), he refers to the good content or quality that characterises the wise person’s speech.
- (5) When he claims that ‘x is better than y’, he compares or contrasts two valuable things (7:1–10).
- (6) He often uses an attributive value adjective or predicate ‘good’ to modify a noun, for example, ‘good person’ (9:2). The sense is that of ‘moral goodness’.

An analysis of Qohelet’s ‘better than’ sentences can be divided into two groups. They all serve a single emphatic purpose: they draw the reader’s attention to what is valued (cf. Ogden 1977:489–505). The first group consists of 17 examples of the ‘better than’ judgements (4:3, 6, 9, 13; 5:5; 6:3, 9; 7:1, 2, 3, 5, 8 (twice), 10; 9:4, 16, 18). In this group, the adjective ‘better’ (*tob*) is used together with ‘than’ to express a comparative value. Some sentences imply that two things share the same property (‘goodness’), but in different degrees, for example, wisdom and strength (9:16). Both are good, but wisdom is better. Other statements imply that the opposite of ‘better’ is not less good, but not good at all. For instance, ‘It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay’ (5:5). However, there are some uses of ‘better’ in this group which lack the use of ‘than’ but nevertheless clearly compare two things. The only difference seems to be a different syntactical arrangement (4:2; 5:1; 9:17). In one verse, two relatively valued states of affairs are presented to which a third is more favourably compared (4:3).

In the second group the ‘better than’ and ‘better for’ judgements are preceded by ‘nothing’ (2:24; 3:12, 22; 8:15). In this group, Qohelet’s counsel is to enjoy the simple things in life: ‘eat your bread and drink your wine’ (9:7), and enjoy your work (toil) because it is ‘good for’ all people (8:15). Together, all these judgements serve as Qohelet’s response to the question in the first chapter: What advantage (gain, profit or benefit) do human beings have in all their activities ‘under the sun’ (1:3)?

3.1.2. Distinctive marks of Qohelet’s axiology

Qohelet’s axiology is characterised by at least four distinct features: realism, universality, normativity, and self- and other-directedness.

- 1) *Realism and objectivity.* Qohelet was a realist (Whybray 1989:24–25, 28; DeRouchie 2011:8), and as a realist he believed that his claims report or state facts about how things are in the world, that his claims are true and

represent facts that exist objectively, independently of what he thought, believed, felt or desired about them.

With regard to (1), Qohelet did not intend to deceive us, for he says that he ‘sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly’ (12:10), for the words of the wise are ‘given by one Shepherd’ (12:11; cf. 2:26; Job 28:12–13; James 1:5).⁷ It is consistent with what the Apostle Paul teaches about inspired scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16–17. Qohelet also leaves no indication that the ‘goodness’ or ‘badness’ of something depends on someone’s personal taste or how much something is liked or desired by any given individual (i.e. subjectivism).

⁷ Most English translations capitalise ‘Shepherd’ in order to identify this shepherd with Yahweh, the one God of Israel (DeRouchie 2011:12-13).

(2) *Universality*. Qohelet made it clear that his axiology has a universal scope; he did not intend to restrict or make it relative to a single individual, group of people, or culture.

With regard to (2), Qohelet let us know that his axiology applies to every person ‘under the sun’ or ‘under heaven’. He says so in the first chapter (v. 3; cf. 2:3ff.) as well as in the final chapter (12:13): ‘For God will bring every act [of every person] to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or bad’. It is also consistent with what our Lord (Matt 16:27) and Paul teach in the New Testament (Rom 2:1–11; 2 Cor 5:10; cf. Heb 9:27).

(3) *Normativity*. If x is ‘better than’ y and ‘nothing is better than’ x, then x provides us with a reason to choose, pursue, obey or perform, and promote or protect it.

Qohelet says ‘It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay... Rather, fear God’ (5:5, 7), and ‘I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one’s lifetime’ (3:12).

(4) *Self- and other-directedness*. If some things are ‘good for’ us, then they provide us with a reason to care for our own well-being and that of others.

Qohelet writes that it is good for me to avoid sorrow in my heart and pain in my body (11:10). Because his axiology is universal, it follows that what is good for one person is good for another. Qohelet also states that ‘oppression makes a wise man mad’ and ‘a bribe corrupts the heart’ (7:7). That is because those who oppress others dehumanise them and those who accept bribes undermine justice and, by so doing, the happiness or well-being of others. Instead, ‘there is nothing better’, says Qohelet, than to do good in one’s life time (3:12).

3.1.3. Qohelet's sources of knowledge (epistemology)

The final observation about Qohelet's axiology that deserves mention is that he acquired knowledge through personal experience, observation, reflection, and the Torah, but especially Genesis. He says, for example, that he 'explored' things 'with his heart' (2:3) and 'saw' (realised or understood) 'that wisdom is better than folly as light is better than darkness' (2:13). Not only is it acknowledged by scholars that Old Testament wisdom is shaped 'within the framework of a theology of creation' (Zimmerly 1964:148), but it is also widely accepted that Qohelet's reflections occurred against the background of the events described in Genesis 1–3 (Caneday 1986:30, 51; Clemens 1994; DeRouchie 2011; Forman 1960; McCabe 1996; 2013; Shank 1974; Zimmerli 1964; Zuck 1991), therefore, the special revelation of God. A single example will suffice to make the point: 'All go to the same place. All come from the dust and all return to the dust' (3:20; 12:7; cf. Gen 3:19).

In contrast to the absence of evil in God's 'very good' Creation in Genesis 1, Qohelet knew that that was no longer the state of affairs or situation 'under the sun'. A radical change occurred since Adam's rebellion and God's subsequent curse (Gen 2:16–17; 3:1–6, 14–19). No wonder he exclaimed: 'So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous [lit. evil] to me; because everything is *hebel* [upside down, uncertain, deeply frustrating, and fleeting]' (2:17; author's own rendering). That, however, does not mean that Qohelet thought of life as meaningless or worthless. To see why, I will next turn to Qohelet's axiological categories and distinctions.

3.2. The bearers of value

Since Qohelet refers to our Creator (12:1) and Giver of life (8:15), it can safely be assumed that he knew that God introduced value into our world (Gen 1:31; see Joubert 2018). That means that value is not a human invention, and it is also quite evident in Ecclesiastes 2:3 and 6:12. To 'see' what is good for us to do presupposes the 'good' in our world, otherwise Qohelet would not have been able to tell us what he saw (cf. 2:13; 3:10, 22; 4:1, 4–7, 15; 5:18; 7:15, 27; 8:9, 16–17; 9:11, 13; 10:5–7).

Qohelet saw and speaks about various bearers or carriers of value, such as consumer goods (5:11), persons (2:26), states of affairs (4:1–16; 5:18; 7:10; 9:1ff.), action (5:4; 7:2, 5; 8:11–12), speech-acts (a rebuke–7:5; gracious words–10:12), relationships (4:9–12), pleasure (8:15), wisdom (7:11; 10:10), patience (7:8), a good name or reputation (7:1), to be alive (11:7), and leadership (10:15–19).

These goods illustrate why none of these things can be worthless. Consider the following three examples.

3.2.1. Enjoyment

Qohelet says, 'Go then, eat your bread in happiness, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works' (9:7; cf. 3:22). Because of uncertainty and the fact that no person is master of the future, it makes sense to enjoy the present, which makes life both fulfilling and valuable. The same points are made in the New Testament: 'Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God' (1 Cor 10:31). Here Paul's point is to honour God in everything we do, but also adds that we should respect another's conscience: 'But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak' (1 Cor 8:9). Elsewhere, Paul states that we should not 'be conceited' and set our 'hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy' (1 Tim 6:17; see also vv. 18–19).

3.2.2. Diligence

Qohelet's advice is to 'Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good' (11:6). Because the unknown future and the uncertain results of our work, the more diligently we should go to work. The point is a positive one, not a counsel of despair or to regard our efforts as worthless. Paul also speaks of spiritual riches: 'Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary' (Gal 6:9).

3.2.3. It is good to be alive

'The light is pleasant, and it is good for the eyes [a person] to see the sun' (11:7). Since that is so, it can be neither meaningless nor worthless 'to remove vexation [or sorrow] from your heart and put away pain [lit. evil] from your body' (v. 10). Qohelet emphasises not only the goodness (value) of spiritual and bodily wellness (cf. 3 John 2), but also tells us to pursue it. The problem is that too many people think that joy and responsibility do not mix; hence, they ignore or forget either the fact that 'childhood and the prime of life are fleeting' or that their Creator will call them to give an account of their actions (11:9).

So what is it that makes good things good?

3.3. The source of goodness

Qohelet makes it known that what makes good things good is our Creator, and refers to them as ‘gifts of God’ (2:24; 3:12, 22; 5:18; 8:15; 9:7–9). As noted earlier, some of the items that are specified for enjoyment are food, drink, and work. It ‘is from the hand of God. For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without him? To the person who is good in his sight he has given wisdom, and knowledge and joy’ (2:24–26; cf. 3:10, 22). To these he adds wealth, possessions, and the number of days of one’s life which God gives to those ‘under the sun’ (5:18–19; 8:15). It underlines an important relation: the goodness of the gifts and the goodness of their Giver (Ps 34:8; 106:1; 136:1; 1 Tim 4:4; 6:16–19). Thus, if the gifts draw us to their Giver, then it becomes difficult to comprehend how they could be worthless or why God would provide us with good things when life is meaningless.

I will next show that the things Qohelet judged to be good can be categorised into at least two basic categories or kinds of ‘goodness’: the intrinsic ‘good’ and what is ‘good for’ us. These can then be further distinguished into the aesthetically and morally valuable.

3.4. Qohelet’s categories of goodness

3.4.1. Intrinsic goodness

The first important category of ‘goodness’ in Qohelet’s axiology can be referred to as ‘intrinsic goodness’ (equivalent: just plain good or good absolutely). To say ‘x is good’ is to say x has the property of ‘being good’, period. Put differently, to ask ‘What is good?’ is to ask what is good in itself or good for its own sake. Certain goods, such as wisdom, knowledge and skill (2:13, 21; 4:13; 7:11–12, 19; 9:13–18), pleasure, joy in one’s work (2:24–26), companionship (4:9–12), justice (5:8), and a good name or reputation (9:1) are examples. Thus, if something is intrinsically good or just plain good, then it is good at all times and places, and ‘goodness’ is a property that all good things have in common, as we shall see shortly.

Qohelet says, ‘It is good *that* you grasp one thing, and also not to let go of the other; for the one who fears God comes forth with both of them’ (7:18; emphasis added). It is just plain good to hold on to one piece of advice or something learned and not to neglect or let go of other equally important pieces of advice or knowledge. Read with verses 16 and 17, we may say it is just plain good to understand the dangers of an overly one-sided view of religiosity (‘excessive righteousness’; 7:16) and also good never to let go of one’s convictions about an overly one-sided view of sin (‘excessive wickedness’; 7:17). For example, Jesus berated the Pharisees for

their ‘long prayers’, their empty oaths, and claims to keep the law of Moses while they neglected ‘justice and mercy and faithfulness’ (Matt 23:14, 16–23; cf. 5:20). By emphasising only certain aspects of what the law of Moses required, they became at the same time hypocritical or overly wicked (cf. Luke 11:42–52; John 8:42–46).

However, the claim that ‘goodness’ is something all good things have in common needs to be qualified to avoid misunderstanding. It would be a mistake to think that the concept of ‘good’ applies to all objects in entirely the same way. If it does, then we would think that ‘goodness’ would describe pleasure, companionship, fruit, vegetables, animals, humans, and God in exactly the same way. So how should we understand the goodness of God (Matt 19:17) in relation to the goodness of his creation? The alternative, as we saw earlier, is to see that good things have the same property (‘goodness’) in common but in different degrees.⁸ It is quite evident in Qohelet’s judgements that some things are ‘better than’ others (7:1–10) and some things ‘more bitter than death’ (7:26). Jesus says, ‘you are of more value than sparrows’ (Matt 10:31) and of ‘much more value than a sheep’ (Matt 12:12).

⁸ Note that God values humans more than animals: Matt 6:26, 10:31, 12:12 and Luke 12:7, 24.

The fact that something is just plain good or absolutely good has at least three logical implications. The first is that it is by virtue of its intrinsic nature that something is good, irrespective of whether prudentially, aesthetically or morally good (cf. fruit, vegetables, enjoyment or happiness, companionship). Therefore, and second, when Qohelet says that ‘x is good’ or ‘x is better’, he cannot mean that it is intrinsically bad or worthless. Finally, whether something is intrinsically good does not depend on anyone’s point of view or on how much it is liked, preferred or desired by anyone. All three points are affirmed by the Apostle Paul: ‘I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself’ (Rom 14:14), and ‘everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude’ (1 Tim 4:4).

3.4.2. The good for (prudential goodness)

The second main category in Qohelet’s axiology refers to what is ‘good for’ or beneficial to us. Just to give it a label, this sort of value could be called ‘prudential goodness’ because it concerns our life, well-being and happiness ‘under the sun’. There are several senses in which x can be good for y: x may be useful as a means to some goal or purpose, for example, good for making something; x may be good for someone to do (take a run or a swim); x may be good for someone to have (a good rest); and ‘x is good for y’ when x sustains or makes y’s life better (i.e. leaves y ‘better off’; Eccl 4:3; 6:5–6).

‘Wisdom’, for example, is not only an intrinsic good, it also is a prudential good in the sense that it ‘strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city’ (7:19). Qohelet states that ‘a wise heart knows the proper time and procedure’ (8:5). The latter kind of wisdom I shall refer to as ‘prudence’.⁹ I will explain.

In Proverbs, Qohelet (i.e. King Solomon)¹⁰ tells his readers that his proverbs are intended to ‘give prudence to the naïve’ (1:1, 4; cf. 8:5, 12), about which at least three things should be said. Firstly, prudence is an ethic of responsibility; it requires that we answer for our intentions, motives, and the consequences of our actions. Secondly, understanding of, deliberation on, and choices between the best means to an end depends on prudence. It explains why the prudent person is most concerned with prudential goodness or value (i.e. well-being or wellness) and the best means by which it can be attained (cf. Prov 8:5). In a word, prudence helps us to determine which means (the instrumental good) is the most apt to some end. And thirdly, prudence involves effort, attention, and carefulness as opposed to indifference or passivity. Qohelet says, ‘Through indolence the rafters sag, and through slackness the house leaks’ (10:18). It requires that one ‘looks at’, ‘looks for’, ‘listens to’ and ‘listens for’ particular things, and then does something about it. These are all actions a person performs. For instance, Qohelet ‘turned to consider...’ (2:12), then ‘looked again at...’ (4:1, 7), and he says ‘it is better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man than for one to listen to the songs of fools’ (7:5; cf. 5:1). One of the things he saw was that a blunt axe only makes work more difficult (10:10). Thus, if a worker runs into difficulties in his or her work, then he or she must consider the means used to accomplish it. That wisdom, says Qohelet, ‘has the advantage of giving success’ (10:10).

