

# SATS PhD COMPENDIUM



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**SATS**

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

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# Editorial

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the third volume (2022) of this compilation. The Compendium comprises concise summaries of doctoral theses written by English and Spanish PhD graduates. I acknowledge the unwavering dedication and countless hours invested by our doctoral students in their research and writing endeavors. Completing a PhD thesis is no small feat, and it is with utmost joy that we commemorate these students, who have not only contributed to this volume but have also enriched theological scholarship and, more importantly, the kingdom of God. Such an achievement undoubtedly owes its success to the faithfulness of God, His benevolence, divine presence, as well as the abundant love and support from family and friends. Additionally, the supervisors played a vital role in skillfully guiding and mentoring these students. SATS expresses profound gratitude for their service and commitment. With that being said, as we celebrate our PhD students, let us also celebrate those who faithfully stood by their side throughout their doctoral journey.

I would like to extend my personal gratitude to all those who made valuable contributions to the publication, namely, Lindsey Moyo and Dr. David Roldán, who meticulously proofread the manuscript, and Marno Kirstein, who performed an outstanding job in typesetting the document. I would also like to thank all our doctoral alumni who submitted their articles. Once again, their collective effort has resulted in an exceptional publication. Above all, I express profound gratitude to our Lord Jesus Christ, who has



bestowed our doctoral students with the strength, skills, and determination necessary to successfully accomplish their PhD theses.

**Dr Robert Falconer**

SATS Coordinator of Student Research

*June 2023*

# Evangelism Practices of the Church of Pentecost in the Afigya Kwabre District, Ghana (1962–2016): Towards Designing a New Missional Strategy

**Dr Onyinah Gyamfi**

Supervisor: Dr Jesse Fungwa Kipimo

## **Abstract**

This study sets out to investigate the evangelism practices of the Church of Pentecost in the Afigya Kwabre District of Ghana between 1962 and 2016, and develops a new missional strategy for the church.

The study analyzes evangelism praxis and identifies factors that caused the Church of Pentecost to experience unprecedented and phenomenal growth. These factors made the church the leading classic Pentecostal church in Ghanaian society. The research also shows some elements that obstructed and influenced the church's development and growth. The study further examines evangelism in selected chapters of the book of Acts and analyzes the mode of evangelism, manifestation of God's accredited power, and miracles performed by Apostles, combined with

empirical and literary findings, to facilitate the adoption of a new missional approach. After the analysis, this study also proposes a new missional strategy.

The significance of this study is that it informs the theoretical awareness and understanding of a decline in the evangelism praxis, despite the church's phenomenal growth. Thus, the researcher recommends focusing on a new missional approach to evangelism that is hitherto lacking. Finally, it informs empirical understanding to mitigate and overcome the challenges to foster a better evangelism practice, sustain the gains, and spread the gospel in Ghanaian society.

## **1. Introduction**

Evangelism is the heartbeat of the church in fulfilling the Great Commission (Mark 16:15, Matt 28:18–20). The Great Commission is universal in scope; Jesus said the good news message should reach all nations by his power. One fundamental aspect of a mission that represents the reign of God is its evangelistic nature (Bryan 2018, 47). Within this Great Commission mandate, the founder of the Church of Pentecost (the CoP), James McKeown, adopted the Akan culture rather than the British culture in his evangelical approach (Leonard 1989; Kafui 2005). This method has been evident in the strides that have been made in the Christian faith in Ghana, including in approaches to evangelism between 1962 and 2016. The result of this evangelism approach was the unprecedented, phenomenal growth of the CoP in Ghana (Bredwa-Mensa 2004).

The CoP's membership rose from 26,000 in 1962 (Bredwa-Mensa 2004, 46) to 259,920 by 1993, thus outgrowing all the historically present churches in Ghana (Achim-Gyimah 2013, 124–125). The CoP is the biggest Pentecostal church in Ghana (Opoku 2004, 106; Larbi 2004). The CoP

Annual Statistical Analysis report (2016) recognized seven CoP districts in the Afigya Kwabre District with a membership of 16,918. The Ghana Statistical Service, District Analytical Report Afigya Kwabre (2010, x), indicates that the entire Afigya Kwabre District population is 136,140. These figures suggest that the church represents 8.04 percent of the Afigya Kwabre District population, and each district has approximately 2,416 members.

The missional history covered all seven districts of the CoP in the Afigya Kwabre District: Ahenekro, Afrancho, Ankaase, Atimatim, Buoho, Kodie, and Tetrem. The general sum of the development and growing movement of the CoP is credited to the efforts of the pioneer laypeople, elders, and pastors. They organized and provided leadership for the various districts, resulting remarkable growth.

In the Scriptures, Jesus consistently spoke of himself as being sent by God the Father in John's Gospel and subsequently commissioned his disciples for the same purpose (John 17:3–25; 20:21). Jesus Christ was the Master Evangelist; he knew how to bring people to himself (Moyer 1998, 43). The church takes decisions accordingly, believing that Jesus Christ sends his disciples into the world, just as the Father sent him. The mission of God is carried out through the church as its primary locus and focus (Engelsviken 2003, 486).

The study hypothesizes that the CoP is experiencing decreasing membership growth rates, a reduction in zeal for evangelism, reduced retention rates of new converts in the church, and ineffective follow-up. Also, there are schisms in prayer camps or centers and an increasingly unaccounted membership. The study analyzes this problem with a robust theory and by vigorously investigating the practices of evangelism in society, and posits how to sustain the church's growth. This theory could assist in designing a new missional strategy for the CoP in the Afigya Kwabre District

in Ghana so that it can forge ahead, maintain its equilibrium, and sustain its growth and development.

