Conspectus

The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary

Volume 35

April 2023

SATS

Bible-based. Christ-centred. Spirit-led.

ISSN 1996-8167

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Editorial

If I could summarize the golden thread of this first issue for 2023, it would be the implications and applications of God's Word in the lives of the saints. From Bible translation to the responsible equipping of laypersons for preaching, *Conspectus* 35 contains five articles that acknowledge the centrality of the biblical text and the importance of its message in the lives of those who read or hear it.

Conspectus 35 Articles

In the first article, "Theologizing in Africa: With Special Reference to Bible Translation in Chichewa," Ernst Wendland emphasizes the many ways in which Bible translators function as theologizers. To illustrate this, he focusses on the New Testament Study Bible in Chichewa, reflecting on the art of conveying the meaning of a biblical text in understandable ways in order to serve the reader(/hearer) well.

Next, Dan Lioy argues for the basic categorization of human speech as either *verbum efficax* or *verbum inefficax* in his article, "The Destructive Power of the Tongue as a *Verbum Inefficax*: A Canonical-Literary Reading of James 3:1–12 through the Lens of Speech-Act Theory." Employing speech-act theory, Lioy discusses efficacious speech as the proclamation of the gospel and inefficacious speech as marked by James in 3:1–12, concluding that efficacious speech promotes human flourishing, while inefficacious speech leads to decay.

In his article, "Salt and Light: Reading Matthew 5:13–16 within the Context of the Matthean Community," Frans-Johann Pienaar explores the rhetorical effect of Jesus's command to be salt and light in the lives of the original audience of Matthew's Gospel. Pienaar argues that Jesus's words in Matthew 5:13–16 come as a challenge to an audience facing daily temptation to assimilate after the destruction of the temple in AD 70.

Next, Charles Owiredu discusses the metaphors used for menstruation in the Old Testament in his article, "Euphemisms and Metaphors for Menstruation in the Old Testament and Two Ghanaian Bible Translations." Owiredu analyzes the metaphorical conceptualizations of menstruation in the Hebrew Bible and then compares them with their translations in two Ghanaian Bibles, Twi and Gã, demonstrating that in both Ghanaian and Israelite thought, ideas around indisposition and separation are prominent when language about menstruation is concerned.

Finally, in his article, "Reimagining the Role of the Pastor as a Teaching Elder in the Twenty-First-Century Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Nkhoma Synod Context: A Situational Audit of Lilongwe City Congregations," Maxwell Chiwoko underscores that most preaching in the Nkhoma Synod is done by laypeople. The author argues for a reimagining of the fulfillment of the teaching responsibilities of pastors and for more effective training for laypersons.

The issue concludes with three book reviews. Robert Badenberg reviews *Who Do You Say I Am? Christology in Africa* (2021), edited by Rodney L. Reed, and David K. Ngaruiya. This is followed by a review of Nijay Gupta's, *Tell Her Story* (2023), written by Joshua R. Barron. Finally, Robert P. Menzies reviews Scott Adams's book, *In Jesus' Name: Johannine Prayer in Ethical, Missional, and Eschatological Perspective* (2022).

New Editorial Board Members

On behalf of the Editorial Board chairperson, Dr. Desmond Henry, I am honored to welcome four new members to the board. The first is Mr. Izaak

Connoway, the journal's newly appointed Copy Editor. Mr. Connoway is currently completing his Ph.D. in Old Testament at the South African Theological Seminary, where he also lectures and serves in the Faculty Research and Publishing team. Colleague, we celebrate this new appointment with you and are grateful for the immense value that your service is adding to the journal.

We also welcome Drs. Scott Adams, Kevin Muriithi Ndereba, and Abeneazer G. Urga. Dr. Adams (Ph.D., Radboud University, Netherlands) serves as an adjunct Assistant Professor in the School of Divinity, Regent University. He is the lead pastor at the Midtown location of Our Savior's Church in Lafayette, Louisiana. His main area of specialization is John's Gospel. It is an honor to feature a book review of Adams's recent publication, *In Jesus' Name: Johannine Prayer in Ethical, Missional, and Eschatological Perspective*, in this very issue.

Dr. Muriithi Ndereba (Ph.D., University of South Africa) is Lecturer and Head of Department, Practical Theology in the School of Theology at St. Paul's University, Kenya and postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Department of Practical Theology and Missiology, Stellenbosch University, South Africa. He previously served on the pastoral staff of a Presbyterian church and leads an apologetics ministry, Apologetics Kenya. He serves on the executive boards of the Africa Society of Evangelical Theology and the International Association of the Study of Youth Ministry. Dr. Muriithi Ndereba's research interests are in pastoral, practical and public theologies, youth ministry, apologetics, and integration of faith and science within an African context.

Dr. Urga (Ph.D., Columbia International University) is a Lecturer in New Testament and Greek, and the Head of the M.A. in Biblical Studies at the Evangelical Theological College in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He is also an adjunct Professor at Columbia International University. His research interests include New Testament research in Africa, Ethiopian Orthodox Christology, African biblical hermeneutics, Hebrews, Colossians, and 1 Peter.

We are grateful for the addition of these colleagues and pray that their contributions will serve the journal and church. Welcome, friends!

DOAJ Indexing and DHET Accreditation

Finally, it is my pleasure to inform the reader that *Conspectus* is now indexed on the Directory of Open Access Journals. DOAJ is an international index that hosts high quality, open-access articles. This also means that the journal is now accredited with the Department of Higher Education and Training, South Africa.

The accreditation of our journal has been a dream living in the Editorial Team for the past three years. A few key players deserve to be acknowledged as we celebrate this achievement. Firstly, the previous editor, Dr. Batanayi Manyika, deserves much recognition for birthing this dream and helping us lay the foundation for our application. I also wish to mention the Editorial Team, and, in particular, the Associate Editor, Dr. Caswell Ntseno, for his diligence and commitment to the process. We acknowledge the continuous support of our Editorial Board and the wise input from the Seminary. Most importantly, we are grateful to God for this opportunity and pray for his continued wisdom and grace in all we do.

My gratitude to all our contributors, the Editorial Board, Review Board, Editorial Team, and Seminary for the successful publication of this issue. May the reflections and discussions bring glory to our Lord, and may you find them helpful as you serve him in your unique contexts.

In Christ,
Dr. Cornelia van Deventer
Editor

Theologizing in Africa: With Special Reference to Bible Translation in Chichewa

Ernst R. Wendland

Stellenbosch University

Abstract

To "theologize," that is, to engage in theological reasoning and exposition when composing oral, written, or multimodal discourse, has been applied continually in Africa ever since the Bible was first introduced to this continent. Whenever God's Word is conveyed in another language and cultural setting, the existential theological barrier must be broken as important scriptural notions and entire propositions must inevitably be reconceptualized semantically and frequently also reconfigured grammatically to be communicated. The focus of the present paper is the crucial activity of Bible translation and the various ways in which those involved in such a multifaceted endeavor always engage in theologizing, to one degree or another, while carrying out their work. This article focuses specifically on the *New Testament Study* Bible in Chichewa (2017 Bible Society of Malawi). The importance of preparing such locally contextualized, scripturally accurate, and linguistically idiomatic study Bibles is demonstrated through manifold exemplification to be an indispensable means of ensuring the theological vitality and dynamic growth of the Church in Africa.

1. Historical Overview: The Chichewa Study Bible Project (CSBP)

This overview will briefly touch upon the history, purpose, and methodology of the CSBP. Two primary aspects are then discussed in greater detail and illustrated. The first aspect is the translated text itself with respect to form and content. The second aspect is the paratext that complements the translation with explanatory, illustrative, or descriptive notes. These

This article: https://www.sats.ac.za/conspectus/theologizing-africa-bible-translation-chichewa
https://doi.org/10.54725/conspectus.2023.1.1

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Keywords
vernacular theologizing, contextualization, Bible translation, study Bibles, Chichewa, Malawi

About the Author
Prof. Ernst Wendland has a Ph.D. in African Languages and Literature from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. A former instructor at Lusaka Lutheran Seminary (1968–2022) and a United Bible Societies Translation Consultant in Zambia, he currently serves as a thesis supervisor at SATS and several other academic institutions. His research interests include various aspects of Bible translation as well as structural, stylistic, poetic, and rhetorical studies in biblical texts and the Bantu languages of South-East Africa.

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include footnotes, maps and illustrations, book introductions, sectional summaries, chapter headings, cross-references, a key term glossary, and a short concordance. Examples of textual study material are taken mainly from chapters nine (dialogic narrative) and ten (didactic debate) of the Chichewa Gospel of John.

The CSBP was an inter-denominational project with a multi-national vision established by the Bible Society of Malawi in conjunction with the United Bible Societies at a foundational meeting in November 1998. This project was initiated in response to urgent requests by the Chichewa- (or Chewa-) speaking Malawian Christian community who saw the great need for various descriptive and explanatory notes to supplement the text of the new popular language Bible that had recently been published, the *Buku Loyera* (Holy Book) (Wendland 1998).[1] Such notes were required especially for the majority population who are largely rural, do not know English well, and/or are not able to access other biblical interpretive resource material other than the Bible they have in their homes. More specifically, the project *skopos*, or primary communicative goals, with regard to content and style, aimed to reach the following target readership:

- Congregational lay leaders and elders (persons with no formal biblical education) who are often called upon to preach and teach in the absence of a theologically trained pastor or priest;
- Rural ministers or catechists having little or no access to biblical resources (commentaries, Bible dictionaries) to use when preparing sermons, Bible studies, and other pastoral materials;
- Monolingual speakers of Chichewa or those who are not skilled enough in English to be able to make effective use of study aids even if they were available.

In addition, a suitably composed study edition would also be of great assistance to those pastors who may be well-trained and fluent in English but who minister to their people for the most part in Chewa. It is not always easy for people, no matter how well-educated, to readily and/or accurately convert specialized terms and key concepts from one language to another. Thus, a reliable translation that is also annotated in the vernacular would take them at least part of the way along this formidable transformational exercise.

In this connection, while it is assumed that most consumers of a study Bible will be readers of the text, in an African setting this will not always be the case. The great majority of receptors for one reason or another (e.g., non-literacy, lack of funds to buy a Bible, unavailability of the Scriptures) *hear* the Word rather than read it for themselves. To a lesser extent, this would also be true for an annotated version in their first (heart) language. Therefore, it may be reasonably expected that a significant number of lay preachers, presiding elders, and even so-called bishops of local parishes, especially those in so-called independent African churches, would not be able to read at all or be functionally literate to the degree that they can readily process and apply a literary feature such as footnotes. In view of this need, it was important to compose explanatory and descriptive comments that are not only smoothly readable (i.e., easily articulated) but immediately *hearable* as well. When they hear an audio text it should be correctly understood without undue difficulty as it is being aurally perceived.

Furthermore, the CSBP's vision extended well beyond the borders of Malawi. It was the first project of its kind in the entire region of Southern Africa, and it was anticipated (and later proven true) that a carefully contextualized, annotated edition of the Bible would act as a vital model and guide for similar endeavors in many of the related Bantu languages of

1 The Buku Loyera was published by the Bible Society of Malawi (https://chichewa.bible/).

South-Central Africa (e.g., Tumbuka and Sena of Malawi; Tonga and Bemba of Zambia). The hope was that the project would bolster the production of accompanying Bible teaching and learning materials written in indigenous languages aimed at reducing the level of biblical illiteracy in the Christian community, whether Protestant, Catholic, Independent, or Charismatic.

The full-time production team of the CSBP consisted of a project coordinator, two co-editors and drafters, a UBS translation consultant, and a typist, all of whom worked together in a centralized (Lilongwe) office provided by the Bible Society of Malawi. In addition, it was hoped that about twenty qualified draft reviewers and associated note composers could be co-opted from various academic and theological institutions in the country to reduce the time needed for completion, which was set at five years for the New Testament. There was a concerted effort to gain the participation of representatives from all the major church bodies in Malawi, but this aim was not fully realized. Each composer or part-time associate was assigned a NT book for which to compose appropriate study notes, not simply by copying or adapting those found in a published English study Bibles, but starting from scratch, based on a careful exegesis of the book at hand and in view of the stipulated target audience.[2] All completed drafts were critically reviewed multiple times by a colleague, by the translation consultant, and by as many pastors, teachers, and scholars recommended by Malawian church leaders as possible.

The *Buku Loyera: Chipangano Chatsopano, Pamodzi ndi Mawu Ofotokozera* (Holy Book: New Testament, Together with Explanatory Words, BLCC) was finally published by the Bible Society of Malawi in 2017. At 1016 pages, it is about the size of the entire old missionary version of the Chewa Bible (1922), the *Buku Lopatulika* (Sacred Book).[3] It took about twice as long to produce this NT study Bible as scheduled. The principal reasons for this delay are as follows:

- The periodic turnover of staff on the editorial team, mainly due to personnel leaving to do graduate studies either within Malawi or in South Africa.
- The lack of a project budget to remunerate potential, qualified note editors and composers sufficiently to either attract or retain them.
- The relative difficulty of composing what amounted to a mini-commentary of a biblical book in a timely manner and to the required standard.
- Various personal distractions or delays stemming from ecclesiastical commitments, family affairs, and/or financial challenges due to a limited salary or compensation.
- A certain misunderstanding concerning the amount of space that would be available for annotation in the future published edition, which turned out to be much less than anticipated (i.e., only 30–50% of a printed page). Had we known this from the beginning, the note-composition process could have been reduced in complexity.

However, the preceding does not detract from the high quality of the 2017 publication or its potential educative value to Chichewa Bible readers not only in Malawi but also in Zambia and Mozambique, where the language it

2 This procedure was different from most other, non-western study Bible projects being carried out in the world at that time, where adaption from existing English publications, e.g., the NIV or GNB, was the norm.

3 The centennial celebration of this groundbreaking version was held in Malawi in 2022. The *Buku Lopatulika* was first published by the British and Foreign Bible Society. Lightly revised editions have been published by the Bible Society of Malawi (https://chichewa.bible/).

uses is also a significant language that has official, government-recognized status.[4] To my knowledge, it was only the second NT study Bible produced in a Bantu language of Africa (after Swahili). From this general introduction to the project under consideration, we turn now to consider in more detail the subject of theologizing as it pertains to Bible translation, with special reference to Chichewa.

2. Theologizing in Bible Translation—*How*, *Where*, and *Why*?

In his insightful monograph *Doing African Christian Theology: An Evangelical Perspective*, Richard Gehman (1987, 26–27) writes:

> In any successful effort to communicate the Gospel to a people across cultural boundaries there must be some measure of relating biblical truths to the known practices and beliefs of the people. Without translation, no communication is possible. And theology is translation.… Theology is reflection on God's self-disclosure contained in the Scriptures with the purpose of generating the knowledge of God and better obedience. As such, Africans have been reflecting on the Scriptures since the Bible was first translated into the vernacular languages. All Bible translations are interpretations of the text from which the Bible is being translated.

4 Chichewa is used or understood by an estimated twenty million first- and second-language speakers in the East and Southern Africa region. "It is the case that the number of people understanding and using Chichewa is much higher than the 12 million native speakers. Like Swahili, Chichewa is considered by some a universal language, a common skill enabling people of varying tribes and those living in Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique to communicate without following the strict grammar of specific local languages.… It contains a considerable literature [*sic*], more than other local African languages" (Taylor n.d.).

As in Africa, so also throughout the world. The activity of Bible translation unavoidably involves the translators in a significant and sustained act of theologizing. It is not a question of if, but when—more specifically, *how*, *where*, and *why* in a text this specialized act and art of cross-cultural communication is manifested.[5] This principle holds true no matter what type or style of version is being prepared, from the most literal, formally correspondent reproduction of the biblical text to a highly idiomatic recreation in a contemporary language.[6]

However, genuine Bible translation is not merely one's private reflection on God's revelation as recorded in the Scriptures, coupled with a subjective, informal effort to communicate this message in the language of fellow speakers today. There is a crucial qualification that must be applied, namely, that such a communicative undertaking must always be directed by the criterion of the original intended meaning. This refers to that internal inventory of formal (literary-structural), semantic, and pragmatic (i.e., functional) significance that has been encoded in the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible and within their overall historical, sociocultural, linguistic, literary, and geographical environment. Especially challenging then is the need to accurately convey this essential sense-reservoir of Scripture with

5 Thus, *theologizing* is an important aspect of what is commonly referred to in missiological circles as contextualization. (For a thorough critical discussion of this key concept, see Hiebert 1994, ch. 4).

6 I would agree with Gehman (1987, 87) that a much greater degree of creative contextualization, or theologizing, is manifested in an idiomatic, in contrast to a more literal, version of the Bible: "Once Scripture is translated into the vernacular, theological reflection by the people is then possible, free to draw upon the figures of speech, analogies, patterns of logic and arrangement, religious and philosophical concepts. Theology is proven to be contextualized by the response it evokes from the people. If the truth of Scripture is communicated by a medium [i.e., manner or style] which seems foreign, then it is not [adequately] contextualized. If the message pierces the heart and seems like their own, then it is contextualized."

reference to the conceptual framework of the new and, in many ways, alien worldview of a contemporary target audience.[7]

Thus, in addition to being compositionally creative, the communal, multifaceted process of contextualizing should be correspondingly controlled in a disciplined and relevant manner. This process of message transmission must always be guided, on the one hand, by the inscribed content of the inspired biblical text, and on the other, by a method that is appropriate for and acceptable to the designated consumer group. That is where the interrelated *how*, *where*, and *why* issues become vitally important, and yet these are not always fully appreciated or practically addressed in current translation theory or practice.[8] In the following discussion, I will explore these notions more concretely as they pertain to the task of theologizing with respect to the text and context of Scripture translation in Chichewa, first in general and then with special reference to the extensive study notes that were prepared for chapters 9–10 of John's Gospel in the NT Study Bible.[9]

7 It is often observed that the African worldview and social setting correspond in many ways to that of the Old Testament. On the other hand, we need to recognize that some noteworthy discrepancies, both large and small, do exist, such as the matrilineal and matrilocal character of a number of South-Eastern Bantu peoples, including the Chewa. See, for example, *Ruth in Central Africa* (Wendland 1987, 166–188).
8 This is especially a problem in the case of more literal, formal equivalence translations, as opposed to those of a more meaning-oriented or functional equivalence nature (see Paul Wendland 2012).
9 This Gospel was chosen because the notes were drafted by the late Rev. Dr. Bishop Patrick Kalilombe who was a leading practical theologian from Malawi and was active for several decades around the turn of the century (http://www.ecmmw.org/new/2012/09/25/biography-of-bishop-patrick-kalilombe-missonaries-of-africa-m-afr/).

3. Theologizing *within* the Translated Text

Bible translation is, or should ideally be, a corporately-run, community-based exercise in Christian communication. This is yet another variable that contributes to its great difficulty, namely, how to get so many diverse individuals and ecclesiastical groups to cooperate, let alone substantially agree, as they proceed in carrying out such an important and influential assignment. This consideration exists over and above the more obvious communicative problems that arise since two or more different languages, emerging from disparate physical and conceptual cultural worlds, are involved in the text-transmission process. The latter includes periodic formal and semantic interference from resource and bridge languages such as English and French.

Accordingly, Bible translation is a highly challenging (yet equally rewarding) venture. Translators function as impartial text mediators. They try their best to accurately re-express verbally in another tongue the *essence* of the biblical message as documented within the source books of Scripture. In order to achieve the most fitting, localized results, the task invariably requires some form of proactive and interactive message contextualization. This requires joint theologizing in a neutral way—attempting to remain as exegetically objective and doctrinally unbiased as possible while shaping the text for a particular audience. Though never perfect in actual practice, honest and able translators seek to ensure that no deliberate additions, subtractions, or changes in crucial content, whether expressed or implied, enter the work, especially those notions that would favor their own ecclesiastical position. Nevertheless, there will always be a greater or lesser degree of theological reconstruction that has to be implemented, since the use of another language automatically situates the primary religious and ethical sense of Scripture within the inclusive thought and experiential world of the people who speak it. These include their current belief system, worldview, customs, values, traditions, social institutions, and physical and geographical environment.

How much theologizing occurs during the Bible translation process?[10] This is not an easy question to answer since it all depends on the circumstances, some of which we will consider further below with respect to John's Gospel in Chichewa. Again, the factor of the *intended audience* is of utmost importance because this will determine both the type and the extent of the adjustments and adaptations that are made within the scope of the vernacular text. A translation that is suitable for and acceptable to one target group may not be fitting for another in terms of grammatical style, wording, or even the spelling system that is used. There are some obvious differences in these respects that may be observed, for example, in the three major Chichewa versions that were produced in Malawi.

The venerable (1922) *Buku Lopatulika* (Sacred Book) translation was produced mainly for Protestant Christians who wanted the Chichewa text to be very similar in wording to the King James Version in English, which in turn follows the forms of the Hebrew and Greek texts quite closely. Another, older (1966) missionary translation, *Malembo Oyera* (Holy Writings), on the other hand, was prepared for Catholics in a style that was somewhat more idiomatic as far as the Chichewa is concerned. The more recently published (1998), ecumenical *Buku Loyera* (Holy Book) translation aimed to be appropriate for both Protestants and Catholics.[11] It was purposefully composed so that the Bible's meaning would be expressed in the form of natural-, everyday-, "popular-language,"[12] Chichewa—without following the text of any English version.

Since I participated in the preparation of the current *Buku Loyera* version, I will take that as my principal point of reference. This is the basic definition that guided our committee's work: Bible translation consists in *re*-presenting as much as possible of the relevant communicative significance of the biblical text in the Chichewa language and cultural context in a dynamic, functionally-equivalent manner. Such a meaning-oriented version is one that the projected consumer, an average lay-Christian constituency, considers as being situationally most fitting in terms of both efficiency (relative intelligibility) and effectiveness (message accuracy, impact, and appeal). The general degree of acceptability had to be first anticipated and subsequently assessed, that is, carefully audience-tested, with respect to the primary socio-religious settings of Scripture use. Examples of these settings are evangelistic outreaches personal devotions, Bible study, and contemporary worship services.[13]

4. Some Examples of Textual Theologizing

It is important to recognize that even a literal version will be theologically contextualized (rightly or wrongly) in the process of reproducing an original text that was verbally represented in a very different language and culture. This occurs either actively or passively, and often unpredictably as well. In the case of the *Buku Lopatulika*, for example, it was decided that the term *kachisi* (traditional ancestral shrine) should be used as a locally familiar

10 On the subject of theologizing with reference to Bible translation in general, see the recent works of Liu (2022a, 2022b). There are relatively few published discussions of this subject with specific reference to study Bibles. Among them, see Hill (2010).

11 Regarding the rationale for and value of an ecumenical Bible translation, see Wendland (1998, 38–42).

12 On the theory and practice of a "popular language" Bible translation, see Wonderly (1968).

13 I have discussed the various methods and groups involved in this testing process elsewhere (Wendland 1998, 199–217).

concept to designate the temple in Jerusalem. One wonders, however, what sort of an impression was conveyed, since there was only one central Jewish temple, but the land of the Achewa people was full of area-specific *akachisi* shrines. The respective modes of construction of these two types of religious buildings were also radically dissimilar. The latter are small, temporary, grass and stick shelters constructed at the base of a large shady tree somewhere out in the bush. In contrast with this the *Buku Loyera* employs a descriptive phrase to render temple, *Nyumba ya Mulungu* (House of God; e.g., John 10:22). In a similar creative, but misguided effort to contextualize the biblical text, when Satan takes Jesus up to the pinnacle (πτερύγιον) of the Temple to tempt him (Matt 4:5), the *Buku Lopatulika* uses *cimbudzi* as a translation. This refers to the central tuft at the top of a traditional grass-roofed hut. Unfortunately, this archaic term is no longer widely known, but its homonym, meaning a public toilet, is in daily use.

The translation of Holy Spirit as *Mzimu Woyer*a (John 1:32) is especially problematic in the Bantu language group. To begin with, the abstract concept of spiritual *holiness* is itself very difficult to convey (i.e., woyera means "a living being that is white, clean, light, pure"), but the concept *spirit* is even more problematic. *Mzimu* refers to a personal ancestral-spirit, (i.e., some known human being, usually a clan relative), who has died and has been existentially transformed to live on in a reduced and invisible, yet still proximate, state among the living. How this anthropomorphic term could apply to the immortal God (*Mulungu*) is not apparent; certainly, a great deal of extratextual theologizing in the form of pastoral church instruction is required to clarify this crucial biblical concept.

In many such cases, in the absence of linguistic or cultural equivalence where key theological ideas are involved, it is frequently necessary for less, rather than more, explanatory information to be expressed in the vernacular. This is because an in-text description often proves to be linguistically unnatural and comparatively even more perplexing to the average person, e.g., *Muuya Uusalala* (Reddish Breath) for Holy Spirit in Citonga, a related language. Due to long usage in the Christian community, both Protestant and Catholic, and the lack of a better alternative, the expression first used in the old *Buku Lopatulika—Mzimu Woyera* (Pure Ancestor)—was retained by common convention in the *Buku Loyera*. This is an instance where textual theologizing in translation can go only so far. The communication of the biblical concept remains dependent on the subsequent preaching and teaching ministry of the resident churches and their various media of message transmission.

A similar example shows that a seemingly "safe" literalistic approach is not always the answer either in such challenging cases. In many such instances passive, unintentional, or unforeseen theologizing occurs. Thus, the Christological title Son of Man (e.g., John 3:14) was from the beginning rendered as correspondently as possible. But the result, not surprisingly, turns out to mean something quite different from what is biblically intended for those who are not initiated or catechized—*Mwana wa Munthu* literally means "a Child of Somebody." It could be male or female, possibly even illegitimate! In modern idiomatic usage and a secular environment, this phrase would imply that the somebody concerned is an ethnic African, distinct from a white Europeans (*Mzungu*). In such instances, the biblical text in translation, unless annotated, depends even more heavily upon initial and ongoing pastoral instruction to further describe and explain the foreign or otherwise misleading scriptural concepts in question.

A more idiomatic, functional-equivalence type of translation allows for comparatively more verbal adaptations to be introduced into the target-language text as the message is more thoroughly or deeply adjusted to fit its normal lexical and syntactic categories. It is important to point out, however, that ideally only the *forms* of the original Scripture (its sounds, lexical structure, grammar, or discourse arrangement) may legitimately be changed in the process. At times the modification may be considerable (e.g., in cases of word order) so as to render the meaning in such a way that it may be more easily and accurately comprehended by a listening audience. But any potential addition, omission, or alteration with regard to the semantic content must be kept to a minimum—and then only in cases where there are no other options. An example of this is when more general expressions must be used, like *kumwamba* (to the place above; e.g., John 1:51) for heaven or *atumwi* (people who are sent; e.g., Luke 6:13) for apostles.

Where no agreement can be reached, a loanword is typically resorted to. But in these instances, the work of theologizing is simply transferred to local receptors, without any active guidance on the part of the translators. Thus, the Citonga term *bapositolo*, while it may be used to denote what *apostles* means in the NT, it commonly refers to the leaders and/or members of some contemporary African independent church body. How far the goal of formal contextualization is pushed (i.e., how much *controlled*-theologizing is allowed in any given case), depends on the related factors of usage and users—that is, the primary purpose and setting for which the translation is being made. Many times, it is necessary to reach a collective compromise, especially during the selection of certain prominent items of religious vocabulary, such as the designation for the new Bible itself (***Buku** Lopatulika* + *Malembo* ***Oyera** = **Buku Loyera***) or where individual denominational theologies conflict.

The *Buku Loyera* is intended to be a popular language version, one that is quickly understood and largely appreciated by all speakers of Chichewa, but especially the current, youth, and child-rearing adult generation. Therefore, it goes much further in restructuring certain biblical concepts and in naturalizing its manner of expression than either *Buku Lopatulika* or *Malembo Oyera*. The most obvious example of this concerns the personal, covenantal name for God in the Old Testament (YHWH), variously rendered as Yahweh, Jehovah, or the LORD in English versions. Here, *Buku Loyera* employs the ancient, pre-Christian name for the High (Creator-Sustainer) God of the universe in the traditional cosmology of the Chewa people—*Chauta*, (Great-One of the Rainbow). This is an exceptional, and no doubt somewhat debatable, example of indigenous theologizing in action, but the term was not chosen to accommodate the biblical message to African ancestral religion. It merely represents the translation committee's best efforts to communicate who God (the generic term being *Mulungu*; cf. Swahili *Mungu*) has been and is to the Chewa nation today in a familiar and meaningful way. This rendition is both referentially and connotatively more recognizable and memorable than a loanword (*Yahve* for Catholic, *Yehova* for Protestant).[14] In one interesting case, to avoid referential ambiguity, a reference to Yahweh in the NT (the parallel passages Matt 22:44; Mark 12:36; and Luke 20:42), where the ambiguous Greek term κύριος is used, was rendered as *Chauta* in *Buku Loyera*.

Many other resourceful, less debatable, instances of conceptual contextualization are to be found in the *Buku Loyera*. Some examples (back-translated into English here, which sounds wordier than the actual Chichewa) include translating Sheol/Hades as "place of dead people," high places as "shrines for worshiping images there," Messiah as "that [well-known] promised Savior," scribes as "teachers of Laws," grace as "being favored in the heart by God," propitiation as "a sacrifice for appeasing sins," (sinful) flesh as "our character that is inclined to evil things," and mediator as "one who stays in the middle."[15] During these efforts to accommodate

14 For a discussion of this translation and some of the theologizing involved, see Wendland (1998, 115–121).
15 cf. *Buku Lopatulika*, which renders mediator as "clan representative/negotiator."

the text of Scripture in specific cases to fit the Chewa language and thought world, the procedure of local theologizing had to be delimited and guided by the consensus of reliable biblical scholarship, as expressed in major commentaries, handbooks, and Bible dictionaries, as well as by the opinions of various church leaders and Chichewa language experts. These consultants pointed out, for example, that the phrasal verb *kutembenuka mtima* (to be turned around in one's heart; e.g., Matt 3:2) was a much better candidate for conveying the biblical imperative *repent* than *kulapa* (to regret, feel remorse), which is used in the older missionary versions and has no element of life-change implied.

Such linguistic accommodation affects not only individual words and phrases, but frequently entire sentences needed to be restructured in the interest of greater intelligibility. This exercise, too, involves considerable biblical text affirmation and apologetic theologizing because an understandable version has the added benefit of preventing possible erroneous interpretations and indefensible doctrines. For example, the first part of Romans 3:22 in *Buku Lopatulika* reads (a back-translation): "… the righteousness of God which comes from faith on [*sic*] Jesus Christ to all who believe." Now, most untutored respondents think this means that human faith automatically brings the blessing of divine righteousness. This passage has been clarified in the *Buku Loyera* translation as, "The very way in which people are reckoned /deemed righteous in the eyes of God is that those people believe Jesus Christ." To be sure, the specific language *forms* of the original Greek (see KJV, RSV, etc.) have been noticeably changed. But as a result of this application of creative, yet controlled, theologizing, the projected message of the Scriptures comes through much more distinctly and naturally to the average readers, speakers, and, especially important, *hearers* of Chichewa.

To conclude this section, it is also necessary to call attention to the need for theologizing to be carried out with regard to the overall compositional style of a translation. In the first place, this is necessary in a popular version that aims to be linguistically clear and natural in the target language.[16] Such verbal care also helps to counter the mistaken impression often given by literal versions that the Scriptures and speakers in the text, including God, habitually talk like foreigners—for example, Europeans attempting to speak Chichewa. On the contrary, the Word of God should communicate idiomatically, so the texts of diverse genres, prose as well as poetry, sound as if they had been initially composed by mother-tongue speakers of the language![17] To illustrate this, I have reproduced John 9:13–21 from the *Buku Loyera* below and boldfaced all those items in the text that are especially colloquial or have no correspondent in the *Buku Lopatulika* version, which I closely examined by way of comparison. This would include various lexical and grammatical features such as the word order, tense-aspect usage, conjunctive expressions and particles, additional vital pronominal references, more precise terminology, and related demonstrative, and emotive words that are typical in the polished direct discourse of competent speakers of Chichewa.[18] On the right side, I have provided my own rather literal English rendition of the Chewa to try and give an approximate impression of its rhythmic and colloquial stylistic character.

16 This type of meaning-orientated version is not only easier to understand, but it also serves to prevent the misunderstanding that all too often results from an overly literal, source-text-bound translation.
17 For an exemplified argument in favor of this approach, see Wendland (2004).
18 For a more detailed look at these and many other stylistic features in Chichewa, see Wendland (1979).