To summarise: Qohelet tells us what is ‘good’ in itself, and he underscores what is ‘good for’ us. Things that are intrinsically and instrumentally good for us share essentially the same property: they support, as opposed to undermine the value of every person’s life, happiness or well-being. They are, by implication, far from valueless or worthless. Things that are just plain, intrinsically or absolutely good and good for us can be further qualified.

3.4.3. Aesthetic value

Many things make a qualitative difference to life ‘under the sun’, including beautiful things. For instance, it is written that every tree that God planted in the Garden of Eden was ‘pleasing to the sight and good for food’ (Gen 2:9). Beauty is, therefore, the value beautiful things have for us. Qohelet says that God has in his

⁹ Proverbs 8:12 says, ‘I, wisdom dwells with prudence’. Zimmerli (1964:149) wrote that ‘the primary character of wisdom’ is prudence. Fee and Stuart (1993:237) predicate the same of Proverbs: the prudent person is most concerned with how to ‘make responsible, successful choices in life’. However, they disappointingly contrast that with what they consider to be the ‘speculative cynicism’ of Qohelet.

¹⁰ For confirmation of Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes, see McCabe (2015:3-20).

sovereignty planned the timing of all things (3:1–8), and ‘has made everything appropriate [lit. beautiful] in its time’ (3:11), ‘which unmistakably reflects Genesis 1’ (Zimmerli 1964:155; cf. Joubert 2018). We may say that everything, for which there is a time, is beautiful. In the words of Qohelet: ‘Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting [lit. beautiful]: to eat, to drink and enjoy [lit. to ‘see’ or experience good] oneself in all one’s labour in which one toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward’ (5:18; cf. 9:9). Through all the *hebel* (gloom, frustration and the perplexity) of events, we can still see and experience God’s beautiful design of things (Ps 19:1ff.).

Thus, if something beautiful is good or valuable, then it makes some response to it appropriate: to love, desire, promote, and care for it, but above all, not to destroy it. It would be difficult to understand how this could be without making use of ‘beautiful’ or ‘good’ and if life ‘under the sun’ is meaningless or worthless.

3.4.4. Moral value

Recall that Qohelet announced that his goal was to ‘see what is good for the sons of men to do under heaven’ (2:3). In the middle of his book, he expresses the same thought in the form of a question: ‘who knows what is good for’ us? (6:12). The hedonist might say that Qohelet taught that nothing matters more in life except one’s experiences, namely, pleasure. Indeed, Qohelet ‘commended pleasure’ (8:15). The danger, however, is to adopt a utilitarian criterion of action, such as ‘act to increase pleasure’; therefore, to think that an increase in pleasure would increase the quality of one’s happiness or well-being, when it would not. Qohelet’s conclusion about who knows what is to our ultimate advantage is unambiguous: ‘The conclusion when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep his commandments, because this applies to every person’ (12:13; cf. 3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12–13). It is not difficult to establish what Qohelet meant and how he arrived at his conclusion.

In the first place, many writers call the ‘fear of God’ the ‘motto, or the key word, of wisdom writings... the highest maxim, the queen of all the rules of direction’ (Blocher 1977:4; cf. Zimmerli 1964:151). In Proverbs, ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge’ (1:7); it is ‘the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding’ (9:10); and it is said to be ‘the instruction [education] for wisdom’ (15:33). Most significantly, Job equates the value of wisdom (28:13) with the fear of God: ‘The fear of the Lord that is wisdom’ (28:28; cf. Deut 4:5–6). It suggests that of all the things that are good for us to do, nothing can be

compared to the value of the fear of and obedience to God. It is the principle or essence of wisdom.

In the second place, Qohelet would have us know that the value of that wisdom is the only value that has implications for our present life and the afterlife. If Ecclesiastes 12:13–14 is the conclusion of all that Qohelet is teaching us between Ecclesiastes 1:2 and Ecclesiastes 12:12, then 12:13–14 can be paraphrased as follows: ‘You have heard me saying a lot of things about life ‘under heaven’ and about what things are better than others; but let me now tell you what is the absolute best: fear God and obey him. It will determine the state of your well-being (happiness) in the present life and the life to come’. I believe we can discern at least two senses of the value of that wisdom. There is the sense of its spiritual and moral value, which entails devotion and loyalty to our Creator as well as the ‘turning away from evil’ (Job 28:28; cf. Prov 3:5–7; 1 Pet 3:11). There is also the sense of its preventative value. James Crenshaw (2013:97) writes that the phrase ‘fear God’ carries ‘a basic sense of dread’. If so, then Qohelet’s plea is to take the fear of God and obedience to his revealed moral will seriously: ‘For God will bring every act [of every person] to judgement, everything...’ (12:14; cf. Rom 2:1–11; 2 Cor 5:10). Thus, if an emotion (fear) provides a person with a motive to act, then it would be prudent for us to make Qohelet’s wisdom our own.

Finally, I believe that Qohelet would have us know that his conclusion did not come from nowhere. A brief comparison of what he said about the fear of and obedience to God, and what is good for us to do, with how these themes are presented in Deuteronomy 6, shows why.¹¹

- ‘[L]isten and be careful’ to do what God commands ‘that it may be well with you’ (Deut 6:3; cf. 4:1, 40; 5:29, 33; 13:4; 27:1, 9–10; 29:9); ‘Hear, O Israel!’ (Deut 6:4; cf. 9:1).

‘When all has been heard: keep God’s commandments’ (Eccl 12:13); ‘I know it will be well for those who fear God’ (Eccl 8:12).

- ‘[W]atch yourself, lest you forget the Lord’ (Deut 6:12; cf. 4:9; 8:11–14, 18–19).

‘Remember also your Creator... Remember him’ (Eccl 12:1, 6).

- ‘[D]o what is right and good in the sight of the Lord’ (Deut 6:18; cf. 12:25, 28; 13:18).

¹¹ Seow (2008:56) is quite aware that ‘Qohelet appears to have been familiar with Deuteronomy’, but fails to notice how Deuteronomy 6 underlies Qohelet’s teaching.

‘I know there is nothing better than... to rejoice and to do good’ (Eccl 3:12).

- ‘[F]ear only the Lord your God... [It is] for our good and for our survival’ (Deut 6:13, 24; cf. 4:10; 8:6; 10:12–13, 20; 13:4).

‘Fear God...’ (12:13); ‘[I]t will be well for those who fear God’ (Eccl 8:12).

The comparison underlines something of extreme importance: the God who speaks through Moses is the same God who speaks to us through Qohelet. The message can be stated in the axiological language of Deuteronomy 6:18: ‘[D]o what is right and good in the sight of the Lord’ (cf. Luke 6:27; Acts 10:38; Rom 2:7, 10; 12:9, 21; Gal 6:10; 1 Pet 3:11).

Since it is reasonable to conclude that Qohelet believed that there are ways of living that are better than others, which best promote our happiness or well-being, it will be useful to say something about the relation between ‘good’ and ‘right’.

3.5. The ‘good’ and the ‘right’

If we say, for instance, that someone is good, we are partly expressing an evaluative fact and partly describing the person. We say that there are certain facts about him or her which we regard as sufficient to warrant or justify the use of the word ‘good’. In contrast, the commandments of God are not describing anything. They are prescribing what people ‘ought’ and ‘ought not’ to do (i.e. their duties). That contrast raises the question about the relationship between the evaluative concept of ‘good’ (or ‘bad’) and the prescriptive deontic concept of ‘right’ (or ‘wrong’, ‘obligation’ and ‘ought’).¹² Because of space constraints, I will first specify three main differences between these concepts and two areas in which they overlap, and then draw three conclusions.

The first principal difference between the concept of ‘good’ and the concept of ‘right’ is that the evaluative ‘good’ takes comparative and superlative forms. ‘Good’, but not ‘right’, admits of degrees. One can say ‘x is better than’ and ‘nothing is better than’, but one cannot say that what God commands is more or less right or obligatory. Another difference is that ‘good’ covers a wider range of things than ‘right’. We evaluate objects, states of affairs (situations), and people and their actions. In contrast, what is ‘right’ is typically used to refer to agents¹³ and their actions. There is a third difference. It seems that value (‘good’) is more closely tied to feelings (5:8; 7:7–10; 8:15; 9:4; 11:7) and desires (6:3, 6–9; 11:9),

¹² Actions and the value of their ‘rightness’ are the focus of what is known in the literature as ‘deontological ethics’ (from the Greek *deon*, which means ‘binding duty’; cf. Kaiser 1983:21; Moreland and Craig 2003:446ff.).

¹³ An ‘agent’, such as a human, is equipped with a two-way ability: to act at will and to refrain from acting.

and what is right more closely to the volition of a person (5:19–20; cf. Jer 7:22–26; 11:7–8; 13:11; 25:3–4).

The first area in which ‘good’ and ‘right’ overlap pertains to what is obligatory for us. We ought to approve what is good, disapprove of what is bad, and despise what is despicable (cf. Rom 12:9), just as we ought to approve what is right and disapprove of what is wrong (cf. Rom 12:17). And we ought to love, desire, protect, and care for what is good, just as we ought to love, desire, care for, and defend what is right. The evaluative ‘good’ and the prescriptive ‘right’ also overlap in the area of reasons for action. In ethical judgements, things that possess value provide reasons to promote and protect and not to destroy them. Reasons, in other words, explain why such actions are both good and right.

The differences and areas of overlap between the ‘good’ and the ‘right’ lead to three reasonable conclusions. First, although the relationship between ‘good’ and ‘right’ is very close in the sense that we can apply ‘ought’ to both what is good and what is right, they are nevertheless two distinct kinds of normative concepts. Second, the main difference is the conceptual roles ‘good’ and ‘right’ play in our lives ‘under the sun’: evaluative concepts allow us to describe and compare things, including people and their actions; deontic concepts prescribe what we ought and ought not to do, or what ought or ought not to be. Finally, by using prescriptive sentences, we may influence the conduct of people by simply pointing out the consequences of their acts or the consequences of their beliefs, feelings, attitudes and desires (cf. 4:1ff; 5:5–6; 7:7). But a value judgement is primarily aimed at *altering* the beliefs, feelings, attitudes and desires of people (cf. 4:13; 5:5–8; 12:13–14).

4. Summary and Concluding Remarks

Although ‘Solomon has a message for all people about their finitude and depravity as well as about God’s design for enjoying the basic gifts of life as he enables’ (McCabe 2015:19–20), we sense that he first, and foremost, cares about our good, well-being, or happiness. In a world in which things are enigmatic and fleeting, most often frustrating, incomprehensible, beyond our control, and subject to pain, suffering, and death, it makes sense to ask what is to our advantage and what is good for us to do. I wish to submit that his concern about our good or well-being should not be seen as a coincidence. According to Qohelet, its ultimate source is ‘one Shepherd’ (12:11; cf. Ps 23:1–6; 80:1), whom the New Testament refers to as the ‘good’ (John 10:11, 14), ‘great’ (Heb 13:20) and

‘Chief Shepherd’ (1 Pet 5:4), the ‘Guardian of our souls’ (1 Pet 2:25).

The analysis of the things that are good or valuable, what it is that makes them valuable, the kinds of value there are, and the relationship between ‘good’ and ‘right’ cannot support the thesis that life is meaningless or worthless. Qohelet’s axiology is also consistent with the teachings of Genesis 1–3, Deuteronomy 6, and the New Testament. None of the good things that God created lost any of their intrinsic or absolute goodness. It explains why things that are intrinsically good and good for us share essentially the same property: they underline, as opposed to, undermine the value of every person’s life, well-being, or happiness. However, because of the reality of sin and other evils in our everyday lives, some things are now ‘good’ and ‘bad’ for us, and some ‘better than’ or ‘worse than’ others. To discern the difference requires prudence, which begins with the fear of God and obedience to his revealed moral will. It is the essence of wisdom, and it has value for our present life and the one to come. About that, Qohelet leaves no one in the dark: ‘I know it will be well for those who fear God, who fear him openly. But it will not be well for the evil man... because he does not fear God’ (8:12–13). It entails a very specific kind of life before and in relation to our Creator and our neighbour. In the language of biblical axiology: live well and live right.

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Lutheran and Reformed Theology in Conversation

Dan Lioy and Robert Falconer

Abstract

The 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation occurred in 2017. That is the same year that a collaborative effort between Robert Kolb and Carl R Trueman was published by Baker. The title of the authors' work is *Between Wittenberg and Geneva*. The subtitle provides a clearer indication of the publication's focus, namely, *Lutheran and Reformed theology in Conversation*.

Kolb and Trueman are neither the first nor the last specialists to compare Lutheran and Reformed approaches to the classical theological loci. That said, their publication represents a fresh and irenic contribution to the ongoing dialogue between these two confessional traditions. Both theologians, in their respective ways, seek to ground their statements about hermeneutics, the law / gospel dialectic, and the Son's person and work (among other topics) to the teachings found in the Word. Along the way, both authors, likewise, highlight salient pastoral convictions that arise from their deliberations.

An examination of each chapter within the book surfaces the shared historical and theological legacy between the Lutheran and Reformed communions. Also, while being appropriately self-critical of their own faith traditions, both authors delineate what they

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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.

regard as the key differences between the two confessional groups. Moreover, as the dialogue unfolds between Kolb and Trueman, readers discover areas of agreement and disagreement between the Lutheran and Reformed camps and Roman Catholicism (on the one hand) and nonconfessional Protestant groups (on the other hand). Doing so helps to elucidate the major areas of theological differentiation among all these ecclesial communions.

What follows is a chapter-by-chapter distillation of the information appearing in the treatise. It is interspersed with supplementary observations of varying depth and detail made by both of us—Dan Lioy (who brings a Lutheran perspective) and Robert Falconer (who brings a Reformed perspective). Our intent in doing so is to promote further conversation within the SATS community about doctrinal issues of shared interest.

Prof. Dan Lioy's Lutheran Orientation

I am a confessional Lutheran who is rostered (ordained) with the North American Lutheran Church (NALC).² As a mission-driven synod, the NALC affirms the following: 'We believe that the mission of the Church is to preach the Gospel and to make disciples for Christ. We believe that making disciples—in our congregations, in our communities and nations, and around the world—must be a priority of the Church in the present age'.³ Because confessional Lutherans affirm a unity throughout the Judeo-Christian canon, they also recognise a connection between the Old Testament and New Testament. Specifically, the Old Testament points forward to Jesus and his work, while the New Testament tells us how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. So, when the New Testament speaks of an Old Testament passage as fulfilled by Jesus, Lutherans view this as the full and correct theological meaning of the Old Testament passage.