Despite its phenomenal growth, there is no recognition or publication concerning declining identification by the church. This uninformed stance makes the study significant not just for shedding light on the unprecedented growth factors, but for creating critical awareness of the classical Pentecostal church by challenging the church to remodel its missional strategy to overcome the decline and avoid a future plateau.

This study takes up the challenges of fieldwork, empirical literacy outcomes, and scholars' explanations of selected chapters from Acts that seek to apply the Christian evangelism approach in their contemporary settings. In the remaining sections of this study, I summarize the key features of the methodology employed, roll out the findings of the empirical investigation, and provide some reflection and conclusion.

## **2. Summary of Literature review**

Mouton (2001, 86–87) suggests that every research project begin with a review of the existing literature. The literature review surveys educated articles, books, conference proceedings, the internet, newspapers, and other relevant, credible scholarship in the field of research. This section is divided into four sub-sections: the CoP; Pentecostal missions; writings on evangelism; and writings on church growth.

### **2.1. The literature on the CoP**

The CoP, as a classical Pentecostal church, has not received much attention from many scholars in the past decade. The following scholars penned

their observations about the growth of the church. First, Larbi (2001, 99–273) acknowledges the CoP as an evangelistic, zealous church, planting and growing churches. These have been the bedrock of the CoP's efforts since its inception. He suggests that the CoP, which started from a humble beginning with a handful of committed members and an unstable financial administration, experienced growth and planted churches across the country.

Second, Opoku (2004, 1–165) explicitly analyzes the sustained growth of the CoP in a post-modern society. He stresses that the founding fathers and their successors prioritized specific core values that underlie its rapid growth. He further explains that these include intensive prayer, belief in miracles, signs, and wonders, a well-coordinated evangelistic and church planting strategy, dedicated leadership, and emphasis on holiness and discipline. He also points to obedience to the word of God, total reliance on the Holy Spirit, an original worship style, and a self-supporting financial policy.

The above writers on the CoP have given great insight and faith into the church's history, the role of the founding fathers, the spirit of evangelism, and the missionary strategies for winning souls for Christ. Indeed, their focus was not on identifying the decline factors and challenges despite the growth factors and sustainability.

## 2.2. The literature on the Pentecostal missions

Some scholars have dealt with Pentecostal missions. For example, Anderson (2018, 121–140) avers that the rapid growth of Pentecostal forms of Christianity in Africa in recent years can partly be attributed to the prevalent practice of exorcism or deliverance. He suggests that Pentecostal

Christianity offers liberation from evil powers and fulfills a felt need. Therefore, he affirms that this provides an attractive product in Africa's religious market, resulting in multiple conversions.

According to Kärkkäinen (2018, 28–49), the Pentecostal mission has always prioritized evangelism and proclamation, an intention to plant new churches that, in turn, could multiply missional efforts. He argues that in the evangelistic function, every church member is allowed to participate everywhere, from homes to workplaces to schools, which has been key to the growth of global Pentecostalism.

The scholars of the above literature have done extensive work and are very helpful for any researcher who wants to engage in the Holy Spirit and Pentecostal missions. This study delves into the dimensions of challenges of schisms and breakaways, heresy, and false prophets that are agents of decline, in order to help the Pentecostal movement mitigate against them, create unity, and sustain its growth.

### 2.3. The literature on evangelism

Some scholars have explored evangelism from a global perspective, and their publications have become tools for appreciating contributions to the evangelism movement. Hama (2018, 113–132) contends that the church exists to carry out Jesus's foundational command to make disciples of all nations. The healthy Christian life of authentic faith and practice is the disciple-life, as a disciple of Jesus, and his focus is to keep the purpose of raising a true disciple of Jesus in mind. Asamoah-Gyadu (2013, xiii, 182) posits that the main reasons for the growth of Pentecostalism have been its ability to adapt to different cultures and societies and to give contextualized expressions to Christianity. He states these include worship and liturgies, music and dance,

prayer, and emphasizing the experience of the Holy Spirit, evangelism, and spiritual gifts.

Top scholars have done extensive work that is useful for any researcher who will engage in evangelism. It is a necessary and healthy approach for Christianity that scholars champion and carry evangelism to all cultures. The researcher suggests that what is needed in evangelism studies is to explore the challenges causing the decline and making the growth plateau at certain stages, which is at the heart of this study.

#### 2.4. The literature on church growth

Several scholars have explored the study of Pentecostalism and church growth, and their publications contribute to church growth at large.

Young-Gi (2004, 101–113) posits that the concept of church growth is practical evangelism and emphasizes the importance of the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. He points out that the primary concern of church growth advocates is to analyze the causes of the growth and decline of the church. Gifford (1998) points out the broader context of Africa's churches, and he uses the concepts taken from political and social analysis to shed more light on recent developments in African Christianity.

The literature so far reviewed is about evangelism in a wide-ranging context and how one can maximize its benefits, if well-planned, for church growth. The researcher analyzed and reviewed them, mainly from a broad perspective, but they are relevant to any research bordering on evangelism and church growth. This study is geared towards filling the gap by investigating the current evangelism practices of the CoP concerning sustainability and overcoming challenges. The study will add to the growing knowledge of the impact of Pentecostalism and evangelism.



### **3. Research Methodology and Design**

This study falls under practical theology and uses Osmer's research model, favoring a qualitative approach (Osmer 2008; 2013). In this context, Corbin and Strauss (2008, 27) suggest that one of the virtues of qualitative research is that many alternative data sources are available. These may include interviews, observations, focus groups, videos, documents, drawings, diaries, memories, newspapers, biographies, historical documents, autobiographies, and other sources not listed here.

With this background, the researcher used fieldwork involving interviews for chapter 2 and focus group discussions for chapters 3 and 4. However, the focus group discussion used Osmer's (2008; 2013) qualitative approach, which includes the descriptive, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic tasks explored in the dynamic relationship of practical theological interpretation. These four tasks of Osmer's qualitative approach were beneficial. They assisted the study in exploring what was going on or what happened, why this happened, and why that was happening, and helped to know how to respond to the situation under study.