13 **Tsono munthu uja** kale **sankapenyayu** adapita naye kwa Afarisi.	13 So that man who formerly could not see,[20] [other people] went with him to the Pharisees.
14 Tsiku limene Yesu a**daa**kanda thope nam**chiritsalo linali** la Sabata.	14 The very day that Jesus had mixed mud and healed him was the Sabbath.
15 **Tsono** Afarisi **nawonso** adamu**funsa** munthu **uja** kuti, “**Iwe, wapenya bwanji**?[19] ” Iye **adaŵauza** kuti, “Anandipaka thope m'maso mwanga, **ine nkuka**samba, ndipo **tsopano** ndi**ku**penya.”	15 So the Pharisees, they too asked that man saying, “Hey you, how is it that you see [now]?” He told them, “He put mud in my eyes, I went and washed, and so now I [can] see.”
16 **Afarisi ena** adati, “Munthu **amene uja ngwo**sachokera kwa Mulungu, chifukwa **satsata lamulo lokhudza tsiku la** Sabata.” Koma ena **adati**, “**Kodi inu**, munthu wochimwa **nku**chita zizindikiro zozizwitsa zotere?” **Choncho** panali kutsutsana.	16 Other Pharisees said, “That fellow is not from God because he does not observe [i.e., follow] the Sabbath Day.” But others said, “Say you [all], could a sinful man perform [i.e., do] such amazing signs?” And so, there was a dispute among them.
17 Tsono **Afarisi aja** adamu**funsa**nso **munthu uja kale sankapenyayu**, adati, “**Kodi iweyo ukuti chiyani** za iye**yo**, m'mene **wakuchiritsamu**?” Iye adati, “**Ndi mneneritu basi!**”	17 Now those Pharisees again asked the man who formerly could not see, saying, “Hey you, what do you have to say about that guy,[21] how he has healed you?” He said, “He must be a prophet surely!”
18 **Koma** akulu a Ayudawo sadakhulupirire kuti **munthuyo kale** sanka**penya ndipo tsopano** akupenya, **mpaka** adaitanitsa makolo **ake**.	18 But those Jewish leaders did not believe that the man, who formerly could not see, now could see, until they summoned his parents.
19 **Tsono** adaŵafunsa kuti, “Kodi **inu**, uyu ndi mwana wanu?	19 So they asked them, “Say you [pl.], is this your child?[22]

19 This is a less vivid, indirect question in Greek and most English translations.
20 A front-shifted focus construction in Chichewa, as are similar examples below.

21 The Pharisees are not respectful when speaking either to the former blind man (using a familiar full singular second person pronominal reference, *Kodi iweyo*) or when referring to Jesus (using a simple demonstrative form without any attribution, *iyeyo*). Of course, the rhymed character of these two forms serves to implicitly highlight their disparaging attitudes.
22 The reference child is idiomatic in this context of direct speech since to specify a son would sound awkward: *mwana wa mwamuna* “child, male one.”

Ndiye mukuti adaabadwadi wosapenya? **Nanga zatani** kuti tsopano akupenya?”	So are you saying that he was born not-seeing? What’s happened then that now he can see?”
20 **Makolo** ake adati, “**Chimene tikudziŵa ife nchakuti ameneyu** ndi mwana wathu, ndipo a**daa**badwa**di** wosa**penya**.	20 His parents answered, “What we know is that this one is our child, and he was born not-seeing.
21 **Koma kuti tsopano** akupenya, siti**ku**dziŵa **m'mene zachitikira. Zoti wamupenyetsa ndani kaya, ife sitikudziŵanso**. Mufun**seni mwiniwakeyu, ngwamkulu, afotokoze yekha**.”	21 But that he can see now, we don’t know how that happened to him. About who caused him to see, we don’t know this either. Just ask the one concerned [lit. this very owner]. He’s an adult [lit. he’s big], let him explain himself.”

As the amount of the text in boldface above would suggest, the *Buku Loyera* is a completely new translation, one that radically changes the soundscape and, to some extent, also the sense (in terms of general intelligibility) of the original Greek account in Chichewa. The dynamic, conversational style and interpersonally engaging rhetoric of the biblical narrative are thereby preserved to an appreciable, functionally equivalent degree. In short, the Scriptures have now come alive in the vernacular! And I would argue that this stylistic factor, too, is an important, but often unrecognized, aspect of theologizing in Africa—that is, in cases where domestic translations of similar overall literary and/or oratorical quality are concerned.[23]

5. Theologizing within the Translation *Paratext*

As has been suggested above, a serious communication gap, or even a complete breakdown in transmission, may occur due to the *conceptual interference* that takes place when an indigenous, culturally conditioned worldview is superimposed upon the biblical one as the text of Scripture is being read or heard. Such barriers to accurate message re-presentation may arise directly due to some formal lexical correspondence that lacks semantic equivalence. They also occur as the result of a more covert, unrecognized clash regarding the respective forms and/or functions of the biblical (Source Language) or the domestic (Target Language) entity, event, and situation that is under consideration.

23 Creative, idiomatic Bible translation practices also have the capacity to influence the local language at large: “‘Bible translation is transformative for a language, especially during the life of the project itself, when it engages some of the best minds of the community in solving formidably difficult problems in semantic mapping, orthography, metaphor, and language standardization,’ linguist K. David Harrison wrote in a foreword to a recent academic volume on the effects of Bible translation on language. ‘But it also extends in influence far beyond the original project, and shines as an example of best practice in ensuring language survival’” (Shellnutt 2019).

The hermeneutical activity of contextualizing a Bible translation, therefore, enters a new dimension when perceptive attention is given to the large quantity of information that lies implicit as part of the resonant conceptual framework of the author's intended meaning. There is obviously a practical limitation to the amount of verbal theologizing that can be produced within the actual text of any translation, regardless of how idiomatic in style and structure, to enable its readers to more fully and correctly comprehend what is being said. However, many different types of supplementary information can be readily conveyed in a parallel manner outside the translation by means of carefully composed explanatory and descriptive notes.[24] These may have various references to pertinent aspects of the setting which conceptually surrounded the biblical text. Some examples include history, customs and culture, peoples and places, geography, plants and animals, and prominent artifacts or works of art. Such selective comments serve to orient readers concerning the extratextual environment of the Bible when it was first composed and transmitted. A great deal of targeted theologizing can take place during this procedure too. For instance, this is what the *Buku Loyera* has to say in a footnote about he ubiquitous expression "unclean spirit." (πνεῦμα ἀκαθάρτου) that Christ had to deal with during his ministry. A back-translation of the note for Luke 4:33 reads:

> *mzimu womuipitsa* (spirit defiling him): A defiling spirit is not the ancestral spirit (*mzimu*) of a dead person, no. This spirit is in the group of angels (*angelo*) of Satan, the very Satan who after rebelling against God was thrown down here below (Rev 12:1–12; 16:13–14). These evil spirits are the ones that make people insane (John 10:20; Luke 8:26–29), cause them to be sick (Luke 13:11, 16), and they also rebel against God (Rev 16:14).

Honest translators have come to realize that, where possible, the provision of such background information is not optional. Rather, it is essential if people are going to be empowered to interact with the Scriptures in a meaningful way—that is, from a position of knowledge, where they are able to more fully investigate these sacred writings like the ancient Bereans did (Acts 17:11). They will thus be able to develop their own formal expressions of Christianity and doctrine (local practical-applied theologies) on the basis of a much firmer biblical foundation. In contrast to past procedures and traditions then, most modern translations include much more annotation in terms of both quantity and quality. It will be necessary, of course, for the translators and reviewers of such notes to take special care as they reflect upon (or theologize about) certain potentially controversial concepts and issues. Hence, they must not use this as a means to promote the views of one church body at the expense of another, for example, regarding the temporal and spiritual significance of the Sabbath Day (e.g., Mark 2:27) or the rock upon which the Church is built (Matt 16:18). In such cases it may be expedient to say nothing at all. This is best, since a comment will normally have to include a statement that is somehow representative of each of the major theological positions with regard to the matter at hand.

It is equally apparent that the text of a translation alone, even one that is augmented by a periodic footnote, illustration, glossary entry, or cross-reference, is not sufficient to prevent such misunderstandings from occurring. Therefore, it is best to point readers in the direction of a more reliable interpretation, one that is generally supported by the community

24 The specific methodology for producing this study Bible is outlined and exemplified in Wendland (2000, 2010). See also the unpublished set of general guidelines in Pritz (n.d.) and the entry "Study Bibles" by Sim in Noss and Houser (2019).

of recognized biblical scholars. Where possible an even more extensive co-text in the form of additional notes has to be provided in order to allow a wider frame of reference, or cognitive environment, to be conceptually evoked. Such conceptual framing will make possible a more accurate interpretation of the translation text itself by projecting readers back into the ancient world of biblical times, including its history, customs, places, and peoples.[25] This widespread need has given rise to a growing movement throughout the world to publish more fully annotated study Bibles, of which the CSBP is an example. This in turn provides an occasion for a great deal of domesticated theologizing to be produced. These study Bibles contain various comments designed to give the target constituency a better understanding of the original situational setting and historical backdrop of the Scriptures. As noted earlier, there is a wide variety of such supplementary helps available. However, with reference to the Chichewa, I will focus on paratextual notes since it is in this domain where the greatest degree of creative, contextualized hermeneutics can be applied by national scholars and first-language communicators.[26]

What is it that sparks or stimulates a particular note to be supplied alongside a translation? To a great extent, this process arises out of long, discerning personal experience in communicating the message of the Scriptures in the resident language and in varied ministerial or compositional settings. Examples include preaching, teaching, witnessing, counseling, literature development, music ministry, and Bible translation. This is one reason why study notes cannot simply be copied in translation from an English version. The local context and experience help to alert a capable note composer as to where a potential problem point with respect to specific elements of a certain passage may be, even when read in its literary context. In other words, there is a strong likelihood that the desired sense of a given word, phrase, clause, or perhaps the entire verse will be partially misunderstood or will be too difficult to understand at all, at least for the majority of hearers. This lack or loss of communicative quality is usually occasioned by some sort of linguistic, conceptual, or cultural mismatch that arises from within the overall sociolinguistic situation being referred to. Without some form of direction in the form of a footnoted explanation then, there is a good chance that the wrong sense will be suggested, even granting a certain amount of flexibility or leeway in this regard. Alternatively, due to the text's excessive difficulty or obscurity, no meaning at all might be conveyed to a majority of the envisaged audience for whom the study Bible is being composed.

Both the placement and the wording of notes throughout the biblical text are determined according to an implicit application of the communicative principle of relevance. Thus an appropriate balance must be maintained whereby the conceptual cost (i.e., effort) that is expended in mentally processing a given note is adequately compensated for by the cognitive gain (i.e., reward) that will be derived from understanding the content, intent, impact, and/or significance of the specific text being referred to.[27] This general assumption applies also in terms of both quantity and quality to the selection and formulation of the corpus of study notes

25 On the importance of this contextual dimension in current thinking on Bible translation theory and practice, see the various essays in Wilt (2002).

26 I distinguish ten types of study notes in the Chichewa study Bible: exegetical, situational, thematic, structural, stylistic, functional, contextual, translational, intertextual, and textual (2000, 152–157). These may also be referred to as the biblical co-text.

27 For a complete discussion of this principle of "relevance" with specific reference to Bible translation, see Gutt (1992; esp. chapter two) considered as a whole. If too many notes are supplied, especially those that are not really very informative, the reader's interest and capacity to deal with the material will be diminished. The same outcome may be expected for notes that are conceptually too dense or stylistically difficult to comprehend.[28] Therefore, the exercise of critically testing and revising the notes for a given book is one that needs to be sustained for the duration of the editorial process and beyond, for example, in preparation for the production of an updated edition of a published study Bible, which should ideally happen within ten years.

Selected paratextual notes and other expository material from John 9–10 in the Chichewa NT Study Bible are given below to illustrate the wide-ranging nature of linguistic, cultural, and theological modification that may be required and the extent of local theologizing that might be incorporated. These examples are given in the form of relatively literal English back-translations. To save space, the actual Chichewa expression used will be reproduced only when it seems relevant to the particular feature being elucidated. These passages are merely suggestive of what might be accomplished in this vital area of encouraging a more dynamic, indigenous hermeneutical initiative through the mediating activity of an intelligent and insightful group of editors, along with their broadly constituted review committees. The quotes also serve to highlight by way of illustration the general character of the various problems that are encountered in this effort, especially with regard to the potential distorting influence of traditional religious beliefs and customary practices upon the average reader or listener.[29]

As in the earlier stylistic text example from John 9:13–21, the following selections also illustrate the attention to natural, even idiomatic, Chichewa linguistic usage that the new study Bible exhibits. In other words, it will not be some dry dogmatic exposition or overly simplified Sunday school lesson that people will be reading and hearing, but rather a captivating colloquial-speech style that corresponds well with that of the popular-language translated text itself. Thus, while the notes aim primarily to explain and inform members of the target audience, these comments perform the added goal of educating them with a greater level of communicative impact and appeal. Theologizing does not necessarily have to be tedious. As shown below, it can be expressed dynamically as well as beautifully in the language concerned. This localized stylistic feature will hopefully serve to give people some extra motivation to make an effort to actually *re*-read the notes that accompany a given Bible passage as well as any added supplementary information of a more specific nature. Unfortunately, space restrictions allow for only a few examples.

There are several overlapping semantic categories that could be identified and exemplified with regard to the marginal notes that are manifested in the Chewa text spanning John 9–10. However, the eight types specified below seem to capture the diversity found in this relatively small corpus. These explanations, inferior though they may sound in

28 Study note composers and editors were encouraged to write in a colloquial (as opposed to scholarly) style, including the abundant use of idiomatic language, figures of speech, proverbs and well-known sayings, references to oral and written literature, and appropriate allusions to familiar aspects of the local geographical, environmental, and sociological setting.

29 Any supposed distortion of this nature must be evaluated on the basis of the source language text and the wider context of Scripture. A didactic or pastoral, contextualized life application, or transculturation, of the biblical message may also be carried out, but usually the space for such information is limited in a study Bible.

English back-translation (as opposed to in Chichewa), serve to illustrate some of the insightful theologizing efforts that the study Bible composers displayed in their work—Bishop Kalilombe in particular. Selected vernacular terms and phrases are given within parentheses (for those who may be familiar with a Bantu language), while my clarifying remarks are inserted in brackets.

5.1 Dogmatic topics[30]

9:35 **Do you believe** (*Kodi ukhulupirira*) **the Son of Man?**: By naming himself the Son of Man (*Mwana wa Munthu*), Jesus means that He is the one (*Iye ndi amene*) to whom the Father (*Atate*) gave leadership, glory, and kingship (*ulamuliro, ulemerero ndi ufumu*) that he might judge all people (Dan 7:13–14). In the rite (*mwambo*) of Baptism (*Ubatizo*), a person who wishes to be baptized is asked these same questions so that he might publicly confirm (*atsimikize poyera*) his [her] faith. (BLCC 2017, 306)

5.2 Ethical issues

9:4 **We must work during the day ... at night ... a person is unable to work**: The meaning is that he [Jesus] must do the work for which the Father sent him during this time while he is alive (*adakali moyo*). His death is coming when he can no longer do his work down here. But he says we must work (*tizigwira nchito*), showing that he is not referring to himself alone, but he is including his disciples (*ophunzira ake*). They too [implicitly including current reader-hearers] must not waste time (*Naonso sayenera kutaya nthawi*): they must do the work of God energetically while there is still time (*mwachangu nthawi idakalipo*). (BLCC 2017, 302)

5.3 Exegetical explanations of biblical texts

9:16 **That man is not from God**: Now it so happened that (*Tsono ndiye kuti*) there was a controversy (*kutsutsana*) among the Pharisees. Some were saying that this man [Jesus] did not follow the Laws of God, so he's a sinner (*tsono ndi wochimwa*). But others objected saying, "If he was a sinner, how could he perform such an amazing sign (*chizindikiro chozizwitsa chotere*)?" This controversy arose from the words found in Deuteronomy 13:4–5. At that time Moses gave the people of Israel a test for determining whether (*muyeso wozindikirira*) a prophet (*mneneri*) was true or not. He said that "any prophet who tells you to rebel against Yahweh (*Chauta*), you must not obey him; that fellow is evil." ... It appeared that those two groups failed to resolve the matter. So, they thought that they should ask the person who had been healed, but their aim was to trap him in what he would say (*cholinga chomupala m'kamwa*). (BLCC 2017, 304)

5.4 Inter- and intra-textual references

10:16 **other sheep that are not of this corral**: Jesus is speaking about other people who are not Jews. At present, he is talking to Jews (*Ayuda*). But that is not to say that he came only for the Jews, not at all (*ayi*). In John 4 we have seen that he stopped in the land of the Samaritans (*kwa Asamariya*) so that they too might hear his words and believe. In John 12:20, we will also hear about some Greeks (*Agriki*) who asked to see Jesus; and Jesus in response showed joy because it was a sign (*chizindikiro*) that his full glory (*ulemerero*) had arrived.

30 Notes of this type are of course limited in scope due to the potentially conflicting doctrinal positions that may be affected if too much specific detail is given.

Now he wants us to recognize that his sheep are many, not only those who come from Judaism. For this reason, Paul (Gal 3:28) says "there is no difference between the Jews and people of other tribes" (*anthu a mitundu ina*) … because we are all one (*amodzi*) in Christ Jesus (*mwa Khristu Yesu*). (BLCC 2017, 308)

5.5 Extra-textual settings of the Bible

10:1 **Into a sheep pen**: A sheep pen (*khola la nkhosa*) was built with rocks in which a family would keep their sheep, and it had an entranceway (*khomo*) in which those sheep could enter and exit. At the entrance they put a guard (*mlonda*) who would protect those sheep (10:3). A person who wanted to steal the sheep could not get in at that entrance, but [perhaps] at some other place. Jesus would have been thinking of the words in Ezekiel 34 which speaks about sheep and a good shepherd (*mbusa wabwino*). (BLCC 2017, 307)

5.6 Editorial/didactic reflections

9:40 **Could it be that we too are blind?** (*Kodi monga ifenso ndife akhungu*): It appears that these Pharisees were in the company when Jesus met up with that healed man (*wochiritsidwa uja*), and so they heard those words of his. Now they wanted to hear Jesus say, "Not at all, I don't mean you (*Iyai, sindikunena inu*)." But they did not realize that Jesus was saying that they too are blind! (BLCC 2017, 306)

5.7 Sectional introductions

The Jews reject Jesus [heading at 10:22]: In this final section Jesus is at another festival: The Festival for remembering the rededication of the House of God (*Chikondwerero chokumbukira kuperekedwanso kwa Nyumba ya Mulungu*). What happened then is that the Jews pressured him to confirm that he really is the promised Savior (*Mpulumutsi uja wolonjezedwa*). Jesus agreed, but he explained its real meaning, that he is the Son of God. To the Jews, this was the sin of despising God (*chimo lonyoza Mulungu*); so, some of them wanted to stone him as a sign that they rejected his words. However, some believed [him]. This was the conclusion of his work of publicly preaching his message. He left them and went into hiding, awaiting the time to arrive that he would die on the cross (*nthawi yake idzafike yokafa pamtanda*). (BLCC 2017, 309)

5.8 Topical studies

This section will analyze the **Good Shepherd** (*Mbusa Wabwino*), as per chapter ten. Here there are two important things. The first is that Jesus is the *Good Shepherd*; the second of great importance in his shepherding [or pastoring] work is that he gives up his life (*amataya moyo wake*) because of his sheep. By calling himself the Good Shepherd, Jesus is pointing at the Old Testament (*Chipangano Chakale*). For his people, Yahweh himself was a Shepherd, the true owner (*mwini weniweni*) of his sheep (see Psalm 80:1), each and every one (*iliyonse imodzimodzi*) (Psalms 23), but also the whole flock (*msambi wonse*), that is, all the people of Israel.… Now in speaking about his shepherding, Jesus adds something very important. He says, his shepherding is that he gives up (or offers) his life on account of his sheep, as he predicts in Mark 10:45.… Only in Isaiah 53:10–12 do we hear that a suffering Servant of Yahweh (*Mtumiki wozunzika wa Chauta*) offers his life so that it might be a sacrifice for forgiving the sins of [all] people (*nsembe yokhulukira machismo a anthu*). (BLCC 2017, 307)

The examples of the preceding section indicate some of the principal domains wherein the most overt and extensive amount of audience-centered theological reflection and adaptation normally occurs. Whether in these explanatory notes, the lexical glossary, or through selected illustrations, a translation team is provided with a wonderful opportunity to make the message of Scripture live locally in the minds of their anticipated listening audience or readership. A supplemental contextualization of the original ancient Near Eastern environment thus encourages a more exegetically based, appealing, suitable, and memorable life application of the biblical text to the contemporary timeline setting. Such careful scriptural commentary also enriches the ministry of those who produce notes that educate and inspire the Bible text consumers in their country, region, and/or parish.

In addition, this paratextual dimension of a translation provides a means where another, less obvious type of theologizing can be carried out, namely, via the particular medium and mode whereby the content of Scripture is being conveyed. Examples that come to mind here include the creative use of typography and format, more legible text-design arrangements on the printed page, and contextually influenced adaptations to an audio and/or visual dimension. Such applications include background music, sound effects, vocal characterization, and culturally specific evocative imagery and illustrations. Along with the requisite compositional creativity, however, an extra measure of administrative caution and control may also be needed in these areas simply because of the additional communicative power of these modern media, especially where both sight and sound are involved as an integral part of the message.

6. Conclusion

The primary aim of this article has been to encourage a greater measure of meaning-oriented, vernacular theologizing on all levels of Christian engagement in the thousands of language communities of Africa through various Scripture translation activities. In particular, it is hoped that many more scholarly, yet also popular, study Bible projects may be actively undertaken, supported, and completed in the near future, before this relatively new century grows old. May this little Chewa case study serve as an example for similar educative endeavors throughout this dynamic, ethnically diverse continent. We close with the Chichewa study note (in back-translation), which in this case simply paraphrases John 20:31, yet also significantly serves to remind us of the central aim of all our Bible translation and communication efforts: "The purpose [of this Gospel] is that readers believe that Jesus is the promised Savior, but he is also the Son of God. This is the very faith that gives us eternal life!"

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Conspectus

The Destructive Power of the Tongue as a *Verbum Inefficax*: A Canonical-Literary Reading of James 3:1–12 through the Lens of Speech-Act Theory[1]

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Abstract

The major premise of this journal article is that human speech is either categorized as a *verbum efficax* or a *verbum inefficax*. On the one hand, as argued in section one, human speech as a *verbum efficax* is efficacious. Yet, as argued in section two, human speech as a *verbum inefficax* is inefficacious. In terms of methodology, section one puts forward an introductory thesis by concisely overviewing speech-act theory, especially as it relates to the efficacious proclamation of the gospel. Next, section two articulates a subsequent antithesis (i.e., how speech can be harmful) by examining James 3:1–12 through the lens of speech-act theory. This includes elucidating the passage's rhetorical and literary structure, along with expositing its content by using speech-act theory as the primary heuristic filter. Lastly, section three offers a concluding synthesis by maintaining that while human speech as a *verbum efficax* promotes human flourishing in all areas of life, human speech as a *verbum inefficax* fosters the atrophying of humanity's existence.

1 An earlier version of this journal article was published on January 14, 2018, as a blog post on https://blogs.bible.org/the-tongue-as-either-a-verbum-efficax-or-verbum-inefficax/.

Keywords
human speech, *verbum efficax, verbum inefficax,* speech-act theory, James 3:1–12

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https://www.sats.ac.za/conspectus/
This article: **https://www.sats.ac.za/conspectus/destructive-power-tongue-verbum-inefficax**
https://doi.org/10.54725/conspectus.2023.1.2

1. Introductory Thesis: Human Speech as a *Verbum Efficax*

In recent decades, specialists in biblical and theological studies have wrestled with the value of utilizing the principles and tools of speech-act theory to interpret the texts of the Judeo-Christian canon. The historical development and objective critique of this approach are deliberated thoroughly in the academic literature.[2]

To briefly summarize the above scholarship, the historical development of speech-act theory is part of the larger account of how human language and communication evolved over thousands of years. This progression is evident in the speeches and debates recorded in the writings of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Greece, as well as in the philosophical and religious texts penned during the medieval and Renaissance periods. In the modern era, specialists have advanced the field of study by using various scientific tools and linguistic methodologies, including speech-act theory, particularly with the goal of elucidating how language is processed and articulated.

Some of the potential methodological drawbacks in utilizing speech-act theory as a communicative framework include the following: ignoring the linguistic and situational contexts that influence speech acts; disregarding the limitations of this hypothetical approach in assessing nonverbal and symbolic forms of conveying thoughts; placing too much confidence on the presumed intention of the original speaker, which at times could be veiled or ambiguous; and overlooking the ways in which differing cultural norms and values might affect the interpretation of how language is used in all its diverse forms. Researchers attempt to overcome these sorts of limitations by adopting nuanced and interdisciplinary lines of inquiry. Indeed, as exemplified in the upcoming discussion, a convincing case can be made for speech-act theory offering viable ways and means of undertaking a canonical-literary reading of Scripture, such as James 3:1–12, that promises to be fresh and innovative.

As defined in the *SIL Glossary of Linguistic Terms* (Loos et al. 2003), a "speech act" involves a "speaker" who makes an "utterance." This includes articulating general declarations, as well as specific hypotheses, explanations, and warrants. Also included in a "speech act" is the "production of a particular effect in the addressee." Botha (1991a, 280) lists the following, representative, binary outcomes: felicitous/infelicitous; happy/unhappy; appropriate/inappropriate; effective/ineffective; and, successful/unsuccessful.

Moreover, speech-act theory places an emphasis on locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Chan (2016, 21) provides a concise explanation of these three distinct facets or aspects, as follows: (1) "locution" is the "act *of* saying something"; (2) "illocution" is the "act *in* saying something"; and, (3) "perlocution" is the "act performed *by* saying something."[3] Yao (2017, 208) further develops these concepts, as follows: (1) the "locutionary act" entails "uttering" specific "noises" and/or "words," the latter especially within a particular context; (2) the "illocutionary act" governs the "manner in which a locution is being used"; and (3) the "perlocutionary act" brings about "certain effects or responses in the hearer" (e.g., "misleading, alarming, or convincing" someone).

2 See the following divergent, representative, scholarly publications: Bartholomew (2001); Botha (1991a; 1991b; 2007); Briggs (2001); Buss (1988); Chan (2016); Childs (2005); Dively (2014); Du Plessis (1991); Norris (2011); Patte (1988); Thiselton (1992; 2001); Vanhoozer (1998; 2001); Ward (2002); Wolterstorff (1995; 2001); White (1988a; 1988b); Yao (2017).

3 Emphasis in the original.

The British philosopher and linguistic analyst, John Langshaw Austin, was instrumental in the development of speech-act theory. This is particularly so with the posthumous publication of his lectures titled, *How to Do Things with Words* (1975). Austin presented the latter at Harvard University in 1955. One of his protégés, John Searle, further conceptualized, synthesized, and organized Austin's concepts. Noteworthy is Searle's 1969 treatise, *Speech Acts*, in which he drew upon specific rules of language to offer a coherent framework for understanding the nature and significance of human utterances.

Austin and Searle were some of the scholars who provided the theoretical foundation for Oswald Bayer's application of speech-act theory to the proclamation of the gospel.[4] He (2003, 50–55; 2007, 126–134) observed that when viewed through the prism of speech-act theory, the good news that early Christians such as Paul and his associates heralded could be understood as a performative utterance, which conveys a specific promise or assurance.[5] Furthermore, the declaration of the gospel is efficacious, in that it actualizes for the first time a reality that did not previously exist.

To be precise, the Creator uses the heralding of the good news to initiate, establish, and preserve a relationship between himself and the unsaved. Indeed, the declaration of the gospel makes the presence of faith operative within addressees, whereas before, unbelief prevailed.[6] Bayer (2003, 258) observes that "God's Word is a *verbum efficax*, an efficacious Word. It never returns void but does what it says." Bayer (2007, 63) also notes that the "Scriptures are not simply printed words to be read off a page." More importantly, they are "life-giving words that stimulate our senses and emotions, our memory and imagination, our heart and desires."

The above assertions are supported by specialists exploring the nexus between speech-act theory and the exegesis of Scripture. For example, in addition to the proclaimed Word, Botha (1991a, 288) makes a credible argument for the written Word being regarded as a valid, efficacious form of speech act. He contends that "most, if not all, principles that are relevant to speech act theory" concerning spoken "narrative" are likewise applicable "when a literary work [such as Scripture] is read." Furthermore, Botha (1991b, 302) deduces that "some of the concepts of speech act theory" provide interpreters with a "versatile approach" that can "enhance" one's "reading" and "exegesis" of biblical texts. Similarly, Dively (2014, 6) advocates that "speech-act theory can be used alongside hermeneutical theories to help interpreters understand sacred texts."

The preceding outlook resonates with apostolic teaching, in which the written and proclaimed Word are both understood to be "alive and active" (Heb 4:12),[7] as well as "living and enduring" (1 Pet 1:23). In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul declared that "all Scripture is inspired by God."[8] The Greek adjective rendered "inspired" means *God-breathed* (Spicq 1994, s.v. θεόπνευστος; Swanson 2001, s.v. θεόπνευστος). Because the Creator of the universe is the divine author of Scripture, its promulgation is eternally beneficial. For instance, God's Word is immeasurably useful for teaching sound doctrine and for showing people where they have strayed from the truth. The Bible is also efficacious for correcting sinful behavior and training people how to live in an upright manner. Verse 17 discloses that when Scripture

4 See the scholarly publications referenced in fn. 2 for a detailed synopsis of specialists who have further refined speech-act theory in ways that move beyond the work of Austin and Searle.
5 What follows is an adaptation of observations made in Lioy (2016, 18, 89–90).
6 In this context, faith is not considered a work, but merely a response of the repentant sinner's broken heart to the saving activity of God.

7 Unless otherwise noted, all English renderings of Scripture are taken from the 2011 NIV.
8 Πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος (NA^{28}).

is consistently heeded, Jesus's followers are thoroughly prepared and furnished to undertake all sorts of beneficial acts for God's glory.

Furthermore, John 3:3–8 discloses that the Spirit is the author and agent of the "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17) that is produced within individual repentant, believing sinners. This observation recalls the creation narrative recorded in Genesis 1:1–2:3. Regardless of whether the focus is on the original act of creation or the new creation, against the backdrop of speech-act theory, both signify a *verbum efficax*. For instance, concerning the original act of creation, Hebrews 11:3 reveals that it was by "God's command" that the cosmos and its intervening ages were made.[9] Brueggemann (1997, 146) clarifies that the "imagery is of a powerful sovereign who utters a decree from the throne" and in doing so actualizes his edict.

In terms of the new creation, when it comes to the proclamation of the gospel, the Spirit uses the promise of salvation to bring about the redemptive reality being articulated. As Packer (2001, 1000) observes, previously unregenerate hearers are enabled to believe the good news about Jesus of Nazareth and experience the "inner" recreation of their "fallen human nature."[10] The implication is that through the heralding of the good news, the Father produces the new birth. He does so in such a way that he remains supreme, unconditional, and gracious in bringing it about. Likewise, the revivification signifies a momentous and extraordinary fresh start for repentant, believing sinners, who are transformed by the Spirit in their volitions, emotions, and actions (see Rom 12:1–2).

9 God's superintendence of the cosmos did not cease with the initial act of creation. Rather, he continues to preserve, sustain, and uphold the universe in every moment of its existence, culminating in his creation of a "new heaven" (Rev 21:1) and a "new earth" at the end of the present age.
10 The remainder of the paragraph is a distillation and reformulation of information appearing in Packer's (2001) seminal article.

2. Subsequent Antithesis: Human Speech as a *Verbum Inefficax*

2.1 Overview

The observations in section one delineate the ways in which the declaration of the gospel is a speech act that produces an eternally worthwhile outcome; yet, what about the reverse? Expressed differently, what form of speech act might bring about a harmful result, namely, one that is a *verbum inefficax*? After all, as Bartholomew (2001, 151) clarifies, "language" is "capable of being misdirected," and Christians have an ethical "responsibility" of refusing to "participate in such misdirection."

James 3:1–12 provides needed insight concerning the above query. This choice of a passage to deliberate on speech-act theory is fitting, particularly given, as Thielman (2005, 505) observes, the epistle "says more about speech than any other single topic."[11] An examination of the pertinent literature did not surface any scholarly publications viewing this passage through the lens of speech-act theory. This especially includes how the latter might clarify the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect of a *verbum inefficax*. Such a lacuna helps to incentivize the research undertaken in this journal article, along with the potential academic merit of the discourse appearing below.