Dr Robert Falconer's Reformed Orientation

I consider myself Reformed in the general sense, although my primary theological interests have shifted from the traditional Calvinistic emphasis on TULIP,⁴ to Neo-Calvinism. Neo-Calvinism's progenitors are Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck, and others. The focus here is placed on the following four emphases: (1) cosmic redemption; (2) the lordship of Christ over all things (the sovereignty of God over all creation); (3) an affirmation

2 The following is the main website for the NALC: <https://thenalc.org>.

3 The *Book of Concord* (or *Concordia*) is the historic, doctrinal standard of the Lutheran Church. An English language translation of the texts of the Lutheran Confessions can be found here: <http://bookofconcord.org/index.php?>

4 An acronym for Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints, which is so pervasive in Calvinism. The *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, by John Calvin, is a seminal text dealing with Reformed theology. An English language translation of the *Institutes* can be found here: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes/>. For additional online resources related to Reformed theology, cf. the links curated and maintained by the Dutch Reformed Translation Society, which can be found here: <https://www.dutchreformed.org/resources/>.

of all vocations as callings from God; and, (4) the Christian's embrace of mission in all life's contexts. So, perhaps, I am not purely Reformed as is Carl R Trueman, and neither would I agree with all that is associated with traditional Calvinism. I am therefore Reformed in the Kuyerian sense; yet, even the Kuyerian tradition builds on the foundation of classical Calvinism.

Preface

In the Preface to *Between Wittenberg and Geneva* (pp. ix-xiii), Trueman draws a distinction between the 'Lutheran and Reformed confessional traditions' and 'Evangelicals'. Trueman explains that those within the Lutheran and Reformed camp affirm the 'gospel of justification by grace through faith' (and so, are 'small e' evangelicals); yet, they do not self-identify with contemporary 'Baptist and parachurch' organizations that have their historical roots in the 'revivals of the eighteenth century'. Likewise, underappreciated is that while Luther and his adherents were lowercase 'reformers', it is inaccurate to refer to them as uppercase 'Reformed'. Those who ignore this point gloss over the substantive doctrinal differences between the Lutheran and Reformed 'communions'.

It is incorrect to allege that emphasizing the preceding theological lines of demarcation smacks of pedantry; instead, at its core, these sorts of distinctions signify an acute recognition of one's own ecclesial 'identity'. For example, consider the tendency among 'Evangelicals' to give pride of place to 'soteriology' (that is, the doctrine of salvation). One consequence is that they are less likely to appreciate why 'sacraments' (namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper) receive so much attention within the Lutheran and Reformed camps. Indeed, the prevailing 'antisacramental culture of modern Evangelicalism' leads adherents to be 'confused' and 'distressed' by what they perceive as strident forms of sacramentalism, particularly among Lutherans.

It is worth noting that both Lutherans and the Reformed affirm the following three tenets: (1) the centrality of the Lord Jesus; (2) the inspiration and authority of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures; and, (3) the reliability of the ancient creeds and confessions of the church as faithful guides in interpreting God's Word. Furthermore, the preceding affirmations help to preserve the clarity of the gospel message, particularly, as it pertains to the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. In turn, doing so reflects the

ecclesial ethos of the Lutheran and Reformed communions, which are evangelical, creedal, and sacramental.

Returning to the Kolb and Trueman treatise, the ‘points of sharp disagreement’ between Lutherans and their Reformed counterparts are most acute when considering the ‘person of Christ’, ‘baptism’, and the ‘Lord’s Supper’. The preceding statement having been made, there remains ‘significant commonality’ between the two groups on numerous ‘elements’ of the apostolic ‘faith’.

Kolb’s methodology in the volume entails directing considerable attention to ‘Luther’s expression of the biblical message’, along with ‘ways it can function today’. Though he is regarded as the ‘central and dominant figure’, other Lutheran confessional writings help to broaden and deepen Kolb’s discourse. In contrast, Trueman’s methodology is considerably more ‘eclectic’. Put another way, his approach is not explicitly tied to any Reformed luminary, particularly that of John Calvin; rather, Trueman’s discourse gleams from a broad spectrum of Reformed theologians and various confessional expressions of faith. Also, like Kolb, Trueman engages the ‘ecumenical creeds of the ancient church’ (Kolb and Trueman 2017:xii).⁵ It should be remembered that both Lutheran and Reformed churches hold the ecumenical creeds together with their confessions⁶ and catechism as authoritative summaries of sacred Scripture.⁷

There are historical reasons for the two divergent approaches taken by Kolb and Trueman. For instance, Luther was a ‘central and dominant figure’ among his peers. Likewise, his ‘personal and theological commitments’ exercised a strong ‘influence’ on the contours of ‘Lutheran theology’ in the years and centuries to follow. Unlike the Lutheranism, which has Martin Luther as its central figure in theology, the Reformed tradition, or Calvinism, has always been rather diverse, consisting of a number of ‘Reformed thinkers’ who have influenced the focus and direction of the ecclesiastical tradition.⁸ As one might expect, this is counterintuitive in popular Evangelical discourse. Calvin did not so ‘dominate the tradition’ that his personal theological preferences became the guiding light for other Reformed theologians to follow, despite Calvin still being a major figure in Reformed theology. It is for this reason that Trueman draws from a wide range of the ‘confessional documents’ to communicate his thoughts (Kolb and Trueman 2017:xii).

5 cf. Bettenson (1963:23-26); Grudem (1994:1168-1203); Horton (2011:192).

6 For a discussion on creeds and confessions, cf. Horton (2011:215-18).

7 cf. Horton 2011:187.

8 These Reformed theologians include, along with John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli, Martin Bucer, William Farel, Heinrich Bullinger, Theodore Beza, John Knox, and the Puritans like John Owen and Jonathan Edwards (cf. Frame 2013:175). Reformed theologians from the twentieth century include Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, B B Warfield, J Gresham Machen, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Cornelius Van Til. Today, among others, JI Packer, DA Carson, John MacArthur, the late RC Sproul, John Piper, Wayne Grudem, Sam Storms, and Michael Horton are contemporary theologians in the Reformed tradition, yet even their ecclesiastical traditions are diverse.

Chapter 1: Scripture and Its Interpretation

The first chapter (pp. 1–30) of *Between Wittenberg and Geneva* deals with Scripture and its interpretation. The authors begin by drawing a distinction between Catholics and their Lutheran and Reformed counterparts. Specifically, the ‘medieval church’ considered the ‘Mass’ to be the ‘heart’ of its ‘public ministry’. In contrast, both the Lutheran and Reformed traditions focused on the proclamation of the Word of God and the exposition of Scripture⁹ (Allison 2011:90–93), downplaying the centrality of the ‘altar’ and making the ‘pulpit’, along with the ‘public proclamation’ of Scripture, to be the locus of ‘church life’ (Kolb and Trueman 2017:1).

⁹ Cf. Deut 31:11; Luke 24:27; John 5:39; Rom 15:4; 2 Pet 1:20.

Furthermore, for those who are either Lutheran or Reformed, the ministry of Word and sacrament go together. The core conviction is that the Spirit ‘confronted’ parishioners, whether for the purposes of ‘judgment’ (i.e. law) or ‘salvation’ (i.e. gospel), depending on whether congregants responded in ‘faith’ or ‘unbelief’. Noteworthy in this regard is the emphasis on the notion of *sola Scriptura* or ‘Scripture alone’. In particular, only God’s Word is supremely authoritative for the faith and practice of believers.

As noted earlier, the preceding stance does not eliminate for Lutheran and Reformed adherents the importance of the church’s historic creeds and confessions, including their underlying ‘doctrinal and exegetical traditions’; yet, even then, it is held that the Creator speaks through what is written in Scripture. Within Lutheranism, it is taught that the Creator is ‘present and at work in and through his Word’. In particular, the Spirit uses ‘oral, written, and sacramental forms’ of the divine ‘promise’ to give ‘assurance’ to believers that they are the Father’s pardoned and redeemed children.

Furthermore, the Lutheran tradition maintains that the Spirit joins the heralding of the Word with the sacraments as means of God’s grace. Put another way, the Lord works through the proclaimed Word along with the enacted Word to bestow such blessings as his salvation, forgiveness, and eternal life to believers. Accordingly, confessional Lutherans maintain that the Lord uses his ‘recreative Word’ to actualise and sustain the reality of the new birth within Christians. More generally, the Father uses ‘human language’ as the ‘instrument’ through which he brings to pass his ‘will’.

Reformed theologians concur with their Lutheran counterparts that Scripture is the ‘normative criteria for all theological discussion’ (Kolb and Trueman 2017:14; Vanhoozer 2005:231,

233).¹⁰ In comparison to a hermeneutic of suspicion, the Reformed engage the Bible with a ‘hermeneutic of trust and obedience’¹¹ (Grudem 1994:81–82; Vanhoozer 2005:207; Westminster Confession 2018:6–7). The Reformed also consider the heralding of Scripture to be ‘one of the marks of the true church’¹² (Horton 2011:751–63). The ‘administration of the sacraments’ would be a second ‘non-negotiable mark’ of the church (Allison 2011:565, 579; Erickson 1998:1038; Grudem 1994:864–65).

Moreover, the Reformed look to the Bible to provide the ‘framework for understanding reality as the creation of a sovereign God’¹³ (Kolb and Trueman 2017:16). Horton explains that we are unable to know the meaning of our daily lives and of our world, or even our human identity and development, until God interprets our lives and history in light of his actions (2011:200–201). Nonetheless, the ‘interpretation’ of God’s Word is a predominant ‘issue’ that divides the ‘Lutheran and the Reformed’. A case in point would be how these two confessional traditions explain and understand Jesus’ statement, ‘This is my body’. Chapter 7 of the jointly authored treatise takes up this matter in earnest.

Another area of distinction involves the hermeneutical lens through which each camp views Scripture. For those who are Reformed, God’s omnipotence¹⁴ is the starting point and his sovereign grace¹⁵ is the central doctrinal focus of the Bible.¹⁶ While Lutherans affirm the sovereignty and omnipotence of the Creator, they see the Lord Jesus as the locus of Scripture’s testimony and justification by faith as the core teaching of the Judeo-Christian canon.

When it comes to the ‘importance, sufficiency, and clarity of the Word’,¹⁷ the Reformed further differentiate themselves from ‘Roman Catholicism and evangelical biblicism’ (Kolb and Trueman 2017:14). On the one hand, Catholics hold to an ‘extrascriptural stream of authoritative revelation’, that is, the Tradition of the Church (Carson 2010:34; Horton 2011:187–89; Kolb and Trueman 2017:16); on the other hand, Evangelicals are prone to ‘ignore the tradition of church teaching’, especially out of expediency or convenience (Kolb and Trueman 2017:17). While this is unfortunately true, the Reformed systematic theologian, Kevin Vanhoozer, in his treatise, *The Drama of Doctrine*, makes a rigorous argument that *sola scriptura*¹⁸ (‘by Scripture alone’) is not intended to say, *nulla traditio* (‘no tradition’). It is not meant as a protest against tradition; on the contrary the Reformers had much respect for tradition;¹⁹ instead, *Sola scriptura* is to set Scripture alone as the supreme norm of faith (Vanhoozer 2005:231–36).

10 For further discussion of Scripture’s sufficiency and necessity in the Reformation, cf. Allison (2011:151-58); Horton (2011:186-98).

11 cf. Exod 19:5; Deut 11:1; Luke 11:28; John 10:35; 14:15; 15:14; 17:17; Rom 1:5; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 John 1:6; Rev 14:12.

12 cf. Acts 2:42.

13 cf. Lioy (2005:35).

14 cf. Gen 18:14; Deut 33:27; Job 42:1-2; Isa 14:27; 26:4-5; 43:13; Jer 32:27; Dan 4:35; Matt 19:26; Luke 1:37; Acts 26:8; Eph 1:19; Rev 19:6.

15 e.g. Ps 105:24-25; Isa 46:8-11; 1 Pet 1:3.

16 cf. Frame (2013:343-44); Grudem (1994:216-17); Horton (2011:260).

17 cf. Grudem (1994:54-140); Horton (2011:196-218); Bavinck (2008:475-94).

18 cf. Barrett (2016); Sproul (2013); White (2004).

19 cf. 1 Cor 11:2; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6.

For the Reformed, the remedy to the preceding excess is to engage God's Word through a 'mastery of the biblical languages' (Carson 2010:40–41; Kolb and Trueman 2017:17; cf. DeRouchie 2012). This is accompanied by an in-depth 'acquaintance with the history of interpretation' (Carson 2010:47–48; Kolb and Trueman 2017:17). Such 'ecclesiastical documents' provide a 'framework' for explaining the meaning of biblical passages (Kolb and Trueman 2017:21). Both of us—Dan and Robert—maintain that any skilful and critical reading of Scripture, no matter how well-informed by reason and intuition, is characterised by methodological preferences. Consequently, deductions arising from any exegetical analysis of Scripture remain provisional, fragmentary, and imperfect.

20 e.g. Lioy (2005).

Another area of deliberation among those who are Lutheran and Reformed concerns the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.²⁰ In some academic literature, the phrase 'continuity and discontinuity' is used to characterise the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. A contrasting option favoured by Dan (and Robert) is the phrase 'continuity and advance'. This is regarded as a more accurate way to denote the integral, nuanced connection between these two portions of the Judeo-Christian canon.

In Dan's teaching ministry, he emphasises to his students that Scripture's reliability encompasses the content, form, and function of the theological message the human authors communicated, as agents of God's revelation, to the original recipients in their ancient languages and cultures. Dan's view is that even though the human authors of the Bible wrote for the spiritual benefit of present-day readers about God's acts as Creator, Judge, and Redeemer, the authors did not write to present-day readers.

Furthermore, Dan stresses that because the Judeo-Christian canon contains, in part, historical narrative motivated by theological concerns, the human authors' primary goal was not to provide an exhaustive, strictly chronological, and absolutely precise report of raw data; instead, it was to explain, through a process involving the selection and arrangement of composed and compiled information, the redemptive-historical significance of actual, past events that occurred in space and time. As a missionary in Kenya, Robert gave a similar explanation in teaching the course, *Grasping God's Word*,²¹ to young Kenyan adults. Dan also underscores that the goal is to exegete the final canonical form of God's Word, especially (though not exclusively) through the prism of a law / gospel dialectic. Dan maintains that the metanarrative of

21 cf. Duvall and Hays (2005).