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 looks at essential elements of the study; chapter 2 traces the remarkable growth history of the CoP, and chapter 3 observes the contextual analysis of the CoP evangelism praxis. Also, chapter 4 explores possible critical reasons for the CoP's decline. Chapter 5 surveys evangelism in selected chapters of Acts and chapter 6 summarizes, concludes, and recommends improving the evangelism praxis of the CoP.

#### **4. Summary of the Remarkable Growth History of the CoP**

Historical records of people are vital aspects of knowing the site and foundation of the origins of an organization. History is exciting and aids the current generation in avoiding past generations' mistakes and adopting the strengthened factors that enable survival and achievement.

The findings revealed that there are good factors that accounted for the historical growth of the church. These are: prayer, worship, the Holy Spirit, discipleship, evangelism, tithing and offerings, Christian fellowship, and church management. All these factors are very pertinent to the course of the study. The study confirms that the leadership qualities of the CoP are a crucial factor in the exponential growth of the church. Thus, their commitment, sacrifices, proper accountability, discipline styles, and good management cannot be overestimated.

Secondly, the findings indicate that many people in the community have received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and have become church members through these factors. Members' commitment and loyalty promoted the church's sustainability and growth, making it enjoy financial independence and meet all its financial obligations.

Thirdly, the findings revealed that the machinery of the missional plans and evangelism drive has caused thousands of people to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The church's prayer life, the reliance on the Holy Spirit, and the operations of the spiritual gifts have made the CoP a haven where people's lives are changed, transformed, and developed as souls are rescued from the power of demonic forces.

Therefore, we can conclude that the CoP gained control and the goodwill of Ghanaian society, which aided it in firmly establishing congregations in almost every city, town, and village. The CoP has achieved high societal standing and has impacted the Ghanaian community.

## 5. Summary of the Contextual Analysis

The contextual analysis helped in discovering the determining factors disturbing the development and growth of the church. This stage describes factors that led to experiencing a decline in the evangelism praxis of the CoP from 2000 to 2016.

The findings expose some factors that account for the decline in the CoP membership growth. These include the challenges of weak local church administration, the lack of passion for the lost, the lack of fellowship in local congregations, and new technology as a missional challenge in Ghana. In addition to this, heresy was a factor of decline in the CoP mission; schisms in prayer centers served as a challenge to the CoP mission; and Akan cosmology had an effect on the CoP mission. We claim that one soul genuinely saved is more precious than 10,000 empty professions. The findings show that the church should check its weaknesses and go for quality, not quantity, regarding soul winning.

The findings discovered are in line with the works of the following scholars: Clifton (2002), Krejcir and Schaeffer (2006), and Gebre (2009), who cited the following shortcomings as church growth-affecting factors: ignorance, carnal-mindedness, prayerlessness, lack of financial integrity and transparency, leadership problems, sin in the church, lack of commitment and zeal, lack of passion for others, self-centeredness, arrested spiritual development, and lack of strategy of evangelism. Life's short day will soon close, and the time of our service opportunity will be gone forever (John 9:4; Eph 5:14–16; 2 Tim 4:2–3; Rom 13:11,12).

The findings reveal that evangelistic desire and characteristics of evangelism are missing from the hearts of most contemporary members, and these are consequentially becoming a decline factor. The findings

identify the loss of “first love” as a decline factor. Many came to the church with a loving welcome for the service of the Kingdom of God. Unfortunately, the love for the Lord’s service is completely lost, emanating from carnality and apathy (Rev 2:4–6; Dan 7:13–14; 1 Pet 2:21; Ps 51: 12–13). If we love him, we will obey him (John 14:15, 23; 1 Cor 13:4–7; 2 Cor 5:14). God’s love has been shed abroad in our hearts and spread abroad from hearts (Rom 5:5).

Without love for Christ, service for him will be a cold and apathetic business. His sacrifice showed the love of Christ for us; our love for Christ is measured by the sacrifices we make. Many contemporary Christians have lost this habit entirely, resulting in a fall in evangelistic drive and service. His love will then be not so much a “love that will not let me go” as a “love that will not let me stay” at home and be at ease while souls perish. The cost of time, energy, prayer, and self-denial will be worthwhile, for the day of reward is coming (2 Tim 4:4–8). Indeed, our relationship with Christ has become warped and stunted concomitantly, leading to a decline in evangelism.

## **6. Summary of the Possible Critical Reasons**

The investigation reveals that certain critical factors account for the CoP’s evangelism praxis decline. These reflection factors are a growth motif in the CoP, failure in missional thrust, lack of laborers in the church, poverty, and unemployment in the Afigya Kwabre District. Also, new technology is a reason for a decline in church growth and schisms are reasons for the reduction of evangelism praxis and African worldview versus Christian worldview. The observations from the investigation identify specific critical reasons behind the decrease in evangelism which account for the weakening of church development and growth.

These factors have weakened members' relationship with the church and its activities and led to declining evangelism. The findings have shown that the church should remember its weaknesses and the reasons behind them, make an effort to overcome them, implement more soul-winning, and sustain the gains.

## **7. Summary of the Selected Chapters of the Book of Acts**

The study confirms that early church evangelism in the book of the Acts of the Apostles is crucial and fundamental to the church today. The offshoot factors are the consideration of the Holy Spirit as the source of power for evangelism, Christ-centered preaching as a model for evangelism, and social services as an evangelism approach. Also, church conferences as an evangelism approach, and miracles and healing the sick as evangelism strategies. The apostles waited for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and were empowered by the Holy Spirit for the Great Commission. They used all forms of evangelism to reach the people of their time, turned down cities for Jesus Christ, won many souls, and established Christianity. They fearlessly and boldly fulfilled their mandate and made Jesus Christ known to others. The general impartation is that scholars agreed that the early church in the book of Acts spread from a small Jewish group from Jerusalem into the Gentile world through radical evangelism.