Worth mentioning is Baker's *Personal Speech-Ethics in the Epistle of James* (1995). He particularly has in mind "ethics or morality as applied to interpersonal communication" (2).[12] While the author does not address

11 Thielman (2005, 505) includes in his assessment of the letter from James, the author's "instructions on prayer, his criticism of boasting, and his blast against those who claim to have faith, but produce no deeds to back it up."
12 Baker (1995, 2) elaborates that "personal speech-ethics" deals with the "rights and wrongs of utterance." Moreover, the field of study involves the "process of human speech," along with its "relationship to thoughts and actions."

the issue of speech-act theory, his monograph provides useful contextual information from the literature of the ancient Near East, Tanakh, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Qumran communities, rabbinic works, and Greco-Roman treatises. In turn, Baker leverages insights gleaned from these diverse sources to discern what possibly "influenced" the "thoughts and assumptions" of the writer who penned the letter from James with respect to "speech-ethics" (1992, 4).

At this juncture, a disclaimer is in order. Questions about the provenance of the letter from James are ancillary to the investigation being undertaken below. The operating premise is that James was the half-brother of the Lord Jesus.[13] Prior to AD 48, James wrote his epistle to Jewish Christians living outside of Judea. Most likely, the author dealt with a widespread, burdensome circumstance they were experiencing, not a specific, calamitous incident. Their pastoral challenges included destitution, maltreatment, distrust and animosity between the wealthy and the impoverished, and misunderstandings about the interplay between saving faith and the good works it fosters.[14]

Watson (1993, 53–54) classifies James 3:1–12 as "deliberative rhetoric." Its characteristics include the intent to "advise and dissuade" an audience concerning a "specific course of action." Also, the "argumentation" is primarily comprised of "example," along with the "comparison of example." Furthermore, there is present the "sources" of the writer's argument (technically referred to as "deliberative *topoi*"), including what is deemed to be "advantageous, expedient, honorable, profitable, necessary, and their opposites." Moreover, the "basis" for the author's case (technically referred to as the *stasis*) is chiefly "one of quality," especially since the "nature or import" of an issue is under consideration.

Hartin (2003, 181–182) puts forward the following as the rhetorical structure of the "well-balanced argument" in James 3:1–2 dealing with the proper and improper uses of the tongue: (1) the theme (or *propositio*): exercise extreme caution in becoming teachers; (2) the reason (or *ratio*): everyone morally stumbles in what they say (v. 2); (3) the proof (or *rationis confirmatio*): the tongue is a potent force (vv. 3–5a); (4) the development or embellishment (or *exornatio*): the tongue is a vortex of devastation and death (vv. 5b–10); and, (5) the conclusion (*conplexio*): responsible and reckless forms of speech can neither occur simultaneously nor peacefully coexist (vv. 11–12).

Admittedly, Watson (1993, 64) proposes an alternative and possibly less serviceable structure for the rhetorical argumentation in James 3:1–12. The divisional differences with Hartin (2003) notwithstanding, Watson's (1993, 48) major claim continues to be pertinent, namely, that the passage remains "the author's own unified composition." It is "constructed according to a standard elaboration pattern for argumentation by Greco-Roman rhetorical works." Watson (49) lists the "four main divisions of the standard speech" as follows: (1) *exordium* (introduction); (2) *narratio* (statement of the facts of the case); (3) *probatio* (proofs of the proposition of the case); and, (4) *peroratio* (conclusion).

One need not adopt the organizational approaches above to affirm the potential value of considering the rhetorical structure of James 3:1–12.

13 Henceforth, the author of the epistle is taken to be male-gendered.
14 The following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the descriptive analysis of Jas 3:1–12: Adam (2013); Adamson (1976); Baker (1995); Bauckham (1999); Beale (2011); Blomberg and Kamell (2008); Brosend (2004); Burdick (1981); Calvin (1855); Carson (2007); Culpepper (1986); Davids (1982; 1989); Dibelius (1976); Fanning (1994); Goldingay (2016); Guthrie (1981); Hartin (2003); Hiebert (1970); Johnson (1995; 1998); Kilner (2010; 2015); Ladd (1997); Laws (1980); Lenski (1961); Lewis (1986); Loh and Hatton (1997); MacGorman (1986); Marshall (2004); Martin (1988); Mayor (1977); McKnight (2011); Moo (2000; 2002); Morris (1990); Motyer (1985); Osborne (2011); Richardson (1997); Ropes (1991); Schreiner (2013); Sleeper (1998); Strange (2010); Stulac (1993); Thielman (2005); Vlachos (2013); Wall (1997); Watson (1993); Williams (2001); Witherington (2007).

In agreement with McKnight (2011, 267), these proposals highlight the "persuasive art" of the author's "rhetoric." The discourse that follows in this essay utilizes a more straightforward delineation of the passage: (1) being responsible teachers (vv. 1–2); (2) recognizing the tongue's destructive power (vv. 3–6); and, (3) acknowledging the tongue's recalcitrance (vv. 7–12). Where appropriate, references to speech-act theory are made, especially the contrast between human utterances as a *verbum efficax* versus a *verbum inefficax*. The treatise also factors in the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect of these divergent forms of articulation.

2.2 Being responsible teachers (Jas 3:1–2)

By way of background, it is reasonable to surmise that there was substantial eagerness among Christians in the early church to teach. After all, based on the emphasis of this ministry in the New Testament,[15] it carried considerable rank and honor, like that of a rabbi in first-century AD ethnic, Jewish circles. Nonetheless, when considering James 3:1, readers discover that knowing divine truth is not necessarily the same as living it. Put another way, even though having a deep intellectual grasp of Scripture is commendable, it is quite another matter to practice what it teaches with unconditional kindness, integrity, and equity.[16]

Furthermore, as James reminded his fellow Christians, while it is noble to aspire to a teaching ministry, such believers are liable to receive a "stricter judgment" (CSB; or harsher condemnation). This means God would evaluate their lives more rigorously and stringently based on their increased awareness of the truth and influence over the lives of others.[17] Such a sobering observation is not intended to discourage teachers in the church who are gifted and called by God. After all, providing biblical instruction continues to be an essential part of carrying out Jesus's Great Commission to make disciples.[18] This observation recalls the discourse in section one, wherein the proclamation of the good news is categorized as a *verbum efficax*.

Moving beyond the preceding statements, the responsibility of teaching Scripture carries with it a degree of power and authority. Regrettably, this circumstance often attracts people whom God has not called to instruct others in his Word, but who crave the esteem and influence the position offers. It is within this pastoral context that the writer broadened his observations to encompass all believers, particularly as he made incisive observations about toxic forms of human speech that prove to be a *verbum inefficax*.[19]

For instance, a primary way to communicate—including the proclamation of God's Word—is by means of the tongue. The downside is that hurtful remarks can greatly offend others, who in turn might refuse to offer their forgiveness. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman (1998) clarify that

15 See Acts 13:1; Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 2:2; 1 Pet 4:11; also Did 13:1–2; 15:1–2.
16 Paul, in 1 Cor 8:1, repeated a common slogan of his day, "We all possess knowledge." His trenchant response was that while "knowledge puffs up," Christlike "love builds up." Other portions of the New Testament draw attention to the problem within the early church of congregations being plagued by the presence of ill-suited, incompetent, and heretical teachers. See Acts 15:24; 1 Tim 1:6–7; 6:3; 2 Tim 4:3; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 3:7; Jude 1:4.

17 See Matt 5:19; 12:36; 18:6; Acts 20:25–27; Jas 2:12.
18 See Matt 28:19–20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46–47; Acts 1:8.
19 Along with the letter from James, the Hebrew sacred writings cautioned against iniquitous forms of human speech. Isaiah 6:5–6 is a case in point. The prophet confessed that he and his fellow citizens were guilty of "unclean lips." While this possibly included uttering vulgar language, most likely Isaiah had something else in mind. The people's lips were instruments of religious hypocrisy and of false professions of faith in God. The prophet recognized his need for his lips to be purified so that he could praise the Lord with the seraphs and declare God's message to the people. The literature of Second Temple Judaism also censured various forms of verbal transgressions, such as being deceitful, talking impulsively, slandering others, gossiping, and quarreling. See Sir 5:11–6:1; 19:4–17; 28:11–26.

in biblical literature, there are "four main categories" for the "symbolic" use of the tongue, as follows: (1) the tongue can denote the "language" being spoken; (2) the tongue frequently "points to an individual utterance"; (3) on occasion, the tongue designates the "shape of an object"; and, (4) the tongue signifies "nonverbal messages." The second use is the most pertinent to the analysis being undertaken here.

James 3:2 acknowledges that the human struggle with sin plagues everyone—including believers—in numerous, varied, and ongoing ways.[20] Despite that, the tongue is the part of the body that reveals a person's depraved, wayward tendencies most clearly. Not even those who teach Scripture are exempt from this reality. After all, as Jesus declared in Matthew 15:18–19, human speech is the gateway from the inner to the outer world. The words a person uses disclose to others what is inside of oneself.[21] While it is true that some individuals talk more than others, the issue here is not how *much* they say, but rather the *kind* of statements that are uttered and the *tone* that characterizes what is spoken.

The Greek verb translated "stumble" (πταίω; Jas 3:2) refers to intentional ethical missteps, not simply inadvertent human error (Balz and Schneider 1990, s.v. πταίω; Schmidt 1964, s.v. πταίω). The literary context indicates that much of this stumbling occurs because of destructive forms of communication (including lying, slander, and gossip, to name a few unsavory examples). The writer disclosed that if people could keep a tight rein on their tongue (at least hypothetically), they likewise could restrain their entire body. Indeed, they would be perfectly self-controlled. Previously, in 1:26, the writer contended that those who fail to bridle their tongues are self-deceived when it comes to their assertions of being "religious" (that is, devout or pious).

The Greek adjective rendered *perfect* (LEB; τέλειος; 3:2) denotes those who are fully developed in a moral sense and meet the highest ethical standards in their conduct (Silva 2014, s.v. τέλειος; Swanson 2001, s.v. τέλειος).[22] The emphasis is on the maturity of one's behavior. The idea is that believers who never sin with their tongues probably show themselves flawlessly developed in other areas of their lives. Regardless of how accurate one's personal assessment is in this area of conduct, the unvarnished truth is that there can be no spiritual maturity while the tongue remains untamed and out of control.

2.3 Recognizing the tongue's destructive power (Jas 3:3–6)

Perhaps within the faith communities to which the letter from James was originally directed, some believers downplayed the importance of controlling their speech. If so, this explains why, in James 3:3–4,[23] the writer

20 See 1 Kgs 8:46; Job 4:17–19; Prov 20:9; Eccl 7:20; 4 Ezra 8:35; Sir 19:16; 1 John 1:8.
21 The Synoptic Gospels record Jesus's teaching that the words people speak reflect what is truly in their innermost being. See Matt 12:33–37; Mark 7:15–23; Luke 6:43–45. On the symbolic import of the heart in biblical literature, see Lower (2009) and Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman (1998).

22 See also Matt 5:48.
23 Martin (1988) notes a textual discrepancy in Jas 3:3. The most "widely supported" Greek manuscripts read εἰ δὲ ("and if"; see Westcott; NA[27]; NA[28]; SBLGNT; NASB; EHV; ESV; LEB; NRSV; NIV; NET; CSB; NLT). A less likely reading is ἰδού ("behold"; see TR1881; KJV; NKJV), particularly due to the likelihood of "scribal harmonizing" with ἰδού in vv. 4 and 5. Also see Metzger (1994).

offered two illustrations of common practices in Greco-Roman society to demonstrate how a small object, such as the human tongue, can positively or negatively control the destiny of a much larger entity.[24]

First, a light metal bar[25] placed in the mouth of a draft horse[26] allows the rider to dictate where the huge animal travels.[27] Second, a boat's rudder[28] determines the course of its many-times-larger sailing vessel. The pilot or helmsman steering the ship[29] needs only to change the direction of the rudder and, despite fierce winds, can keep the vessel on course.

Verse 5 applies the preceding two illustrations to the tongue by stating that even though it is a small member of the human body, it can produce a great deal of good or evil. When viewed through the lens of speech-act theory, this state of affairs would be characterized as either a *verbum efficax* or *verbum inefficax*. In the second case, despite the tongue's exaggerated claims, it has the power to wreak unimaginable havoc on the lives of its victims.

The second half of verse 5 introduces a third illustration involving a tiny flame. On the one hand, it can often be extinguished quickly with little thought and effort; yet, on the other hand, a seemingly harmless spark can reduce acres of forest to charred rubble.[30] Verse 6 advances the thought by comparing the tongue to an inferno,[31] since a few ill-chosen words can do a vast amount of damage in a short length of time.[32] Moreover, as the epitome of a *verbum inefficax*, the tongue is comparable to an incendiary device that engulfs an individual's whole life.

Verse 6 literally refers to the "tongue" as the "world of iniquity."[33] Wall (1997, 169) explains that within the letter from James, the Greek noun rendered *world* (κόσμος) denotes the locus of "anti-God values and sentiments." For this reason, the author exhorted Christians to resist the temptation of being stained and corrupted by the pagan beliefs, values, and priorities embraced by the unsaved (1:27). For instance, their ethical system lauds material wealth and maligns poverty (2:5). Moreover, "friendship

24 Moo (2002, 104) states that the letter from James drew upon a "widespread series of images from his culture." Literary correspondences can be found in the writings of Aristotle, Philo, and Plutarch (See the citations in Ropes 1991, 231). Johnson (1998, 204) clarifies that the "Hellenistic moralists" of the day were "fundamentally sanguine" concerning humankind's ability to align "speech" with "reason and virtue." The epistle's author, however, was considerably "more pessimistic in his evaluation." By espousing this view, he ensured his readers fully grasped the destructive potential latent in the tongue. For an in-depth comparison of James with other Greco-Roman and Judaic texts, see Baker (1995); Strange (2010).

25 Possibly made from iron; see Yamauchi (2016).

26 Perhaps weighing between 1,000 and 2,000 pounds; see Cansdale (2009a).

27 Psa 39:1 records David's decision to place a "muzzle" over his "mouth" as a way to prevent him from sinning with his "tongue," especially while in the "presence" of the "wicked."

28 The rudder would have been a wooden or metal blade about the size of a person's arm that was fastened in a perpendicular position to the stern of the ship; see Branch and Schoville (2016).

29 The vessel would have been up to 150 feet in length; see Beck (2011).

30 Moo (2000, 155) draws attention to an alternative interpretation in Jas 3:5, namely, that the author's reference might be to the "brush" typically carpeting "many Palestinian hills." In the "dry Mediterranean climate," the parched vegetation could "easily and disastrously burst into flames." For a selective list of references in ancient literature wherein the occurrence of forest fires is used for illustrative purposes in ethical discussions, see Ropes (1991, 232–233).

31 See Prov 16:27, which likens the slanderous remarks uttered by human "lips" to a "scorching fire." Similarly, Psalms of Solomon 12:2–3 associates the "lying tongue" of the "wicked" with a "fire that burns." Likewise, Sir 28:22 equates a malicious tongue with "flames" that burn their victims.

32 In the ancient world, people used buckets, axes, and other tools to prevent, thwart, and extinguish fires; yet, despite their vigilant efforts, they were extremely limited in what they could accomplish. Moreover, once the flames became uncontrollable, they could spread quickly throughout a town filled with dry, wooden structures; see Funderburk (2009); Van Broekhoven (1982).

33 Loh and Hatton (1997) reiterate the consensus view among specialists that the syntax and imagery in James 3:6 are "extremely ambiguous and difficult to understand." In turn, Davids (1982, 141–144) offers a cogent and clear delineation of the various approaches commentators have used to understand the precise meaning of the verse. Amid all the scholarly deliberations and disagreements, his sage conclusion is that the "author has piled up stock phrases and expressions" that are best "taken unidiomatically." As with "modern sermons," the "mixture of metaphors and grammar" would have left an indelible impression on the "original readers with rhetorical clarity."

with the world" (4:4) not only results in "hostility toward God" (EHV), but also becoming his adversary. Correspondingly, 1 John 2:15–17 admonishes believers to neither "love the world" nor whatever the "world" offers. The latter includes the depraved appetites of sinful people, the sensual desires of their eyes, and their bragging about what they have and do.

James 3:6 is pungent in declaring that human speech represents the source and sum of wickedness committed by the heathen in society.[34] Indeed, the tongue signifies the totality of unrighteousness that pagan, fallen individuals can achieve. This truth is evident when the instrument of articulation operates unchecked, particularly as it spews forth a torrent of invectives that spiritually defiles a person's entire being. Even worse, the tongue sets ablaze the complete arc of temporal and eternal existence. Human speech exerts such a destructive force over the cycle of life—in the words of Hartin (2003, 177), "from the cradle to the grave"—because it is inflamed by hell's fiery abyss.

Hell renders the Greek noun *γέεννα*.[35] It is a transliteration and simplification of the Hebrew phrase, גֵּיא בֶן־הִנֹּם, which refers to the Valley of Hinnom. The latter was the lower area of land along the southwest corner of Jerusalem. The valley formed part of the dividing line between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The locale is also where Ahaz and Manasseh, two of Judah's most notorious kings, offered their sons in fiery sacrifice to the Ammonite god, Molech.[36] In the intertestamental period Jewish apocalyptic writers first called the Valley of Hinnom the gateway to hell, and later

34 Gal 5:19–21 catalogs a representative list of vices performed by human beings in their sinful state, and fittingly constitutes the "whole world of wickedness" (NLT) associated with the tongue in Jas 3:6.
35 The following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the discussion about the Greek noun, γέεννα: Jeremias (1964); Louw and Nida (1989); Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman (1998); Silva (2014).
36 See Josh 15:8; 18:16; 2 Kgs 23:10; 2 Chr 33:6; Jer 7:31–32; 19:5–7; 32:35.

referred to it as hell itself.[37] In first-century AD Jerusalem, inhabitants continuously used the area to dump and burn garbage and bodily waste, so that smoke could be seen rising from it continually.

Considering the above explanatory information, *γέεννα* provides an apt illustration of everlasting torment. Also, James 3:6, in referring to hell, draws attention to forms of human speech that constitute the most unsavory exemplars of *verbum inefficax*. For instance, when the tongue is left uncontrolled, it becomes a tool for vice, rather than virtue. Indeed, under the influence of Satan and his demonic cohorts, people say things that are destructive in nature.

2.4 Acknowledging the tongue's recalcitrance (Jas 3:7–12)

In James 3:7–12, the writer compared the tongue to an untamed (and possibly ritually unclean) animal. Presumably, this rhetorical decision produced a strong visceral response in his Jewish-minded readers. After all, they would have found any comparison between people and other aspects of creation—whether animate or inanimate—to be demeaning,[38] especially since humanity was regarded as the apex of everything God brought into existence.[39]

The writer noted that throughout their history, people across the globe subdued various species of creatures. Even in his day, clever individuals figured out ways to domesticate wild beasts of the forest and birds in the

37 See 1 Enoch 54:1; 56:3.
38 See 1 Enoch 85–90; Acts 10:9–16; 11:5–10; Jude 1:12–13.
39 See the creation narrative recorded in Gen 1:1–2:3.

sky, along with reptiles and sea creatures.[40] Humanity's preceding laudatory accomplishments stood in sharp contrast with their inability to subdue the tongue in acts of locution.

During their time on earth as God's vice-regents, people were completely unsuccessful in taming their utterances. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, they became promulgators of what speech-act theory labels as a *verbum inefficax*. The writer indicated that to subdue the tongue, nothing less than God's power was required. So, on the one hand, humankind succeeded in carrying out the divine mandate to rule over virtually every aspect of creation;[41] yet, on the other hand, the instrument of communication remained feral. Likewise, it showed no sign of ever capitulating to human control.[42]

James 3:8 bluntly states the reason for humanity's abysmal failure rate. Their instrument of speech is not only evil, but also *restless*.[43] The Greek adjective translated *restless* (ἀκατάστατος) suggests a staggering, unsteady, and disorderly form of wickedness.[44] Loh and Hatton (1997) put forward the image of a "caged beast" that paces "back and forth" and searches for an "opportunity to break out." The implication is that the tongue, as the exemplar of a *verbum inefficax*, could pounce at any time, without warning or rational cause, and with the outcome being chaos and confusion.[45]

The Greek phrase rendered, "full of deadly poison" (μεστὴ ἰοῦ θανατηφόρου), recalls Psalm 140:3.[46] The poet compared the speech of his antagonists to the sharp, fatal bite of a viper. Though this snake is diminutive, it has a particularly mean disposition. It attacks swiftly and holds fast to its victim with lethal tenacity. Correspondingly, like a venomous snake concealed in the bush beside a trail, the tongue is loaded with life-threatening toxins and poised to strike.[47]

The above comparison reinforces the notion that what the tongue utters can constitute a form of speech act that brings about a noxious result, namely, one that is *verbum inefficax*. Human articulation especially shows its devastating nature by its erratic and contradictory behavior. For example, as suggested by Blomberg and Kamell (2008, 161), during a corporate worship service believers might use their mouths to praise their "Lord and Father" (Jas 3:9).[48] Then, in a different setting, they might deploy

40 Ancient sacred Jewish and Christian texts typically placed earth's creatures into four broad categories of speciation; see Gen 1:26; 9:2; Deut 4:17–18; 1 Enoch 7:5; Acts 10:12; 11:6.

41 See Gen 1:26; 9:2; Ps 8:6–8. For a disquisition of the creation or cultural mandate, especially from a missional perspective, see Bosch (2011); Crouch (2013); Hastings (2012).

42 See Prov 10:20; 12:18; 13:3; 15:2, 4; 21:3; 31:36; Sir 14:1; 19:5–6; 25:8; Lev. Rab. 16; Deut. Rab. 5:10.

43 Davids (1982, 144–145) explains that the Greek text of Jas 3:8 contains a minor textual discrepancy. The most highly regarded manuscripts use the adjective, ἀκατάστατον (restless; see Westcott; NA27; NA28; SBLGNT; NASB; EHV; ESV; LEB; NRSV; NIV; NET; CSB; NLT). However, a larger number of lesser regarded manuscripts use the variant reading, ἀκατασχετόν (uncontrollable; see TR1881; KJV; NKJV). Also see Metzger (1994).

44 For details on this lexeme, see Danker (2000), Oepke (1964), and Souter (1917).

45 Not surprisingly, Jas 1:19 admonishes Jesus's followers to "be quick to listen" and "slow to speak."

46 Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman (1998) additionally list Pss 57:4, 64:3, and Jer 9:8 as examples of the tongue being used as a "weapon for harm." Furthermore, they draw attention to Prov 18:21, which describes the tongue as having the "power" to either foster "life" or bring about "death."

47 For a consideration of the snake as a variegated metaphor in the Judeo-Christian canon, see Beck (2011); Cansdale (2009b).

48 As identified by Dibelius (1976, 202–203). See the formulaic, liturgical language in the following Jewish and Christian texts: 1 Chron 29:10; Pss 28:6; 31:21; 103:1–2; Isa 63:16; 1 Enoch 22:14; 48:10; 61:7; 63:2; 81:3; 84:2; Sir 23:1, 4; Tob 3:11; Rom 9:5; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3. Mayor (1977, 121) elucidates that aside from Jas 3:9, the Greek phrase rendered "Lord and Father" (κύριον καὶ πατέρα) is found nowhere else in New Testament. Also, as Hiebert (1970, 222) notes, the verse contains a minor textual discrepancy. Numerous later manuscripts use the noun, θεόν (God), which in turn influenced several translations of the verse (see TR1881; KJV; NKJV). Even so, the most highly regarded earlier manuscripts use the noun, κύριον (Lord), which is also attested in differing translations of the same verse (see Westcott; NA[27]; NA[28]; SBLGNT; NASB; EHV; ESV; LEB; NRSV; NIV; NET; CSB; NLT). Also see Metzger (1994).

their tongues to pronounce a curse (or invoke adversity and sorrow) on their fellow human beings.[49] Witherington (2007, 497) comments that in ancient times, people regarded words as being "more than the mere audible pronunciation" of specific terms. The words people uttered had "inherent power," which in turn could impact "what they spoke."

The activity of praising God is commendable and constructive, whereas the activity of cursing people is reprehensible and destructive. The enormity of the preceding double-minded hypocrisy[50] is intensified by the realization that the same Creator made every person in his likeness. Admittedly, the consensus theological view is that within fallen humanity, the image of God has been defaced through sin.[51] Nonetheless, people still bear the divine *likeness* to some degree,[52] and this reality sets them apart from the rest of earth's creatures.[53] So, to call down misfortune on one's fellow human beings is tantamount to cursing their sovereign Lord.[54]

Carson (2007, 1006) comments that such a self-centered and self-serving attitude is a "form of idolatry." Understandably, then, in verse 10, the author despaired that a person's mouth could pronounce blessings (that is, a *verbum efficax*) and spout expletives (that is, a *verbum inefficax*) in almost the same breath.[55] Certainly, out of a pastoral concern for his readers (to whom he appealed as his colleagues in the faith), he declared that such inconsistency was unacceptable for Jesus's followers to tolerate.[56] In the parlance of speech-act theory, believers honor their Redeemer when their utterances are spiritually efficacious rather than inefficacious.

To illustrate his point, the writer used two rhetorical questions[57] involving phenomena in the physical world.[58] Specifically, the groundwater flowing abundantly from the opening of a spring in the Jordan Valley was either fresh or brackish, not delectable one moment and acrid shortly thereafter (v. 11). Likewise, one would not expect to draw fresh water out of a pond suffused with salt (v. 12).[59] Moreover, the fig trees growing throughout the eastern Mediterranean never produced a crop of olives.

49 For a deliberation of the lexical meaning and theological nuances of the Greek verb, καταράομαι (curse), see Büchsel (1964); Mangum and Brown (2014); Silva (2014). For the contribution that speech-act theory could potentially make in the analysis of biblical texts containing blessings and curses, see Briggs (2001, 20–21, 184–185); Chan (2016, 86–87, 93, 117, 151, 170, 172, 193, 195, 199–201, 206–207, 224, 229, 237); Childs (2005, 389); Hancher (1988, 28–29); Patte (1988, 9–10); White (1988a, 21); Wolterstorff (1995:8, 185, 212, 217).

50 See Pss 62:4; 119:13; Lam 3:38; Sir 5:13–15; 28:12; Jas 1:8; Did. 2:4.

51 The traditional doctrinal position is that humans intrinsically possess the *imago Dei* (especially in terms of rulership and representation), and that in a post-Fall world overrun with sin, the image of God has been marred, though not eradicated. Kilner (2010; 2015) dissents from this view, particularly that the *imago Dei* has in any manner been "damaged," "partly lost," and/or "compromised" (2010, 602–603; 2015, 174). Even so, he concedes that he is making an argument based on silence (2010, 615; 2015, 183): "Admittedly, the Bible does not contain an explicit affirmation that the image of God has *not* been damaged" (emphasis in the original). For an evenhanded critique of Kilner's reasoning and rationale for his position, see Franklin (2017).

52 See Gen 1:26–27; 5:1–2; 9:6; 2 Enoch 44:1; 2 Esd 8:44; Wis 2:23; Gen. Rab. 24:7–8; 1 Cor 11:7.

53 For differing views regarding the interpretive nuances connected with the phrase, *image of God* as used in Scripture, see Longman (2017); Middleton (2017); Walton (2015).

54 See an analogous point made in Gen. Rab. 24:7, as part of a rabbinical interpretation of Gen 5:1 (Neusner 2001, 75).

55 See the admonitions in Sir 6:1; 28:13; and Testament of Benjamin 6:5–6, against using the tongue to make hypocritical, contradictory statements.

56 Vlachos (2013, 116) explains that the use of χρή (it ought), rather than δεῖ (it is necessary), in Jas 3:10, "bears a stronger sense here." The rhetorical force of the interjection is fittingly captured by the NLT with "this is not right!"

57 According to Lenski (1961, 612), the two rhetorical questions presumed corresponding, vigorous, negative responses.

58 In Matt 7:15–19, Jesus pointed out distinctions found in the natural world to stress the importance of differentiating between true and false prophets. See also Matt 12:33–35; Luke 6:43–45.

59 Brannon (2014) draws attention to a textual discrepancy in Jas 3:12. The earliest, most reliable Greek manuscripts read, "neither can a saltwater spring produce fresh water" (οὔτε ἁλυκὸν γλυκὺ ποιῆσαι ὕδωρ; see Westcott; NA27; NA28; SBLGNT; NASB; EHV; ESV; LEB; NRSV; NIV; NET; CSB; NLT). In contrast, later, less reliable Greek manuscripts read, "thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh" (οὕτως οὐδεμια πηγὴ ἁλυκὸν καὶ γλυκὺ ποιῆσαι ὕδωρ; see TR1881; KJV; NKJV). The discrepancy notwithstanding, the essential meaning of the verse is equivalent, namely, that two completely dissimilar types of water (salt and fresh) cannot originate from the same source.

Similarly, grape vines planted on Judea's hillsides did not yield a batch of figs. Each kind of plant—regardless of whether it was a tree, shrub, or herb[60] —bore only their naturally-occurring harvests.

Like verse 10, the writer in verse 12 referred to his readers as his Christian friends. In this way, he retained their attention, especially as he implored them to recognize the sharp contrast between how entities in creation and the tongue normally operate. In brief, human speech has the potential to be perverse. As verses 13 through 16 reveal, apart from God's wisdom, believers are helpless to counter the destructive effects of their utterances, whether in their relationship with God or other people. The only viable choice, then, is for Jesus's followers to shun all forms of destructive communication.

3. Concluding Synthesis: Opting for Human Speech as a *Verbum Efficax*, Not a *Verbum Inefficax*

The major premise of this journal article is that human speech is either categorized as a *verbum efficax* or a *verbum inefficax*. Put differently, the tongue utters words that are alternately efficacious or inefficacious. The first option promotes human flourishing in all areas of life, whereas the second option fosters the atrophying of humanity's existence.

Speech-act theory provides the philosophical basis for the preceding delineations. General declarations, along with particular explanations, warrants, and hypotheses, fall under the rubric of being utterances made by people. When considering the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect of these articulations, they can either be helpful or harmful, as well as beneficial or deleterious.

60 These referents are just a few representative categories. For the motif of plants used in Scripture, see Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman (1998); Shewell-Cooper (2009); Tucker (2016).

The creation narrative in Genesis 1:1–2:3 is a grand example of a *verbum efficax*. At the dawn of time, the Triune God commanded the entire universe into existence. Another case in point would be the Spirit of God making believers new creations when they hear the proclamation of the gospel. Whereas before the announcement of the good news, there was spiritual death, after the utterance of the *εὐαγγέλιον* (gospel), there is the manifestation of faith and with it the revivification of one's soul.

The extended discourse in James 3:1–12 provides an incisive *exposé* of a *verbum inefficax*. The teaching ministry of God's Word forms the gateway to the writer's diatribe against harmful, toxic forms of human speech. He was unsparing in spotlighting the truth that those who fancy themselves as dispensers of divine truth face the prospect of being judged more strictly by the Creator for the motivation, nature, scope, and outcomes of their teaching ministries.

Next, the writer broadened the horizon of his critique against all forms of *verbum inefficax*, as centered in the tongue. On one level, it declares pretentious aspirations; yet, on another level, its utterances lead to death and destruction. Human speech is comparable to a tiny spark that sets ablaze an entire forest. Ultimately, idolatry, immorality, and injustice are the ingredients that spew forth from this noxious hellstew.

In this way the tongue is the archetype of a *verbum inefficax*. From an individual point of view, human speech has the ability to spiritually sully a person's entire body. Moreover, from an interpersonal perspective, the instrument of articulation can exert a destructive force that engulfs human communities, from those that only involve a few people to those that encompass entire nation-states.

The writer convincingly argued that no human power can exercise lasting control over the tongue. Indeed, as the embodiment of a *verbum inefficax*, thoughtless and malicious forms of speech lay waste to lives, reputations, and careers like a fire consuming a forest, leaving it a charred, smoldering wasteland.

There is, then, a dynamic tension between utterances that are either a *verbum efficax* or a *verbum inefficax*. Conveyed differently, the tongue can alternately bless and curse, as well as build up and tear down. The potential of this small member of a person's body for good is seemingly limitless, and so is its power for evil. The proverbial Jekyll and Hyde nature of human speech is unparalleled in the natural world.