Scripture bears witness to the Lord Jesus, and the scandal of the Cross is Scripture's interpretive key.

Chapter 2: Law and Gospel

The second chapter (pp. 31–58) deals with the 'distinction between law and gospel'. On the one hand, the Spirit uses the 'law' to convict people of their sins; on the other hand, the Spirit uses the 'gospel' to present the Messiah and the salvation he offers to people. Within Lutheranism, the terms 'law' and 'gospel' are intentionally used in a 'narrow' and focused manner. In turn, doing so helps to accentuate the dialectical tension between law and gospel. Specifically, while the law issues commands, the gospel holds forth God's promises. On one level, the law censures sinners and condemns them to death; yet, on another level, the gospel puts forward the Father's gift of new life through faith in his Son.

Lutherans and the Reformed part company with Roman Catholics by rejecting the teaching that believers must 'merit' God's 'grace' by performing a range of 'truly worthy good works' in their 'daily behaviour and attitude'.²² Indeed, Lutherans and the Reformed emphasise that the Creator alone intervenes to 'rescue sinners' from 'missing the mark' of his infinite glory²³ (Kolb and Trueman 2017:31–32). Within both Lutheranism and the Reformed traditions, the Son is regarded as the sole and sufficient agent of the believers' redemption. The Spirit uses the proclamation of the gospel to plant the seed of faith in the soil of the sinners' heart. In turn, the Spirit enlivens them to repentance, to receive the good news, and to become the Father's reborn children.

Lutherans regard maintaining the categorical distinction between law and gospel as imperative. Doing so ensures 'absolute clarity' among congregants in recognizing the 'seriousness' of their iniquities and grasping the full-orbed 'comfort' found in the Messiah's 'death and resurrection'. Lutherans refer to God's gift of 'righteousness' as being 'alien', that is, originating with the Creator apart from the recipients of his unconditional declaration of pardon. In contrast to this 'passive righteousness' is an 'active righteousness', which is displayed in 'service and love for others'. Lutherans also speak of 'civil righteousness'. By this is meant 'external adherence to God's plan for life'. It is taught that even in this realm, people 'fail to conform perfectly' to the Creator's 'expectations'.

22 cf. Rom 3:20-25; Eph 2:8-9; Gal 2:16; Allison (2011:505-14).

23 cf. Matt 1:21; Acts 5:31; Rom 3:23; 5:8-10; 6:23; 2 Cor 5:21; Eph 2:8-9.

Among Lutherans, a lively debate exists concerning whether there is a twofold or threefold use of the law, as follows: (1) a *civil* use: to restrain evil in the world through punishment; (2) a *soteriological* use: to point out sin and the need for salvation; and, (3) a *moral* use: to provide a guide for sanctified living among the regenerate. Those in the Reformed camp approach the preceding discussion from a different starting point. In particular, their theologians start off by dividing the Hebrew sacred writings into the ‘three categories’, namely, the ‘moral, ceremonial, and civil’ law. Duvall and Hays, however, make a compelling argument that these distinctions in the traditional approach are too inconsistent and ambiguous; instead, they advocate a careful examination of ‘the narrative and covenant contexts of the Old Testament legal material’ without such fixed distinctions (2005:ch. 19).

24 cf. Westminster Confession (2018:19.2)

The ‘Decalogue’ is regarded as the premier expression of the ‘moral law’.²⁴ The Old Testament ‘sacrificial system’ is identified with the ‘ceremonial law’. The ‘political administration of ancient Israel’ encompasses the ‘civil law’. Furthermore, the Reformed maintain that the Son’s advent brought about the fulfilment of the ‘ceremonial’ facets of the law and the abrogation of the its ‘civil aspects’. For instance, Jesus’ sacrificial death at Calvary eliminates the need for animal sacrifices²⁵ (Bavinck 2006:328–40; Erickson 1998:822–23; Horton 2011:486–93). Likewise, his resurrection from the dead and his ascension into heaven have transformed ‘Israel from a political and ethnic entity into a spiritual body’ (Kolb and Trueman 2017:47).

25 cf. Heb 9:24-28; 10:1-18.

26 cf. Matt 5:18; 22:37-40; Acts 15:19-20.

Those of us who are Reformed stress that the ‘moral law’ has continuing ‘relevance’ for believers.²⁶ After all, it is argued that this aspect of God’s law ‘reflects’ his eternal and abiding ‘character’, and so ‘remains in place’ (Westminster Confession 2018:19.5–6). The Reformed tradition affirms the Lutheran ‘distinction’ between ‘law’ and ‘gospel’. Also, Reformed theologians see threefold demarcations in the law; yet, they more often refer to these as ‘functions’ of the law, rather than ‘uses’ of the law (Kolb and Trueman 2017:48).

Those in the Reformed camp tend to emphasise the soteriological function first and the civil function second (Kolb and Trueman 2017:48; Westminster Confession 2018:19.4). Also, whereas Lutherans typically highlight the soteriological use of the law in congregational preaching, the Reformed place more emphasis on the moral purpose of the law. Expressed differently, while the ‘law–gospel dialectic’ is recognised by Reformed adherents, its ‘role’ in theological and pastoral discourse is ‘much less prominent’ than in

Lutheran circles. The Reformed place greater import on the law's function of encouraging and guiding the 'behaviour' of Christians (Kolb and Trueman 2017:49).

The 'sharp antithesis' Lutherans see between law and gospel tends to be downplayed in Reformed discourse. Whereas Lutherans focus on the 'commands' made by the 'law' and the 'promises' offered by the 'gospel', Reformed theologians stress that both 'law and gospel offer promises'. To develop the preceding observation further, those in the Reformed camp maintain that the 'promises' made by the 'law' are 'conditioned' on a person's 'obedience'; yet, due to their 'fallen sinful nature', they are 'impotent' to satisfy their 'moral obligation to God'. In contrast, the gospel's 'promises' are 'unconditional,' due to the Son's 'life and work'.

The above emphases might explain why Reformed theologians maintain that in the ancient Eden orchard, the Creator 'gave to Adam a law', which is referred to as a 'covenant of works'²⁷ (Westminster Confession 2018:19.1). Lutheran theologians typically reject this teaching, in which they argue that, from the time God created humankind, humankind's relationship was defined by grace, not works. For Lutherans, the considerable emphasis in the Reformed tradition on the law as an 'external guide' for believers raises concerns that it might become a 'type of legalism'. To put it differently, there is the threat that 'works righteousness' could be 'smuggled back into the salvific equation'.

The Reformed response is that the Spirit 'internalises the law' on the hearts of believers.²⁸ Consequently, the Spirit gives 'Christians' both the 'desire' and the ability to fulfil the 'aspirational norm of behaviour' expressed in the third use of the law (Bavinck 2006:528; Frame 2013:989–90). Relevant to these observations is the Reformed understanding of 'justification by imputation'²⁹ (Grudem 1994:726–29; Horton 2011:620–21, 630–40), in which there is a sharp separation from 'actual good works' (Allison 2011:512–13). The declaration of righteousness³⁰ (Frame 2013:966–67; Grudem 1994:723–24) is followed by the believers' 'sanctification', in which there is an increasing separation from sin and being progressively set apart to holiness³¹ (Frame 2013:970–71, 983–86; Grudem 1994:747–48; Horton 2011:650–57). Chapter 5 of the jointly authored treatise takes up this matter in earnest.

Chapter 3: The Person and Work of Christ

The third chapter (pp. 58–86) deals with the person and work of Christ, otherwise known by the more technical term of *Christology*.

27 cf. Gen 2:16-17; Rom 5:12-21. For a compelling discussion on the *covenant of vocation* as an alternate to the *covenant of works*, cf. Wright (2016:73-87).

28 cf. Ezek 11:19; 36:26, Jer 31:33; Heb 8:10.

29 cf. Rom 4:4-5; 1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9. In contrast to Dan, it is at this point where I, Robert, find myself sympathetic towards Wright's New Pauline Perspective (NPP) view of justification and yet intrigued by what the Apocalyptic Paul school has to offer. Perhaps until such a time as I can untie the three threads in my own mind, I will leave them in knotted tension (cf. Allison (2011:518-19); Bird (2016); Frame (2013:972-73); McKnight (2015); Rutledge (2017:565, 571-612). For a disquisition of Paul's writings from a traditional (i.e. non-NPP), apocalyptic perspective, cf. Lioy (2016).

30 cf. Rom 3:26.

31 cf. Rom 6:6; 12:1-2; 1 Cor 6:11; 1 Thess 4:3; 2 Thess 2:13; Heb 10:10; 2 Pet 3:18.

The core theological issue in the exchange between Kolb and Trueman is the ‘question’ of the Saviour’s ‘identity’. The historic creeds and confessions of the church have affirmed that Jesus of Nazareth is ‘God manifest in the flesh’. Expressed differently, he is the ‘God of Israel’ incarnate.

Both the Lutheran and Reformed traditions hold to the doctrine of the hypostatic union. Specifically, because of the Incarnation, there is the joining together of two natures—undiminished deity and unfallen humanity—in the one Person of the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ.³² Even though there is a real and inseparable union of the two natures in one Person, there is absolutely no blending together of their unique essences. Each retains its own distinct properties or attributes unchanged and undiminished.

32 cf. Allison (2011:379-81); Bavinck (2006:256-59); Berkhof (1959:119-21); Calvin (2007: Book 2.1-2, pp. 309-310); Erickson (1998:749-55); Frame (2013:887-89); Grudem (1994:556-58); Horton (2011:468-79); Westminster Confession (2018:8.2-3).

Moreover, it was a divine person, not merely a divine nature, that assumed humanity or became incarnate. The implication is that the second Person of the Trinity did not unite himself with a human person, but with a human nature. For the preceding reason, Jesus’ human nature, when considered by itself, is ‘anhypostatic’. This technical term means that Jesus’ human nature receives its ‘personhood from union with the divine’ at the ‘moment of conception’. Accordingly, when ‘joined with the Logos’, Jesus’ human nature ‘receives’ the Son’s ‘personal subsistence’. Consequently, Jesus’ human nature becomes ‘enhypostatic’.

While there exists ‘much common ground between the two traditions’ with respect to ‘Christology’, Lutheran and Reformed adherents part company when it comes to the question of whether the ‘characteristics of one nature’ ever ‘become the possession of the other’. Lutherans teach that the attributes of the Son’s divine nature (e.g. his omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, and so on) are communicable, or shared, ‘directly’ with his human nature. In maintaining this doctrinal stance, Lutherans likewise affirm that ‘each nature retains its own integrity’. Put another way, while the ‘two natures’ are ‘distinct,’ they remain ‘inseparable’.

Lutherans reject the charge made by some of embracing the ‘Eutychian heresy’, namely, ‘denying the continued existence’ of the Son’s ‘human nature’. Adherents of Lutheranism assert that Jesus’ human ‘nature’ is able to ‘exercise the characteristics of the divine nature even if it never possesses them’. Dogmaticians in the Lutheran tradition recognise the ‘paradoxical nature of the incarnation’. It is a divine mystery that defies the attempts of human logic to explain by sophisticated rationalizations.

In Lutheranism, there is a profound difference between the mystery of the faith versus a sceptical questioning of the faith. The

first option recognises the presence of deep paradoxes. In contrast, the second option rejects the faith. This is because human reason fails to provide a satisfying elucidation for doctrines which on the surface seem to be baffling and contradictory. Lutherans, by affirming the mystery, argue that they are not committing intellectual suicide; instead, they humbly acknowledge that intellectuals, despite their self-proclaimed acumen, are finite and feeble creatures who lack the ability to resolve many of life's paradoxes.

The preceding observations have implications for the Lutheran understanding of the Lord's Supper. It is taught that in the sacrament of holy communion, the bread and the wine become the real, true, and objective presence of the Saviour's 'body and blood' through the 'power of his Word'. For this, the Lord Jesus gives to the communicants his body and blood in, with, and under the bread and the wine. Through this sacrament, the triune God brings the gift of forgiveness to the worshipping congregation and strengthens their faith.

Those in the Reformed camp deny the Son's real, 'eucharistic' presence in the bread and wine; instead, they hold to his spiritual presence. Likewise, it is taught that when communicants partake of the bread and the wine during the Lord's Supper, the Spirit metaphysically transports them to heaven and unites them with the Son,³³ where his physical body is located³⁴ (Allison 2011:654; Bavinck 2008:576; Calvin 2007: Book 4. 17.32; Frame 2013:1069; Horton 2011:814–18). The Reformed stance is due, in part, to a rejection of the Lutheran teaching that Jesus' body shares the divine property of ubiquity. The term, 'ubiquity', means the 'ability to be in more than one place in more than one form at the same time' (Allison 2011:653–54; Bavinck 2008:575–77; Horton 2011:810; Sproul 2013).

Reformed Theologians maintain that it is physically impossible for the Son's body—even in its glorified, resurrected, and ascended state—to be 'spatially' present in multiple locales and in differing modalities at any given moment (Bavinck 2008:557–58, 576; Frame 2013:1067; Horton 2011:809–10). It is reasoned that the 'material and spiritual realms' are 'so distinct' that the 'finite cannot comprehend or contain the infinite'. Moreover, Reformed theologians teach that the communication of attributes takes place in the person of the Son (Bavinck 2006:258–257; Berkhof 1959:119–20; Grudem 1994:562–63; Horton 2011:476–79; cf. Erickson 1998:754–55). In turn, this ensures that each nature retains its own distinctive properties. As previously noted, for Lutherans, the

33 cf. Matt 28:20; Eph 2:6-7; Col 3:1; Rom 6:3; 8:9-10; 16:7; Gal 2:20; 3:26-27; Col 3:3-4.

34 cf. Luke 22:66-69; Mark 16:19 (N.B. some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9-20); Acts 7:55-56; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20-22; Heb. 1:3.

35 cf. Allison (2011:380-81).

36 cf. Acts 4:12; Eph 3:11; Heb 9:28; 10:4-18 (esp. v. 14); 13:20; 1 Pet 3:18.

37 cf. John 1:14; 1 Tim 2:5; Phil 2:7; Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*; Calvin (2007: Book 2.12.1-3, pp. 297-298); For further discussion on atonement theology in the reformation and post-reformation, cf. Allison (2011:398-405); Berkhof (1959:187-96).

38 cf. John 1:29; 1 Cor 15:3; Eph 1:7.

39 cf. Calvin (2007: Book 2.14.3, p. 311); Frame (2013: 903); Horton (2011: 493, 499-500).