Greg (2010) confirms that Acts tells the story of a handful of men who did not leave their world the same way they found it by the power of the Holy Spirit. They were ordinary people who the Holy Spirit enabled to do extraordinary things. They were ridiculed, opposed, persecuted, and physically assaulted everywhere they went for their beliefs. The study observes that some were put to death. Yet, within 30 years, this original

group of 120 and their converts turned the world upside down with the gospel.

Anbarasu (2009, 57) supplements the discussion that all the people living in the province of Asia had heard the gospel of Jesus Christ within two and a half years. Also, the writer further states that Paul and his disciples, through their radical evangelism, established the seven churches mentioned in the book of Revelation (1:10–11).

Green (1970, 173, 280) describes it as: “They were gossiping the gospel,” and this yielded positively; many converted to Christianity. Thus, in the book of Acts, evangelism was simply the lifeblood of early Christians because they lived and died in their faith in Jesus Christ. Harnack (2009) concludes that their messages were more palatable, appealing, acceptable, and explainable, filling a void in a hostile society through their evangelism and winning countless souls.

Their messages were Christocentric, portraying Jesus as all in all of the world. It is an undeniable fact that their methods of evangelism conquered the world for Jesus Christ. Stamps (1992, 1637) concludes the discussion that the NT and patristic records recount that in 30 years, the gospel had spread from Jerusalem to Rome, captured 32 countries, 54 cities, 9 Mediterranean islands, 95 different persons by name, and a variety of government officials and administrators by their precise title. Evangelism became a manifesto for the early church to drive the mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The power of the gospel was moving like a fire burning the souls of the people and like water covering the land for Jesus Christ. The evangelistic praxes of the Acts of the Apostles remain remarkably relevant for the contemporary church. The early church has laid a good foundation for the church today.

## 8. Reflection on Findings

The lessons learned from the study challenged the researcher to suggest the following 11 reflections.

First, the researcher recommends the church re-examine its self-financing policy in the area of financial support to local churches, districts, and areas, and increase them. The church should relook at this support to the grassroots local churches and increase the percentage of its allocations to reduce their extreme financial needs, which have the potential of bringing about low financial commitment, lowering church attendance, and leading members to backslide. Also, the failure to increase in number will continue to weaken the financial growth of the local churches and harm the growth plateau in the days ahead.

Second, the researcher recommends the early church home cell strategy concept. This system operated powerfully in home cells and temple courts for worshipping and fellowship (Acts 2:42–47). This home cell meetings strategy should be considered and scheduled as a twice-weekly fellowship. This strategy might promote dynamic local friendship, relationships, togetherness, growth in church attendance, grassroots local finances, and the bond of love and unity among members. Also, it may curb excessive financial demands through local church programs.

Third, the researcher recommends that the church desire the anointing and operation of spiritual gifts. The findings suggest that the church can achieve the Great Commission through the power gifts; specifically, the gift of faith, gifts of healing, and miraculous powers. These gifts could assist the church in demonstrating the power of God to the people. These gifts could enable them to cast out demons and facilitate the healing of different illnesses suffered by the people. These gifts could allow

them to prove to the people that the power of God exists within them; God could show his grace and mercy to destroy the power of Satan and redeem the people. The unction of the Holy Spirit could empower the church to break down different ideologies and philosophies in the world that are enslaving people's lives and draw them to the knowledge of the grace and truth of Jesus Christ.

Fourth, the researcher recommends an annual orientation of transfers by the leadership to the ministers themselves and to church members. This orientation could ease the tense situation and promote and sustain the church's growth. This orientation should be linked to an intercultural studies retreat, which will assist the pastors in overcoming and preparing for any socio-cultural and psychological effects.

Fifth, the researcher recommends that it has become necessary for the church to reconsider ministers' workloads. This consideration will prevent burnout and increase full-time callings of ministers.

Sixth, the researcher recommends entirely reconsidering and integrating all the accepted prayer camp leaders and teams into the church's main staff stream under the administration of the CoP headquarters. This consideration should place them in the headquarters' salary structure and management, thus placing them on the CoP monthly salary scheme. This integration would give the church complete control of the operations of these prayer camps. It might stabilize their financial living systems, which in turn may curb the ambition of breakaways syndrome.

The researcher further recommends that the church establish prayer and revival centers in all area seats. The head office should assist in the construction of such a project from this time onwards, and station ministers as leaders of the prayer and revival centers, together with IO team members constituting a prayer group for each center. The minister should



be responsible for the center's day-to-day affairs without the oversight responsibility of any local congregation or district outside the center, so that they can have more time to concentrate on running the center's prayer programs with the team members.

This chaotic world requires the church to have a special place of prayer and a special revival team attending to attendees' requests. This recommendation would enable members with prayer requests and those yearning for a suitable place to revive themselves, to have an accessible place to present their concerns and meet God in this regard. The church without such prayer and revival centers in this contemporary era may decline because members may run to unapproved prayer centers where wrong doctrines are taught, which could trigger some to backslide and lose their faith in Jesus Christ. The head office must absorb their salaries, as mentioned earlier.

The researcher envisages that this may revive the church's potential to rekindle the ministry of healings and signs, miracles, and wonders, which may heal and deliver people from the power of demonic torturing. Moreso, the centers would become soul-winning entrances to the church, which could cause church growth at large.

The researcher is confident that full integration in addition to the adoption of prayer and revival centers may enable the church to bring members under her feet, take absolute control, and give them proper training on how the church wants them to operate. This reflection could restrain the occurrence of breakups, maintain cooperation, and promote church growth.