To recap, the tongue, as a *verbum inefficax*, is frightening in its power, destructive in its capacity, and unpredictable in its character. Taming the tongue is a discipline rarely achieved, even by Jesus's followers. Indeed, apart from the Savior's grace and the Spirit's empowering presence,[61] even believers are helpless to counter the devastating effects of their speech in their relationships with God and other people. For this reason, the admonition in 1 Peter 3:10 is well worth considering. Specifically, believers who want their God-given existence to be characterized by productivity and joy must restrain their "tongue" from speaking "evil" and preempt their "lips from uttering deceit" (NET). Even better is when the instrument of human speech utters praises to the Creator.[62]

61 Especially through the ministry of Word and sacrament.
62 See Pss 51:14; 126:2; Acts 10:46.

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Salt and Light: Reading Matthew 5:13–16 within the Context of the Matthean Community

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Abstract
The pericope of Matthew 5–7, known traditionally as the Sermon on the Mount, has provided scholars with fertile ground for research over the last two millennia. However, one finds scant evidence of scholarly exegesis that reveals an understanding of the Sermon's message from within the fractured social situation of the diverse Matthean community following the first Jewish War. Some scholars assert that the writers of the Gospels had no particular audience in mind when writing. This approach would make the Sermon a collection of generic proverbs or universally applicable tropes. Conversely, this study suggests that the social situation of the Matthean community is not only foundational but essential when reading the commands found in the pericope. The research investigates the historical and social context in Syria, Galilee, and Judea post AD 70 and the first Jewish revolt. This focus on the social situation is used as a lens through which to read Matthew 5:13–16. This study postulates that following the destruction of Jerusalem, the Matthean community would have experienced great angst, giving rise to a temptation to assimilate in order to survive. However, Matthew 5:13–16 instructs this community, "Be salt and light. Do not hide your light under a bushel and do not assimilate into the community and become useless."

1. Introduction
The Sermon on the Mount has been a topic of discussion amongst Christian theologians and interpreters throughout the history of the Church. This study, however, proposes that the wealth of research on the *Sitz im Leben* of the Matthean community has not been sufficiently explored in exegeting specific passages. Rather, it seems that interpreters have been content with reading the Gospels as if they were only universal documents (see Bauckham 2008). This has led to an abstraction of the Gospels' teaching turning it into

This article: https://www.sats.ac.za/conspectus/salt-light-matthew-contect-matthean-community
https://doi.org/10.54725/conspectus.2023.1.3

Conspectus

Keywords
Matthew 5, Sermon on the Mount, Matthean community, discipleship, Jewish war, salt and light

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a set of moral truths that can be applied to any context as if written for that context. This is not the way the Pauline or the General Epistles are read. Contrariwise, in the epistles scholars always emphasize the original audience and their situation. This study asks why the same method is not applied to the Gospels. Consequently, this study proposes that considering the Matthean community's context allows a fresh dimension of the text to come to the fore. A note to the reader: when this article refers to the *Matthean community*, it simply refers to the original recipients of the Gospel and not to a sectarian community that manipulated the words and works of Jesus to suit their agenda.

This study proceeds as follows: 1) it provides a brief description of various historical readings of the Sermon on the Mount; 2) it investigates the *Sitz im Leben* of the Matthean community; 3) it reads Matthew 5:13–16 in light of the reconstruction of the Matthean community's context; 4) finally, it provides a contemporary reflection.

2. The History of Interpretation: A Brief Overview

This section briefly surveys various historical readings of the Sermon on the Mount. Due to space limitations, it cannot reproduce all the historical readings but rather reviews the ones that it deems most influential in the modern Christian context.[1] Quarles (2011, 4–11) identifies the following readings of the Sermon on the Mount in the Christian tradition: 1) those who believe that the Sermon on the Mount applies to all Christians; 2) those who believe it applies only to those Christians who wish to attain holiness; 3) those who maintain Christians should not and cannot obey the Sermon on the Mount; 4) those who believe it is possible to keep it inwardly despite one's actions to the contrary. Again, this is not an exhaustive list of all the possible readings, but these readings are, in this study's opinion, the most common in a Western church context.

The Didache (written around AD 100) is the earliest Christia document outside of the New Testament that mentions the Sermon on the Mount, and it represents the first group of Christian interpreters of the Sermon (Holmes 1989, 135–147). The Didache takes for granted that the Sermon on the Mount is the epitome of Christian discipleship. This is the earliest witness to how Christians received the Sermon on the Mount, and it applies the Sermon to all Christians. This makes it an indispensable resource for recovering the way the Matthean community understood the Sermon. The Didache is structured by employing the idea of "two ways" (Holmes 1989, 135). Quarles (2011, 4) notes that these two ways reflect the two ways mentioned in Matthew 7:13–14. The Didache uses the phrase "you will be perfect" in multiple locations, and according to Quarles (2011, 4), these are allusions to Matthew 5:48. To be perfect would mean to imitate Christ's teaching presented in the Sermon. Thus, for Quarles (4), the Didache uses the Sermon on the Mount to characterize "the ideal disciple." This reading of the Sermon on the Mount was also espoused by John Chrysostom (d. AD 407). Chrysostom (2015, 18.236; 22.280), whose homilies constitute the oldest extant treatment of the Gospel of Matthew as a whole, pointed out that some Christians had been characterized by the qualities represented in the Sermon on the Mount. Therefore, Chrysostom exclaimed, "Let us not consider that these commandments are impossible." He believed obeying these commands came naturally for believers.

Secondly, in the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas (1948, part 2.1, question 108) recovered the distinction first made by Ambrose in the fourth century between *counsels* and *precepts*. Precepts were commands that all

1 For a fuller treatment, see Quarles (2011) and Kissinger (1975).

Christians had to follow (Aquinas 1948, part 2.1, question 108). Counsels, for Aquinas, were guides for those who wished to attain true holiness. Quarles (2011, 7) explains that "Counsels were intended for the spiritually elite and could be fulfilled only through withdrawal from society to monastic life." The third group, namely the dispensationalists, do away with this schema and declare the Sermon on the Mount unnecessary for Christians. Lewis Chafer (1948, 5:97) contends that the Sermon was intended for Jews before the cross and is thus inapplicable to those living after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Finally, and of particular interest to this study is the fourth and final group.

Luther rejected this distinction because Aquinas did not take seriously the "two kingdoms" the Christian constantly finds themself inhabiting (Schreiner 2007). Schreiner lays out Luther's view as follows:

> The believer will oppose every evil within the limits of his office and may go to court to remedy some violence or injustice. The Christian may go to war, be a governor or a lawyer, or work in any other computation. The Christian may maintain their households, swear roads, and engage in secular affairs. Nonetheless, they never do these things "as Christians." The Christian is acting in these positions as a secular person. The two persons in each Christian must move in their own proper sphere. (Schreiner 2007, 116)

Luther thus believed that the Christian is innocent as long as he keeps a "Christian heart" (Schreiner 2007, 105–113). This view became the contemporary confessional view. For this group, actions are immaterial; as long as one confesses that one is a Christian, all else is forgiven. Public behavior is of no consequence as long as what one does privately remains within Scriptural bounds. This is because, as Schreiner (2007, 105–113) notes, Christians engage in these activities as secular people. Furthermore, the confessional group proposed that the demands in the Sermon are primarily to help the believer recognize that they are a sinner in need of forgiveness (Hall 2021).[2] For Luther and the confessional group, it seems that the Matthean community might as well have sacrificed to Caesar as long as they realized they were sinners and believed in their hearts that Christ was their savior. Ulrich Luz (2007, 209) comments on this Lutheran tendency saying, "Matthew's goal is that the life of Christians should operate to the glory of God as faith's witness … there is for the evangelist no hiddenness of the Christian life sub *contrario*, no tendency toward an ecclesiological variant of the two-kingdoms doctrine."

Contrary to what Aquinas said (1948, part 2.1, question 108), the Sermon on the Mount does not contain abstract virtues which only the best Christians aspire to. Instead, it has practical, real-life examples of how to love one's neighbor, something Jesus was serious about (Matthew 22:36–40). Furthermore, in the first century, contra Luther, people did not compartmentalize their public and private lives. Rather, Saldarini (1994, 100) comments that "Religion, economics, and private associations were all embedded" in societal and familial life. It was all intertwined (see Luz 2007, 208–209). Thus, what one does in public or at work was just as sacred as what one did in private, or in the Christian community. Christ is not an inward, subjective God, only interested in the individual's interior, private life; rather, he is a missional Christ who seeks to redeem and transform society through people shaped by his teachings.

2 This is commonly summed up in the "Romans Road to Salvation:" The Law shows me I am a sinner; Jesus dies for my sins; I turn to Jesus; Now I am saved. I include a reference here to Christianity.com (i.e., Hall) to show the prevalence of such thinking.

This study proposes that the corrective to the interpretations of Aquinas, Luther, and Chafer is to take the context of the Matthean community seriously. One has to recognize that there are real recipients behind the Gospel, as Saldarini (1992, 27–43, 84–123) and Luz (2007, 45–60) have masterfully pointed out. Furthermore, this community was required to obey the words in Matthew 5:13–16, not only in their personal lives but in their public lives as well. Only once one bears this in mind can one's eyes be opened to what the text is trying to convey.

Most articles and commentaries written about the Sermon on the Mount hardly ever reflect with any depth on the social situation of the Matthean community. The works by Luz (2007) and Saldarini (1992) are exceptions. However, even with them, the social situation is rarely brought to bear on specific texts but is usually only applied in a generic sense to large passages. The unique contribution of this study is to consider the Matthean community's experience, bring it into conversation with a specific text, and show what the text required of them under these circumstances. Thus, it is not to discount the findings of these other studies. Rather, it brings their insight to bear on Matthew 5:13–16.

Some of the historical interpretive tendencies briefly sketched above point out that the Sermon on the Mount is usually treated as a set of moral imperatives that can be applied to any contemporary situation. The difficulty with this approach, according to Wright (2021a; 2021b), is that it is "like listening into half of a phone conversation." Levine (2014, 9) helpfully notes that,

> There's an old saying in biblical studies … that a text without a context is just a pretext for making it say anything one wants. But the more we know about the original contexts, the richer our understanding becomes. The greater our appreciation for the artists and composers who created the works initially.

Consequently, Wood (2021, 1) contends that proper "research seeks to engage the reader in understanding the original audience in its cultural turmoil, political pain, and religious identification." This investigation into the political, religious, and cultural turmoil allows the reader to begin to step into the shoes of the original audience. Following this the reader might be able to commiserate with the shock the Matthean community may have felt at being told to be "salt and light." This study thus spends some time investigating who the Matthean community was and what their world was like.

3. The Matthean Community

Ample research has been done on the nature of historical investigation in the Gospels and how tenuous this type of investigation might be. On the one hand, it is possible to privilege one type of hermeneutical framework over another as can be seen in some western readings of the biblical text (Ramantswana 2016, 1). This can lead to an interpretation that simply reflects the interpreter's culture rather than allowing the text to speak for itself, especially when that interpreter crosses cultural boundaries, like when someone from the west comes to Africa. This can and has led to some severely skewed interpretations of Scripture.[3] Justin Ukpong (2002) presents a measured analysis arguing that there needs to be an appreciation of different methods and ways of looking at the text of the Bible, especially in terms of appreciating minority readings of a certain text. However, this

3 An example of this is Apartheid, when white South Africans used Scripture to defend their overt racism.

problem is not alleviated by privileging one cultural reading over another. According to Ramantswana (2016),[4] this is the difficulty with many of the post-colonial hermeneutical frameworks. Whilst these readings may in some ways offer new ways to look at a specific text or situation they can just as easily twist the actual message of the text to suit their own political and social ideologies.

Rather, this study argues along with Hans-Georg Gadamer (2013, 306–307) and David Horrell (2020)[5] that the interpreter must be aware of their own particular worldview and try as best they can to allow the text to speak independently of their own cultural assumptions (see also Ramantswana 2016). This is not entirely possible because nobody can escape their own culture and read from nowhere. But it does allow for the possibility of what Gadamer (2013, 306–307) calls a fusion of horizons. This fusion of horizons occurs when the interpreter allows the text to speak to their own preunderstandings and adjusts those preunderstandings according to what the text is communicating (306–307). This fusion of horizons is what this study attempts to do by bringing the historical situation of the Matthean community to bear on a specific text and then extrapolating what that means for contemporary Christians. Its unique contribution lies not solely in the nature of the Matthean community, or the exegesis of Matthew 5:13–16, but in bringing these two together in order to thoroughly exegete the text and extract some deeper meaning from it.

4 This can be seen in Ramanstwana's conclusion that the solution to colonial interpretations is "the production of alternative knowledge." Whilst it can be fruitful, it can very easily become just as domineering and imperialistic if it is elevated to the status of "ultimate methodology." See 2016, 197.

5 See especially chapter 9.

This study does not rehash many of the arguments regarding the location of the Matthean community or the dating of the Gospel. Other scholars have dealt with these at length, and the reader can refer to them if necessary (Sim 1998, 10–12; Luz 2007, 45–60; Saldarini 1992, 27–43, 84–123; McIver 2012, 18; Brown and Meier 1983; Wood 2021, 7; Morris 1992, 76; Foster 2004; Garland 2001; Turner 2008).[6] One comment of interest made by McIver is that the Matthean community is in a city.[7] McIver (2012, 18) asserts that this is evidenced by Matthew's lavish use of the term πόλις (city). Matthew's Gospel uses it twenty-six times compared to Mark's eight (McIver 2012, 18). Suffice to say, this study, along with Hagner (1993, LXXII–LXXV), Luz (2007, 58–59), and Saldarini (1992, 85 fn 1), assumes a date of around AD 80–85, and that the community is somewhere in a city within the Syro-Palestinian area. The reason for this assumption is that the Gospel itself does not say where this community is located, so Saldarini's caution (2007, 84) should be heeded—any proposal in this regard is bound to be speculative. However, regardless of the exact location of the community, their experience would have been similar in any Syro-Palestinian city. This is due to the cultural milieu produced by Hellenization (Pienaar 2022, 19–20, 56–61).[8] This next section briefly describes this common experience in Hellenistic society.

In the Mediterranean world of the first century, the state used religion to control the people and prevent any official rebellion against Rome (Magie 1950, 1.572; Price 1984, 179; Horrell 2008, 57).[9] This religion expressed

6 Brown and Meier propose one of the following options, 1) Jerusalem, 2) Alexandria, 3) Caesarea Maritima, 4) Syrian Countryside, 5) Phoenicia, or 6) Antioch.

7 As a result, Antioch seems to fit the bill of both Syro-Palestine and a city. However, this remains speculative.

8 What follows below is largely taken from Pienaar (2022).

9 See Price (1984, 59) for a chart of all the Imperial Temples in Asia Minor.

itself in the Imperial Cult, which is essentially the worship of the Roman Emperor (Magie 1950, 1.572; Price 1984, 179; Horrell 2008, 55). All of the Roman Emperors had temples in Asia Minor and had divine honors paid to them by the people of the Empire (Magie 1950, 1.572; Price 1984, 179). The Imperial Cult in Asia Minor provided a convenient way for people to show their loyalty to Rome and for Rome to gauge their loyalty; Rome saw loyalty to the Imperial Cult as loyalty towards Rome and vice versa (Magie 1950, 1.572; Price 1984, 179). Tacitus (1888, Ann. 4.36–37) affirms this in his *Annals* that when the people of Cyzicus in Phrygia neglected the cult of Augustus, Rome charged them with abusing Roman citizens.

Similarly, Sepphoris in Galilee was decimated by Rome for rebelling against the Empire after Herod's death in 4 BC (Berlin and Overman 2002, 1–14; Wood 2021, 80). Non-conformity to the Cult was seen not only as a challenge to the Empire but a challenge to the essence of society itself (Horrell 2008, 57). It threatened to unravel the cultural continuity and political stability that the Imperial Cult provided (54–57). Price (1984, 248) asserts, "The (imperial) cult … enhanced the dominance of local elites over the populace, of cities over other cities, and Hellenistic over indigenous cultures. That is, the cult was a major part of the web of power that formed the fabric of society." This led the elites to exert a good amount of social pressure on people who would not conform to the social norm and jeopardize the elites' standing with Rome.

Furthermore, it had the possibility of bringing divine disfavor and a worsened economic situation by offending the gods (Sordi 1986, 5, 203). Everybody believed that the gods needed to be appeased for society to prosper (Wright 2021a, 23). If the crop failed, Dionysus was angry because he had been neglected. Therefore, in the community's eyes, anyone who refused to honor the gods through various rituals and festivals was not merely eccentric but was placing the entire community in danger. Such a person was a liability to society.

However, as Wright (2021a, 23) points out, "the Jews were exempt from all this." They were a recognized religion in the Roman Empire. Therefore, they were not required to participate in the worship of the Roman gods (24). The only requisite was that the Jews pray to their God for the prosperity of the Romans. This, however, ceased in AD 66, and mayhem followed.

The precursor to the First Jewish Revolt was when Florus, the procurator of Judea, marched into Jerusalem and ordered his soldiers to kill and capture some Jews. Wright and Bird (2019, 101) note that, "He even had some Jewish leaders flogged and crucified." Wood (2021, 83) recounts that a riot ensued, Florus returned to Caesarea, and in response the Jews stopped offering the daily sacrifice in the Temple on Rome's behalf. According to Wood (2021, 83) this provocation was the beginning of the end for the Jews. Berlin and Overman (2002, 7) note that in May of AD 67, Vespasian led the Roman army into Galilee. Vespasian started his conquest with Gabara in Northern Galilee. Here, Horsley (2002, 95) recounts that Vespasian "Finding no combatants in the town, '… slew all the males who were of age … and also burned all the surrounding villages and towns,' enslaving the remaining inhabitants."[10] Vespasian next turned to Yodefat in the northwest of Galilee and then to Gamla in the northeast before finally setting his sights on Jerusalem. Wood's 2021, 83) vivid description is worth noting:

> The sound of war would have permeated through the valley and across the lake, causing the Jews in the surrounding villages and towns to hear as their countrymen perished. The smoke of the fires would hang

10 See also, Josephus (1937, *J.W.*, 3.132–134).

> heavy across the lake, and eventually, when all has gone silent, the Army marched south using roads that brought them past cities, Kineret lake, villages, farmland, and synagogues. The terror from merely seeing the might of Rome with its banners, war machines, horses, and legions would have been immense, and the knowledge that Rome would dig in to finish their campaign [would have been] an unbearable horror.

Horsley (2002, 99) notes that "some villagers did resist the Roman reconquest, in which the Roman troops systematically slaughtered and enslaved the people and destroyed their villages without consideration of whether combatants were present." Titus then marched to Jerusalem.[11] Rainey and Notley (2015, 393) describe the siege that followed:

> After the lengthy five-month siege, the soldiers pillaged the city, murdering and looting as they went. John and Simon were captured. The former begged for his life and was imprisoned for the remainder of his life. Simon son of Giora was put in chains and taken to Rome for the triumph (War 6:433). Most of the city now lay in ruins. Only portions of the first wall and the three towers were left as a testimony to the former strength of the city and the Roman power that brought the Jewish resistance to its knees.

The Temple had fallen; there was blood in the streets; everything was on fire. Titus marched his spoils of war north into Caesarea Philippi for an elaborate procession and celebration. Josephus (1737, *J.W.*, 7.2–3) notes that some of the prisoners were used as entertainment; some were thrown to wild animals, and others were forced to engage in "battles to the death." Others were crucified (Wood 2021, 85; Josephus 1737, *J.W.*, 7.2–3). Furthermore, in the city of Antioch, Titus took the spoils from his conquest of Jerusalem and set them at the city gate, which led to the Jewish quarter in the city. It served both as a humiliation and a reminder (Brown and Meier 2004, 32). Rome had been defied and the vengeance was swift, decisive, and deadly.

Saldarini (1994, 91–92) argues that Jesus's replacement of ethnic kinship with fictive kinship (i.e., calling someone brother who obeys his father's will) led to a sharp conflict between the Jewish leadership and the Christian community. Thus, when the Christians started to claim the Jewish exemption, the Jews were anything but accommodating (Wright 2021a, 24).[12] Wright (2021a, 24) observes, "To be a Jesus-follower was therefore to claim a new version of the standard Jewish exemption clause, and to do so with the full awareness that this was bound to be risky and unpopular, both with the Jewish community and with the wider civic, not least Roman, society." Christians, as a result, were hated by the general populace because of their profoundly antisocial behavior (Schutter 1989, 11; Bechtler 1998, 84). Furthermore, having Christians lay claim to Jewish privileges while not living like a Jew could lead to a backlash against the Jewish community, as had happened during the revolt, which was still fresh in the mind of the Jewish community. Consequently, Christians trying to hide under the Jewish exemption clause were summarily ejected by Jews from the synagogues.

11 Whilst Vespasian was leading a conquest against Judea, Nero died, so Vespasian returned to Rome to take over as emperor. Vespasian sent his son, Titus, to complete the conquest. Titus is the one who laid siege to Jerusalem and destroyed it.

12 It is this same exemption that Paul shelters under in southern Greece when accused by the Jewish leadership of teaching illegal forms of worship in Acts 18. Gallio, the proconsul, concludes that this is an internal-Jewish dispute and therefore outside of his purview. However, Wright (2021a, 24) notes that this exemption does not really apply elsewhere in the Roman Empire. See Acts 18:14–16.

This expulsion placed Christians in a precarious position. Suetonius (1914, *Nero* 16) recounts that Nero's persecution of the Christians was not merely for the fire, but because he deemed their religion to be "a novel and malicious superstition." They no longer had the safety net that belonged to the Jews. They were considered to be atheists and this, as Wright (2021a, 23–25) observes, was "illegal." Tacitus (1888, Ann. 15.44) recounts the violent nature of this persecution: some Christians were fed to wild beasts in the arena; others were nailed to crosses; still others were dipped in wax and set alight to serve as lamps in Nero's Garden. Nero killed the Christians merely for bearing the name *χριστιανός*. Pliny the Younger (*Frontline* n.d.) killed Christians if they would not recant their Christian faith and pay homage to Caesar (de Ste Croix 1964, 28–33). Le Roux (2018, 51) affirms that local citizens could bring Christians before civic magistrates, leading to their death. Therefore, the Christian proclamation that Christ is Lord and, as a result, Caesar is not, was hazardous. This was a tumultuous time in the Empire. Persecution was a daily reality, and it was deadly.

This was the social world of the Matthean community. Their experience of one of the most violent genocides of the first century was fresh in their memory. Their homes had been destroyed; their families killed. Daily reminders were set up in the town square. They were no longer under the cover of a recognized religion. Exiled by their own (i.e., the Jews), they were in constant danger of being punished by Rome for the capital crime of atheism.

Furthermore, the temples functioned as the meeting places for the trade guilds. The marketplace was dedicated to one of the local Roman gods, making these inaccessible to the Christian unless they were willing to proclaim allegiance to these gods. Naturally, the community was hard-pressed to hunker down, isolate, and fly under the radar. If nobody knew they were a Christian, and if they bought and sold from one another, nobody would be any wiser. However, to the horror of the readers of Matthew's Gospel, he records Jesus proclaiming:

> "You" are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. "You" are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matt 5:13–16; ESV)

Jesus's command to this community trying to survive a severely hostile society is to "be salt and be light." Not to hide, but "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:19–20, ESV). If the social and cultural situation discussed above is kept in mind, the Sermon on the Mount takes on greater meaning. In the next section, the Matthean community's situation is brought into conversation with a passage from the Sermon.

4. Matthew 5:13–16

This study now turns to the text of Matthew 5:13–16. First, it should be noted that Matthew's Gospel falls within the genre of ancient biography. Thus, it does not necessarily correspond to what contemporary persons would call *history* in the sense that it provides a chronological step-by-step account of Jesus's life. Rather, the Gospels provide, like ancient Greco-Roman biographies, a window into the life of Jesus through a literary presentation of his life and deeds. However, Keener (2019) notes on this point that this does not imply that the Jesus conveyed in the text is made up by the author. Rather, he (2019, 171) observes that ancient biographers did not invent their own stories but conveyed that which they deemed to be historically true even if it was contextualized in a different manner.[13] Keener (2019, 404–415) along with Bauckham (2008) explains, that this is why there was a premium on eyewitness accounts in the production of these biographies. However, whilst these biographies, which the Church calls Gospels, are accounts of Jesus's life and ministry, that is not all that is conveyed through them. For example, Saldarini (1994, 85) states that the Gospel of Matthew conveys the life and experiences of the Matthean community through the story of Jesus and his disciples. These correspondences are not "one-to-one" but, through a careful reading of the Gospel, it is possible to discern some clues as to the social situation that Matthew and his readers were confronted with. This is the aim of this study. Therefore, having presented the general life situation of Christian communities in northern Galilee and Syria, it now turns specifically to Matthew 5:13–16 in order to ascertain the Gospel's message.

> Ὑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ ἅλας τῆς γῆς· ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἅλας μωρανθῇ, ἐν τίνι ἁλισθήσεται; εἰς οὐδὲν ἰσχύει ἔτι εἰ μὴ βληθὲν ἔξω καταπατεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Ὑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου. οὐ δύναται πόλις κρυβῆναι ἐπάνω ὄρους κειμένη· οὐδὲ καίουσιν λύχνον καὶ τιθέασιν αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τὸν μόδιον ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὴν λυχνίαν, καὶ λάμπει πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ. οὕτως λαμψάτω τὸ φῶς ὑμῶν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅπως ἴδωσιν ὑμῶν τὰ καλὰ ἔργα καὶ δοξάσωσιν τὸν πατέρα ὑμῶν τὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.[14]

13 Keener (2019, 210) observes elsewhere that in the Greco-Roman world getting one's facts right was a matter of honor and thus something all biographers intended to do.

> "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13–16, NRSV)

Firstly, it is necessary to mention two methodological positions. It is noted that, according to Luz (2007, 203–24), critical scholarship posits that the sources behind this Matthean text are an amalgamation of Matthean redactions and the Q sayings. This study is not interested in these hypothetical reconstructions but rather engages with the text as a final product.[15] Secondly, this study is produced in a Western context and thus reflects primarily on the Western church's syncretism and their recent period of peace with secular society. This is not to discount the various communities in China, India, the Middle East, and parts of Africa in which this is not the case. Its purpose is rather to encourage the Western church to brace itself for the tides that are turning and to draw on the example of the Matthean community to remain faithful when the cultural tide turns, as it surely will.

The sentences Ὑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ ἅλας τῆς γῆς (You are the salt of the earth) and Ὑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου (You are the light of the world) are

14 Matthew 5:13–16; All quotations from the Greek New Testament come from the NA[28].
15 This study agrees with Matthew Thiessen (2020, 6) who writes that "I refuse to comment on something that I do not believe existed." Those who disagree with this position have the burden of proof to produce textual evidence that proves otherwise, which up until now they have been unable to do.

structurally and grammatically identical. Keener (1999, 173) asserts that verses 14–16 elaborate on the point made in verse 13. Thus, in dealing with one passage, one deals with the other as well. This study deals with the salt first and then moves on to the light.

Firstly, why does Jesus use salt as a metaphor? This metaphor can only be understood in light of the use of salt within first-century society. Scholars agree (Luz 2007, 205; Brannan 2012, *Magnesians* 10;[16] Davies and Allison, 1988, 472; Keener 1999, 172; Blomberg 1992, 102; Morris, 1992, 104) that salt was used as a preservative in the ancient world. Luz (2007, 205) along with Keener (1999, 172–173) agrees that it was also used as a flavoring agent to retard fermentation in manure and to treat wineskins. Nolland (2005, 212–213) adds that salt was a cleansing and purifying agent (see also Luz 2007, 205). Olley (2003, 16) boldly proclaims that the usage of salt has no religious connotation in these verses. He goes on to say, "there are no Old Testament or Jewish precedents" for salt containing any sort of religious symbolism (Olley 2003, 16). This study contradicts Olley's thesis.

This study proposes that the usage of the phrase in Matthew's Gospel is the same as the covenantal usage in the Old Testament. This observation has not been expounded on by most of the commentators of the Gospel.[17] Although Davies and Allison (1988, 473) note the possibility of the Old Testament's usage here, they conclude that, "it is quite impossible to decide which one characteristic is to the fore in Mt 5.13." This study proposes that the retrieval of the use of the metaphor of salt in the Old Testament allows one to see how it is used in Matthew's Gospel.

16 Ignatius mentions such a use in his letter *to the Magnesians*.
17 It is absent from Keener (1998), Nolland (2005), and Turner (2008) as well as Overman (1996, 76), Marshall (2004), and Morris (1992, 104).

In a seminal article, Garlington (2011, 715–748) sets forth "four central and overlapping notions" that inform one's reading of "salt of the earth" in Matthew's Gospel.[18] Of central importance, for Garlington, is the notion that "salt is a covenantal concept" (716). Within this covenantal framework, Garlington notes four symbols connected to salt within the covenant of the Old Testament. Two of these are central to this study and are discussed below, namely salt as a symbol of *permanence* and *purity*.[19]

Leviticus 2:13 reads, "You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the *salt of the covenant* with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt" (ESV).[20] Garlington (2011, 717) notes that the threefold repetition of salt brings out its prominence. Furthermore, it is referred to as the "salt of the covenant." Wenham (1979, 71) proposes that salt symbolizes the covenant itself in this verse. This is because Greeks and Jews are noted to have consumed salt together when they sealed a covenant (Latham 1982, 30–35; Davies and Allison 1988, 472).[21] Numbers 18:19 expounds on the exact meaning of the covenant of salt: "All the holy contributions that the people of Israel present to the Lord I give to you, and to your sons and daughters with you, as a perpetual due. It is a *covenant of salt forever* before the Lord for you and for your offspring with you" (ESV).[22] This covenant of salt is an eternal covenant. Wenham (1979, 71) comments, "so it was something that could not be destroyed by fire or time or any other means in integrity. The addition of salt to the offering was a reminder that the worshipper was in an eternal

18 This study provides an overview of Garlington's findings, but see his in-depth analysis of the relevant texts as well.
19 see Garlington's article for a discussion of salt as a symbol of covenant *fellowship* and *curse*.
20Typographic emphases added.
21 See Latham (1982) for the Greek sources and Davies and Allison (1988) for the Jewish materials.
22 Typographic emphases added.

covenant relationship with his God. This meant that the worshipper had a perpetual duty to uphold and keep the covenant law."

Indeed, Wevers (1997, 304) asserts that "the salt as a preservative was thought to make the διαθήκη eternally valid." The perpetuity and permanence of the covenant are further attested by the rendition of Leviticus 2:13b in the LXX.[23] The LXX text of Leviticus 2:13b reads καὶ πᾶν δῶρον θυσίας ὑμῶν ἁλὶ ἁλισθήσεται, οὐ διαπαύσετε ἅλα διαθήκης κυρίου ἀπὸ θυσιασμάτων ὑμῶν, ἐπὶ παντὸς δώρου ὑμῶν προσοίσετε κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ ὑμῶν ἅλας. Wevers (1997, 20) paraphrase of the LXX reads, "You may not bring to an end, cause to rest, the covenant of salt from your sacrifice." For Wevers (1997, 391) and Latham (1982, 40), this text emphasizes the permanence of the covenant and the loyalty it demanded from its adherents. Indeed, Garlington (2011, 717) concludes that this verse and the reoccurrence of salt in the passage underscores "the permanence and stability of the covenant, and thus the necessity of covenant faithfulness."

Garlington (2011, 721) further notes that salt is used to symbolize purity. Dumbrell (1981, 12) attempts to separate the factors of *permanence* and *purity*. This, however, seems unwarranted as purity and permanence (or faithfulness) are always connected in the Old Testament. The purifying theme of salt in the Old Testament is found in a few passages. In Exodus 30:35, the offering is to be "seasoned with salt, pure and holy" (ESV). Quarles (2011, 78) notes that this passage suggests salt was a "symbol of purification." In 2 Kings 2:21, Elisha throws salt into a contaminated spring and declares, "Thus says the LORD, I have healed this water; from now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it" (ESV). Davies and Allison (1988, 473) claim it is impossible to know which usage of salt from their eleven possibilities is in view here. Hagner (1993, 99) ambiguously notes that salt is a necessity of life. This study agrees with Blomberg (1992, 102) that, "One must avoid assuming that all possible uses of salt were in view here."