40 cf. Gen 3:15; Luke 11:21-22; John 10:10; 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Rom 15:24; 1 Cor 15:22-25; Col 2:15; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Pet. 3:21-22; 1 John 3:8; Rev. 3:21; 11:15.

41 cf. Col 2:15; Heb 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8.

42 cf. Isa 53:5-6; Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45; John 3:16; 15:13; Rom 1:18; 3:21-28; 4:22-25; 5:8,16-19; 8:32; 1 Cor 15:1-58; Gal 2:20; 3:10-13; Heb 2:17; 1 Pet 1:18-19; 2:21-25; 3:18; 1 John 2:2.

43 cf. Rom 3:25-26; Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 2:2; 4:10. For a synthesis of the *Christus Victor* motif and penal substitution, cf. Falconer's (2013) doctoral thesis, titled, *A Theological and Biblical Examination on the Synthesis of Penal Substitution and Christus Victor Motifs: Implications for African Metaphysics*, which can be accessed here: <http://bit.ly/2Kr20yf>. Also, cf. Ferguson (2010: ch. 9); Treat (2014: chap. 8).

44 cf. Matt 16:24; John 8:12; 15:12-13; Phil 3:8-21; 1 Pet 2:21-24; 1 John 2:6.

45 cf. Rom 5:8; 1 John 3:16; 4:7-12.

46 This gives expression to atonement synthesis (Falconer 2013); cf. 1 Cor 15:20-28; Gal 1:4; Col 2:12-15, 20; Heb 2:14-17; 1 Pet 3:18-22; 1 John 3:4-10; Rev 5:5-10.

sharing of attributes occurs between the Son's divine and human natures.³⁵

With respect to the Son's incarnation, both Lutheran and Reformed adherents maintain that for Jesus' sacrificial death to be infinite in its saving efficacy³⁶ (Berkhof 1959:187–88), he had to be fully divine. Also, for Jesus' to be a suitable representative and substitute for sinners, he had to be fully human³⁷ (Allison 2011:503–4; Grudem 1994:540–42, 553). In this regard, Romans 3:25 states that the Father presented the Son as a 'sacrifice of atonement'³⁸ (Bavinck 2006:337–40, esp. 338; Horton 2011:493–500). The underlying Greek noun, *ἱλαστήριον*, is translated more literally as 'propitiation' (Bauer 2001:474). This word communicates the idea that Son's redemptive work at Calvary averted the Father's justifiable wrath against sinners.³⁹ Jesus' sacrifice also provided 'expiation', or the removal of personal guilt. Paul was making a parallel between the atoning sacrifices offered in the Jerusalem temple and the Son's death on the cross.

As articulated by Wittmer (2013), the 'four arms of the cross' are a useful illustration for making sense of what Jesus did on behalf of the lost: (1) 'downward, toward Satan'—this *Christus Victor*⁴⁰ aspect of the cross was a reminder that the Son 'died to defeat Satan, who held the power of sin and death'⁴¹ (Aulen 2003; Boersma 2004:182–201; Boyd 1997:238–68; Erickson 1998:810–13; Horton 2011:500–503; McDonald 1985:125–37, 258–65; McKnight 2007:104–5, 110; Rutledge 2017:348–94; Stott 2006:264–92). (2) 'upward, toward God'—this *penal substitutionary*⁴² aspect of the cross was a reminder that the Son appeased the 'Father's wrath' and 'satisfied' his eternal justice by bearing the 'penalty' of humanity's sin in their 'place' and as their perfect substitute⁴³ (Boersma 2004:153–79; Edwards and Shaw 2006; Erickson 1998:830–32; Frame 2013:902; Grudem 1994:579; Horton 2011:493–500, 504; Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach 2007; McKnight 2007:113; Morris 1965:296–98; Packer and Dever 2008; Stott 2006:157–92); and, (3) 'sideways, toward' the lost—this aspect of the 'cross' provided a 'moral influence'⁴⁴ and 'example' by demonstrating 'how much God loves' humankind⁴⁵ (Erickson 1998:802–6; Frame 2013:904; Grudem 1994:581–82; McDonald 1985:174–80; McKnight 2007:114).

In short, the divine goal was *Christus Victor*, and the means was penal substitution,⁴⁶ and one benefit (among many) was Jesus' example of love for all people. Where Lutheran and Reformed theologians differ is the extent of the atonement. While the

Reformed hold to a 'limited' or 'definite atonement view'⁴⁷ (Erickson 1998:843–46; Frame 2013:904–7; Grudem 1994:594–96; Horton 2011:517–20; Owen 1959), Lutherans teach that Jesus' 'atonement' is infinite in its saving value and unlimited in its 'extent'.⁴⁸

Chapter 4: Election and Sanctification

The fourth chapter (pp. 87–115) deliberates the subject of 'election and the bondage of the will'. Various issues are discussed, including the 'nature of human freedom', the 'understanding of biblical references to election and predestination', the 'impact of the fall on subsequent humanity', and the 'definition of grace'. Both Lutheran and Reformed theologians endeavour to 'articulate an understanding of salvation' that engages the 'writings of Augustine'.⁴⁹ These theologians also labour to situate their teachings within a broader ecclesial 'tradition' that stresses the Creator's 'powerful and decisive sovereignty'.

On the one hand, adherents belonging to both groups affirm that since unsaved people are spiritually dead and have depraved 'fallen wills', they 'contribute' nothing to their salvation; on the other hand, and for the preceding reason, they 'need' the 'decisive, unilateral saving action' of the Lord to regenerate them. Moreover, there is a general consensus among Lutherans and the Reformed that divine election is unconditional, being due solely to the 'absolute predetermining sovereignty of God'. After all, the volition of the lost is 'bound to turn away' from the Creator to pagan deities. To take the preceding point further, it is jointly affirmed that all 'attempts' by the lost to 'turn their wills toward God' are doomed to failure. Instead of choosing God, people always select what is blasphemous and idolatrous.⁵⁰ The Spirit alone restores the corrupt human 'will' to a state of 'trust and godliness'.

Lutherans and the Reformed maintain both the 'total omnipotence of God' and his 'unconditional and total love' for 'sinners'. The outtake is that the Creator chooses the lost, apart from any 'merit or worthiness', to become his adopted, faithful children. Furthermore, what the Lord 'foreknows proceeds from what' he decrees. The implication is that God's selection of the lost for salvation is never based on the false premise that sinners have a preexisting, inherent disposition to choose God (i.e. that the Lord elects the unregenerate because of some ill-defined and 'foreseen faith'). Briefly put, there is no place for synergism in the salvific equation (i.e. human freedom to choose and God's grace work

47 cf. Matt 1:21; John 6:37–39, 65; 10:14–15; 17:2, 6, 9; Rom 8:30–35; Eph 1:4–13; 5:25–27; 2 Thess 2:13–14; Titus 3:4–5. The Reformed view of 'limited' or 'definite' atonement is laid out in the *Canons of Dort*; cf. Beeke (2018).

48 cf. Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45; John 3:16; Rom 10:13; 2 Cor 5:15; 1 Tim 2:6; 4:10; Heb 2:9; 1 John 2:2; Erickson (1998:849–52); Kunhiyop (2008:86–89); Horton (2011:516–20).

49 cf. especially Augustine's *Confessions* (2009) and *The City of God* (2009).

50 cf. Eccles 9:3; Jer 17:9; Mark 7:21–22. Calvin (2007:97) trenchantly referred to the 'human mind' as a 'perpetual forge of idols'.

together to bring about a person's regeneration). Only monergism is the acceptable theological stance (i.e. a person's salvation is entirely the work of God, not the combined effort of the Creator and the sinner).

Lutherans affirm the notion of 'civil righteousness'. By this phrase is meant that people 'outside the faith' can 'perform works' that 'externally accomplish' the Creator's 'will in society'. Lutherans also teach that even then, the unsaved remain guilty of transgressing the Lord in their thoughts, words, and actions. Consequently, they are 'fully responsible' for spurning the Creator. In short, 'sinners', not God, are to blame for their 'evil' deeds. Furthermore, Lutherans acknowledge that the 'tension' between divine sovereignty and human free will 'defies logical mastery'.

Admittedly, there is a tendency on the part of Reformed theologians to use human reason to speculate about the underlying 'mechanics of God's unconditional choice'.⁵¹ Lutherans, however, resist the preceding inclination. Rather than offer a philosophically-nuanced explanation for how the above tension can be resolved, Lutherans focus on a pastorally-sensitive response, namely, the 'promise of forgiveness and new life' through faith in the Son. Within the Lutheran tradition, then, the Messiah 'stands at the centre' of the repentant sinners' 'restoration'. As the believers' great High Priest, the Son offers 'consolation' and 'assurance' to 'troubled consciences' plagued with fears about not being among God's 'elect'. The Reformed, too, give attention to the 'underlying pastoral concern'. Indeed, they regard the Creator's 'absolute sovereignty' as a 'source of comfort to the faithful'⁵² (Piper 2009).

While Lutherans teach unconditional election (Allison 2011:461–62), they reject the Reformed dogma of double predestination (or election to reprobation; Berkhof 1959:157). This is the tenet that God intentionally chooses some people for damnation, while at the same time designates others for salvation (Allison 2011:462–65; Bavinck 2008:456; Calvin 2007: Book 3.23.7, pp. 629-630; Grudem 1994:684–86; Erickson 1998:930–31; Westminster Confession 2018:10.1–4). This is an aspect of mechanistic logic in Reformed theology that I, Robert, personally find unpalatable and at this moment am unable to reconcile the problem, and thus on this point find myself more sympathetic towards Lutheranism.

Similarly, Lutherans maintain that the Son is the 'propitiation' (1 John 2:1) for the 'sins' of the 'whole world' (Allison 2011:398–99). This emphasis stands in sharp contrast to the Reformed notion of 'limited atonement' or 'particular redemption', namely, that Jesus' sacrificial death is meant only for the elect (Allison 2011:399–405;

51 I, Robert, found Piper's (2009) lectures, 'An introduction to TULIP: The Pursuit of God's Glory in Salvation' (cf. the Canons of Dort in Beeke 2018), helpful and enlightening; yet, it did feel contrived at times, and I have wondered whether the Lutheran 'tension' between divine sovereignty and human free will that 'defies logical mastery' might be a better and more helpful response.

52 Although I, Robert, find God's absolute sovereignty of some comfort, it raises other concerns for me, namely, double predestination (discussed in the next paragraph) and issues related to theodicy. An understanding of the Creator's divine sovereignty in the Kuyperian tradition (Neo-Calvinism) for me is more agreeable, and perhaps even more exciting, theologically. For an overview, cf. Bartholomew (2017); Kuyper (2008). Also, cf. Gen 50:20; Jer 31:35; Matt 10:29; Rom 11:32–34; Heb 1:3.

Bavinck 2008: 4:460–64; Beeke 2018; Grudem 1994:594–96; Horton 2011:572–77; Owen 1959). While on the one hand, I, Robert, am Reformed, affirming the notion of ‘particular redemption’ in one way or another, I would wish to say that there is ‘universal significance’ as well, notably in common grace (Bavinck 2008:4:420). It is ‘cosmic in scope’, a salvation that ‘encompasses nothing short of a renewal of the whole earth’ (Horton 2011:560), and I argue for the eschatological renewal of creation. Limited atonement to me seems to be half the picture,⁵³ but this is not the place to develop such a theology in detail. Moreover, Lutherans think that the unregenerate can resist God’s offer of saving grace and that believers can apostatise from the faith. Those who are Reformed, however, contend that God’s grace is irresistible, that the regenerate will persevere in their faith until the end of their earthly sojourn, and that they can never renounce or fall away from the Saviour (Bavinck 2006:510, 524, 594; Erickson 1998:928, 997–1000; Grudem 1994:700, 788–802; Horton 2011:680–84; Piper 2009; cf. *the Canons of Dort* in Beeke 2018).

Reformed theologians conceptualise the way of salvation (Latin, the *ordo salutis*) as a sequence of steps that correspond to the logic of human experience (Bavinck 2006:564–66; Berkhof 1959:224–26; Grudem 1994:669–70). In contrast, the Lutheran understanding of soteriology does not separate into siloed, dogmatic compartments such concepts as divine foreknowledge, predestination, the summons to salvation, justification, and glorification,⁵⁴ instead, all aspects of redemption are joined together in the wonderful truth that the believers’ salvation is due to the Creator’s unmerited favour.⁵⁵ So, instead of the Reformed tendency of depicting the biblical terms for salvation as individual links in a chain⁵⁶ (Bavinck 2006:491; Frame 2013:998; Horton 2011:561), Lutheranism portrays them as spokes on a wheel that are indivisibly connected to the hub, which is the Messiah. Even within the Reformed camp, there is no consensus over the presumed ‘logical ordering’ of the Creator’s ‘decrees’ (Frame 2013:935–37, 950). One critique is that the disputants’ quarrelling reduces the Lord’s ‘sovereignty over creation and salvation’ into ‘simplistic’, ‘one-dimensional’, and ‘linear categories’. In turn, these fail to ‘do justice to the intricate testimony of Scripture’ concerning the debated issues (Bavinck 2006:589–90).

Chapter 5: Justification and Sanctification

The fifth chapter (pp. 117–45) takes up the subject of justification and sanctification. On these matters, adherents of the Lutheran

53 cf. John 1:29; 3:14-18; Rom 8:19-24; 2 Cor 5:19; 1 John 2:2; 4:14.

54 cf. Rom 8:28-30.

55 cf. Eph 2:5, 8-10; Rom 3:20-25.

56 An example may be found in Grudem’s (1994:670) ‘Order of Salvation’ list: (1) election (God’s choice of people to be saved); (2) the gospel call (proclaiming the message of the gospel); (3) regeneration (being born again); (4) conversion (faith and repentance); (5) justification (right legal standing); (6) adoption (membership in God’s family); (7) sanctification (right conduct of life); (8) perseverance (remaining a Christian); (9) death (going to be with the Lord); and, (10) glorification (receiving a resurrection body).

and Reformed traditions share much in common, while at the same time maintain clear doctrinal distinctions. With respect to agreed-upon perspectives, both ecclesial communities teach that sin denotes people turning in on themselves (in Latin, *incurvatus in se*). The consuming focus is on self-love, self-improvement, and self-gratification. Both groups also teach that sin is more than just a repudiation of the worship of God and a refusal to honour, praise, and thank him. More importantly, sin is a hatred of God and a rejection of his supremacy and his lordship in one's life. The outworking of sin is seen in a refusal and failure to keep God's commands. Put another way, sin is a state of alienation from God, which manifests itself in displays of ingratitude, narcissism, and wrongdoing.