Seventh, the researcher recommends that the church's leadership be urged to educate and train members about evangelism in their monthly programs.

Eighth, the researcher recommends that the church publish evangelism pamphlets monthly for free distribution to society as part of the evangelism strategy. Literature as a way of evangelism will be a potent tool in the imagination of humanity that might capture many to Jesus Christ.

Ninth, the researcher recommends that the church readapt the laypeople's movement to maintain the fire of evangelism and the church's growth. The leadership should take responsibility for nurturing, budgeting, and equipping the members' conscience and desire to evangelize, and this enactment will challenge them to stand as active witnesses for Christ.

Tenth, the researcher recommends that the church keep records of all the widows, widowers, orphans, poor, and vulnerable in the church at all local, district, area, and national levels to extend social services. Since the CoP runs a central fund financial system, the researcher recommends that the central budget cover such people in the church. Thus, the church should designate a percentage of the CoP's central annual budget for these people's needs in the fellowship and the community.

Finally, the researcher recommends that the church build community schools and hospitals in all area seats or centers of the church. The church should make an effort and devise a policy to build up community schools and community hospitals in all area centers from this time onwards. Through social service, the church will have the potential to win more souls and have a voice in the communities, people will pay attention to their salvation messages, and it will win many people.

## **9. Designing a New Missional Strategy**

The heart of the study is designing a new missional strategy and contributing to the growing knowledge in practical theology. This study has achieved

these two purposes. The researcher could not accomplish the study without highlighting the new missional strategies explored by the findings. It could be an unwieldy resource as the church, the leading classical Pentecostal church, would want to continue in this regard.

The study's findings identify the following as the new missional strategies to assist the church in championing the Great Commission to sustain the gains and add more souls: (1) an annual orientation for ministers' transfer in the CoP, (2) Pentecostal ministers' burnout and possible remedies, (3) an inclusive theology of prayer camps in the CoP, (4) an improved evangelism approach in the CoP, and (5) evangelism as social engagement in the community. The missional strategies are summarized in the following:

Firstly, towards an annual orientation for ministers' transfer in the CoP. The findings suggest that ministers' transfers are the norm in the church administration. Most times, its ramifications have affected and impeded the church's growth. For the church to overcome such negative impacts, this annual orientation for ministers and members could educate members, curb the situation, and promote the church's growth.

Secondly, regarding Pentecostal ministers' burnout and possible remedies, the findings suggest that burnout syndrome experiences are inevitable for church ministers. They are subjected to repercussions, and this eventually impedes productivity. To overcome this high risk of significant levels of stress and exhaustion, the church could reconsider ministers' volume of duties and, if possible, cut the number of local churches within a district, thereby having a cut-out point for the city districts and rural districts as well. This move could help ministers overcome burnout and increase their productivity.

Thirdly, towards an inclusive theology of prayer camps in the CoP. The findings indicate that prayer camps are organs that promoted the

church's growth and are also breeding grounds for splits. To overcome this unwarranted occurrence, the study suggests that the church place all the accepted prayer camps and absorb them into the church's main monthly wage structure. This move could give the church total control of the prayer camps, shut down their financial ambition, promote their obedience to church policies on prayer camps, and promote the church's growth.

Fourthly, towards an improved evangelism approach in the CoP. The findings reveal that the church is challenged to fulfill the Great Commission mandate, despite the reluctance of its members to witness. To overcome this, the church should put the five models of evangelism suggested in the findings, to work. Thus, evangelism in biblical perspectives, training to witness Christ, miracles, and healings as evangelism in the CoP, literature as a way of evangelism, and evangelism as a laypeople's movement. These adoptions can move the church in different forms of meeting the Great Commission's command, sustain the gains, and win more souls for Christ.

Fifthly, evangelism is a social engagement in the community. The findings reveal that though the church is involved in social services like building schools and hospitals and digging mechanized water systems in some communities, there is still more room for improvement considering its enormous membership. For the church to have a breakthrough in the communities through social services that have great potential to win souls, the study proposes three social amenities: taking good care of the vulnerable people within and outside the church, building community schools, and building hospitals. These social services are dear to the heart of society and could be a strategic platform to sustain the gains and win more souls.

The study provides the proposed missional strategy recommendations to foster better evangelistic approaches.

## **10. Conclusion of the Study**

This dissertation which took a phenomenological approach traced the unprecedented historical growth and development experience of the CoP. This study is different from previous studies on the CoP in several ways. It is very influential and makes a distinctive contribution to the Pentecostal mission in the following three ways:

Firstly, this dissertation explores the history of the CoP from an evangelism perspective and identifies its phenomenal growth. The study establishes that the CoP's unprecedented growth centered on the best fundamental core values of: prayer, worship, vibrant fellowship, discipleship, evangelism, and the Holy Spirit. Also, church management, tithing, and offerings helped the church experience phenomenal growth and become a pedestal in Ghanaian society. Also, by faith in Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit's power, the church became a vibrant agent for change through the presentation of the good news to Ghanaian communities. Thereby it drew many people to God's saving grace and the knowledge of the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ, leading to it becoming the largest classical Pentecostal church in the country.

Secondly, this study outlines the awareness of some obstructive factors facing the CoP's growth phenomenon. These were forces fighting against the church development and growth management. These obstructive factors include the challenge of the weak local administration, the lack of passion for the lost, and the lack of vibrant fellowship. Also, new technology is a reason behind the contribution of heresy to the decline. Finally, schisms in prayer camps are a reason for the fall and the effect of Akan cosmology. This study has demonstrated that these obstructive factors threaten the church's development and growth. These need to be

looked at; these challenges and predicament militate against the church's growth and development.