The two symbols of salt behind Matthew's usage are covenant faithfulness and purity. Morris (1992, 103) alleges that the Matthean disciples oppose what is corrupt and function as a moral antiseptic to society; as a preservative. The word usually translated as "lost its taste," (ESV) or "loses its saltiness," (NIV) is μωρανθῇ. This word comes from the noun μωρός, which refers to a fool, or a godless person (BDAG 2000, 663). Indeed, Blomberg (1992, 102) contends that it does not refer to the scientifically impossible notion of losing its taste. Instead, it refers to the common problem in the ancient world of becoming "defiled." If the salt is defiled with various impurities, it becomes worthless as a preservative (Turner 2008, 76; Blomberg 1992, 102). When this defiling has occurred, Jesus says that the only thing that remains is for one "to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet" (ESV). Blomberg (1992, 102) expounds this saying well when he asserts that,

> "To be thrown out and trampled by men" neither affirms nor denies anything about "eternal security." Rather, as Luke 14:35 makes even clearer, this phrase refers to the world's response to Christians if they do not function as they should. Believers who fail to arrest corruption become worthless as agents of change and redemption. Christianity may make its peace with the world and avoid persecution, but it is thereby rendered impotent to fulfill its divinely ordained role. It will thus ultimately be rejected even by those with whom it has sought compromise.

23 All LXX quotations come from Rahlfs (1979).

The purpose of this passage is to remind the disciples that they are sent into the world to redeem it. If they become defiled by shrinking back from this duty through assimilation, they are worthless. They are to be cast out into the streets like garbage.

Moving on to verses 14–16, the sense seems to be more straightforward. Jesus declares that the disciples "are the light of the world" (ESV). Keener (1999, 174–175) notes that the Jews would have found this correlation alarming (see also Davies and Allison 1988, 471). In the Old Testament, Israel was to function as the light to the nations. However, Jesus said that it is his disciples who are the light of the world (Keener 1999, 174–175; Davies and Allison 1988, 471). Davies and Allison (1988, 471) add that in Matthew's Gospel, it is no longer "the Temple, Torah, or Israel who are "salt or light of the world … but Jesus's followers."[24] Next, the disciples are likened to a city on a hill. Hagner connects this city with Jerusalem because it is built on a hill, and in the Old Testament it is said to be a light (Hagner 1993, 100). Others like Luz (2007, 207) and Nolland (2005, 214) argue that this connection is unwarranted because the noun *πόλις* (city) does not have a definite article. Some, like Blomberg (1992, 102) and Morris (1992, 105), do not discuss the matter. The purpose of the metaphor, according to Luz (2007, 207) is clear: the reason someone builds a city on a hill is so that it can be seen from a distance; otherwise, they would have built it in a valley.

Similarly, someone lights a lamp to give light to the environment around it. Finally, Matthew's Gospel links the two metaphors with the adverb *οὕτως* (in the same way; ESV). They are to shine their light before men by "doing good works" (ESV). This, in turn, will cause those who see them to glorify God. The command to be salt and light reinforces the same idea.

Quarles (2011, 79) contends that the parallelism between Matthew 5:13 and 5:14 further strengthens this conclusion. The sentences *Ὑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ ἅλας τῆς γῆς* (You are the salt of the earth) and *Ὑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου* (You are the light of the world) are structurally and grammatically identical (Quarles 2011, 79). Indeed, Quarles insists, "This parallelism suggests that the metaphors of 'salt' and 'light' have roughly the same sense." Certainly, for Quarles, "You are the light of the world" means, "that the disciples of Jesus will be characterized by righteousness and purity and that their righteousness will move others to glorify God and seek to be transformed by Him in a similar way." Blomberg (1992, 103) summarizes that meaning well when he says,

> Both metaphors of salt and light raise important questions about Christian involvement in society regarding all forms of separatism or withdrawal. We are not called to control secular power structures; neither are we promised that we can Christianize the legislation and values of the world. But we must remain active preservative agents, indeed irritants, in calling the world to heed God's standards. We dare not form isolated Christian enclaves to which the world pays no attention.

24 Nolland (2005, 213) notes that in the Jewish texts Adam, God, and the servant are also designated by light.

5. Conclusion: A Contemporary Reflection

This study concludes by reflecting on the practical significance and applicability of these verses to the church today. Thus, the mode of language will shift from scholarly and analytical to personal and exhortatory.

One can imagine the difficulty this text posed to the Matthean community. After their expulsion from Judaism and their startling designation as atheists, their initial impulse would have been to isolate themselves from the wider world. If this proved too difficult, the temptation of assimilation into the culture through syncretism or a return to Judaism would have proved an appealing alternative. The community may have been sizable and prevalent, as McIver (2012, 230, also *passim*) suggests; but they were undoubtedly marginalized by society. Pushed by external forces into this proverbial corner, the Matthean community needed to choose between assimilation and isolation. Matthew's Gospel, however, adds a third option to this list—"be salt and be light." They were not to become defiled by assimilating into the culture or returning to Judaism and so become worthless. Nor were they to hide or fly under the radar and wait for the Temple to be rebuilt and the Kingdom of Israel to be restored. The Gospel urges the community to shine its light before men; to do the good works of the Kingdom so that God may be glorified. The Matthean community is not only to exist in society; they are to live as sent ones. Indeed, Jesus's final words, according to Matthew, are "go, make disciples of all nations, teach them everything you have learned from me, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. [You do not need to return to the Temple, for] I am with you" (Matthew 28:18–20; author's interpretation). Jews held the common belief that God's presence was in the Temple and thus would have desired to return to it and rebuild it. However, Jesus says, "I am with you, go into the world." These three commands, to be salt, to be light, and to go as sent ones proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom, are not abstract virtues as Aquinas thought. They are real-life commands with real consequences if they are obeyed.

If the community obeyed these commands, the results could be catastrophic. One could witness to another regarding Jesus in the morning, and by evening one's whole family could be brought before the magistrate for advocating an unsanctioned religion. For these Christians, taking up one's cross was not merely a nice idea but an ever-present reality. Waking up to go to church at 9:00 a.m. does not qualify as suffering. Placing a bumper sticker of a fish on our car does not constitute bearing witness.

Christianity has devolved into something inward, governing only our personal lives (Hauerwas 2006, 60). Christianity has excised the ethical thrust of the Sermon on the Mount by proposing that the most important thing is accepting Jesus as a "personal savior" (60). This led to what Bonhoeffer (2001, 43) termed "cheap grace." Bonhoeffer contends that cheap grace is "as doctrine, as a principle, as a system. It means forgiveness of sins as a general truth; it means God's love as merely a Christian idea of God. Those who affirm it already have their sins forgiven." However, these generalities can only persist if one believes that Jesus is not the Son of God and that he did not live as he did (Hauerwas 2006, 60). Davies (1969, 148) asserts that these commands in the sermon, "point beyond themselves to himself, as their source." Indeed, Christians now become witnesses of the Messiah through obedience to his commands. One does not simply trust in Jesus for salvation and then get on with one's life. The purpose of Jesus's coming is not to take Christians to heaven one day, but to bring God's Kingdom to earth.

Christians then are the ones who manifest that Kingdom on the earth through living like Christ and obeying his charge to be salt and light. Lischer (1987, 161–162) affirms this, noting that, "Our only hope of living as the community of the Sermon is to acknowledge that we do not retaliate, hate, curse, lust, divorce, swear, brag, preen, worry, or backbite because it is not in the nature of our God or our destination that we should be such a people." Indeed, Hauerwas (2006, 61) asserts, "The sermon, therefore, is not a list of requirements, but rather a description of the life of a people gathered by and around Jesus." To be salt and light, then, is constantly to be visible to the world around us. To take the beatitudes and shine them before men so that God can be glorified. Bonhoeffer (2001, 113) contends "to flee into invisibility is to deny the call. Any community of Jesus which wants to be invisible is no longer a community that follows him." Yoder (1984, 135–149) notes that the Constantinian shift in the fourth century changed what it meant to be a Christian. Before Christianity became a state religion under emperor Constantine, everyone who attended church was a Christian. It took exceptional conviction and courage to be counted as one. However, after Christianity became mainstream, the "doctrine of the invisibility of the church," arose for the first time. This was the start of nominal Christianity, since everybody was doing it. From then on one could not be sure that "true Christians" were present among the mass of people. As a result, the Sermon on the Mount became good advice for those who really wanted to be holy. As for the rest, it remained optional. Some examples from the contemporary Christian situation in both the west and elsewhere are instructive for the application of this text.

In India, with the emergence of the new Hindu-only government under Narendra Modi (see Serhan 2022) Christians are forced underground. I have friends who serve these Christian populations, and they note the existence of "silent Christians." These are Christians who dare not even mention the name of Christ in public, never mind acknowledge their allegiance to him, for fear of being expelled from the village. My friends have had the Indian Police show up at their houses demanding to see their documentation and inquiring about their reason for being in India. They live in constant danger of imprisonment or deportation, as has already happened to one of their acquaintances.

In China, the Chinese Communist Party has often cracked down on Christians. Lai Jinqiang, a Chinese entrepreneur was arrested and put on trial for producing an audio Bible (Li 2020). Pastor Wang Yi was imprisoned in 2018 after being accused of "inciting subversion of state power" (Enos 2022). In Africa, one sees similar examples.

In Kenya, there have been numerous lethal attacks on Christian communities. In 2019 in an attack on a bus, eleven Christians were shot by the terrorist group al-Shabaab (Bulut 2020). Four years earlier in 2015 terrorists from the same group singled out and killed 147 Christian students at Garissa University College (Bulut 2020). In Nigeria, there are multiple reports of violence, kidnapping, and murder committed against the Christian population (Gilbert 2022). One Nigerian priest was tortured to death and a woman was captured and set on fire because of "blasphemy" (Chimtom 2022). The same has happened in other African countries like Eritrea, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, and Sudan.

In the West, the tide is already turning. A Christian baker who refused to bake a cake for a homosexual couple's wedding was sued for discrimination (Slevin 2021, 1). A Christian professor was fired for challenging his students' "progressive" views on marriage and sexuality (Morris 2019). It is now considered a hate crime if Christians advocate for biblical views on various topics in Scotland (Catholic News Service 2021, 1). The cost of being a Christian is increasing day by day as the culture reverts to its pagan roots. The benefits of being a Christian, similarly, are becoming less and less. The question this study leaves with the reader is this: will you be salt and light even if it costs you your life? This decision was laid before the Matthean community, and we have to face it today as well.

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Euphemisms and Metaphors for Menstruation in the Old Testament and Two Ghanaian Bible Translations

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Abstract
This article discusses the metaphors for menstruation in the Old Testament. It aims to explore the metaphorical conceptualizations of menstruation in the Hebrew Bible and compare them with their translations in two Ghanaian Bibles (Twi and Gã). The Conceptual Metaphor Theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) is used to analyze the data. The findings of the study indicate that in both Ghanaian and Israelite thought regarding menstruation, ideas of indisposition and separation are prominent. This leads to the identification of the metaphors, MENSTRUATION IS AN ILLNESS, MENSTRUATION IS SEPARATION, and MENSTRUATION IS A GENDER MARKER. The understanding of the metaphors of menstruation gleaned from the euphemisms used for menstruation in both cultures seems to give greater comprehension to the Ghanaian reader of the texts on menstruation in the Old Testament.

1. Introduction[1]
In recent times, linguists have dedicated much attention to discussing metaphors beyond figures of speech. Cognitive metaphor theorists are focusing their research on a conceptual level. This shift has become

1 I take cognizance that, for some, the topic at hand could be sensitive, especially since it is engaged by a male author. To honor the lived experiences of women, I interviewed Ghanaian women between the ages of 30 and 70 in the process of gathering information on the euphemisms for menstruation. Ghana has long-standing traditions and rituals associated with menstruation. Since menstruation is seen as a symbol of fertility and womanhood, female respondents were comfortable in discussing it openly as long as euphemisms and metaphors were employed.

https://www.sats.ac.za/conspectus/
This article: https://www.sats.ac.za/conspectus/euphemisms-metaphors-menstruation-old-testament
https://doi.org/10.54725/conspectus.2023.1.4

Conspectus

Keywords
menstruation, Old Testament, Twi language, Gã language, euphemism, Conceptual Metaphor Theory

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SATS
Bible-based. Christ-centred. Spirit-led.

popular in many fields of study, but its application to the field of Biblical Studies has not been sufficiently explored. Several scholars have studied menstrual practices in cultures of the world. Some work has been done in Ghana (Agyekum 2002), and in India, where it is strongly associated with dirtiness (Dhingra Kumar and Kour 2009). However, no significant work has been published on the metaphorical conceptualization of menstruation in the Bible in relation to Ghanaian thought and languages.

Menstruation is a biological experience that is interpreted in different ways in various cultural and religious contexts. The concept of menstruation is at the very core of social relations between men and women in Ghanaian culture, as was also the case in ancient Israelite culture. The conception of menstruation as ill-health or being symbolically unclean and dangerous is present in the thought of Ghanaians as was the case of the ancient Israelites. In both Ghanaian and Israelite cultures menstrual blood is interpreted in terms of pollution or "matter out of place," in the words of Douglas (2002, 50). There is the fear of the danger of the menstruant transferring her impurity to others.

The notion that uterine blood is polluting and therefore sociologically taboo still thrives among traditional Ghanaians. This has led to the plain biological descriptor *menstruation* being avoided and euphemisms being used instead. The euphemisms yield abstract concepts which can be comprehended in concrete terms because they are metaphors. The question this study seeks to answer is, what are the metaphorical conceptualizations of menstruation expressed in the Hebrew Bible and their translations in the Twi and Gã Bibles? This article explores the metaphoric content of the euphemisms Ghanaians use for menstruation in order to find out how similar they are to Israelite conceptions found in the Old Testament. The article seeks to provide a linguistic description of the ways in which verbal taboos relating to menstruation are represented in the Bible. It brings to the attention of linguists and translators the nature of verbal taboos in biblical and African thought, with a special focus on menstruation.

Various Old Testament examples will provide an understanding of the metaphoric conception. The analysis is based on selected texts on menstruation from Genesis, Leviticus, and Ezekiel and their translations into Twi and Gã. The English translations of the Hebrew are my own. The aim is to investigate, from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, the metaphors used as euphemisms for menstruation in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and some African translations. It is shown that these euphemisms instantiate the metaphors, MENSTRUATION IS AN INDISPOSITION/ILLNESS, MENSTRUATION IS SEPARATION, and MENSTRUATION IS A GENDER MARKER. The article argues that one way of unearthing he contextual understanding of menstruation beyond its dictionary definition is by extracting relevant conceptual metaphors from euphemisms assigned to menstruation in various cultures.

It is believed the awareness of such metaphorical conceptualizations can help in the translation process. Therefore, the study explores the conceptual understanding of menstruation expressions, approaching this from the point of view of metaphors to illustrate how they work in religious texts. Examples are limited to menstruation references in the Hebrew Old Testament and two Ghanaian translations. Previous studies of metaphors have not compared menstruation euphemisms in various translations of the Old Testament, especially Ghanaian languages. The aim is to fill this gap. Therefore, the present study will contribute to the existing body of literature seeking to apply cognitive linguistics to the area of Biblical Studies. It also contributes to the ongoing academic discussion on metaphor in the construction of meaning. The article begins with an introduction to the study and a brief discussion of euphemism and the concept of menstruation. Next, attention is given to the discussion of conceptual metaphors.

This is followed by a section on the material and methods for the study. Subsequent sections look at the metaphorical conceptualization of menstruation expressions, specifically in Hebrew, Twi, and Gã. The article concludes with a discussion of the findings.

2. Theoretical Background

This section discusses definitions and various categories of conceptual metaphors analyzed in this study. Since the 1980s, cognitive linguists have been discussing metaphor as a conceptual phenomenon associated with human thinking and behavior. Metaphors are present in our everyday conversations, not just in language, but also in our thought and action (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 3). One cannot imagine a language without metaphor and metonymy, two forces inherent in the basic structure of human speech (Ullman 1979, 223). Though we may think of metaphors as mere figurative speech employed to embellish speeches and texts, we can extract more from them in terms of how humans structure their conceptualizations.

In discussing Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 5) define metaphor as "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another." They explain that metaphors reveal how people perceive their world; how they structure their experience. Language is filled with concepts that reveal how speakers conceptualize and make sense of the world (2003, 3). Metaphors can help make an abstract experience more concrete (49). For example, life, an abstract experience, can be made more concrete by describing it in terms of a journey or a war. Kövecses (2000, 4) also defines metaphor simply as "understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain." Mapping is done from a "source domain" to a "target domain" (Lakoff 1993, 202). In other words, "one concept [the target] is understood in terms of the other [the source]" (Feyearts 2000, 60). Kövecses (2000, 4) notes that "the target domain is the domain that we try to understand through the use of the source domain." That is, CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN (X) IS TARGET DOMAIN (Y). For example, in the metaphor DEATH IS A JOURNEY, one conceptual domain (death) is understood in the terms of another conceptual domain (journey). Conceptual Metaphor Theory provides an important framework for explaining metaphors in language as well as cognition. In analyzing the metaphors of menstruation in the Torah, this study employs conceptual metaphor theory as its framework.

Three subtypes of metaphors proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003, 10–33) are used. These subtypes include structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors (Kövecses 2010). Regarding structural metaphors, the mappings are between the source and target domains. For example, the metaphor DEATH IS A JOURNEY maps knowledge between the concept of journey and death. Conceptual correspondences such as these indicate that both concepts (death and journey), have a beginning (i.e., departure) and an end (i.e., destination).

The second subtype, orientational metaphors, are coherent metaphors that aid in making sense of concepts in a coherent manner based on our image-schema knowledge of the world. Kövecses (2010, 35) observes that orientational metaphor is about basic human spatial orientations, such as up-down. Thus, the orientational concepts forming the basis for our evaluations include concepts such as IN and OUT, UP and DOWN, ABOVE and BENEATH, and FRONT and BEHIND. Examples of orientational metaphors are SADNESS IS DOWN, HAPPINESS IS UP. Here, image-schematic knowledge is used. This image-schematic knowledge is acquired from our experiences through our interactions with the world to evaluate our concepts.

The third subtype is ontological metaphors. Cognitive linguists see ontological metaphors as involving ways of viewing intangible concepts as entities. Included in these concepts are feelings, activities, and ideas (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), when these experiences are identified as substances, they can be categorized, grouped, and quantified, which enables researchers to reason about them. By relating our experience to physical objects and substances, we can see parts of these experiences as discrete entities. As observed by Kövecses (2010, 34), ontological metaphors provide a way to view events, activities, and ideas (target domain) as objects, and containers (source domain) that are commonly found in speeches to aid the audience in understanding the abstract concept in terms of the entities. The ontological subtype divides further into personification, entity, and container metaphors. In this article, we will also briefly look at the personification of menstruation.

3. Language and Method

3.1 Languages and data

Several books have been published in Twi and Gã. However, the most accessible source is the Bible. In this study, the data for analysis is drawn from the Hebrew Bible, the Twi and Gã Bible translations, and daily conversational discourses. The Biblical Hebrew data were gathered from Genesis, Leviticus, and Ezekiel. The two Ghanaian languages Twi and Gã are widely spoken in Ghana. About 80% of the population speaks Twi as a first or second language (Garry et al. 2001, 8). Both languages are Kwa languages, which belong to the Niger-Congo family. Twi is an Akan language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast. There are several dialects of this language, but this study employs the Akuapem dialect. Gã is spoken by most of the ethnic groups in Southern Ghana, especially in and around the capital city, Accra. The native speakers of the language are also known as the Gã or Gãs. This language is taught in Ghanaian schools. Apart from the native speakers of the language who are the inhabitants of Accra, the language is widely spoken as a second language by a large population of Ghanaians who through urban migration have relocated to Accra and its surrounding towns.

In addition to the Bibles in the three languages, I also extracted figures of speech from spoken Twi and Gã in everyday conversation, like the television and the radio. Being fluent in both Gã and Twi, I conducted unstructured interviews with some scholars who are native speakers of both languages to confirm or correct my interpretations of the metaphors. Following this, I extracted the euphemistic expressions used as metaphors, and grouped the data.

The translations from Hebrew into English are mine. Among the several versions of the Twi Bible, the 1964 version is chosen for this study. The Gã Scriptures in this article were taken from the 2006 version of the Gã Bible.

3.2 Mode of analysis

The data gathered were collected by using the source domain-oriented approach. The menstruation expressions were identified and grouped into metaphorical mappings for the analysis. I consulted the Hebrew text to find out which metaphors were used to instantiate the menstruation expressions. I then cross-checked the translations of these expressions in the Twi and Gã Bibles. Next, I described the metaphorical structure of menstruation in Biblical Hebrew and compared it with the data for Twi and Gã. The metaphors extracted from the menstruation euphemisms are categorized according to their different cognitive functions.

In my comparative analysis, I used a methodology suggested by Kövecses (2010) for the identification and description of metaphors.

Throughout the article SMALL CAPS are used for conceptual metaphors. Twi and Gã expressions are put in italics.

4. Ghanaian Euphemisms for Menstruation

4.1 Euphemism

Allan and Burridge (2006) have discussed politeness and impoliteness in relation to what is described as x-phemisms. According to them, x-phemisms are orthophemism, euphemism, and dysphemism. Orthophemism (straight talk) refers to a word or phrase that is more formal, while euphemism (sweet talk) is more colloquial and figurative (Allan and Burridge 2006, 32). For example, in English, the word *menstruation* may be considered an orthophemism, while *period* may be understood as a euphemism. Euphemisms are spoken to save face. By dysphemism, we are referring to a word or phrase that carries connotations that are offensive to the speaker and those being addressed (26). Moreover, there are instances where orthophemisms and euphemisms could be considered dysphemisms.

In the Ghanaian cultural context, menstruation is a verbal taboo (Agyekum 2002), so it is not mentioned by name. People avoid this taboo by creatively using euphemistic expressions to find ways of talking about this uncomfortable topic. For example, in reference to a woman in her menstrual period, the Twi would be, *ne nsa aka fam*, (her hand has touched the ground). There are two models for speaking euphemistically of menstruation in Twi: positive and negative. The positive model is based on the idea that menstruation is power and purification (Agyekum 2002, 378).

In this article, my focus will be on the menstruation euphemisms of the Israelite and Ghanaian cultures. Menstruation euphemisms can be broken down into the following themes: color, visitor, identity, indisposition, and seclusion (Allan and Burridge 1991, 81). This study explores three themes, namely, identity, indisposition, and seclusion. In the next sections, I will be discussing the ideas about menstruation in the Ghanaian culture.

4.2 The menstruant in Ghanaian society

In traditional Ghanaian society, there are many taboos associated with menstruation. These include a menstruant being prohibited from cooking for any man (e.g., Rattray 1927, 74). The menstruant is thought to be so dangerous that even crops have to be protected from her evil influence (Rattray 1932, 380). She is not allowed to enter sacred places nor touch sacred objects (74–75). According to Field (1948, 137), the menstruant is forbidden from entering streams to fetch water. The married menstruant was not permitted to speak directly to her husband, except through a spokesperson, who could be either a child or an elderly woman who has reached menopause.

In a typical Ghanaian traditional society, the menstruant was required to stay outside her home, either behind the house or in a special house built for women to stay in during their menstrual periods. This is because she is perceived to be unclean. She is believed to possess bad magic (Field 1960, 41). Until the close of the twentieth century, it was strongly believed in Ghana that contact with a menstruant would have a negative effect on a person's protective power as well as magical accouterments, including talismans, ancestral stools, and shrines. While menstruating, a woman's clothing or any object that has touched her menstrual blood could be employed to cause harm or could be used to render supernatural influences ineffective. Therefore, she is forbidden to enter the chief's palace or the premises of traditional religious officials. Some Ghanaians believe that menstrual blood is charged with magical powers that can have a negative influence. The menstruant emits negative forces that can render protective medicines impotent by touching them. Therefore, she is not permitted to enter a man's room in her condition. She is also not allowed in the kitchen because any cooking utensil she touches becomes defiled.

The fear of evil spirits is prevalent in Ghanaian society. Since menstrual blood is believed to possess magical powers to expel evil, Agyekum (2002, 378) asserts that menstrual blood can be used to make talismans. Both the Akan and the Gã believe that menstrual blood can be used in making love potions and charms. Love potions are usually put in men's food. There is also the fertility aspect of the positive model. Among many Ghanaian cultures, the first menstruation symbolizes a transition from girlhood to womanhood. This puts menstruation in a positive light, hence the euphemism for menstruation in Twi, *ɔayɛ asakyima*, (she has flowered) and in Gã, *etsɔ yoo*, (she has become a woman). Agyekum (2002, 380) notes regarding the Akan, that to say a woman has flowered is a way of calling attention to the fact that she is mature and ready to produce fruits.

Within the negative model, menstruation is perceived as pollution, failed production, indisposition, and seclusion (Agyekum 2002, 374–376). Agyekum's observations can be said to be true for the Gã as well. Across tribes and cultures in Ghana, it is taboo to have sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman because she is perceived as being unclean (Agyekum 2002). The menstrual taboo must be strictly kept in order to avoid severe penalties that are levied if it is infringed (Asare-Opoku 1978, 9). Even some Christian men avoid their wives during their period. Despite modern Ghanaian Christians distantiating themselves from traditional taboos, some churches prohibit menstruating women from partaking in Holy Communion.

In order to understand how the Israelites and Ghanaians perceive menstruation, the various euphemisms for menstruation and the metaphorical conceptualization of these euphemisms in Hebrew and selected Ghanaian languages need to be examined. The next section explores the metaphorical conceptualization of menstruation in the Hebrew, Twi, and Gã Bibles.

5. Metaphorical Conceptualizations of Menstruation in the Hebrew, Twi, and Gã Bibles

5.1 The biblical concept of menstruation

The Hebrew term נִדָּה refers to a ritual organized around the natural cycle of a woman. Generally, the term נִדָּה means expulsion and elimination (Milgrom 1991, 744–745). The term derives from the Hebrew root נדה, carrying such meanings as to be tossed about, to move back and forth or to make distant. Figuratively, it refers to "ceremonial impurity," especially, "menstruation" (Brown, Driver, and Briggs 2011, 662); Köhler, Baumgartner, and Stamm (2000, 596) define נִדָּה as "excretion, abhorrent thing or impurity." Gesenius (1979, 535) refers to נִדָּה as "filth and menstrual uncleanness." The word נִדָּה does not literally mean menstruation but is rather a euphemism referring to the ritualistic separation of a woman during her menstrual cycle. This reflects an actual physical separation of a menstruating woman owing to her ritual impurity. In the Old Testament, a distinction is made between different female genital emissions. There is זבה, which is non-menstrual flow (Lev 15:25–30), and נִדָּה, which is menstrual flow (Lev 15:19–24). The term זבה refers to a woman bleeding when she is not menstruating or when she has a discharge of blood beyond the period of her menstruation.

According to Milgrom (1991, 744–745), נִדָּה came to refer not just to the menstrual discharge but also to the menstruant. The menstruant was temporarily discharged from her duties and socially excluded by being quarantined. According to Leviticus, she was to be separated for seven days (15:19). Whatever she lies on shall be unclean (15:20); whoever touches her bed shall wash their clothes, bathe and be unclean till evening (15:21); whoever touches anything that she has sat on shall wash their clothes, bathe and be unclean until evening (15:22); any man who is contaminated by lying down beside her shall be unclean until evening (15:24). The menstruant waits till her flow ends, then counts seven days with no bleeding; only then is she pure. Following the seven days she ought to bring an offering to the sanctuary for atonement (Lev 15:29–30). Thus, Leviticus conceptualizes the menstruating woman as a CONTAMINANT. In Leviticus 18:19, it was forbidden for a husband to go close to his wife in her state of נִדָּה impurity with the intention to have sexual relations with her. The seriousness of this prohibition is evident in the severity of the punishment imposed on both the man and the woman who violated the prohibition—expulsion from the midst of one's people (Lev 20:18). The meaning of נִדָּה and the ritual that the menstruant must go through instantiate the metaphors MENSTRUATION IS AN INFECTION and MENSTRUATION IS SEPARATION.

5.2 *Menstruation as an illness, separation and a gender marker*

In this section, the study discusses menstruation as a person in example (1), menstruation as an indisposition or illness in examples (2–11), menstruation as a separation in examples (12–19), and menstruation as a gender marker in examples (20–23).

5.2.1 MENSTRUATION IS A PERSON

One category of conceptual metaphors is ontological metaphors. Personification is one type of ontological metaphor that allows us to understand "a wide variety of experiences with non-human entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 33). According to Kövecses (2010, 50), events are viewed as produced by an active willful agent, henc,e the metaphor, EVENTS ARE ACTIONS. In the Twi menstruation euphemism, there is also a theme of the visitor, so menstruation is personified as a periodic visitor. Menstruation is conceptualized euphemistically as an expected male visitor.

In the Twi euphemistic expression *akoa no abedu* (the man has arrived), the beginning of the woman's period signifies the arrival of a well-known and regular visitor. This visitor comes to stay with the woman for a few days, then leaves, only to return later. Though the Twi word *akoa* literally means a servant, this term refers to a man whose name you would not want to mention.

Menstruation is an event, which can be conceptualized as an action via the metaphor EVENTS ARE ACTIONS. The event, in the case of the Twi conceptualization of menstruation, is the visitation; it is conceptualized as a guest. Thus, MENSTRUATION IS A TEMPORARY VISITOR that comes to isolate women for a period. Also, MENSTRUATION IS A MAN who pays women monthly visits.

Moreover, when MENSTRUATION AS AN ENTITY is conceptualized as being a person, it leads to the metaphor MENSTRUATION IS A PERSON. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 26), viewing an experience as an entity allows us to refer to, quantify, and identify a particular aspect of it. For example, in the metaphor of MENSTRUATION IS AN ENTITY, the Akan view MENSTRUATION (target domain) as an ENTITY (source domain).

As long as this metaphorical man is around, the woman, if married, stays away from her husband and does not cook or have sexual intercourse with him. In this sense, MENSTRUATION IS A RIVAL. A quarter of a month,

2 An average of 1980 days in her menstruating lifetime.

60 days in a year, and for some thirty-three years of her life,[2] this visiting rival comes to push the woman into seclusion. Such is the personification of menstruation by virtue of the WOMEN ARE GUESTS metaphor in which the menstrual blood corresponds with a periodic male visitor. This visitor arrives either once or twice every month to take the menstruant on vacation. Thus, the Akan conceptualize MENSTRUATION IS A PERSON. The arrival of the menstrual blood (VISITOR) leads to the expulsion of the menstruant (HOST) from within the house to the periphery of the house. This person stops his visits when the woman has attained menopause, or she is pregnant and not bleeding. The conceptualization of menstruation as a person is absent in Gã thought and the Bible does not have such a notion either.

5.2.2 MENSTRUATION IS AN INDISPOSITION

The themes of indisposition and illness form part of Twi's euphemisms for menstruation. Many cultures associate the loss of blood with injury and loss of strength (Allan and Burridge 2006, 166). The same can be said of the Hebrew and Akan cultures. In Akan thought, blood is life. Therefore, the loss of blood is understood as an illness that could result in death. The metaphor MENSTRUATION IS AN ILLNESS is instantiated in Twi by the euphemistic expressions in examples (4–10) and Hebrew expressions in (1–3):

(1) וְאִם שָׁכֹב יִשְׁכַּב אִישׁ אֹתָהּ וּתְהִי נִדָּתָהּ עָלָיו[2],
And if a man actually sleeps with her, and her impurity touches him. (Lev 15:24)

(2) וְאֶל־אִשָּׁה בְּנִדַּה טֻמְאָתָהּ לֹא תִקְרַב
A woman in her menstrual impurity you shall not approach. (Lev 18:19)

(3) וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׁכַּב אֶת־אִשָּׁא דָּוָה
And a man who will lie with a woman having her sickness. (Lev 20:18)

(4) *Te sɛ ɔsabufo fĩ.*
Like the filth of one whose hand is broken. (Twi; Ezek 36:17)

(5) *Ɔnte yie*.
She is not well. (Twi)

(6) *Wanya mmaa yare*.
She has got the sickness of women. (Twi)

(7) *Mabu nsa*.
I have broken [a] hand. (Twi; Gen 31:35)

(8) *Sɛ ɔbarima no ne no da na n'asabu ade no bi ka ne ho a*.
If the man sleeps with her and some of her hand-breaking thing touches him. (Twi; Lev 15:24)

(9) *Nkɔ ɔbea a n'asabu mu ne ho ntewee no ho nkoyi n'adagyaw so.*
Do not go to a woman who in her hand-breaking is unclean, to uncover her nakedness. (Twi; Lev 18:19)

(10) *Nkɔ ɔbea a n'asabu mu ne ho ntewee no ho.*
Do not go onto a woman who in her broken hand is unclean. (Twi; Lev 20:18)

The Twi expression, *ne nsa mu abu*, (his hand is broken) is a metaphorical expression of despair or discouragement. In expressing the emotion of discouragement, the Gã people would say, *enine mli eje wui* (the bones in her/his hands have fallen out). Thus, the emotion of despair is conceptualized metaphorically by the Gã as a boneless hand. Both Twi and Gã expressions could be for men and women. However, the Twi expression, *wabu ne nsa* (she

[2] All Hebrew text used in this article comes from the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*.

has broken her hand) is used solely in reference to a woman, to imply that she is menstruating. This has no emotional connotations. The expression seems to suggest that she herself and she alone is responsible for her broken hand. It conceptualizes menstruation as a physical injury, euphemistically expressing the discharging of blood from the lining of the uterus.. This conceptualization of menstruation as hand breaking has no equivalent in Hebrew and is absent in Gã as well.