From a lexical perspective, 'justify' renders the Greek verb, *δικαιόω*, which means 'to pronounce righteous or free'. When 'justify' is used in a narrow, technical sense to refer to the believer's relationship with God, it denotes a verdict or legal act in which a person is declared 'not guilty', pardoned, or forgiven apart from any merit of their own. The implication is that the justification of sinners does not depend on their obedience to the Mosaic Law (i.e. Torah observance); instead, God is the sole, supreme, and complete source of the believers' righteousness.

57 cf. Rom 3:20; 26, 28; 4:5; 5:1; 8:30; 10:4, 10; Gal 2:16; 3:24.

Justification relates to the divine law court⁵⁷ on the last day (Frame 2013:966–67; Grudem 1994:723–24; Horton 2011:630–35). In that specific sense, justification is fundamentally *eschatological*; yet, Lutherans and the Reformed affirm that, in baptismal union with the Son, the end-time gift has invaded salvation history (Horton 2011:594–97, 622; Erickson 1998:1100, 1110). The cosmic judgment to occur on the last day has now been revealed in the Son's atoning sacrifice on the cross. Accordingly, those who are joined to him by faith are even now declared to be in the right before the Father.

Some mistakenly think that the act of believing is a good work that earns one a place in heaven. Lutheran and Reformed dogmaticians counter that faith is simply receiving the benefits of salvation the Son freely offers in the gospel. Furthermore, both the Lutheran and Reformed camps affirm that faith is a belief in whatever God reveals. It is a trusting commitment. An exercise of faith involves the whole person—the mind, emotions, and will.

Lutheran and Reformed Theologians emphasise several interconnected, biblical truths related to the doctrine of justification. First, justification only arises through trusting in the Son.⁵⁸ Second, justification involves the imputation of the Son's

58 cf. Rom 4:1-5:21.

righteousness on repentant, believing sinners⁵⁹ (Allison 2011:509–14; Bavinck 2006:222, 455, 487, 491, 518–19, 583, 590–91; Calvin 2007: Book 3.11.1–4, 475–77; 3.11.23 p. 391; Erickson 1998:968–74; Frame 2013:914; Grudem 1994:722–33; Horton 2011:620–42; Westminster Confession 2018:11; cf. Johnson and Waters 2007; Schreiner 2015; Sproul 1995; White 2004). Third, justification is the consequence of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice on the cross. Fourth, the Spirit brings about sanctification⁶⁰ through the Father’s ‘justifying word’ (Cooper 2012:6).⁶¹

Lutheran sacramental theology teaches that justification is a reality that encompasses both ‘legal’ (Cooper 2012:2) and ‘ontological’ dimensions. Those who are righteous before the Father through faith in the Son have also received the Spirit. The preceding emphasis differs from the standard Reformed approach. Adherents tend to regard justification as a single, past, legal declaration, one occupying a forensic rather than a transformative sphere (Grudem 1994:724; Horton 2011:622). For Lutherans, justification is viewed as an ongoing, life-changing state of existence with real-world ramifications.

Lutherans teach that believers are declared to be completely justified through the Son’s alien righteousness (in Latin, *iustitia Christi aliena*; i.e. *extra nos* or outside of us; e.g. as seen in his obedience to the Father’s commands and the Son’s sacrificial death). Moreover, it is through the means of grace (i.e. Word and sacrament) that the lost receive the ability to believe, experience regeneration, and grow in holiness. Lutheran dogmaticians emphasise that ‘justification’ (Cooper 2012:2) has ‘legal’ and ‘ontological’ components, with the former preceding the latter. Expressed differently, God first pronounces the sinners righteous before making them righteous. Lutheranism also maintains that when God declares the sinner to be justified, eternal life is brought from spiritual ‘death’. Consequently, it would be incorrect to say that an ‘effective change in the heart’ is ever the instrument or ‘cause of imputation’; instead, ‘imputation is the cause of regeneration and a renewed life’.⁶²

In Reformed teaching, justification is a single, instantaneous, legal act of God in which repentant sinners are credited with the righteousness of Christ and thus pardoned (Calvin 2007: Book 3.3.11, p. 476; 11. 22, p. 491; Erickson 1998:968–70; Frame 2013:968; Grudem 1994:723). In short, justification is a ‘transfer term’ (Cooper 2012:4) that points to the chronological starting point of the believer’s walk with God (Grudem 1994:747–48; Westminster Confession 2018:11.1). Sanctification is understood to

59 cf. Rom 3:23-25; 4:3; 5:17; Phil 3:9. I, Robert, agree with much of the Reformed view of imputation of the Son’s righteousness on the repentant, believing sinner; yet, in contrast to Dan, I, Robert, find *in addition*, some of the theology on justification proposed by the New Pauline Perspective and the Apocalyptic Paul quite compelling. As with my synthesis of Penal Substitution and the *Christus Victor* motif (Falconer 2013), I wonder whether there might likewise be a synthesis for these three perspectives. I am yet to resolve the matter in my own mind.

60 In other words, the internal ‘spiritual transformation’ (Steinmann 2015:77) and renewal of believers.

61 In the upcoming discourse concerning the Lutheran perspective on justification and sanctification, I, Dan, have found the analysis provided by Cooper (2012) to be clarifying and incisive, as indicated by the various reference citations to his work.

62 With which this Reformed theologian would concur.

be an ‘ongoing process’ (Cooper 2012:4) in which the Spirit enables Jesus’ followers to experience growth in ‘holiness’⁶³ (Frame 2013:985, 987; Grudem 1994:748–53; Erickson 1998:980; Westminster Confession 2018:13.1); that is, they are progressively sanctified or ‘gradually made intrinsically righteous’ (Cooper 2012:4; cf. Erickson 1998:983–86; Horton 2011: 653–57). Lutherans counter that sanctification is principally going deeper into their justification. Expressed another way, sanctification entails the believer living in a pardoned state before the Creator.

The mechanism by which the process of sanctification unfolds is articulated differently by both communions. The Reformed emphasise that believers are increasingly conformed to the image of the Son when they obey the law by the power of the Spirit (Erickson 1998:980; Grudem 1994:758). Lutherans counter that sanctification occurs as a result of the constant experience of the law condemning them as sinners and their being renewed in their faith through the means of grace.

Furthermore, Lutherans teach that a purely legal and representative understanding of justification might lead to good works being regarded as the ‘essence’ (Cooper 2012:4) of the sanctified ‘Christian life’. It is a subtle yet important shift in emphasis from monergism to ‘synergism’ (6), in which acts of piety and charity precede and foster holiness, rather than originate and proceed from holiness. So, instead of cajoling believers to ‘Try harder!’ and ‘Do better!’, Lutheran pastors proclaim the good news that God’s children are the objects of his gracious work. They are the Spirit’s masterpieces, whom he is transforming through repentance by means of the law–gospel dialectic.

The preceding observations align with a Lutheran understanding of sanctification. As clarified by Steinmann (2015:77), in its ‘narrow’ theological ‘sense’, sanctification refers to the ‘inward spiritual transformation of a believer by the miraculous’ operation of the ‘Spirit through the means of grace’. In this process, the Spirit puts the ‘sinner’ to ‘death’, but ‘raises the saint’ to new life. On the one hand, the ‘Law of God kills the Old Adam as it exposes sin’; on the other hand, the ‘Gospel enlivens the new self’. Cooper (2012:5) explains that in Lutheranism, the ‘strict theological categories’ that emerged in ‘seventeenth-century scholasticism’ should be joined together. Specifically, ‘imputation, forgiveness, regeneration, and adoption are all encapsulated in the same reality that God saves sinners by grace alone, through faith alone’. Additionally, trusting in the Son is the ongoing basis for a person’s ‘standing’ (4)

in the presence of the Father being ‘evaluated, secured, and renewed’.

For Lutherans, then, the Creator’s announcement of his children being pardoned is not a single, unrepeatable episode (as it is regarded in Reformed teaching), but an ever-present experience. In particular, when Jesus freely offers himself as the ‘resurrected and ascended eschatological Son of God in the Eucharist’ (Cooper 2012:4–5), believers once more hear proclaimed the Father’s ‘verdict of justification’. Correspondingly, in Lutheranism, the believers’ baptismal ‘union’ with the Saviour (whose real presence is affirmed in holy communion) is ‘strengthened’. Also, his ‘alien righteousness is continually imputed as the means by which’ the believers’ ‘relationship’ with the Father is ‘mediated’. Lutherans teach that believers are righteous as well as sinners at the same time. In Latin, the phrase is *simul justus et peccator*. So, during the observance of the Lord’s Supper in the corporate worship service, when the minister announces ‘absolution to the penitent sinner’, the minister’s ‘human words become, sacramentally, God’s own declarative’ utterance. In this way, the Lord bestows eternal ‘life’, ‘forgiveness’, and Jesus’ ‘righteousness’.

Reformed dogmaticians consider justification and sanctification to be distinct from each other both logically and temporally (Frame 2013:870–71; Erickson 1998:982; Grudem 1994:746–47; Horton 2011:648–49). Even so, while Calvin sees these as two distinguishable aspects, he likewise perceives them ‘to be united together in him’, or inseparable (Calvin 2007: Book 3.11.6, 478; cf. 3.11.11, p. 483). This view regards sanctification as the result of justification⁶⁴ (Horton 2011:650–51). Lutheranism counters that justification and sanctification are each ‘simultaneous benefits’ (Cooper 2012:6) of the Christians’ baptismal ‘union’ with the resurrected and ascended Messiah. Succinctly put, being declared righteous and set apart for service to the Saviour remain so interlinked that it is impossible to decouple and cordon them off. Here good ‘works’ are not to be ‘identified’ as the cause of ‘sanctification’; instead, they are the ‘result of sanctification’.

64 cf. Phil 3:9-14.

As noted earlier, in Lutheran theology, sanctification and justification come through the alien righteousness of the Son. Moreover, sanctification is the ‘declarative reality’ (Cooper 2012:6) of a believer’s imputed, extrinsic righteousness becoming an ‘effective intrinsic reality’. Lutherans teach that justification describes the believers’ relationship with God, in which sinners passively receive the Father’s gracious offer of the Son through the means of grace. In contrast, sanctification describes the believers’

relationship with the world, in which the Spirit empowers them to perform good works in an intentional and proactive manner.

Adherents to Lutheranism maintain that sanctification is rooted in the gospel, which in turn is the basis for believers producing fruit. Sanctification includes the Spirit recreating sinners as the Father's holy people and their manifesting to the world the new life they have in the Son. Both Reformed theology and Lutheranism stress faith and gratitude as the motivation for believers doing charitable acts. The prime objective is not God receiving glory through the inner piety and virtuous deeds performed by Christians; instead, the aim is God glorifying himself as the Spirit empowers believers to do good works for the benefit of others.

Reformed Theologians place a strong emphasis on God's sovereign decree on salvation⁶⁵ (Erickson 1998:927–31). In contrast, confessional Lutheranism shifts the emphasis to God's providential justification of repentant sinners, namely, those to whom he has given saving faith through his means of grace. Lutherans teach that while justification describes the believers' relationship with God, sanctification denotes their relationship to society. As previously stated, it is the manifestation of the Savior's resurrection life within believers to the world.

To recap the Lutheran perspective, 'justification is a monergistic act' (Cooper 2012:6) in which the Father 'imputes' the merits of the Son to sinners. Their faith in him is the basis for the Father declaring them to be righteous. 'Sanctification' is also a 'monergistic act' whereby God's renewing grace (provided by the Spirit through Word and sacrament) operates in the lives of believers. The Lord enables them to demonstrate their status as his holy people through virtuous deeds done on behalf of others.

To summarise the Reformed view, the understanding of justification is a monergistic and immediate legal act of God in which he forgives our sins and credits the righteousness of Christ to us, thus declaring us to be righteous (Allison 2011:498; Grudem 1994:723). Also, justification is by faith without works (Frame 2013:970). While in regeneration and justification, we are utterly unable to cooperate with God's grace,⁶⁶ having been acted upon by the Holy Spirit through the gospel; however, in sanctification, our own activity and good works are enabled by God's grace.⁶⁷ We are unable to work for our salvation, but we ought to work out our salvation in everyday life (Allison 2011:520; Grudem 1994:753–56; Horton 2011:662). It is alone God's work of justification (Calvin 2007, Book 3.11.7, p. 479) that enables fallen people to produce the fruit of righteousness. This is sanctification (Horton 2011:663);

65 cf. John 6:44, 65; 15:16; Eph 1:4-5; Acts 13:48; Rom 9-16; Westminster Confession (2018:5); Piper (2009). In recent years, Reformed theologians from two different schools, Neo-Puritanism and Neo-Calvinism, have put different emphases on God's sovereign decree. Neo-Puritanism emphasises the sovereignty of God over salvation (i.e. total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints, employing the acronym, TULIP), while the Neo-Calvinists (or Kuyperians) accentuate the sovereignty of God over all creation (i.e. creation order/cultural mandate, Christian worldview, common grace, antithesis, and sphere sovereignty). As mentioned, I, Robert, align myself with the Neo-Calvinist tradition.

66 cf. John 6:44; Rom 3:1-23; 2 Cor 4:3-4; Eph 2:1-3.

67 Erickson (1998:982-83) offers a more nuanced approach that seems to be monergistic.

however, with respect to sanctification, the dangers of legalism and antinomianism are to be avoided (Horton 2011:664).

Chapters 6 and 7: The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

The sixth chapter (pp. 147–74) concerns the sacrament of baptism, while the seventh chapter (pp. 175–205) deals with the Lord's Supper. Since both topics have already been broached within the context of other related issues, their treatment below is less extensive. As with the preceding subjects covered in earlier chapters, Lutheran and Reformed adherents have a range of overlapping and divergent views regarding these Christian rites. For instance, both ecclesial communities affirm that baptism is intended for adult believers and their children. Similarly, the mode of baptism can involve immersion, affusion, or sprinkling.

Moreover, Lutherans and many Reformed Christians practise pedobaptism,⁶⁸ namely, the baptism of infants⁶⁹ (Allison 2011:623–31, 633; cf. Bavinck 2008:497; Grudem 1994:975–81; Horton 2011:794–98, 2012:171–75; Westminster Confession 2018:28.4; Calvin 2007: Book 4.16, pp. 871–892). This contrasts with those Evangelical groups, who restrict the rite to credobaptism or the baptism of those who believe (Allison 2011:633; Erickson 1998:1105–6; Grudem 1994:970–71; cf. Horton's response to Grudem in Horton 2011:795–97). I, Robert, *also* view credobaptism (which I affirm), as our proclamation of what Christ has done for and in us, namely, our burial with him,⁷⁰ resurrection, newness of life,⁷¹ and union with him⁷² (Rom 6:2–5; Bavinck 2008:520; Erickson 1998:1110; Wright 2008:272–73). Further, it is a political statement, a renunciation of the secular, those things that previously contended for our desires. Baptism, therefore, acts as vying for our unaltered devotion and allegiance towards Christ alone (Smith 2009).