Again, this study shows that the said reluctance came from the church's rapid growth, promoting a fall in evangelism activities, non-involvement in church activities, absenteeism, and a sharp increase in backsliders. These call for the renewal of commitment by leadership and members with a considerable task force that is highly unmotivated to witness and catch the focus of the church founders' vision. The study serves as an awareness tool for Pentecostals in West Africa and the CoP, particularly regarding the possibility of church growth reaching a plateau. While most Pentecostals celebrate church growth, the study has shown that the evangelism praxis is on the verge of declining among Pentecostals. This awareness requires urgent attention from church leadership and Pentecostal scholars to safeguard the movement's future.

Thirdly, this study has demonstrated that God used the early church to establish Christianity in the book of Acts. The accounts of the selected chapters of Acts indicate that the early church experienced imprisonment, beatings, plots, and riots; Jews and Gentiles persecuted them. Yet, the opposition became a catalyst for the spread of Christianity. Significantly, the study notes that growth during times of oppression showed that Christianity was not the work of humans but God's supernatural act. The sovereign God accredited their message with deliverance, miracles, healings, signs, and wonders. Their words cut deep into the people's hearts and moved them to surrender to Jesus Christ. They performed miracles to reveal the power of God to the people, capturing their souls, minds, spirits, and bodies for Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, the account indicates the history of a dynamic church-growing community of disciples from Jerusalem to Syria, Africa,

Asia, and Europe. Christianity spread from believing Jews to non-Jews in 32 countries, 54 cities, 9 Mediterranean Islands, 95 different named persons, and various government officials and administrators by their specific titles in the first century. The Holy Spirit's work demonstrated that Christianity was supernatural. Thus, they became more Holy Spirit conscious, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the early church turned societies upside down for Jesus Christ. There were movements, excitement, energy, and ability that caused the growth.

The early church's witnessing has been beneficial today because it strengthens the faith and renews the assurances that the church can again do the same, as God will fulfill his promise. The historical accounts of the early church growth in the book of Acts (selected chapters) serve as a case study for the church to draw lessons. The church could apply this biblical and theological assessment of the early church's evangelism praxes, requiring much attention from church leaders. Other Pentecostals may learn from these lessons to guide the growth factors, overcome a decline, and sustain gains.

To conclude this study of Pentecostal evangelism praxis, this research has achieved the objectives of this dissertation by providing, for the first time, a comprehensive and systematic analysis of factors affecting the phenomenal growth of the CoP, with all the church's premium core values, which facilitated its rapid growth.

I acknowledge that evangelism is not a one-way affair but involves many approaches to help the community understand and receive the Savior Lord Jesus Christ. The study has produced and stirred an innovative perception of my understanding of evangelism praxis. The creative perception is that if evangelism praxis is enhanced, it could continue to cause the church's growth; the Great Commission mandate will spread the

Good News in the country, West Africa, and the global community.

Therefore, upon implementing the proposed recommendations presented in this study, the researcher suggests that the CoP would effectively evangelize to capture the whole nation—Ghana and globally for Jesus Christ and sustain the growth gains. I hope this dissertation will enlighten and challenge the CoP worldwide and other Pentecostals to remodel evangelism praxis to meet contemporary demands, continue to grow, and overcome a future plateau. Great Commission: Great impact on society!

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# Using the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4–5 as a Heuristic Lens to Understand Paul's Christology in Romans

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## **Abstract**

This study demonstrates that the intertextual presence of the Shema (Deut 6:4–5) serves as a heuristic lens to clarify and deepen our understanding of Paul's Christology in Romans. The literary theory of intertextuality is employed as the lens through which the presence of the Shema is observed. The study includes developing appropriate definitions and a quantitative methodology for identifying Paul's usage of allusions and echoes of the Shema. Exegesis of the Shema determined the proper translation and interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:4 is "Hear Israel! the Lord your God is one Lord," which is an important predecessor task that enables the analysis. Ten intertexts, eight allusions, and two echoes, are detected. Analysis of these intertexts demonstrates the importance of the Shema within the context of Paul's presentation of his Christology in Romans.

## **1. Designing a New Missional Strategy**

This study asserts that the Shema (Deut 6:4–5) serves as a heuristic lens to clarify and deepen our understanding of Paul’s Christology in Romans. First, the lens is introduced, the Shema, followed by the heuristic, biblical intertextuality.

The Shema is the centerpiece of Jewish thought, worship, and identity in the first century. Rabbinic and other Second Temple sources hold that the Shema is the essence of Torah, a succinct statement that encompasses the Decalogue, which, in turn, is a summation of the entire Mosaic law. Thus, the Shema was selected as the “lens” or the aperture through which Paul’s Christology in Romans may be viewed. The Shema was selected because of its importance to Jewish life, culture, and religious practice, spanning the period from Moses to the first century.

Paul, trained as a Pharisee, would have been intimately familiar with the Shema’s importance from early childhood, chiefly due to its requirement for twice-daily personal recitations and its liturgical use in synagogue and temple worship. Steeped in the OT, Second Temple writings, and Jewish teachings and culture, Paul would naturally, consciously, or subconsciously, associate the Shema at various locations in Romans. Thus, assessing the importance of the Shema when Paul discusses his Christology in Romans serves to fill this gap in scholarly literature.

## **2. The Importance of the Shema to First-Century Judaism**

The Shema remains as crucial to ethical Judaism and its monotheistic theology today as when Moses first spoke it (Deut 6:4) and Jesus recited it (Mark 12:29). The Shema’ Yisrael expresses the Jewish nation’s ethical

behaviors and worship practices. The Shema is a declaration of faith for the Jew and a biblical statement of truth for all Christians.

The Shema expresses the essence of the Jewish faith and joins the first two commandments as the fundamental expressions of Judaism. Without the first two commandments, nothing else in the Torah would have bound the Jews to God in strict obedience. Further, the first commandment uniquely defined the ancient Jews, and through daily recitations of Shema, the nation declared God as preeminent over all creation.