As expressed in (5), Twi conceptualizes the menstruant as one who is sick. Her sickness is one unique to women as indicated in (6). From (7) we deduce a conceptual metaphor MENSTRUATION IS A HAND INJURY. The Twi translation of Genesis 31:35 uses the breaking of the hand as the euphemism for menstruation.

In (4) and (7–9), the Twi translation *asabu* (hand breaking) agrees with the Hebrew דָּוָה (sickness), in (3) denoting menstruation as being an injury. That the menstruant is indisposed means she has become incapable of performing her usual domestic duties. This ill-health requires a period of rest. This sickness, perceived as uncleanness and contamination, requires that she is socially isolated and quarantined. The Hebrew דָּוָה in (3) is a feminine singular adjective meaning *faint* or *unwell*. This suggests that the menstruant is a sick woman. These Hebrew and Twi ideas of menstruation being an illness instantiate the metaphor MENSTRUATION IS AN ILLNESS.

In Levitical thought, menstrual blood is conceived as being a contagion and therefore very dangerous. Thus, menstruation renders the woman ritually ill. Whoever and whatever she touches becomes ritually contaminated. In (1) and (2), the Hebrew phrases נִדָּתָהּ (her impurity) and בְּנִדָּה (in impurity), respectively refer to the woman's menstrual flow. It is also translated "her flowers" (Douay-Rheims) and "her separation" (Young's Literal Translation). The term נִדָּתָהּ could also refer to her menstrual blood, which the Israelites conceived of as a contaminant. These ideas in (1), (2), and (4) suggest a metaphor MENSTRUATION IS AN INFECTION. In (4) the Twi translates הַנִּדָּה (the impure one) in Ezekiel 36:17 as *ɔsabufo* (a broken-handed woman). The Twi translates the noun נִדָּה in Leviticus 15:24 and 18:19 as *asabu* (hand breaking).

5.2.3 MENSTRUATION IS SEPARATION

The metaphor MENSTRUATION AS SEPARATION arises from the understanding of the domain of menstruation in terms of the domain of exclusion. In the Old Testament, especially in Leviticus, the sense of menstruation being a contagion is prevalent in the context of ritual impurity. In the same sense, the Ghanaians conceive the menstruant as a contaminant. Menstrual blood renders the woman impure and unclean. The social distancing protocol she observes is due to the cultural understanding that she has become ritually dangerous. Various Twi and Gã euphemisms relating to vacation and rest include examples (13–19):

(12) כְּטֻמְאַת הַנִּדָּה
Like the uncleanness of a separated one. (Ezek 36:17)
(13) Ɔkɔ *afikyire.*
She has gone behind the house. (Twi)
(14) Ɔnkɔ *gya ho.*
She does not go near the fire. (Twi)
(15) *Muka mu afɔ.*
The hearth is wet on the inside. (Twi)
(16) *Ni Sara ekpa tsuiasɛɛ yaa.*
And Sarah had stopped going to the back of the house. (Gã; Gen 18:11)
(17) *Kaaya yoo ŋɔɔ ni okɛ lɛ ayawɔ be ni mli ni etee tsuiasɛɛ.*
Do not go to a woman to sleep with her while she has gone behind the house. (Gã; Lev 18:19)

(18) *Kɛji nuu ko kɛ yoo ni etee tsuiasɛɛ wɔ lɛ.*

If a man and a woman who has gone behind the house have sexual intercourse. (Gã; Lev 20:18)

(19) *Tamɔ yoo ni etee tsuiasɛɛ ni ehe tsee.*

Like a woman who has gone behind the house and is unclean. (Gã; Ezek 36:17)

In example (13) the euphemistic expression *ɔkɔ afikyire* (she has gone to the rear of the house) clearly refers to the state of being secluded during her menstruation. The Gã expression in (14), *tsuiasɛɛ* (the back of the house), carries the same sense as the Twi expressions meaning going into isolation or being quarantined. In (16) and (17), *tsuiasɛɛ* is the translation of the Hebrew נִדָּה. In (18) the Gã euphemistic expression *etee tsuiasɛɛ* shows how the Hebrew דָּוָה (sickness) was translated. In (19) the Hebrew הַנִּדָּה is translated as *yoo ni etee tsuiasɛɛ* (a woman who has gone to the back of the house.) In (12) the Hebrew expression הַנִּדָּה refers to a woman in her customary impurity. It describes the menstruant as one to be kept at a distance, producing the metaphor, נִדָּה IS SOCIAL DISTANCING.

Since the Ghanaian sees the menstruant as impure, this conception could instantiate the metaphor MENSTRUATION IS POLLUTION. This yields the metaphor MENSTRUATION IS TEMPORARY SEGREGATION. The menstruating woman is removed from the center to the periphery, from the front to the back. This movement instantiates an orientational metaphor, MENSTRUATION IS MOVEMENT TO THE REAR. When a woman is menstruating, she spends this period at the rear of the house.

Example (14) implies the menstruating woman is excused from any culinary duties. As indicated by example (15), the absence of the cook renders the floor of the fireplace wet as there is no production of heat to dry the place. Thus, examples (13–15) represent a menstruant's social isolation; she is excluded and secluded in a specific place with an opportunity to rest. This experience instantiates the metaphors MENSTRUATION IS SEPARATION, MENSTRUATION IS SECLUSION/SOCIAL ISOLATION, and MENSTRUATION IS A VACATION.

5.2.4 MENSTRUATION IS A GENDER MARKER

The conceptualization of MENSTRUATION IS A GENDER MARKER arises from the understanding of the domain of menstruation in terms of the domain of gender identification/marking. Menstrual blood becomes an object or a substance that distinguishes the female from the male as it is an experience only women can have. In the Old Testament, specifically in Genesis, the sense of menstruation being a mark of identification is evident in Hebrew. In the same sense, the Ghanaian conceives menstruation as a feminine identity-marker as shown below:

(20) כִּי־דֶרֶךְ נָשִׁים לִי

For the custom of women [is] with me. (Gen 31:35)

(21) אֹרַח לִהְיוֹת לְשָׂרָה הָדַל כַּנָּשִׁים

It had ceased to be with Sarah after the custom of women. (Gen 18:11)

(22) *Mifee yei anii.*

I am doing women's thing. (Gã; Gen 31:35)

(23) *Na nea ɛyɛ mmea no to atwa wɔ Sara ho.*

What happens to women had ceased with Sarah. (Twi; Gen 18:11)

In Genesis 31:35, Rachel told her father Laban that she was in her menstrual period so she could not stand up in his presence. The Hebrew expression in (20), דֶּרֶךְ נָשִׁים, could mean the *custom of women*, but the expression literally means *the road that women tread*. It can be deduced from the Hebrew meaning that menstruation is a journey, and as Genesis 18:11 indicates, Sarah had already come to the end of this journey. This is seen in (21) where the Hebrew euphemism אֹרַח כַּנָּשִׁים (after the custom of women) is used for her monthly period. This shows that (21) also instantiates the metaphor MENSTRUATION IS A JOURNEY. In example (22), the Gã also refers to what women do. In (23), the Twi euphemism *nea ɛyɛ mmea*, (what happens to women) refers to menstruation. Thus, the Hebrew, Twi, and Gã languages present menstruation euphemistically as a uniquely feminine custom. This understanding instantiates the metaphor, MENSTRUATION IS A GENDER MARKER. Menstrual blood is the object or substance that marks the identity of a woman.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that all three languages label menstruants as polluting, and therefore to be avoided. There is a common theme that menstruation is synonymous with impurity, separation, and feminine identity. The Hebrew Bible conceptualizes menstruation as SEPARATION, AN ILLNESS, and A FEMININE GENDER-MARKER. Twi conceptualizes menstruation as A PERSON, SEPARATION, AN ILLNESS, and A FEMININE GENDER-MARKER. The Gã people conceptualize menstruation as SEPARATION and A FEMININE GENDER-MARKER.

It is evident from the data that the concept of menstruation as a person is not found in Hebrew and Gã. The euphemism referring to menstruation as a man is found in Twi. Also, Gã does not use any euphemism that instantiates the MENSTRUATION IS AN ILLNESS metaphor. To translate the Old Testament references to menstruation, Gã uses either the euphemism "custom of women" (FEMININE GENDER-MARKER) or "movement to the back of the house" (SEPARATION/SECLUSION).

In this article, the examination of the euphemistic expressions for menstruation used in the Old Testament and its Twi and Gã translations indicates that there are similarities between the Hebrew Biblical thought and Ghanaian thinking about menstruation. Some prominent themes from the euphemistic expressions for menstruation found in Hebrew, Twi, and Gã are the themes of indisposition, seclusion, and identity marking. In both Israelite and traditional Ghanaian thought and practice, menstruation is generally associated with notions of impurity and pollution. This leads to the enforcement of both residential and culinary taboos. In all three cultures, the menstruating woman is required to observe ritual protocols including social distancing, isolation, and being quarantined. Hence, the metaphor MENSTRUATION IS SEPARATION/EXCLUSION is the most pronounced in all three languages explored.

The findings of this article have demonstrated how important the study of conceptual metaphors is in biblical studies. Apart from adding to the body of literature on linguistics and theology, the present study broadens the path to further cognitive studies of biblical texts in different languages.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to explore the metaphors of menstruation in the Old Testament, drawing insight from the cognitive approach to metaphors. This study has endeavored to provide an answer to the question, what are the metaphorical conceptualizations of menstruation expressions in the Hebrew Bible and their translations in the Twi and Gã Bibles?

I have compared the general metaphorical conceptualizations of menstruation in the three languages, Hebrew, Twi, and Gã. I have shown that there is a common theme that menstruation is synonymous with illness, separation, and feminine identity in both Israelite and Ghanaian thoughts. We can also observe from our data that the menstruation expressions in the Old Testament and their translations in the Ghanaian Bibles studied instantiate such metaphors as MENSTRUATION IS AN ILLNESS, MENSTRUATION IS SEPARATION and MENSTRUATION IS A FEMININE GENDER-MARKER. Therefore, we can conclude that the ancient Israelites and modern Ghanaians have similar beliefs about menstruating women. In both cultures, menstrual taboo constructs a division between men and women. We may attribute the similarities in the metaphorical conceptualizations to the universality of the unique feminine experience in different cultures as well as the socio-psychological and religious explanations given to these experiences.

It is obvious from the study, that cognitive linguistic investigations into menstruation metaphors contribute a good deal to our understanding of the ways in which people conceptualize menstruation. This study is limited to texts in the Old Testament. However, further research on a larger corpus that includes the New Testament can help us broaden our understanding of menstruation expressions in many more of the languages the Bible has been translated into. It is evident from the data that the insight gathered in this study will motivate scholars interested in exploring the application of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory in the study of metaphors in theological studies.

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Reimagining the Role of the Pastor as a Teaching Elder in the Twenty-First-Century Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Nkhoma Synod Context: A Situational Audit of Lilongwe City Congregations

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Abstract

In the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Nkhoma Synod, a pastor has various responsibilities. Crucial to the pastoral calling is the ministry of teaching. They therefore define the pastor as a teaching elder. One important way a pastor fulfills the teaching responsibility is through preaching, but this study found that, because of various factors, most of the preaching is done by laypeople. In this research, I argue that there is a need to reimagine how pastors can fulfill their teaching responsibilities in the twenty-first-century context.

This article: https://www.sats.ac.za/conspectus/reimagining-role-pastor-teaching
https://doi.org/10.54725/conspectus.2023.1.5

1. Introduction

One of the principal duties of a pastor in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Nkhoma Synod (CCAP NS, from hereon) is preaching the Word. The pastor is considered to be a teaching elder. While the common understanding has been that a pastor must do all the preaching himself, the situational audit of the current practices in the church reveals that laypeople preach the most. Yet the laity is not empowered to effectively carry out the responsibility of preaching. This research paper calls for the role of the pastor as a teaching elder

Conspectus

Keywords
CCAP Nkhoma Synod, teaching elder, Reformed tradition, lay empowerment

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to be reimagined in the twenty-first century. The main question that this research paper attempts to answer is "how can a CCAP NS pastor fulfill their role as a teaching elder through the ministry of preaching in the twenty-first-century context?" The main argument of this paper is that this important duty can be effectively executed through laity empowerment.

To arrive at the above argument, this study surveys different scholarly works focusing on the teaching role of a pastor. Thereafter, the biblical material is also reviewed to establish the biblical foundation of the office of a pastor and the centrality of a pastor's teaching ministry. Having laid both scholarly and biblical bases for the main argument, the study presents the data from the situational analysis that was done in the congregations of CCAP NS in Lilongwe City on the current practices regarding the involvement of pastors in preaching. Preaching was singled out as it is one of the most effective ways a pastor fulfills the teaching responsibility. After discussing the findings, the study finishes with some recommendations focusing on how CCAP NS pastors may fulfill their teaching responsibility in the twenty-first century.

2. Survey of Scholarship

Numerous scholars have commented on the role of the pastor as a teacher in a congregation. In this section, a survey of scholarly views will be done. In the liturgy for the ordination of a pastor in the CCAP NS reference is made from Ephesians 4:11 as the biblical basis for the office of a pastor. Commenting on this verse, the liturgy says:

> The word pastor or shepherd defines a person who has been set apart to do the work of a shepherd. As a shepherd of the sheep looks after, protects, and keeps his sheep, in the same way, the shepherd or pastor in the church of God, should look after, protect and keep the sheep of the Lord––who are his own people. Feeding the flock of the Lord means instructing them in the Word and administering the Holy Sacraments. The instruments to protect them as well as to keep them are found in the Bible. Hence a pastor must teach the people. (Nkhoma Synod 2009, 37)[1]

The above quotation points to the dual roles of a pastor—teaching the Scriptures and administering the sacraments. This is in line with the Reformed tradition which describes a pastor as a "minister of the Word and sacraments" whose function is that of "proclaiming, explaining, and applying Holy Scripture [or, someone] who shall preach the Word" (DeRidder and Hofman 1994, 99–102). As a minister of the Word, a pastor in the CCAP NS is described as a "teaching elder" (Msangaambe 2011, 234; Zeze 2012, 78).

In discussing the teaching role of a pastor, Akin (2004, 49) argues that, the noun pastor, from the Greek word *ποιμήν* poimen, in English 'shepherd,' does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament as a reference to a leader in the church, though the derivate verb and the noun 'flock' are found. The pastor is also given the title 'teacher', which together with pastor, denote one office of ministry [whose daily ministry is] providing instruction in the Word of God.

Due to the crucial nature of the role of teaching for a pastor, White (2004, 278) contends that it is impossible to be a pastor without teaching. John Calvin also said that pastors have the responsibility of proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, apart from the administration of sacraments and discipline. By doing this, pastors uphold the correct doctrine and correct false teachings. Calvin equated the preaching responsibility of pastors to that of apostles who were appointed by God to preach to the whole world.

1 The citation is my own translation of the Chichewa version of the Nkhoma Synod Liturgy called "Malongosoledwe a za mu Mpingo" (Church Liturgy).

Thus, just as the apostles were entrusted with the responsibility of preaching the gospel, pastors are supposed to preach the gospel to the flock entrusted to them by God (Calvin 1961, 1057–1059).

Manetsch (2013) observes that while preaching was done in the pre-reformation era, what makes the reformers' approach unique is their emphasis on the Word:

> For Calvin and the ministers who came after him, Christian preaching was the primary instrument that God employed to bring sinners to faith in Christ and guide them toward spiritual maturity. In their minds, the proclamation of the Scripture was God's dynamic instrument of bringing about personal spiritual regeneration, the reformation of the church, and the transformation of society according to the righteousness of Christ. They viewed the preaching of the word as the minister's primary duty. (Manetsch 2013, 146–147;)

Karrant-Nunn (2003, 194) discusses the vital role preaching played in bringing about reformation for the masses in Germany during the time of the Reformation. She concludes, "no sermon, no reformation." This in a way points to the fact that preaching was the vehicle that was used by the reformers in bringing the Reformation to the masses unfamiliar with the theological discourses of the day.

Barrett (2015) studied the life of John Owen, a Puritan Reformed pastor, to counter a worrisome trend he observes among pastors. He shockingly states that pastors today have very busy schedules which suffocate their primary responsibility as teachers of the Word of God in congregations.

> The modern pastor is so busy marketing the church's identity, raising funds for the next building campaign, or overseeing business meetings that preaching the Scriptures becomes secondary or, even worse, tertiary in its importance. Yet one is hard-pressed to find a pastoral responsibility in the New Testament (NT) that takes priority over the preaching of God's Word. When we compare the NT emphasis on the proclamation of the Word to twenty-first-century priorities in ministry, it must be asked, "Has preaching become just another duty in a long list of ministry chores? (Barrett 2015, 459–460)

Barrett cites John Owen who says "the first and principal duty of a pastor is to feed the flock by diligent preaching of the word … he is no pastor who does not feed his flock. The main duty of a pastor is to preach God's word to God's people, as a shepherd feeding his sheep" (Barrett 2015, 459–460, 462).

In emphasizing preaching as the top priority of a pastor, Croft (2015, 37) first laments that ministerial duties take up so much time, that "time to study in preparation for preaching often gets squeezed out of a pastor's busy schedule." He then advises pastors that regardless of their tight schedules and no matter how demanding ministerial responsibilities can be "the study and preaching of the Word of God should be the focus of every faithful pastor's ministry."

MacArthur (2005) also agrees with the point that preaching is the top priority of a pastor. Having surveyed the Scriptures and the history of the church, he concludes that preaching must take precedence over a pastor's other duties. He argues that "no man's pastoral ministry will be successful in God's sight who does not give preaching its proper place" (2005, n.p.). Jefferson (1980, 76) uses the image of a shepherd in describing the role of the pastor in a congregation. As the shepherd of a flock is duty-bound to feed his sheep, a pastor is called by God to feed the people of God. He therefore states that "no part of a minister's work is more strictly, genuinely pastoral than the work of preaching."

In his article which seeks to survey the evolution of pastoral ministry in the history of the church, Stitzinger (1995, 149) observes that the Bible presents several duties and responsibilities for a pastor of which one central task is teaching the Scripture through preaching. He notes that the reformers of the church also considered preaching the primary task of a pastor. As such, a pastor is both a teacher and a preacher as the two are inseparable. Hindson and Dobson (1983, 10–12) insist that the biblical responsibility of the role of a pastor has not changed. A pastor must maintain his role as a shepherd, teacher, and evangelist as he is supposed to feed his flock with spiritual food, teach them the biblical truth, and model the example of Christ to them.

From the views of different scholars presented above, two points can be made. First, the primary responsibility of pastors is to teach the Word of God to the members of their congregations. Second, preaching is one of the most effective ways pastors can execute their teaching responsibility. However, the survey of scholarship has sadly shown that in the twenty-first century there are several things that divert the attention of pastors from fulfilling their teaching roles. As we will see below, the CCAP NS is not spared from this sad development. To solidify the claim that pastors are called to teach, in the section that follows, I have provided a survey of what the Bible says concerning the teaching duty of pastors.

3. Survey of Biblical Material

In the New Testament, the word pastor translates a Greek word *ποιμήν*, which is also translated as *shepherd*. This word occurs 18 times in the New Testament, and mostly in the Gospels. It has its background in the Old Testament from the Hebrew word רֹעֶה, which occurs 173 times and is commonly translated as *shepherd*. Like in most of the ancient Near East, in Israel shepherds had the duty to care for, feed, protect, and lead their flock (Carnes 2007, 22–23). In the Old Testament, this term was also used metaphorically to refer to different figures such as God (Gen 48:15; 49:24; Ps 23; 77:21; Ezek 34), kings (2 Sam 5:2; 7:7–8; Ps 80:1–3; Ezek 34), priests and prophets (Jer 17:16). This metaphor signified the various responsibilities of the ones it referred to (Gan 2019, 158). For instance, God as the shepherd of his people fulfilled the responsibility of caring for them, leading them, protecting them from danger, and providing for their needs (Ps 23). In the same way, kings and religious leaders had to fulfill the same responsibilities over the people they were leading (Gan 2010, 8–11). Their failure to execute their shepherding role with faithfulness attracted God's condemnation (Ezek 34).

The metaphorical use of the term shepherd continued in the New Testament. Since in the Old Testament God faults kings and religious leaders for failing to shepherd his people according to his will, the New Testament presents Jesus as the perfect example of a shepherd as he is "the Good Shepherd" who lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:10–14). Gan (2019, 45) cites Fackre who argues that the metaphor of shepherd is applied to Jesus in the New Testament because of the threefold offices he fulfills: the offices of the priest, prophet, and king. But this interpretation does not present the whole truth because in the Old Testament the shepherd metaphor was primarily used to refer to God as he is the chief shepherd. The kings, prophets, and priests were just entrusted with the responsibility, but God remained the chief shepherd. What we see in Jesus in the New Testament is the demonstration of the shepherding responsibility after the human figures had failed.

It is interesting that the New Testament establishes the pastoral office on the shepherd metaphor (Eph 4:11). This implies that pastors assume the responsibility of both the Old Testament shepherds and of Jesus. Since Jesus demonstrated what shepherding God's flock means, pastors are called to continue in the footsteps of Jesus as they shepherd God's people—they are to lead, feed, care for, and protect the people of God entrusted to their care.

Through teaching, a pastor fulfills the roles of feeding and protecting God's flock by providing them with spiritual food and protection from false teachings (Gan 2019, 54). At this point let us look at Ephesians 4:11 in its context.

> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (Eph 4:11–14; ESV)

In the above passage, the office of a pastor (shepherd) is listed with the offices of the apostle, the prophet, and the evangelist. In Greek, the terms shepherds (pastors) and teachers are governed by one definite article, which linguistically may imply that they are one office. Some New Testament commentators believe that this signifies that a pastor's duty is teaching (Jeremias 1968, 497; Lincoln 1990, 250; cf. Stone 2006, 53; Jones 2014, 54; Piper and Carson 2011, 61). From verses twelve to fourteen Paul highlights the need for these different offices, including the office of pastors. Focusing on the office of pastors alone, it is clear in the passage that their duty is to teach their flock the Word of God in order for them to grow and mature spiritually, because spiritual maturity is one of the important cornerstones of unity in the body of Christ. Hebrews 6:1 points out that after repentance, believers are supposed to grow in their faith. But for this growth to take place there must be someone to teach them. This is the responsibility of pastors.

In 1 Corinthians 12:28 Paul also talks about the different offices in the church. The office of pastors is not mentioned, but the office of teachers is mentioned. The use of the term teachers instead of pastors may suggest that the primary responsibility of pastors is teaching the Word of God.

All these biblical references signify that the central tenet of Scripture is that teaching is one of the foremost shepherding responsibilities of a pastor. It is on this premise that this study conducted a situational analysis of the current practice in the involvement of pastors in the preaching programs in the Lilongwe City congregations of the CCAP NS.

4. Conducting the Situational Analysis

In this section, I describe the nature of my situational analysis of the current practice of the involvement of pastors in preaching programs in the CCAP NS. A situational analysis is necessary for research of this kind because it facilitates a comparative analysis between the current situation and the desired situation (Save the Children 2020, 5). Since it is desirable that pastors should faithfully execute their teaching duty, this article uses situational analysis to find out whether this is the case or not.

4.1 Design

This study follows an empirical design. The empirical aspect involves the administration of structured questionnaires to solicit data for the situational audit of the current practices of the involvement of pastors in preaching in the CCAP NS.

4.2 Targeted population and sampling

The target population of this research paper was CCAP NS congregations in Lilongwe City. The sampling frame comprised forty-six church service committees, of which each committee represented a congregation. The congregations' church service committees that participated in the research were selected using combined Simple and Convenience Sampling Methods. Following Slovin's formula $n = \frac{N}{1+N\,(e\text{^}2)}$,[2] which requires that a sample frame below one hundred should engage all members of the target population in the research process, the required sample size is all forty-six congregation church service committees (Kaphesi and Kaphesi 2018, 70). However, due to the time factor and willingness of participants to take part in the research, the sample size became twenty-six, representing 56% of the target population.[3]

4.3 Research methodology

The research used a descriptive approach to survey relevant literature on the role of the pastor as a teacher. To have an understanding of the current practices of the involvement of pastors in teaching programs in congregations the research used a situational analysis methodology. Data for the situational analysis were collected through the administration of a semi-structured questionnaire. Each congregation was given a questionnaire that was filled out by the church service committee. Each committee represented a congregation since they oversee different worship activities that include teaching programs at a congregation level.

4.4 Data analysis

To obtain descriptive statistics, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data that was collected through the use of a semi-structured questionnaire. The findings of the situational audit are discussed in section 5.

4.5 Ethical clearance

To be within the academic ethical standards, consent to solicit the data to conduct a situational audit was obtained from the pastors in the congregations enlisted above. Those congregations whose pastors expressed unwillingness to participate in the study were not involved.

5. Discussion of Findings

5.1 Size of congregations

As indicated earlier, the study was done on twenty-six congregations. The study sought to determine the size of each congregation in terms of the number of prayer houses.[4] It was discovered that out of the twenty-six congregations, fourteen congregations have no prayer house (representing

2 n = sample size, N = sample frame, and e = margin of error

3 These congregations are: Mwala CCAP, Chiombamwala CCAP, Nsangu CCAP, Kaning'a CCAP, Bwaila CCAP, Katate CCAP, Nsunga CCAP, Kakule CCAP, Mvunguti CCAP, Masintha CCAP, Kalambo CCAP, Mlima CCAP, Kafita CCAP, Katondo CCAP, Kapita CCAP, Chikuluti CCAP, Chikungu CCAP, Mvama CCAP, Likuni CCAP, Chimwala CCAP, Mnkhumbu CCAP, Msonkhamanja CCAP, Mbuka CCAP, Kachere CCAP, Lingadzi CCAP, and Nsungwi CCAP.

4 A prayer house is a place where people gather for prayers. They form part of a congregation and a congregation may have one or more prayer houses depending on the width of the area it covers.

54% of all the congregations), six congregations have one or two prayer houses (representing 23%), three congregations have three prayer houses (representing 11%), and three congregations have more than four prayer houses (representing 11%). From these statistics, it emerges that over half of the congregations that participated in the study have no prayer houses. The figure below illustrates these statistics.

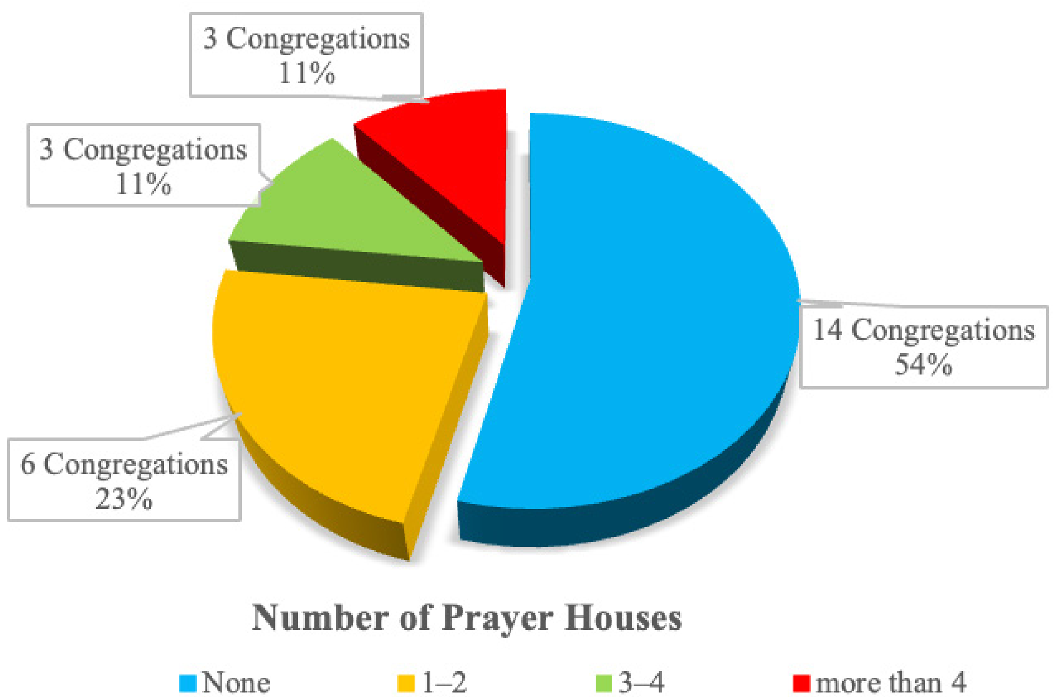

Figure 1. Size of congregations according to the number of prayer houses

If we can generalize these statistics, we can conclude that most of the city congregations have none or few prayer houses.

5.2 How frequently pastors preach in prayer houses

In its attempt to investigate the involvement of pastors in preaching programs in congregations, the study inquired about the frequency with which the pastors preached at the prayer houses. The inquiry was done for each of the twelve congregations with prayer houses. The frequency was measured per term. It was discovered that for congregations with one or two prayer houses, one has a pastor who preaches once a quarter in every prayer house, four have pastors who preach twice in every quarter, and one preached three times in every quarter. For congregations with three prayer houses, two have pastors who preached twice, and one has a pastor who preached once in every prayer house in every quarter. In all three congregations with more than four prayer houses, pastors preached in each prayer house once quarterly. Two facts emerged from these statistics: The table below illustrates the data.

Size of Congregation	Pastors Preaching Frequency	Number of Congregations
1–2 Prayer houses 3 Prayer houses 4> Prayer houses	Once	1 2 3
1–2 Prayer houses 3 Prayer houses 4> Prayer houses	Twice	4 1 0
1–2 Prayer houses 3 Prayer houses 4> Prayer houses	Three times	1 0 0

Table 1. Pastors' preaching frequency in prayer houses

From the statistics it can be derived that pastors in congregations with one or two prayer houses preached more than once in every prayer house, compared to pastors in congregations with three and more prayer houses who mostly preach in every prayer house once quarterly.

5.3 *How frequently pastors preach at the station*[5]

Apart from investigating the frequency with which pastors preach at the prayer houses, the study also inquired about how many times in a quarter pastors preached at the station. The study found that out of the twenty-six congregations that participated in the study, pastors in seventeen congregations (representing 65%) preach more than three times a quarter, pastors in seven congregations (representing 27%) preach three times a quarter, while pastors in two congregations (representing only 8% of congregations) preach at the station twice every three months. Below is a graphic presentation of these statistics.

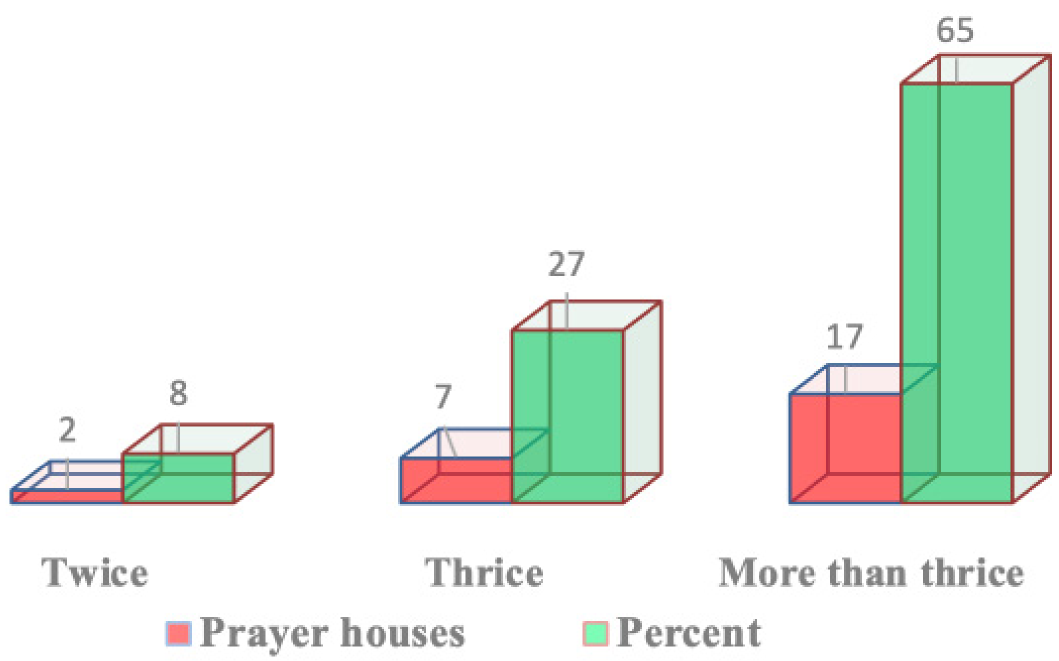

Figure 2. How frequently pastors preach at the station

5 For congregations with more than one prayer house or place for worship services, a station is the central place of worship where a pastor resides. This is the administrative center of a congregation.