To reiterate what was previously articulated, both Lutherans and the Reformed agree that through the 'Word of the Law' (Kurian and Day 2017:124), the Lord 'brings sinners to know their lost condition and repent'. This occurs as the 'Spirit awakens them to see their sin' (Larson 2015), as well as 'convicts them of their guilt' and summons them to 'repent and believe'. God also uses the law to restrain evil and show his will for people's lives. In contrast, through the 'Word of the Gospel', the Father enables sinners to put their faith in the Son, to be declared righteous, to 'enter the process of sanctification', and to receive 'eternal life'. The Spirit

68 For Lutheran dogmatians, baptism is viewed as a means of grace (Erickson 1998:1099-1102), whereas the position held by Reformed theologians is that baptism is a sign and seal of the new covenant (Erickson 1998:1102-5).

69 While I, Robert, understand and appreciate the theology of pedobaptism, I find myself more agreeable to credobaptism (i.e. believer's baptism). For both arguments, cf. Bavinck (2008:521-32); Grudem (1994:970-71).

70 cf. Col 2:12.

71 cf. Rom 6:1-11; Col 2:11-12.

72 cf. Rom 6:3-4.

summons and empowers the lost to ‘accept’ the Father’s ‘grace’ in baptismal union with the Son. Each person who believes is immediately pardoned and imputed with the Son’s ‘righteousness’.

73 cf. Horton (2012:177-78).

The Reformed define sacraments as outward signs and seals of God’s inward grace, which is offered to the elect in the gospel⁷³ (Bavinck 2008:461–63, 468–70, 473–77; Calvin 2007: Book 4.14.3, 6–7; Erickson 1998:1102; Horton 2011:766–69, 791–92, 820; Westminster Confession 2018:27.1, 28.1). According to this definition, only baptism and the Lord’s Supper qualify as legitimate sacraments (Bavinck 2008:463 cf. pp. 490–495; Horton 2011:771; Westminster Confession 2018:27.4). Reformed adherents maintain that each sacrament serves the purpose of sustaining and strengthening the faith of believers (Bavinck 2008:362) by confirming the promises of the gospel. Moreover, the Reformed teach that the sacraments give God’s children inward assurance that they are truly among the elect (Bavinck 2008:475; Horton 2011:788–91, 821; Westminster Confession 2018:27.1).

Lutherans go further by defining sacraments as those sacred acts that employ external, visible elements (i.e. the water of baptism and the bread and wine of holy communion) and provide internal, invisible gifts of grace. More specifically, a sacrament is a work in which God is present and active through the elements. Additionally, Lutherans teach that the Spirit operates through the sacraments to arouse faith, which originates with and is nourished by the Word of promise. The Word expresses what God commands, pledges, and accomplishes through the sacraments. To clarify a bit more, Lutherans maintain that God created people to learn through their senses, including what they see, hear, smell, touch, and taste. So, when the proclaimed Word is joined with the enacted Word—involving such elements as water, bread, and wine—communicants are more deeply impacted. In turn, the Spirit uses the ministry of Word and sacrament to strengthen the faith and deepen the love shown by God’s people.

In contrast to the Reformed, Lutherans teach that in the sacrament of baptism (done either by pouring, sprinkling, or immersing someone with water), the Father offers the benefits of the Son’s redemption to all people (including infants) and graciously bestows the washing of regeneration and newness of life to all who believe. Since baptism enables believers to share in the holy life of the triune God, believers likewise are joined to the body of Christ, the universal church. Similarly, in contrast to the Reformed, Lutherans maintain that in the sacrament of holy communion, the bread and the wine become the real, true,

objective, and localised presence of Jesus' body and blood through the Word. Hence, the Lord Jesus gives to the communicants his body and blood in, with, and under the bread and the wine. Lutherans think that through the sacrament of holy communion, the triune God brings the gift of forgiveness to the worshipping congregation and strengthens their faith. Lutherans acknowledge that the miraculous way in which the above occurs when Jesus' words of institution are read, is a profound mystery, whose solution is known only to the Creator.

Reformed theologians deny the Messiah's sacramental presence in the bread and wine⁷⁴ (Bavinck 2008:575–80; Horton 2011:810, 812; Sproul 2013; Westminster Confession 2018:29.5–6); instead, it is taught that Jesus is spiritually present through the work of the Holy Spirit and that the effect of the Lord's Supper is not automatic, but depends also on the participants receptivity and faith⁷⁵ (Bavinck 2008:470; Erickson 1998:1126–28; Grudem 1994:995–96; Horton 2011:768). As noted before, this emphasis is due, in part, to the Reformed rejecting the Lutheran teaching that Jesus' human body takes on the divine property of ubiquity⁷⁶ (Allison 2011:652–54; Calvin 2007: Book 4.17.17–18, 30–31; Grudem 1994:995). Further, the Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice, and so it ought to be served around a table and not at an altar of sacrifice (Bavinck 2008:541, 565–66; Westminster Confession 2018:29.2).⁷⁷

Chapter 8: Worship

The eighth chapter (pp. 207–34) exams the issue of worship. Both Lutherans and the Reformed affirm that, in relationship to God, the church's purpose is to worship him, especially through the ministry of Word and sacrament. Both communions also teach that worship in the church is not a tack-on activity that believers perform; rather, it occupies a central place in the corporate life of God's people.

Despite these common affirmations, there are meaningful distinctions. For instance, the Reformed hold to the regulative principle of worship, in which only what God has commanded in Scripture is permissible during the corporate gathering (Allison 2011:667–68; Westminster Confession 2018:21.1). In contrast, Lutherans maintain that believers can do in worship whatever God's Word has not forbidden. Moreover, within Reformed congregations, it is typically understood that worship is something congregants do for God⁷⁸ (Westminster Confession 2018:21.2). This

74 For devotional teaching on the Reformed perspective on the Lord's Supper, cf. Bruce (2005); Watson (2013).

75 Horton (2011:766) says, 'Faith, therefore, contributes nothing to the nature and efficacy of the sacraments; they are what they are and do what they do'. He continues, 'baptism and the Supper remain objective sacraments even apart from one's faith. Faith does not *make* a sacrament, but it does *receive* the reality of the sacrament; otherwise one receives only the sign without the thing signified' (p. 768, cf. p. 791).

76 For a dialogue on the different views of the Lord's Supper, cf. Armstrong (2007).

77 cf. the corresponding statement made at the beginning of the journal article in connection with chapter 1 of Kolb and Trueman (2017). To reiterate, in contrast to the centrality of the altar given by Catholics in their celebration of the Mass, both Lutherans and the Reformed give pride of place to the exposition and proclamation of Scripture.

78 cf. Matt 4:10; John 5:23; Rom 1:25; Col 2:18; 3:17; 1 Pet 2:5; Rev 19:10.

includes offering praise and thanks to the Lord, presenting and rededicating themselves to his service, and giving him their offerings to be used for his glory (Grudem 1994:1003–5; Westminster Confession 2018:21.2). Lutherans affirm that corporate worship is motivated by the parishioners' gratitude for the Creator's grace. Nonetheless, Lutherans consider the corporate gathering as an opportunity for God to minister to congregants, not for them to do something for God. Indeed, if the activity of worship is depicted as an arrow, it points from the Lord to his children, not from them to him.

Those within the Lutheran and Reformed traditions wrestle with how the gifts of the Spirit⁷⁹ factor into corporate worship. Admittedly, there are widely-differing views, especially with respect to the more miraculous manifestations of the Spirit⁸⁰ (Grudem 1994:1031, 1046; Grudem and Gundry 1996). For example, some argue that the sign gifts have ended (being confined to the age of the apostles), while others contend that all of them remain operative today in the church. Even within Lutheran and Reformed communions, there has been a charismatic renewal movement (Allison 2011:447; Theron 1999:194, 196–97, 199; cf. Williams 1996),⁸¹ and the responses among various synods and presbyteries have understandably been mixed.⁸²

In thinking through the above issues theologically, it is helpful to note that among Lutheran and Reformed adherents, there is an emphasis on the gospel, especially as it is centred in the person and work of the Son. Meanwhile, within some charismatic circles, there is a focus on the presence and power of the Spirit, especially in connection with the sign gifts (such as healing, direct prophecy, and speaking in tongues). On the one hand, some charismatics are preoccupied with the spiritual experience and sanctification of a believer's inner life; on the other hand, many Lutherans and the Reformed consider justification by faith as the primary area of concern.

Those within the Lutheran and Reformed traditions give foremost emphasis to God's revelation in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. Some charismatics, however, teach that God can use visions, dreams, and direct prophecy to lead the church and guide believers, even at times apart from the Word. Lutherans, and to a lesser extent the Reformed, affirm the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper as God's means of grace (Grudem 1994:950–55; Horton 2011:763, 766–69). In contrast, many charismatics regard these as mere ordinances and symbolic, external works (Grudem 1994:968–70, 996; Horton 2011:770).

79 cf. Rom 12:6-8; 1 Co. 7:7; 12:8-10, 28; Eph 4:11; 1 Pet. 4:11. For a generous discussion on spiritual gifts from a conservative, Reformed, charismatic perspective, cf. Grudem (1994:1016-83).

80 There are strong voices from both the continuationist and cessationist perspectives. For example, cf. Storms (2017) and MacArthur (2013), respectively.

81 This issue is not deliberated within Kolb and Trueman (2017), even though it is a subject of longstanding interest among Lutherans and the Reformed. For this reason, the charismatic renewal movement is briefly explored here.

82 For instance, cf. *The Lutheran Church and the Charismatic Movement: Guidelines for Congregations and Pastors*, which was published in 1977 by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Concerning a Reformed perspective, cf. Packer (1980a; 1980b).

Moreover, some charismatics believe they can trust their inner emotions when it comes to feeling certitude about their relationship with God⁸³ (MacArthur 2013: xii). Those in the Lutheran and Reformed traditions, however, look to God's objective Word and sacraments (Horton 2011:751–63), rather than their subjective emotions, for assurance. Some within the Lutheran and Reformed charismatic renewal movements state that they are giving needed emphasis to the doctrine of the Spirit⁸⁴ by offering believers a fresh experience of his presence in their inner lives (Allison 2011:447–49). Also, while there is an affirmation of the sacraments as means of grace, charismatic Lutheran and Reformed worshipers maintain that the Spirit can also move in fresh, experiential ways (Storms 2017).

83 One need only look at sermons and books by contemporary charismatics, such as Bill Johnson, Mike Bickle, Rick Joyner, Todd White, Randy Clark, Cindy Jacobs, and others.

84 cf. John 6:63; Acts 4:8, 31; 6:5, 8, 10; 8:11, 26; 10:44–47, 15:19; 1 Cor 2:4; 12:7; 2 Cor 3:6; Eph 2:18; 6:17; 1 Thess 1:5; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:12.

Conclusion

The Conclusion (pp. 235–6) of *Between Wittenberg and Geneva* offers an abbreviated synopsis to the entire volume. Both Kolb and Trueman reiterate the publication's objective of clarifying the major tenets of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions. The process entails thoughtful and substantive dialogue on the range of issues explored in the preceding chapters. Likewise, we—Dan and Robert—intend our engagement with this dual-authored work to further the discussion within the community of SATS regarding the areas of overlap and distinction among members of the Lutheran and Reformed communions, and even from other theological and ecclesiastical traditions. This includes assessing 'settled solutions to questions' each group asks by their respective study and application of Scripture.

On the one hand, as the preceding discourse has noted, there remain 'serious differences' between Lutheran and Reformed dogmaticians, especially in their 'formulation' of key 'theological and philosophical presuppositions'; on the other hand, there is 'common ground' on 'specific points' involving 'teaching and proclamation'. We trust the readership of *Conspectus* are better informed and edified by our chapter-by-chapter distillation and deliberation of the information appearing in Kolb and Trueman volume, and that, despite differing theological views, the process remains characterised by unity and charity among Jesus' followers.

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Review of Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost*.

Annang Asumang

Keener C 2016. *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

1. Introduction of Author and Book

Craig Keener is one of the most influential Biblical Scholars in contemporary conservative Christianity currently serving as FM and Ada Thompson Professor of the New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary. Keener is an extensively published author; at my last check, he has ‘authored 24 books, five of which have won book awards in *Christianity Today*’ (Keener 2018). The publications include major multivolume and sometimes voluminous academic commentaries on New Testament Backgrounds, the Gospels of Matthew, and of John, Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles to the Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians. In addition to numerous journal articles, Keener has also used his writings to address important contemporary issues such as divorce and remarriage, miracles, and knowing the ‘mind of the Spirit’. He is himself a Pentecostal minister, and thus eminently qualified to bring his wealth of expertise not only in Biblical scholarship, global intercultural theological education and

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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.

practical ministry to bear on an aspect of one of the foremost subjects currently facing Christians and the academy.

That subject is Pentecostal Hermeneutics. It is an arena of keen interest and debate, not least because pentecostalism, as a spirituality, as well as a Christian tradition, is only recently receiving serious scholarly attention. A fundamental agenda in this new interest is what pentecostalism brings to the global theological discourse especially the tradition's hermeneutics. This is an arena of debate to which several authors have already made contributions (Archer and Oliverio Jr 2016; Martin 2013; Nel 2015:1–21) and Keener's latest publication may be said to belong to it. Even then, in reframing the standard discussion of the subject by labelling it as 'Spirit Hermeneutics', Keener has managed to catch the spirit of the proverbial current by significantly advancing that conversation, given the cross-traditional and global nature of pentecostalisation—the phenomenon whereby Pentecostal spirituality has interpenetrated and transformed other Christian traditions and the wider societies. This is quite correct in my view, for as I point out later, Keener's bridging of 'Pentecostal Hermeneutics' with mainstream Christian conservative hermeneutics is one of the most important achievements of the book.

The book itself was commissioned as part of what the publishers label as 'Pentecostal Manifestos'—a series of publications aimed at giving voice to established and emerging Pentecostal scholars to articulate the tradition's distinctive engagement with important theological themes of relevance to the wider Christian community. As his numerous devoted readers have come to expect, Keener delivers with an extensively-referenced and -sourced 522 page tome, of which 233 plus xxviii pages, that is, almost fifty per cent is made up of extremely useful front materials, appendices, endnotes and references. The main body of the book consists of an introduction and conclusion which enclose six parts, each with varying numbers of chapters. I now summarise these sections and follow with critical engagement of the contents.