Exegesis of Deuteronomy 6:4–5 is the predicate for identifying intra-biblical instances of the Shema in the remainder of Deuteronomy, inter-biblical examples within the rest of the OT, and extra-biblical occurrences of the Shema in the Second Temple literature to paint a picture of how the Israelites, particularly Paul, understood the Shema.

A literal translation of the Shema is shown below, with grammatically possible variations indicated in brackets.

“Hear, O Israel! The LORD [is] our God, the LORD [is] one [or, is one LORD]

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” (Deut 6:4-5).

### *2.1. A comparison of Deuteronomy 6:4 found in the MT, LXX, and Synoptic Gospels*

Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 in Matthew 22:37 and Luke 10:27 but does not quote Deuteronomy 6:4. The left-hand column defines the separation of the verse for reference purposes.

Verse	Deut 6:4–5 MT (BHS/WIVU)	Deut 6:4–5 LXX (LES)	Mark 12:29–30; 32–33 (NA28)
6:4a	שמע ישראל	Ἴσραὴλ, Ἰσραὴλ,	Ἴσραὴλ, Ἰσραὴλ,
6:4b	יהוה אחד	κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν	κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν
6:4c	יהוה אחד	κύριος εἷς ἐστιν,	κύριος εἷς ἐστιν

*Table 1: A comparison of Deuteronomy 6:4 found in the MT, LXX, and Synoptic Gospels*

The simplicity of the first verse of the Shema is far more complicated than one might expect. A literal translation (Lord our God, Lord one) of the four Hebrew words found in Deuteronomy 6:4 is not controversial. However, at least ten interpretations of the six Hebrew words of Deuteronomy 6:4 may be found in various Bible translations because Hebrew does not have the familiar present-tense copulative verb form of “to be” or “is” that links the subject and predicate.

There are important theological implications implicit in the selected translation approach to the Shema, particularly the final word in 6:4, **דָּבָר**, which is usually translated as the singular “one.” Did Moses intend to address the “uniqueness,” often called the “aleness,” of God, or was he speaking of the “unity” or “oneness of God,” or was he intentionally vague? Thus, a purely grammatical analysis that allows translating the phrase as either “the Lord alone” or “the Lord is one,” is insufficient for determining the meaning of the phrase.

Moses could have selected another word to communicate God’s oneness. In Hebrew, **דָּבָר** (“one”) is not synonymous with **יְבִדֵּד** (“alone”), so this is not merely a literary word choice but possibly an intentional duality. The passage has sufficient ambiguity to fit the concept of God’s oneness and his uniqueness.

Because “is one” is grammatically possible, we must press forward with a further interpretive option allowed by the Hebrew text, that is, “[is] one LORD.” Further, external sources, such as the Nash Papyrus circa 150 BCE, the LXX, the MT, Mark 12:29, and the Halbtorn amulet dating from the late second century BCE, confirm that the best translation of Deuteronomy 6:4 is “The LORD our God is one LORD,” which, unexpectedly, is found only in the KJV translation, although it is often footnoted in many modern translations.

A thorough examination of the Second Temple writings, including the Apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, and the writings of Josephus and Philo of Alexandria, determined that beyond monotheism as the religious presupposition of the Jews, there are many references to the oneness of God and very few, in context, to the aloneness of God.

Further, as monotheism is embedded within the Jewish zeitgeist, the study found a vast number of idiomatic expressions that appeal to the oneness of God (e.g., many instances of the phrase “the Holy One of God” were found) and noncontextual reflections of the Shema (e.g., to hate another with all one’s heart and soul). The Shema, as a divine command from God, appears to have evolved from a creedal statement to an idiom without the force of its original expression of communal obedience to the One God and a commitment to the wholehearted love of God. The study also concludes that Moses’ divinely inspired statement, “The LORD our God is one LORD,” was intentionally vague so that its message would remain potent to Israel when coming into contact with pagan gods that will compete for their fealty.



### **3. Intertextuality as a Robust Hermeneutic for Biblical Studies**

Conservative biblical scholarship has an added burden when choosing intertextuality as a hermeneutical tool in biblical studies. Conservative exegetes are loath to abandon literary context, historical-culture background, and word and grammar studies to reveal original authorial intent for a significant reason: Conservative scholarship presupposes the biblical writings were made manifest under the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Authorial intent remains the bedrock interpretive principle for conservative biblical studies. This approach to biblical hermeneutics and exegesis has dominated the field of biblical studies since the Reformation. If Scripture is the word of God, then unambiguously stating that the author of Scripture is dead, as proponents of “orthodox” intertextuality do, should be anathema to all but the most critical exegetes.

Further, intertextuality remains a term without a universally adopted literary definition or text-critical application methodology, particularly within biblical studies. Modern biblical scholarship has wrestled with orthodox intertextuality as a biblical hermeneutic for over three decades without a suitable resolution of terms and practices. That struggle is reflected in the many proposed scholarly approaches for using intertextuality to identify principally allusions and echoes of the OT in the NT.

#### *3.1. Biblical Intertextuality as a hermeneutical tool*

The literature was surveyed to identify scholars who have normalized intertextuality into a biblically sound hermeneutical tool. The literature review found that biblical intertextuality (BI) studies offer the opportunity for revealing new interpretive meaning from a text while assiduously

avoiding the undesirable portions of orthodox intertextuality. However, there are no universally accepted guidelines, definitions, or methodologies for identifying the presence of intertextual allusions or echoes of the OT in the NT within BI studies.

### *3.2. A proposed taxonomy of biblical intertexts*

This work classifies BI types as either (1) citation or quotation, (2) allusion, or (3) echo. Thus, for this study, the following definitions are adopted.