A cross-tabulation of the size of congregations in terms of the number of prayer houses and the regularity of pastors' involvement in preaching at the station revealed that out of the seventeen congregations whose pastors preach at the station more than three times, ten congregations have no prayer houses, four have one or two prayer houses, two have three prayer houses, and one has more than four prayer houses. Out of the seven congregations whose pastors preach three times quarterly, four have no prayer houses, one indicated they have one or two prayer houses, one has three prayer houses, and one has more than four prayer houses. For the two congregations whose pastors preach twice quarterly at the station, one indicated they have one or two prayer houses while the other one has more than four prayer houses.

5.4 *The most regular preachers*

The study also sought to compare the regularity with which pastors and laypeople preach cumulatively regardless of the size of the congregations. The graph below reveals the results.

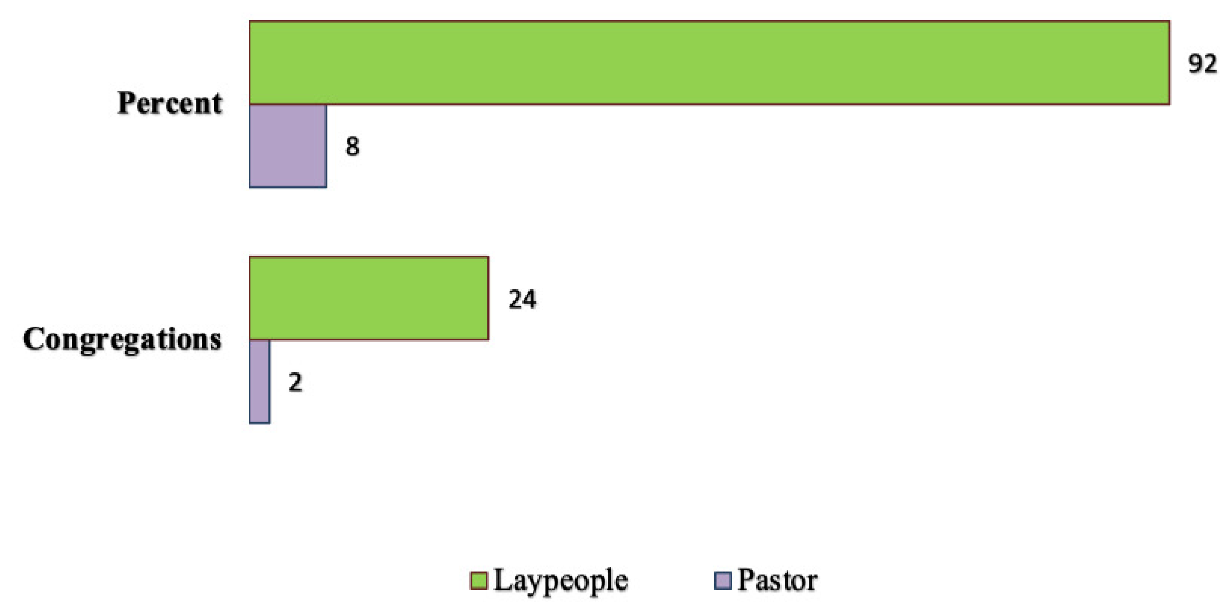

Figure 3. The most regular preachers

The graphic presentation above shows that in twenty-four congregations (representing 92.3%) laypeople preach the most while in only two congregations (representing 7.7%) pastors preach more than laypeople. A correlational analysis was done to see the influence of the size of the congregation on the regularity of pastors' preaching. The data shows that there is a minimal relationship because 86% of congregations without prayer houses (twelve out of fourteen) have laypeople as the most regular preachers while all congregations with prayer houses have laypeople as the most regular preachers. Even if the total number of times that pastors in congregations with prayer houses preach in the prayer houses are combined with the number of times they preach at the station, lay preachers still preach more regularly.

5.5 Reasons for the dominance of lay preachers

Apart from the size of congregations being one of the factors that might contribute to the dominance of laypeople in the preaching program, participants were asked to indicate why they think most of the preaching is done by laypeople. The graph below shows the responses of the participants:

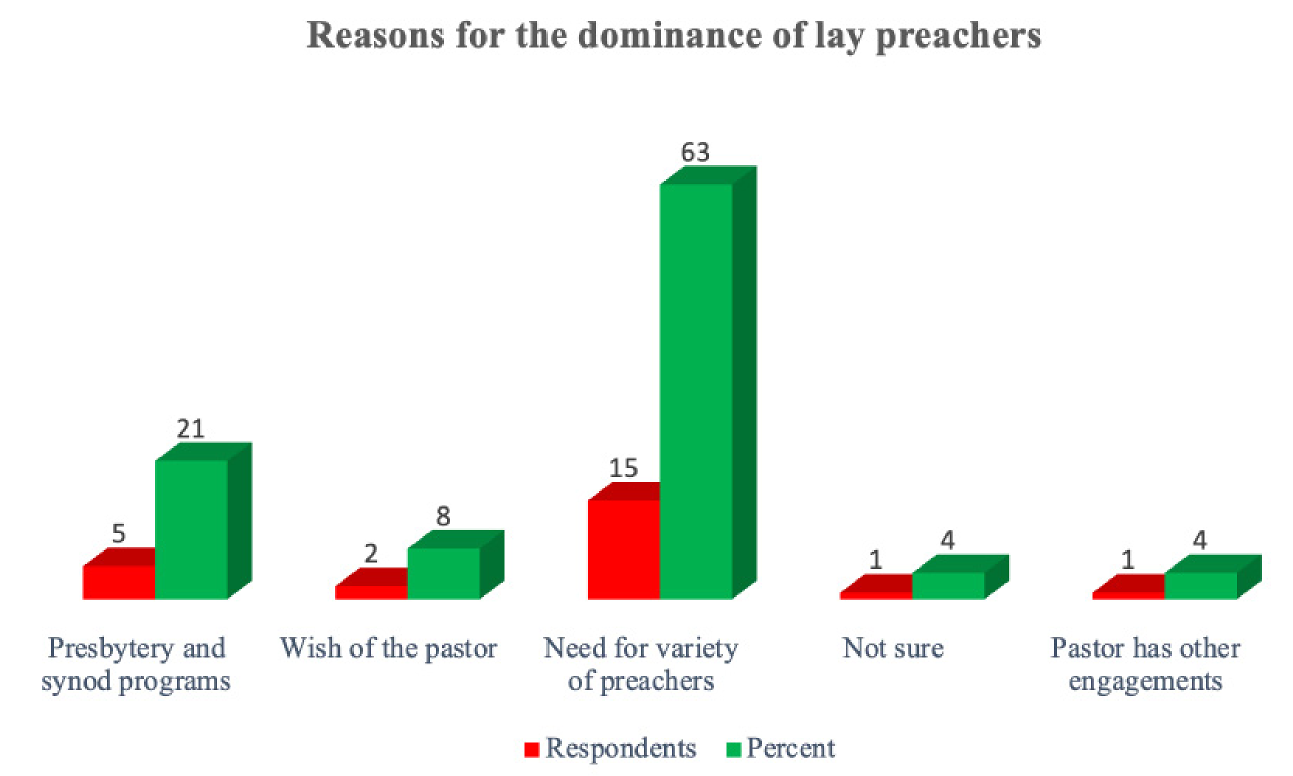

Figure 4. The reasons for the dominance of lay preachers

The data above shows that 63% of the respondents indicated that the main reason why lay preachers preach more regularly than pastors is the congregation's need for a variety of preachers. This was followed by 21% of respondents who said that synod and presbytery functions, such as commissioning and decommissioning of pastors in congregations, cause some pastors to preach less than laypeople. These respondents believe that if synod and presbytery functions do not happen on Sundays, pastors who skip preaching for such events would be available full-time for preaching in their congregations. The data above further indicates that 8% of the participants believe that lay preachers dominate the preaching program due to the wish of pastors. A total of 4% indicated that the reason lay preachers dominate is because of other commitments the pastor has, such as education. Another 4% was not sure why laypeople preach the most.

A careful consideration of the data above clearly indicates that the majority of the respondents believe that preaching is not a one-man show. This is why there is a desire to have different people featured in the preaching program, not just the pastor of a congregation.

5.6 Training of lay preachers

The study also inquired about the training on Bible interpretation, and sermon preparation and delivery for lay preachers who are featured in the preaching program. The data reveals that pastors in nineteen of the twenty-six congregations (representing 73.1%) do not give any training to the lay preachers who are featured in the preaching program and seven congregations (representing 27%) train lay preachers. The graph below illustrates the data.

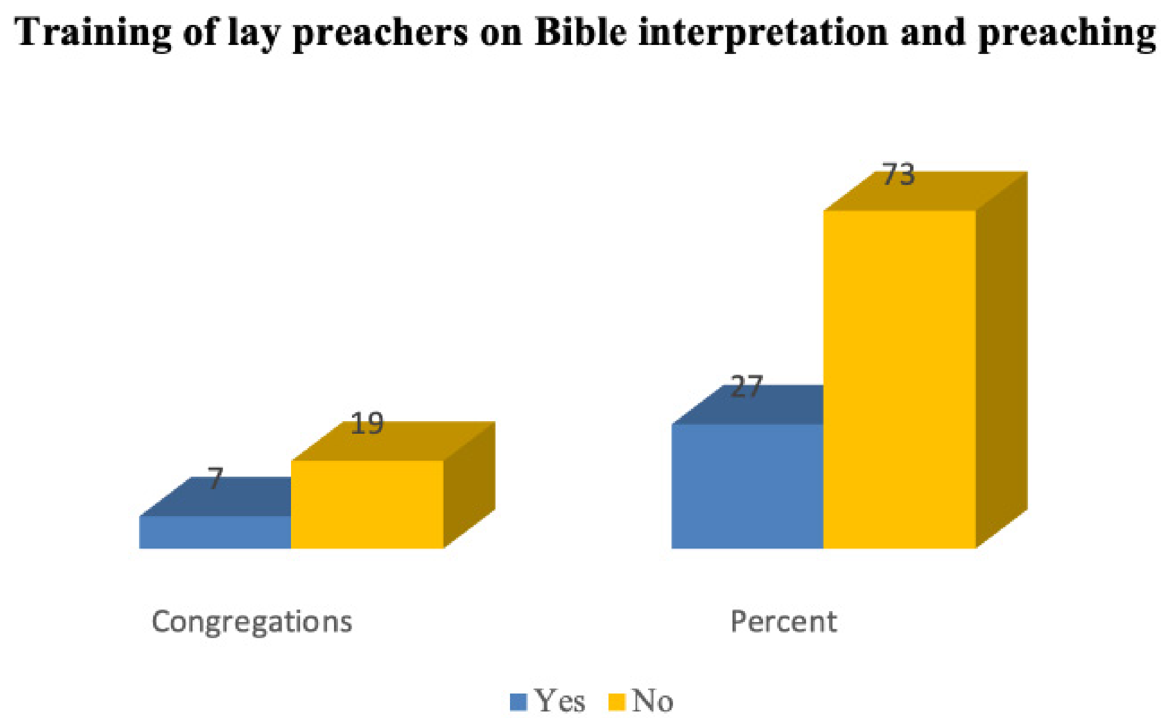

Figure 5. Training of lay preachers

A cross-tabulation of the data on the most regular preachers between laypeople and pastors and the training of lay preachers reveals that seventeen of the nineteen congregations whose pastors never train lay preachers are congregations with a dominance of lay preachers while only two have pastors as their most regular preachers. From this, one important conclusion can be made: for most congregations, apart from having laypeople preaching more than pastors, these lay preachers never receive any training from their pastors on Bible interpretation, and sermon preparation and presentation.

5.6.1 Types of training given to lay preachers

For the congregations whose pastors teach laypeople featured on the preaching program on Bible interpretation, and sermon preparation and presentation, a further inquiry was made on the type of training given to the lay preachers. The data shows that pastors in four congregations use Veritas Training[6] while pastors in three congregations organize sermon preparation seminars. This is shown in the figure below.

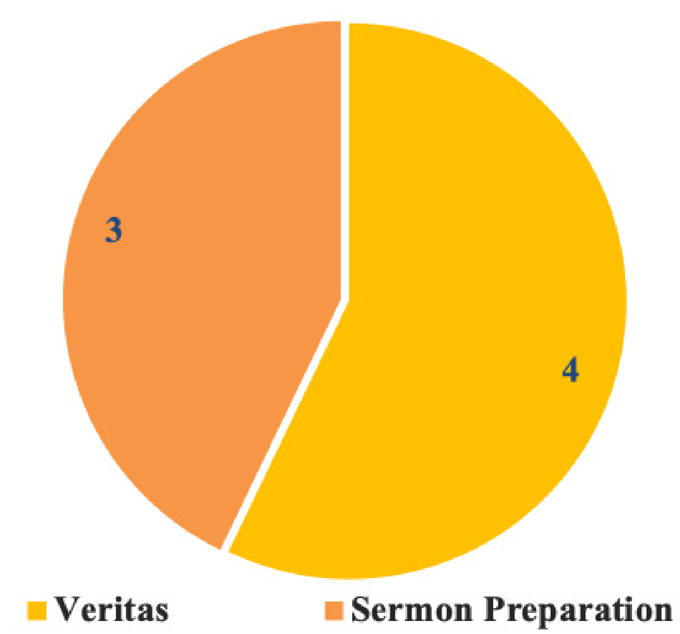

Figure 6. Types of training given to lay preachers

6 Veritas is a training program that equips pastors and laypeople in churches in Malawi and other Sub-Saharan regions with basic Bible interpretation skills.

5.6.2 Other teaching programs

The survey also inquired about other teaching programs that pastors conduct in their respective congregations apart from preaching and other official teaching programs of the synod.[7] The figure below shows the graphic presentation of the data.

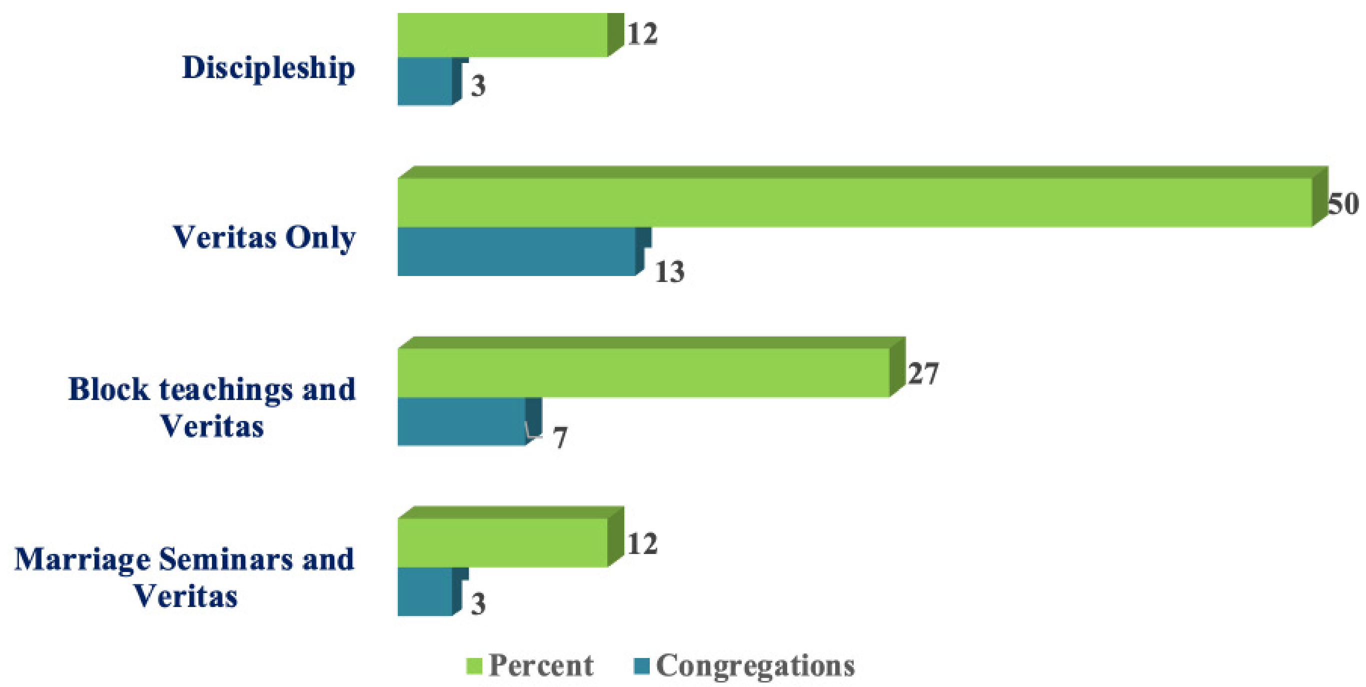

Figure 7. Other teaching programs organized by pastors

The data in the figure above shows that 50% (thirteen congregations) of pastors use Veritas Training only. Pastors in seven congregations conduct block teachings and Veritas, three conduct marriage seminars and Veritas, while three others conduct discipleship sessions. The data clearly shows that Veritas is the most common teaching program that pastors use in their congregations to supplement the official synod teaching programs. This is supported by the fact that 88% of pastors in the congregations that participated in the study use Veritas Training in their congregations.

7 E.g., orientation of newly-appointed committees, catechumen, Sunday school, and preaching at funerals and Wednesday prayers.

5.7 Setting up of preaching programs

This study also inquired as to whose responsibility it is to set up the preaching programs in each congregation. The data reveals that in most congregations, (twenty-one of the twenty-six congregations, or 80.8%), pastors and church service committees set up preaching programs together. In three congregations (11.5%) pastors set up the preaching programs alone, while in two congregations (7.7%) the church service committees set up the preaching program without the involvement of pastors. This is shown in the figure below.

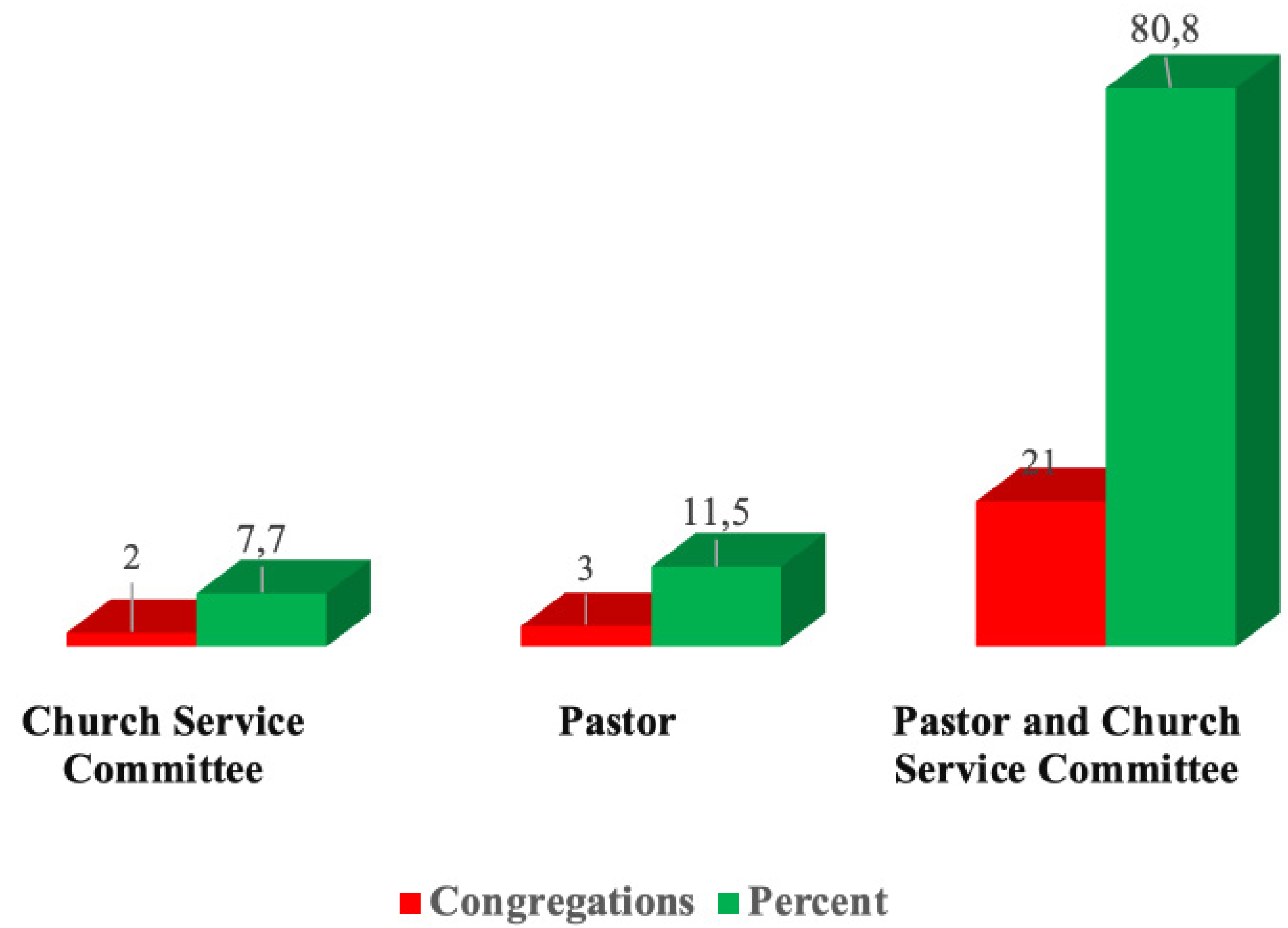

Figure 8. Producers of preaching

5.8 Guidelines for lay preachers

The participants were also asked about the nature of the guidelines that the preachers receive in their respective congregations. The data reveal that different congregations offer different guidelines. In sixteen of the congregations (representing 62%) preachers are given topics with biblical texts to preach from. Considering that in many congregations preaching programs are organized by pastors and church service committees who give preachers topics and texts to preach from, it is easier for preachers to stay within the lanes when they preach. However, it could also be challenging for the preacher if they are not familiar with the topics and texts.

The data further reveals that in six congregations (representing 23%) preachers are neither given topics nor biblical texts to preach from, but are left to choose for themselves. The advantage of this system is that preachers may not have to face the problem of preaching on a topic they are not familiar with or a text they do not understand or that does not resonate with them. The resulting problem is that shaping the faith of the congregation is challenging because of a lack of coherence in what comes from the pulpit.

The data further indicates that four congregations (representing 15%) give preachers topics but allow them to choose biblical texts to preach from. This allows preachers to choose texts they can manage, but sometimes texts and topics may not be in agreement. The figure below illustrates the data.

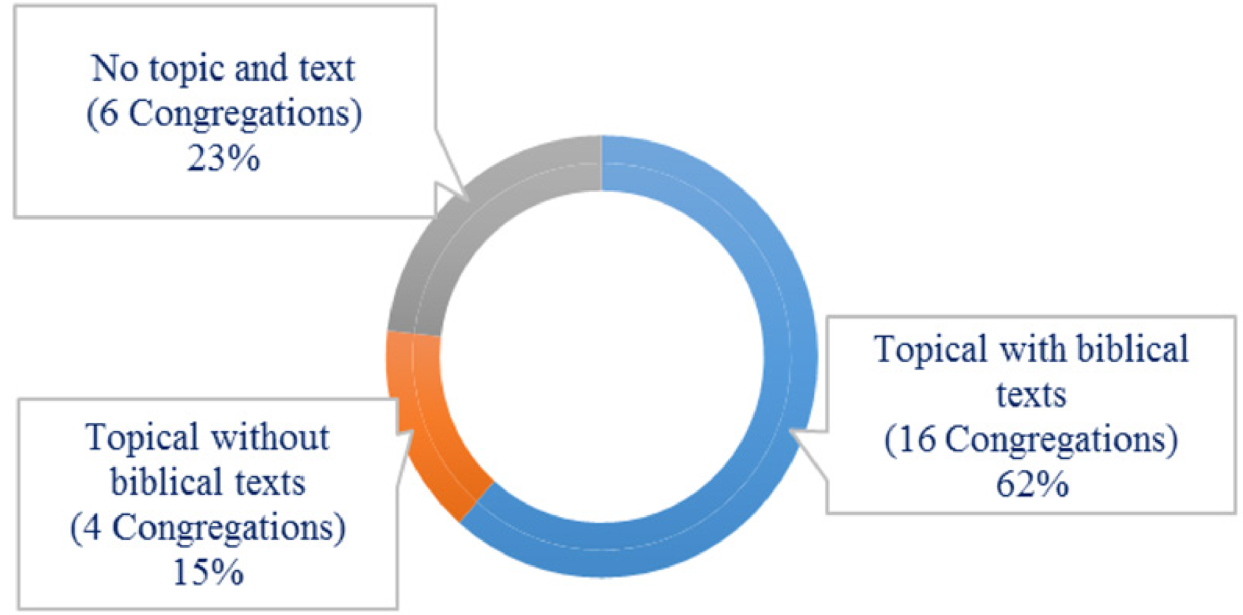

Figure 9. Preaching program formats

5.9 Orientation of preachers

This study also investigated whether or not pastors orient preachers featured in the preaching program before they preach. This inquiry was based on two assumptions: 1) that both pastors and church service committees have objectives to accomplish whenever they draw up a preaching program, and 2) that these objectives motivate their choices of who should preach when and what kind of guidance they provide. The figure below shows a graphic presentation of the data.

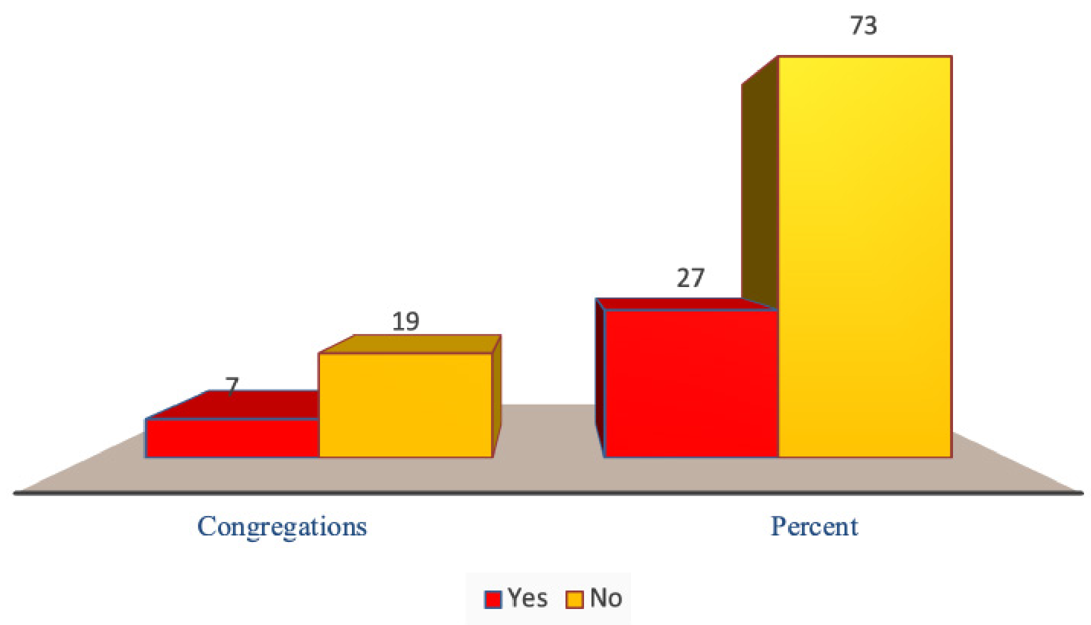

Figure 10. Orientation of lay preachers

The figure above shows that in nineteen congregations (representing 73%) preachers are never oriented before they preach while in seven congregations (representing 27%) pastors orient preachers before the time. A cross-tabulation with the variable about the dominant preachers with the orientation of preachers reveals that eighteen of the nineteen congregations which never do the orientation of preachers on the preaching program are dominated by lay preachers. The picture becomes even bleaker when a further cross-tabulation is done with the issue of whether pastors provide preachers with training in Bible interpretation and preaching. The data reveals that sixteen of the nineteen congregations that do not provide guidelines to lay preachers do not offer training in Bible interpretation or sermon preparation, either. This means in many congregations preachers lack both orientation and training on how and what they are supposed to preach.

6. Reimagining the Role of the Pastor as a Teaching Elder

It is reasonable to conclude that the findings of the situational audit of the CCAP NS congregations in Lilongwe reflect the situation in the Nkhoma Synod as a whole. This argument hinges on the fact that most Nkhoma Synod congregations are in rural areas covering a wider geographical area and have more prayer houses (Phiri 2020, 23–44). Regardless of the reasons, the fact that laypeople preach more than pastors is a call to reimagine how pastors should fulfill their role as teaching elders tasked with proclaiming the biblical truth to the flock entrusted to them. While preaching is an important means of fulfilling their teaching role, the fact that lay preachers dominate the preaching program means that pastors must consider other means of fulfilling their teaching role. Against this background, the study suggests that pastors must empower their congregations to preach effectively. This study presents the following findings and recommendations:

6.1 The findings

6.1.1 The need to empower laity

The study found that based on the following factors, pastors should empower their congregants in the ministry of preaching. Even if a pastor can have the zeal to fulfill his mandate of preaching, it is not just difficult but impossible to be effective in preaching if his congregation has many prayer houses. It is possible to preach every Sunday, but if a congregation has many prayer houses it means laypeople will preach more than the pastor. Therefore, it is important to invest in the people who do most of the preaching so that if the pastor is absent because he is preaching at another prayer house, the preaching will be done by a preacher who is well-equipped and empowered.

6.1.2 Meeting the people's need for variety

Technology has broken the geographical barriers which were there in the past. Information travels fast. People have a taste for different voices and listening to a single person every Sunday might irritate some. This is why in some congregations, people prefer that the preaching program features a variety of preachers. This implies that even if a pastor has enough zeal to preach every Sunday, the fact that people need a variety of preachers impedes his zeal. However, a pastor can preach indirectly every Sunday by raising up a variety of preachers who will stand in the pulpit each week.

6.1.3 Other pastoral engagements

Pastors will always be responsible for ministerial duties other than preaching. In light of this, a pastor should empower the people who stand in the pulpit whenever he is not preaching. If the laypeople are empowered, a pastor does not have to be concerned when a lay preacher enters the pulpit.

6.1.4 Spiritual growth and maturity of the church

Empowering laypeople is a means that can aid congregations in spiritual maturity. A congregation that has people who are empowered to preach will have missionaries who are always ready to testify about Christ and teach others wherever they are. As a pastor teaches his congregants to become teachers of the Word, their teaching ministry is not confined only to the congregation but can be practiced wherever they find themselves. Therefore, pastors must invest in the laity so that they can go on to teach others.

6.1.5 False doctrines

I have pointed out repeatedly that laypeople preach more frequently than pastors in most congregations. This means that without empowering the laity pastors are indirectly sowing seeds of false doctrine in their congregations. On average pastors spend five years of theological training in the CCAP NS because their duty is so critical that they are supposed to guard against false teachers and teach the congregants the truth of Scripture. The thorough training of pastors to guard against false teaching, could be jeopardized if laity are not equally empowered for their preaching ministry. Having the laypeople who are not empowered preach the most to a congregation can be compared with a qualified pilot entrusting a plane full of passengers to one of the passengers who does not know anything about flying a plane. If pastors are serious about combating false doctrines, then they must empower the laypeople before they stand in the pulpit.

6.2 Recommendations for the CCAP NS

Following the situational audit, this study makes the following recommendations:

1. Pastors must take a leading role in the formulation of the preaching program.
2. Pastors should provide preachers with topics and Bible texts.
3. Congregations with prayer houses (regardless of the number) must preach from the same topics and the same biblical passages.
4. Pastors should train all people featured in the preaching program in the basic principles of preaching, discuss each topic on the preaching program with them, and outline points from the passages that everyone preaches from every Sunday in all prayer houses.
5. No person should be allowed to stand in the pulpit if he has not participated in what is stated in the previous point.
6. Pastors should encourage congregants to participate in Veritas and other Bible interpretation and preaching training.