2. Summary of Contents

In the introductory chapter, Keener sets about defining the field of his study, delineating the questions he aims to address, stating his main thesis and providing an outline of his argument. In sum, he argues that this book is 'primarily designed to function as biblical theological reflection supporting a dynamic, experiential reading of Scripture' (p. 1). He asserts that Scripture itself mandates that it

be read experientially and thus his aim is to articulate how such an enterprise, open to encountering the Spirit who continues to speak today through Scripture may be conducted. He clarifies that he is dead set against the kind of ‘unbridled subjectivism of popular charismatic excesses’ (p. 5) just as much as the purely cognitive models of biblical interpretation which diminish the continued experience of the Spirit as it was with the original audiences. This criticism of both extremes shapes significant aspects of the book’s discourse, with Keener urging that in his view ‘all Christians should be considered charismatic by definition’ (p. 8).

2.1 Summary of Part 1

The first part of the book lays a solid biblical theological foundation for Keener’s argument by examining the Pentecost narratives in Acts and some of the subsequent revivalist movements in Christianity to show that the Bible must be read experientially, eschatologically and missionally. Positing that ‘Scripture itself invites us to read it theologically with interest in praxis and mission’ (p. 19), he postulates that the spiritual contexts of the writers and first audiences are as important as their socio-historical and cultural contexts. In that light, today’s readers of Scripture who analogously share in the kind of experiences of the Spirit described in the text, experiences which were evidently familiar to the writers and their communities, those Christians are much better placed to capture the text’s full meaning than those who don’t share in that experience. In the same way, the eschatological ethos of Scripture mandates that it be read with a continualist hermeneutic which expects God to continue working out his eschatological missional purposes through today’s believers.

2.2 Summary of Part 2

The second part follows on with the eschatological missional theme by arguing that Scripture must be read in global perspective that is sensitive to what the Spirit is doing in different parts of the world. He again grounds this global reading in the biblical text and in the Pentecost narrative in particular, positing that speaking in other tongues signified the necessarily global dimension of the Spirit’s work and mandating the cross-cultural reading of Scripture. This inevitably leads to a discussion of the implications of contextualization in this project. Keener traces how contextualization and recontextualization occur in the Bible and encourages interpreters to be self-aware of both their own cultural preconditioning as well as their blind spots to current interpretations in other cultures when interpreting Scripture. This

leads Keener to employ a couple of case studies to examine the importance of contextualization for reading the Bible from a global cross-cultural perspective.

2.3 Summary of Part 3

The third part of the book underlines the need to read the text with its originally ‘designed sense’, by which he means pursuing ‘the sense projected by the ideal author or at least the ancient cultural sense’ (p. 99). This section is in particular aimed at rejecting approaches to reading Scripture prevalent in some sections of the Pentecostal movement as well as some postmodernist reader-response methods which diminish or even ignore the primacy of authorial intention and the pastoral purposes and contexts within which the texts were written. To prevent these dangers, Keener suggests a three-stage procedure involving studying the immediate context of the text, its original function and its meaning in the light of the cultural context. He appeals to relevance theory to assert that attempts to pit historical study against the theological interests of the texts are wrong-headed, though he admits that some readings are more helpful than others.

2.4 Summary of Part 4

The fourth part of *Spirit Hermeneutics* lays the foundation for the subsequent part by examining how the Spirit epistemologically directs Spirit Hermeneutics. Again Keener negotiates a middle ground between two extremes. On the one hand, he warns against a naively simplistic approach to Bible interpretation which ignores what the text itself is actually saying, or which imposes the interpreter’s preconceived ideas upon it. On the other hand, Keener rejects a ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’ which employs a secular and materialistic worldview with its hostile bias against the miraculous in Scripture and which is thus strangely acceptable to any interpreter, be they believers or nonbelievers and anti-believers. In this regard, he takes to task ‘hard cessationism which offers an intellectual approach to the text’ for mirroring unbelieving approaches to reading scripture as ‘it fails to embrace the continuing relevance of a major aspect of the biblical message’ (p. 199). The key to staying in the middle ground is an epistemological commitment to the hermeneutical relationship between the Word and the Spirit nurtured by faithful submission to God through Christ.

2.5 Summary of Part 5

Having defined the underlying premise of an epistemology of Spirit and the Word, Keener devotes the fifth part to examining the exact processes by which the Spirit-inspired writers of Scripture model Spirit Hermeneutics. This is one of the most important sections of the book, as it successfully provides important exemplars of what it means to interpret Scripture through Spirit-driven experience. Keener examines Jesus' hermeneutical use of Scripture to address the contextual issues of his day. Keener affirms that whereas to Jesus, the original sense of Scripture was fundamental to his exegesis, the application of the text to his context was nevertheless driven by the Spirit's work. Keener then uses specific passages to affirm how this approach is also employed by other inspired New Testament writers and speakers such as Paul, Stephen, and Matthew. These are extended to provide a number of guidelines for Spirit-enabled application and analogizing of Scripture.

2.6 Summary of Part 6

The final part is aimed at addressing the excesses of Pentecostal readings of Scripture. Keener ably traces some of the historical roots of problematic populist readings starting with the holiness Wesleyan movement, and employs examples to set out some of the features of 'the wrong kind of experiential reading' (p. 268). He suggests how the global Pentecostal community, whose clear-cut definition he admits is elusive, is nevertheless the arbiter constraining such excesses.

3. Critical Engagement

3.1 Strengths of the Book

This book has been hailed by many reviewers as a 'game changer' in the discipline of biblical hermeneutics and I am in total agreement with that glowing assessment. For evidence, one could point to many of its strengths which lead me to commend it to all conservative postgraduate seminary students, their teachers and certainly their libraries. I could write for example of its engaging nature, its lucidity, its commitment to the primacy and priority of the text as Spirit-inspired literature, its compelling argumentation by exemplification and its determination to underline the Bible as the Spirit's textbook designed to be interpreted through experience of the Spirit who continues to work through it. However, several other reviewers, including a whole edition of the journal *Pneuma* (Keener, 2017:198–240), have already examined its major contributions in some detail. Accordingly, I will limit myself here to

only a couple of strengths which to my mind have not been adequately highlighted.

In the first place, and as stated previously, a major achievement of this project is its attempt to bridge the gap between 'Pentecostal Hermeneutics' and 'mainstream' Christian hermeneutics. So from the start, Keener insists that he is not aiming 'to describe or prescribe an entire hermeneutic used by Pentecostal or charismatic exegetes; it is rather meant to highlight emphases that Pentecostals, charismatics and other people of the Spirit may add to hermeneutical wisdom already in place' (p. 7). In other words, what is on offer is enriching the hermeneutical praxis of the wider non-Pentecostal but pentecostalised Christian community, by introducing them to an approach to Bible interpretation which is evidently being instigated, directed and blessed by the Spirit today. This is an astute move as it demonstrates the coming-of-age of Pentecostal scholarship. But even more so, this bridging of the gap ensures that in an era of pentecostalisation of global Christianity whereby Pentecostal spirituality has permeated almost all Christian traditional denominational boundaries, its hermeneutical procedures and nuances become accessible to all Christians.

Keener's widened definition of what therefore constitutes a 'Charismatic Christian' is thus reasonably well argued, even though some may still need to be convinced whether such an extremely broad and boundary-blurring definition reflects the current state of Christian praxis on the ground. It is indeed gratifying that Keener provides an extensive list of scholars he knows of who may be reasonably classified as charismatic or Pentecostal in one of his appendices. Be that as it may, it seems to me that in abandoning the term 'Pentecostal hermeneutic' in favour of '*Spirit Hermeneutics*', Keener has accelerated the process of moving the hermeneutical beliefs and practices of pentecostalism from its secluded silo into the open-air of mainstream Christian interpretive praxis. This fits in perfectly well with the pentecostalisation of Christianity. I will shortly quibble with whether this new title is adequate enough, but I am very appreciative of Keener's concerted effort to respond to the mandates of the pentecostalisation of global Christianity.

Another achievement of Keener is how he situates his theory of Christian hermeneutics from the starting point of Scripture, rather than philosophical theories of human understanding. As the subtitle underlines, his primary assertion is that Scripture must be read 'in the light of Pentecost', rather than on the terms of an understanding of human anthropology. Keener returns to this

grounding of theory in Scripture by demonstrating how the kind of hermeneutics he advocates is modelled by Jesus and the inspired writers of Scripture and thus provides exemplars for our own contemporary interpretation. As I argue shortly, this biblically-grounded approach though brilliant, could have been augmented by an engagement with some of the philosophical and theological approaches to the hermeneutical enterprise, at least in order to strengthen the bridge which he erects with mainline approaches to the subject. Even so, his limited approach may well be deliberate, as it heightens his commitment to letting the Bible itself direct our theory of hermeneutics.

As Keener's numerous fans, of whom I count myself as one of the foremost, have come to expect of Keener, the copious endnotes of the book will certainly be of immense help to the research student. I am also impressed, but again unsurprised, by the several chapters of helpful appendices covering ancillary matters, the almost seventy pages of bibliographic references and the indices of authors and subject. Overall also, the book's unapologetically continualist outlook is another of its major features, and I am very appreciative of it.

3.2 Critical Quibbles

My first quibble is with regard to the title 'Spirit Hermeneutics'. Keener defends this terminological choice by arguing that the book's primary aim is not to comprehensively address the question of how one interprets or understands Scripture, but to focus on the narrower question of 'How do we hear the Spirit's voice in Scripture?' (p. 2). In that regard he rightly finds 'Pentecostal Hermeneutics' too narrow, so also, I must assume, would have been the alternative 'Charismatic Hermeneutics'.

Even so, the meaning of the term 'Spirit Hermeneutics' is not self-evident and perhaps discordant to the ear, especially given that the hermeneutical procedures that Keener lays out require co-operation between the exegete and the Spirit whom he or she experiences. Keener is of course absolutely right in urging us to move beyond restricting the work of the Spirit in hermeneutics to illumination alone, by taking serious account also of those experiential functions which lie beyond the cognitive faculties of the believing exegete. Yet, the term 'Spirit Hermeneutics' fails to capture this phenomenon and certainly may well give the impression, which Keener repeatedly condemns, that the hermeneutical procedure for which he argues is a totally passive reception of the meaning of the text from the Spirit. This is certainly far from what the book represents. In that case, would

'Spirit-directed Hermeneutics' or better still, *'Spirit-experiential Hermeneutics'* have been a better title, especially as the latter gives voice to the emphasis on experiencing the Spirit in Scripture?

A second area of query is on the section in which Keener argues for the pursuit of the 'designed sense' of the text. It is here that Keener mostly attempts to engage the excesses of both Pentecostal as well as non-Pentecostal, especially historical, readings of the text, a section which was extremely important for his central task of bridging the two. In this regard, his suggestion that the interpreter must focus on how the text functioned in its original context was extremely important. But Keener could have defined how the non-cognitive aspects of this 'designed sense' may be attained. He later underlines the importance of application and analogical mapping of the interpreter's experiences with that projected in the scriptures; but, what of the place of symbolical, typological or even limited allegorical interpretations of the Bible? There is no doubt that in some places the inspired writers and the first readers of the text could well have understood such Premodernist approaches as 'designed sense', and there are some conservative interpreters today who find this approach acceptable under certain controls. An attempt to address how this hermeneutical practice relates to the 'designed sense' would have been helpful.

I would also like to express a small quibble about the limited engagement with philosophical theories of hermeneutics. Though Keener engages elements of Hirsch's theory of interpretation, little is said about how *Spirit Hermeneutics*, and the pursuit of the 'designed sense' of scripture philosophically relates to other hermeneutical theoretical accounts proposed for example by Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur and Thiselton to name a few of the influential theorists. More crucially it appears to me that the type of experiential hermeneutics Keener proposes shares some important affinities with the phenomenological and existential hermeneutics of the nineteenth-century theologians (e.g. Kierkegaard and Buber). Some engagement with these might have solidified the theory undergirding his proposal.

Of course, Keener significantly differs from some of these theorists by his more positive commitment to the priority of the text as well as his grounding of the hermeneutical enterprise in the experience of the Spirit's voice in the text. Moreover, I am mindful of Keener's disclaimer that his intention was not to generate an exhaustive account of Christian hermeneutics. And in any case, he devotes Appendix A to briefly engage hermeneutical philosophers such as

Dilthey, Gadamer and Bultmann and so address some of the theoretical questions they raise with regard to his proposal. All that said, however, and given the impressive achievement of the book, more in-depth critical engagement with the key dialogical partners who provide the philosophical frameworks underpinning the hermeneutics which shape some of the approaches dominating contemporary mainline conservative biblical interpretation would have served to strengthen the alternative philosophical outlook set out in the book.

A final area to which Keener could have given more attention regards the natural question of how Spirit-driven experiential reading of the Bible relates in hierarchical terms to the 'designed sense' of the canon. In other words, if today's Christian may practise hermeneutical procedures modelled on those practised by the inspired writers of Scripture due to being in eschatological continuity with these Biblical believers in terms of experience of the Spirit's work, then at what point do the insights and experiences of the contemporary Christian differ in magnitude from those of the first canonical Christians? I am specifically asking, where does the finality and thus superiority of the biblical canon fit in the account of Spirit hermeneutics?

I am sure Keener would have answered such a question by indicating the degree to which the contemporary church is dissimilar to the Church of biblical times and therefore cannot wholly replicate the apostolic hermeneutics in its totality. And indeed he indirectly addresses this issue by urging that despite his non-cessationist outlook, the biblical witness of the canon is supreme above any revelation or interpretation that has followed it (p. 281). The canon, to Keener, remains the 'measuring stick' for all subsequent interpretations and thus cannot be superseded. That said, Keener does not give sustained attention to this vexed question, a question that I imagine will be raised by those of 'soft cessationist' persuasion. Even so, there is never an indication in the book that Keener would subscribe to the prioritization of contemporary readings of Scripture over and above those originally 'designed' by the inspired authors themselves, making this particular query to be a rather moot academic quibble.

4. Conclusion

This extended review has summarised and evaluated one of the most important contributions to shaping systematic approaches to interpreting Scripture following the inevitable implications of the

pentecostalisation of global Christianity. Keener has once again faithfully served his Lord in producing a book which in my view will in future be hailed as one of the most influential turning points in making Spirit-driven experiential readings of the Bible the standard hermeneutical norm in conservative Christianity. He certainly has provided the scaffolding for bridging the gap between Pentecostal hermeneutics and mainstream conservative approaches to the subject. Though much still needs to be now done in building and strengthening this bridge to its logical completion, I am confident that *'Spirit Hermeneutics'* will play a fundamental role in shaping this agenda.

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