7. Conclusion

This research investigated the role of the pastor as a teaching elder in the CCAP NS. Having surveyed the relevant literature and the Bible, the study presented a situational audit of the current practices of the involvement of pastors in preaching programs in the CCAP NS congregations in Lilongwe city. Having conducted the data analysis the research proposed that there is a need to reimagine how a pastor can fulfill his role as a teaching elder. This study has established that based on several factors, a pastor can be effective in his role as a teaching elder by empowering the laypeople who dominate the preaching program in most congregations.

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Book Review: *Who Do You Say I Am? Christology in Africa*

Reed, Rodney L., and David K. Ngaruiya, eds. 2021. *Who Do You Say I Am? Christology in Africa*. Carlisle: Langham Global Library. xv + 459 pp. ISBN: 978-1-83973-532-5. Approx. 630 ZAR ($34.19 USD). Paperback.

This volume complements previous editions of the annual conferences of the Africa Society of Evangelical Theology (ASET). The editors, Rodney L. Reed and David K. Ngaruiya, compiled the best papers at the 2020 ASET conference and grouped them into three parts, also adding a collection of five papers (part 4) paying tribute to the late Prof. John S. Mbiti, whose contribution to and influence upon ASET was thought to deserve special recognition.

Part 1, "Christ in the Bible," comprises eight papers investigating New Testament passages on how they portray Jesus. But how should one read the Jesus stories? How should one relate to Jesus, a first-century Jew, from a contemporary African perspective?

Telesia K. Musili argues for a rereading of John 7:53–8:11 in the sense that Jesus extends an invitation that "brings out transformation, not only for the [adulterous] woman but also for all men and demeaning social structures" (p. 20). In an exegetical study of Luke 11:1–13, **Timothy J. Monger** evokes the honor-shame template of the parable that strikes a chord with East African cultures. Arguing that *anaideia* means "shamelessness" rather than "persistence," the sleeper will extend hospitality to avoid his shamelessness in denying the friend's request to go public. Jesus then purposely applies this to God, the "Father to reveal his nature: he will always act to preserve the honor of his name" (p. 38). **Lydia Chemei**, appraising John 4:1–42, purports "Eurocentric approaches in the analysis of the Christology of John's gospel" lack "practical replication" of Jesus's "inclusivity within the church leadership in Africa" (p. 43). In the encounter with the Samaritan woman, Jesus emerges "as the inclusive one, the nonjudgmental one, the teacher and the nurturer" (p. 43). She then deploys the concept of hybridity to relay these qualities "in imaging Christ as the egalitarian leader to formulate an African Christology that addresses the need for egalitarian leaders who model authentic servanthood as Christ did" (p. 44). **Elizabeth W. Mburu** avers that Western Christianity has "presented Christology in a particular way" which "has stunted the growth of a robust Christianity in Africa" (p. 57). Exploring Galatians "through the lens of an African Hermeneutic," she advocates for a "multidimensional nature of Christology" (p. 57), one which portrays Christ as a liberator, unifier (of the church), victor, truth, and curse-bearer.

Elkanah K. Cheboi reads Galatians 3:1–14, where Christ is presented as the "curse-remover," as an attempt by Paul to establish "his Christology of the cursed and crucified Christ as the remover of curses against this backdrop of the ancient understanding and practice of curses" (p. 77). The pervasive presence of curses and binding spells in antiquity is also a widespread phenomenon in contemporary African contexts. Although Africans, like the ancients, know many remedies to prevent or reverse curses, they also only manage the situation and cannot offer the ultimate solution (p. 88). Thus, imaging "the crucified Christ not only as a curse-bearer but also as the ultimate curse-breaker" (p. 88)—ergo the ultimate solution for sin and death—within local African audiences is an appropriate pastoral response. **Enoch O. Okode** offers a detailed exegetical analysis of Romans 5:6–8,

https://doi.org/10.54725/conspectus.2023.1.6

bemoaning the fact that verse 7 is largely circumvented in the literature. Okode propounds to read and understand this passage within the cultural setting of the "Greco-Roman benefaction system," whereby Jesus, the Messiah, is portrayed as the Supreme King "whose benefaction is superior and surprising because it overturns key aspects of the Greco-Roman ethic of reciprocity" (p. 95). Okode's passionate—and well-argued—appeal for Romans 5:7 draws "upon the rare but not inconceivable Greco-Roman practice whereby the beneficiary of a gift would be willing to die on behalf of his benefactor" (p. 111). Christ, however, subverts this practice since his sacrificial death is not a payment "for the sake of 'the good' (ὁ ἀγαθός) … but for the unworthy to demonstrate God's love (5:8)" (p. 112).

Gift Mtukwa "seeks to examine what exactly Paul expected his followers to imitate in Christ and his representatives (apostles)." Tracing the use of "*μιμηταί* [imitation]" in the "Pauline corpus" (p. 117) and its use in ancient literature, he then highlights some implications for the contemporary church in Africa, namely, to imitate Christ (being cruciform, humbling oneself, and acting on behalf of others) and, as a recommendation to church leaders, to also imitate Paul who worked "with his own hands so as not to be a burden to anyone" (p. 132). Lastly, **Moses I. Ogidis** advocates for a christological reading of Ephesians 5:21–33, steering away from popular interpretations which thrive on "the hierarchical relationship between husbands and wives" (p. 137) by solely emphasizing (misusing) the submission clause. The focal point is Christ who serves as "the ideal model—being human and God—for husbands to emulate his sacrificial love," which in turn serves "as a model for married men in Africa" (p. 137).

Part 2, entitled "Christ in Theology and Church History" comprising seven chapters, shifts to a historical inquiry, seeking to address "issues of constructive theology regarding the doctrine of Christ" (p. xiv). **Daniel Mwailu** signposts the bumpy journey of Christology in Africa now well placed at the center of "contemporary theologizing" (p. 158). Of paramount importance is to evoke emic concepts and ideas in "producing a Christology that is authentically biblical, culturally African, and which lasts" (p. 161), though care and in-depth study of "authentic concepts that leave no room for nominal Christianity nor an open doorway for syncretism" (p. 172) are required. **Juliana Nzuki** and **Elkanah K. Cheboi** employ the intertestamental period which projected "a political and military messiah who would deliver Israel from its enemies" to caution against constructing a Christ derived from "prevailing socioeconomic and political circumstances" (p. 182). Such pitfalls should be avoided in the African endeavor of formulating a Christology (i.e., the ancestor motif). **Henry M. Garba** presents Cyril of Alexandria's Christology as an important historical perspective for contemporary African Christianity because it embraces a "unitive understanding"—the divine and human nature—of Christ so crucial for providing "an appropriate and authentic christological interpretation of the Christ event" (p. 214). Likewise, **John M. Kiboi** delves into the christological confessions of the early church to highlight the need to appropriately balance ontological (person) and functional (work) Christologies. The methodology to achieve this is the "top-down ontological approach that begins from the Being before it reflects on human experiences and (pastoral) reflections" (p. 238).

E. Okelloh Ogera develops "a christological motif from the concept of *Ker* (high priest) among the Luo community of Western Kenya," juxtaposing it with the biblical concept of the high priest in an attempt to contextualize Jesus Christ so that he "does not remain a stranger among African Christians" (p. 239). **Stephanie A. Lowery**, following Célestin Musekura's view on the necessity of communal forgiveness, explores African wisdom "related to giving and forgiving" for a "more profound, contextualized understanding of forgiveness" (p. 257). **Thandi Soko-de Jong** researches faith communities in Blantyre (Malawi) and their response to the question: "How do you understand 'Jesus as Healer' in situations of living with treatable but not yet curable illness?" (p. 275). The findings attest to "more diverse, positive approaches to health and healing in African (evangelical) images of Jesus as Healer than those often focused upon in the prosperity gospel" (p. 286).

Part 3 contains four chapters under the headline, "Christ in Praxis." **Rowland D. Van Es Jr.** offers a visual approach to African Christology by investigating how African Christians "view images of Jesus portrayed in African drawings in order to understand him" (p. 292). Conversing with J. Mbiti and K. Bediako, **Alistair I. Wilson** opines that both scholars have failed to sufficiently emphasize "the role of Jesus Christ as Lord of mission" (p. 320), thus they did not develop a constructive "mission Christology," which posits Jesus "as the authorizer and initiator of mission both before and after his death and resurrection" (p. 336). **L. Oseje** and **B. C. Sichone** focus on Jesus in Islam, making a plea for a better grasp of how Muslims perceive and interpret Jesus. Oseje opts for contrasting Jesus as portrayed in the New Testament with *AKI* in the Qur'an. Sichone's interest is with the lay Christians who "need to know what or how Muslims think about God in relation to Jesus" (p. 363).

Part 4 presents **David K. Ngaruiya, Esther Mombo, James Nkansah-Obrempong, Jesse N. K. Mugambi**, and **Samuel Ngewa** paying their tribute to the late John S. Mbiti by reflecting on some of his major achievements, his personal qualities, and some anecdotal material of personal encounters of the authors with the "father of contemporary African theology" (p. 394). The volume is supplemented by a list of contributors as well as the requisite Subject, Author, and Scripture indices.

The present volume is a welcome contribution to the pivotal question of how one should relate to Jesus, a first-century Jew, from a contemporary African perspective. Two directions were outlined: focusing on the Scripture texts—advocating for re-reading of texts in the New Testament to situate the African contexts within reach of their messages—and listening to the experiences and struggles of Christian communities in the past who were faced with the same question. There is much freshness, passion, and expertise presented within the wide range of articles and topics. Current African christologizing, as demonstrated with this volume, generates a new thrust by analyzing the past, both in terms of Africa's own missionary experience as well as delving into ancient missionary practices of early Christian communities elsewhere. This volume additionally stresses the point that the Church in Africa ought not to forget its task to bring Christian Christology into conversation with the arts and other religious traditions in the neighborhood.

There is also a slight though noticeable jab directed towards Western theology and missional practice that have insufficiently (harmfully?) contextualized the Gospel message, which left the African Church wanting, bereft of the necessary skills—and maturity—to stem contemporaneous ills which have befallen it. Undoubtedly, there is no escaping from the fact that a simple (Eurocentric) transfer of theology and missional practice left behind a bewildering array of outcomes which requires now "producing a Christology that is authentically biblical, culturally African, and which lasts" (p. 161). This view seems to align with ASET's Theological Series statement in the introductory part:

> We often hear these days that the center of Christianity is moving toward the Global South and Africa is a key player in that movement. This makes the study of African Christianity and African realities important—even more so when it is being done by Africans themselves and in their own context.

Granted! But, supposing this view that Africa is a key player in shifting the center of Christianity to the Global South achieves its maturation to its fullest extent and capacity, will Africa then be able to bequeath to the rest of the world not only African Christianity fully immersed in African realities, but a Christianity that transcends geography and cultural expression to supersede the Western Christian enterprise to Africa with its apparent Eurocentric flaws and ignorance? In other words, should African Christology not also be attentive to the greater horizon of God's mission? Should it not also instill in its pursuit to properly engage with the African realities the notion that to frame that from which you cannot free yourself (to represent and embody a gospel in a culturally conditioned form, as Lesslie Newbigin once put it) is a reality since a certain *foreignness* always accompanies all cross-cultural Gospel bearers, whether the transfer happens from North to South or from South to North?

I appreciate the diversity of topics but also the critical tone—noticeable, though sporadic—warning the reader not to yield to the temptation to forge all sorts of christological responses out of massively rich African contexts just for the sake of christologizing, only to bring some form of African authenticity to the table.

Who Do You Say I Am? Christology in Africa makes for compelling reading and offers a wide range of approaches for contextual christological concepts in Africa. It is a must-read for students in theological institutions, the pastoral staff overseeing churches, congregations, or parishes, but equally important, it ought to reach the ordinary Christian to foster the growth of a robust Christianity in Africa.

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Book Review: *Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church*

Gupta, Nijay K. 2023. *Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic. xiii + 209 pp. ISBN 978-1-5140-0074-8. Approx. 433 ZAR ($24 USD). Paperback.

1. Introduction

Nijay K. Gupta is a full professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary in the greater Chicago area; formerly he held the same position at Portland Seminary. He is well-known to the South African Theological Seminary (SATS) community, having offered Master Classes for SATS on 1 Thessalonians (2021) and Philemon (2022). He has published commentaries on 1-2 Thessalonians, in the New Covenant Commentary Series (Cascade Books, 2016), and on Galatians, in the Story of God Bible Commentary Series (Zondervan Academic, 2023). His monographs include *Paul and the Language of Faith* (Eerdmans, 2020) and *15 New Testament Words of Life: A New Testament Theology for Real Life* (Zondervan Academic, 2022). In *Tell Her Story*, Gupta examines some often-hidden figures—albeit hidden in plain sight—of women in ministry, as seen in the biblical texts. He starts with an examination of the era prior to the establishment of the Church, looking at key texts in the Old Testament and in the Gospels as well as the general role and place of women in the world of the New Testament. He then proceeds to assess the known women leaders in the early Church. Next, he asks, "What About…?" and scrutinizes the common objections raised to women in ecclesial leadership. The book includes both a general index and a Scripture index. *Tell Her Story* has footnotes rather than endnotes, which the reader will find helpful.

2. Overview

Like many, Gupta's Christian journey began in an ecclesial tradition in which only men were allowed to lead. Also like many, he simply accepted that things were the way they were and the way they should be. Unlike the Bereans, he did not examine whether his inherited theology and ecclesiology were grounded in Scripture. He was simply "content with the assumption that the church is for everyone to attend and participate in, but should be led by men, because that's the way it has always been according to the Good Book" (p. 2). Fortunately for New Testament scholarship and for readers of this book, he moved beyond the views he had inherited and examined the evidence for himself.

2.1 Backgrounds: Part 1, "Before the woman leaders of the early Church"

In this section, Gupta highlights the background to his exploration of Christian women leaders which comprises the core of his book in the following section. In a section with four chapters, he explores four topics: "Deborah, Prophet, Judge, Mother over Israel," "Going Back to the Beginning: Genesis 1–3," "Women in the New Testament World," and "The Women in Jesus' Life and Ministry."

Many who assume that the very idea of female leadership is inherently contrary to God's created order go to great lengths to explain how Deborah's effective leadership was an exception that proved the rule of exclusive male leadership. They assert that Deborah's leadership was merely the result of her filling a vacuum caused by the failure of Israelite men to step up and lead. Gupta refutes those arguments largely by letting the testimony of Scripture speak for itself, observing that "Deborah is the only judge given extensive narration of whom nothing negative is said or implied" (p. 12). He shows her to be not just a secular magistrate and military advisor but a spiritual leader in the model of Moses and Joshua and as a type of Samuel who would follow.

Next, Gupta cogently argues that nothing in the Genesis creation account "clearly establishes headship, female submission, or unique male ruling authority" (p. 25). The disruption to human "harmonious partnership" that we see in Genesis 3 does not establish a biblical mandate for hierarchicalism; instead of hierarchy, the "way back" to "unity and harmony [is restored] through Jesus Christ" (p. 29).

In reviewing the social contexts of the Roman Empire in the first century, Gupta acknowledges that Roman society was patriarchal from top to bottom but carefully points out a more nuanced, and more historically accurate, picture. Women were not merely consigned to be "barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen" (in accordance with the modern hierarchical trope) but often had considerable agency and honor and exercised leadership and patronage in various contexts. Inscriptional evidence demonstrates that even in Jewish synagogues, "women sometimes held leadership titles" (p. 47). It should, therefore, come as no surprise that important early Christian "leaders like the apostle Paul not only acknowledged women leaders in Christian communities but also commended and praised them for their work" (p. 49).

In the fourth chapter, Gupta turns to the women of the Gospels, who were "often modeling and performing ministry faithfully" in ways that show that "they were instrumental agents of the beginning of the gospel and the birth of the church" (p. 51). In a male-dominated world, the Gospels consistently highlight the concerns, contributions, and voices of women. Notably, it was a woman, Mary Magdalene, who was commissioned to preach the gospel of the resurrection to the Twelve.

2.2 The data: Part 2, "The women leaders of the early Church"

This section is the main course of the feast Gupta lays out before us. In these five chapters, he examines "The Early Churches," "Women Co-laborers in Ministry Leadership," "Phoebe, Paul's Trusted Proxy," "Prisca, Strategic Church Leader and Expert Teacher," and "Junia, Venerated Apostle and Imprisoned Hero." Remarkably, out of 26 individuals whom Paul explicitly honored as church leaders in Romans 16, ten were women. "Paul was explicitly commending women's ministry and leadership" (p. 98). Gupta observes that the hosts of house churches "would have been the most natural choices for church overseers" given their preexisting skillsets. He acknowledges that the majority of such householders would have typically been the *paterfamilias*, but he goes on to note that in the New Testament period "women may have comprised up to 25 percent of the total householders" (p. 87). Lydia in Philippi (Acts 16), Nympha in Laodicea (Col 4), and Prisca (with her husband Aquila) in Ephesus are examples of these. Throughout his letters, Paul habitually honored "faithful Christian women leaders" (albeit, while not excluding men), frequently commending them "*as* coworkers" in ministry (p. 107; emphasis mine).

The New Testament documents portray early churches which "consciously rejected authoritarian systems that were prevalent in" the surrounding society (p. 78). For example, Paul identifies Phoebe, a woman, as a *diakonos* (minister) in Romans 16:1, a term elsewhere used of Jesus

(Rom 15:8). It is interesting that he uses "the generic masculine form of the word" rather than the feminine form (*diakonissa*) which we might translate as *deaconess* (p. 84). Elsewhere Paul uses this term to describe various leaders who "possess *authority*" (p. 118; emphasis mine). As Paul's hand-selected letter carrier for the Romans, Phoebe additionally would have possessed "a kind of apostolic agency" as his official interpreter and commentator of his words, as someone whom Paul recognized as a peer (p. 122). Likewise, Prisca (also known as Priscilla) is highlighted by both Luke and Paul as not only a church leader but as one who, as "an advanced teacher" (p. 135), was commended for correcting the male church leader and evangelist Apollos. On this point, Gupta notes that Luke uses the same verb (*ektithēmi*) to describe her instruction of Apollos as he uses to describe the apostolic teaching of Peter (Acts 11:4; 28:23).

It is remarkable that today some people continue to insist that "maybe Junia was a man and not a woman" or that Paul was merely lauding her and Andronicus as people whom the actual (all male) apostles happened to know and thought well of. (Notably mistranslations of Rom 16:7 in versions like the NET and the popular ESV perpetuate the latter mistake; NIV–1984 recognized that the pair were *apostoloi* but incorrectly gave the masculine *Junias*; NIV–2011 gives *Junia*, acknowledging her sex.) The evidence that Junia was a woman and that she and her husband Andronicus were "*prominent*—noteworthy, distinguished, special—among the *apostoloi*" (p. 141) is incontrovertible. Even if not "big-A" Apostles (e.g., The Twelve plus Paul), they were clearly apostolic workers who exercised the full range of authoritative teaching and ministry in the churches. To correct continuing misconceptions to the contrary, Gupta helpfully summarizes the evidence on these points.

Gupta concludes part 2 by reflecting on five key themes:

- "God's People Have Needed Wise, Faithful, and Brave Women from the Beginning";
- "Women of All Kinds Encountered Jesus and His People";
- "Paul Preached Harmony between Men and Women in the Home and the Church";
- "Paul Relied on Numerous Women Leaders as Coworkers in the Gospel Mission"; and
- "Independently Powerful Women Existed in the Roman World—and in the Early Churches Too."

Gupta cogently argues that the named women in Paul's letters "were *ministers*"—within the leadership of the early church "women were there, when we so often imagine that they weren't" (p. 156; emphasis mine).

2.3 Excursus: What about…?

This is Gupta's "bonus section" (p. 6). Having examined the evidence of *How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church*, he moves to address the two most common *gotcha* questions raised both by hierarchalists and by those who have simply always been taught that "women can't." The questions are, what about Paul prohibiting women from teaching in the church in 1 Timothy 2, and what about the submission texts in the New Testament household codes? (p. 161).

Many interpreters assume that the passage in 1 Timothy 2 teaches "that women ought to play no executive function in the church because they are gullible and hasty by nature, and their proper place is caring for family in the home" (p. 164). Gupta successfully refutes this misinterpretation, looking

https://doi.org/10.54725/conspectus.2022.2.7

at the entire narrative scope of the New Testament instead of at a handful of proof texts. Likewise, many ardently believe that submission language directed towards women in the household codes can be summarized merely as *women should be submissive (often to the point of subjugation) in the home and women are absolutely forbidden to be anything other than silent in the church*. Gupta acknowledges that during his "early years of Christian faith," he was unable to reconcile "these submission texts with any perspective that allowed women to exercise authority in the church." But as he studied these passages—both "what they say" and what they "don't say"—and their contexts more deeply, he realized that those passages are not the prohibitory texts they are taken to be (p. 182). Upon examination, these codes, though borrowed from surrounding Greco-Roman culture, have been thoroughly Christianized. In them, Paul introduces a "reciprocity and partnership" between husbands and wives that emphasizes "mutual care and unity" (p. 189) and a "radical mutuality within existing relationship systems" (p. 194), such as we see in the broader exhortation to mutual submission between all believers, men and women together, in Ephesians 5:21. In light of what we know from Paul's own writings "women could and did serve in powerful roles in ministry leadership," and Gupta sees "no reason why the household codes would have prevented women from serving in ministry" (p. 199).

3. Evaluation

Throughout this book, Gupta is careful to avoid historical revisionism. He admits, for example, that "we don't know whether women served as *episkopoi* in the early churches," noting that no one, either man or woman, is explicitly named as an overseer of the Church in the New Testament (p. 85). This may serve to disappoint some egalitarians even as it encourages any hierarchalists who may have read so far. Instead, this book can be characterized as "an exercise in *amplification*" (p. 3; emphasis mine), simply highlighting the evidence that has been there all along. Gupta's handling of biblical texts, including controversial ones, is consistently responsible. He does not pretend to have explained away "all the confusing bits" of texts like 1 Timothy 2:8–15 (p. 177), and he writes with epistemic humility. Because of his engaging writing style, this book is accessible to ordinary readers. Because of his responsible scholarship, academic readers can be directed to key primary and secondary sources in the footnotes. In spite of ancient (and contemporary!) expectations to the contrary, the New Testament documents treat "women as strong, productive, trustworthy, and wise co-leaders in ministry" (p. 197).

I found little to criticize in *Tell Her Story*, beyond a single typographical error (p. 104, footnote 27). Readers who approach the book with a dogmatic commitment to gender hierarchicalism are unlikely to be convinced to change their position by Gupta's argument. Even if they grant the evidence that Junia was both a woman and an apostle, for example, they are likely to deny that her ministry role is exemplary for the current day. Readers, whether egalitarian or complementarian, who approach the proffered evidence with an open mind stand to gain much.

The book's primary limitation is one necessitated by its scope. I would have appreciated an examination of extrabiblical documents and other evidence from Early Christianity, such as the corpus of the Apostolic Fathers and various second-century texts. What do 1 Clement, Ignatius's letters, and the Didache have to say about the role of women? What might a careful study of the New Testament apocryphal writings reveal? While those writings contain many hagiographical elements that are clearly fictive, what, for example, do the stories of Thecla tell us about the role of women in leading, teaching, and ministering in the early Church? Gupta, however, has limited his scope to the canonical New Testament documents, though this suits his intended purpose. Finally, the value of this book would have been enhanced by the inclusion of a full bibliography. Gupta does provide a select list of suggested further reading as a “Postscript”; this is helpful, but for his sources, readers must peruse the footnotes.

4. Conclusion

Gupta confesses that in the past he had “neglected the stories” of women leaders in the Bible, treating “the Bible as a man’s world” in which “women were just supporting characters” (p. 154). Having hidden these women from himself, he eventually hid them from others as well. But now he takes responsibility for that error and encourages us to join him in repudiating this practice. Doing so will help us all to “become better theological cartographers” (p. 160). I highly recommend this text for established scholars, younger students, and laity alike. Those strongly opposed to ministry roles for women should carefully consider the evidence and argumentation that Gupta presents. Others will find that predilections for women in ministry are not unprecedented but have apostolic roots. In the words of Beth Allison Barr in the Foreword, “God has always seen women” and “in *Tell Her Story*,” Gupta “helps us see them too” (p. xi).

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https://doi.org/10.54725/conspectus.2022.2.7

Book Review: *In Jesus' Name: Johannine Prayer in Ethical, Missional, and Eschatological Perspective*

Adams, Scott. 2022. *In Jesus' Name: Johannine Prayer in Ethical, Missional, and Eschatological Perspective*. Eugene: Pickwick. xiv + 98 pp. ISBN: 978-1-6667-3241-2. Approx. 364.10 ZAR ($20 USD). Paperback.

With his second book on prayer in the Johannine tradition, Scott Adams builds on the foundation he laid with his earlier study, *Prayer in John's Farewell Discourse: An Exegetical Investigation* (Pickwick, 2020). In his more recent monograph, aptly titled, *In Jesus' Name*, Adams compares the perspective on prayer presented in John's Farewell Discourse (John 14–16) with attitudes reflected in other portions of the Johannine corpus, specifically 1 John, 3 John, and Revelation. Adams's goal is not to argue for a particular understanding of the authorship of these biblical texts (though he does see them as part of a connected tradition). Rather, Adams seeks to illuminate the message concerning prayer found in these inspired writings by analyzing and comparing them. In this way, Adams is able to isolate distinctive aspects, while also highlighting important points of continuity. The result is a concise, informative, and edifying analysis of prayer in Johannine perspective. As with his earlier book, *In Jesus' Name* is marked by helpful interaction with current scholarship, solid exegesis, and informed theological reflection. Additionally, this book reflects the breadth of Adams's own ministry. Adams serves on the faculty of the Regent University School of Divinity (Virginia) and as the lead pastor at the Midtown Location of Our Savior's Church in Lafayette, Louisiana. Thus, he has one foot in the world of the academy and one in the church. Adams beautifully blends the academic and the pastoral in this recent volume with his eye for application, which is highlighted most clearly in his final chapter on contemporary application. This quality, in addition to the rhetorical power of Adams's prose, makes *In Jesus' Name* valuable for pastors and parishioners as well as scholars.

In Jesus' Name begins with the foundation (ch. 2); the way in which prayer functions in the Gospel of John and, more specifically, in the Farewell Discourse (FD). Prayer in the FD is "motivated by esteem for Jesus' name and all that his name represents." As a result, Johannine prayer flows from "the disciples' relationship with Jesus" (p. 17). Adams explains, "Praying on the basis of one's union with [Christ] not only involves making petitions according to the motivation of love as assumed in the Decalogue, but it involves making requests on the basis of Jesus' words and example (John 13:15; 34)" (p. 21). Johannine prayer is ethical in that it calls for the welfare of other believers as well as the salvation of the unbelieving world. The ethical and the missional are intertwined in that "prayer according to Jesus' love-ethic serves as one of the means by which individuals in the world become the friends of Jesus and members of the community of God" (p. 24).

Chapters 3–5 then progressively build by comparing this foundational understanding of prayer with that presented in 1 John (ch. 3), 3 John (ch. 4), and Revelation (ch. 5). In chapter 3 Adams provides helpful context for the promises of 1 John 3:21–22 ("Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him") and 5:14–15 ("And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we

https://doi.org/10.54725/conspectus.2023.1.8

ask anything according to his will he hears us"). By comparing these texts with John 14:1, 12–14, and 15:1–7 he demonstrates that the Johannine tradition presents "belief in Jesus, the efficacy of his name, and abiding in him" as the basis for one's confidence in prayer. This confidence in prayer is implied in the FD, but it is explicitly stated in 1 John. So, the FD and 1 John "employ slightly different vocabulary but portray the same optimistic outcomes" of prayer (p. 43).

In chapter 4 Adams offers detailed commentary on 3 John 2 and, through his comparison of this text with John 14:12–14, 15:7, and 17:1–16, he argues in a convincing fashion that "the Elder not only wished for Gaius's prosperity, but he prayed for it to come to pass for the sake of 'the name' and the mission of God." Adams suggests that "the Elder's prayer-wish and Gaius's prosperity" illustrate "how God chose to preserve the Johannine emissaries as they carried forth their mission" in a hostile world (p. 61).

In chapter 5 Adams contrasts prayer in the FD with "the prayers of the saints" in Revelation. The former is offered for the *continuation* of God's mission; the latter in anticipation of the *completion* of God's mission. In Revelation 5:8, 6:10, and 8:3–4, prayer is pictured as contributing to the vindication of the martyr-saints and the completion of God's final judgment. Here prayer is "the means by which the saints participate in" the eschatological drama (p. 79). Adams observes,

> The martyr's cry and God's response to them would naturally provide encouragement for the saints in John's day and for believers throughout history who are facing eschatological labor pains. The answer to their prayer-cries may be delayed, but their requests will not be denied. (pp. 73–74)

Adams's work serves to broaden our perspective on prayer in several important ways. First, in Christian communities often torn between the extremes promulgated by prosperity preachers on the one hand and gloomy, "just hang on until the end" cessationists on the other, Adams's balanced approach to prayer is refreshing. He insists that "faithful disciples will not ask for anything that precludes Jesus' character and mission" (p. 57). Thus, he rejects attempts to read "the Elder's prayer wish [3 John 2] as the means for all Christians to obtain health and wealth." And yet, at the same time, Adams wisely cautions, we "must not entirely minimize the Elder's prayer-wish to the point of precluding any expectation for material blessing" (p. 55). The key here is found in prayer that prioritizes God's glory and mission over our self-interest or comfort. This leads to my second observation.

Adams rightly grounds Johannine prayer in the mission of the church. The Elder prays for Gaius's prosperity "to come to pass for the sake of 'the name' and the mission of God." As Adams notes, this accords well with the FD, "where prayer is prescribed for the fruitfulness of the believing community" (p. 61). Finally, this ethical balance in prayer is facilitated by a proper understanding of biblical eschatology. Indeed, "Revelation reminds us that our eschatological hopes may be delayed, but they will not be denied." Since we pray in the name of the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:16), we can have confidence in spite of the spiritual battle that rages around us. I concur with Adams, we "should articulate a theology of victory" in our prayers, both private and corporate (p. 88). Our prayers should reflect the hope that is within us—a hope that cries out, "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev 21:1; 22:20).

I would note, however, that the cry of the martyrs, "How Long, O Lord…?" (Rev 6:10) encourages us to add lament, along with shouts of victory, to our repertoire of prayers. In view of the tendency of those in Pentecostal or Charismatic churches to adopt uncritically an over-realized eschatology (I say this as a Pentecostal), perhaps more emphasis on the "not yet" aspect of the "already/not yet" tension that marks our present existence would be helpful. Paul's reference to another prayer-cry, "the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (Rom 8:26; see also v. 23), moves in a similar direction.

Johannine prayer, and particularly the prayer-cry of Revelation 6:10, raises other important questions. Is prayer simply listening and learning? Or could it be, as Adams suggests, that when we pray, we actually participate in God's redemptive, transforming work? And do these prayers need to be cognitive and articulate in order to be edifying and efficacious? Here placing this Johannine perspective in dialogue with Paul's *Abba*-cry (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6; see also Mark 14:36) and his many references to praying and singing in the Spirit (1 Cor 14:14–15; Eph 5:18–19; 6:18; Col 3:16; see also 1 Thess 5:16–19 and Jude 20) might be productive.

These references to Paul highlight the fact that Adams's fruitful study of prayer in Johannine perspective is incomplete. What insights might be gleaned if he were to broaden this biblical dialogue on prayer to include other New Testament authors? I think now especially of Luke, who provides us with a wealth of material on prayer and connects prayer with the empowering work of the Holy Spirit in a special way (Luke 3:21; 11:13). Does this Lukan emphasis find its counterpart in texts like John 14:26, "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name" (John 14:26)?

All of this reminds us that it is no small thing to pray in Jesus's name, and we should not take this incredible privilege lightly. Adams's exhortation not to pray in Jesus's name in "a flippant, irreverent manner" is rooted in a marvelous truth: "God has given his name to Jesus, and Jesus has, in turn, given believers permission to use his name in prayer" (p. 85). May we, like Jesus, pray with Spirit-inspired joy and expectation (Luke 10:21) as we marvel at God's gracious desire to hear our prayers and to act.

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