Intertextual citation or quotation: “An intentional, explicit, verbatim, or near-verbatim citation by Paul of a predecessor text of six or more words in length or the presence of at least three keywords.” No citations of the Shema in Romans were detected.

Intertextual allusion: “A literary device intentionally employed by Paul to point a reader back to a single identifiable inter-, intra-, or extra-biblical source text, of which one or more components must be remembered and brought forward in the new context such that the alluding text is understood fully.” The author must intend an allusion, and the recipient must recognize the presence of an allusion and understand its meaning. The specific context and identifiable source’s presence are strong evidence of authorial intention. Further, shared language elements may also be evidence of an intertextual allusion.

Intertextual echo: “A subtle literary reference that may be either a conscious or a subconscious act by the author referencing an identifiable predecessor text.” An echo does not require recognition or understanding by the recipient, nor does it require an action on the part of the recipient.

The challenge with applying this definition of an echo is that, as a group, receptors may or may not recognize the presence of an echo. Gentiles quite possibly would miss an echo based on an OT passage. Although most

scholars overlook such a nuanced interpretation, this dichotomy (how Jews and Gentiles “hear” an echo) is implicit in any proposed definition of an echo. In other words, the author (in this study, Paul, who views the world through Scripture) may or may not intend to direct the receptor’s attention to the predecessor text, and the receptors do not need to understand the author’s intent. However, like an allusion, an echo must have a single, identifiable source.

### *3.3. A proposed heuristic for identifying and evaluating candidate allusions and echoes in inter-biblical texts*

This study adopts a portion of the prescreening methodology for allusions and echoes proposed by Beetham (2008, 27–36), although systematically reconceptualized, augmented, and expanded for this study. Beetham’s unique approach, built upon the foundation established by Hays (1989, 29–33), proposes a more generalized approach for a study evaluating multiple OT in the NT passages. This study, however, focuses on the intertextual presence of a single OT passage (Deut 6:4–5) in a single NT letter (Romans). None of the biblical scholars surveyed approached their evaluative task in this manner. The four-part evaluative process summarized in Table 2 is applied to candidate intertexts identified through a detailed assessment of Romans in the original language.

Several steps are derived from Christopher Beetham (2008, 27–35) and Richard Hays (1989, 29–33), although significantly recontextualized for this study.

<b>Part A. Exegesis of the candidate inter-biblical text</b>
Step 1. Identify the text
Step 2. Preliminary translation
Step 3. Source and text-critical issues
Step 4. Grammatical analysis
Step 5. Theological purpose: What was Paul’s theological purpose for writing this text?
Step 6. Assessment: Is there a history identifying the text as an allusion or echo?
Step 7. Conclusions
<b>Part B. Evidence for the presence of an allusion or echo in the inter-biblical text</b>
Step 1. Word agreement or rare concept similarity. Does the text share keyword or rare concepts with the source text?
Step 2. Essential interpretive link. Three elements must be satisfied for an allusion to be present: (1) the author must intend to allude to the predecessor text, (2) the recipient must recognize the presence of an allusion, and (3) the recipient must understand its meaning.
Step 3. Thematic coherence. How well does the candidate’s allusion or echo fit within Paul’s immediate argument?
<b>Part C. Final evaluation of the candidate allusion or echo in the inter-biblical text</b>
Is there an allusion or echo of the Shema presented in this verse/passage? Does the allusion or echo pertain to Paul’s Christology?
<b>Part D. Exegetical significance of the allusion or echo</b>
How does the intertext further this study’s understanding of Paul’s Christology?

*Table 2: A summary of the proposed heuristic used to identify and confirm the presence of an allusion or echo of the Shema within a candidate inter-biblical text*

#### 4. Shemaic Intertexts in Romans

As noted, the Shema represents a statement of the oneness of God, as a summary of the Decalogue and, in turn, a summary of the Mosaic law. Also, the study examined Paul’s understanding of the oneness of God found in Romans that was used as part of the evaluative process (Table 2). With this understanding of the Shema, Paul’s understanding of the oneness of

God is found in Romans is explored. With these tasks completed, a robust intertextual discovery process is established. The study then applies this methodology to the text of Romans.

The study identifies ten intertexts (eight allusions and two echoes) in which Paul either alludes to or echoes the Shema when expressing or explaining an important aspect of his Christology. The following sections are abstracts of the more detailed analyses performed on the ten identified allusions or echoes, based on the analysis methodology summarized in Table 2. A further thirteen passages marginally failed the analysis methodology documented in the study.

*4.1. Romans 1:7b: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

This allusion to the Shema concludes the discourse unit of Romans 1:1–7, the letter’s salutation. Multiple theological, literary, and exegetical arguments are presented in the study to assert that in Romans 1:7b Paul intends to allude to the oneness of God and thus allude to the Shema. Paul’s approach consistently follows the logic presented in 1 Corinthians 8:6, that is, God is the Father, and the Lord is Jesus Christ, both persons existing in oneness. This Binitarian understanding of the Godhead reflects the theology of the primitive Christian church. The analysis concludes that Paul often juxtaposes the phrases “God the Father” and the “Lord Jesus Christ” when speaking of the first two members of the Godhead as a statement of his understanding of the oneness of God, and thus allusive of the Shema.

*4.2. Romans 2:13–15a: “For it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts.”*

Romans 2:13–15a is strategically placed in the discourse unit Romans 2:1–16, which addresses God’s righteous judgment, particularly the universal nature of sin. Paul’s diatribe is subtle and is directed at the Jews, who should not believe they are privileged. Jew and Gentile will be judged to the same standard impartially by God. The key literary and concept similarity is that Paul states that justification requires an active response to the gospel (Rom 2:13), which is very much the same as Moses’ call “Hear, Israel” found in the Shema. In both verses, grammatically, “hearing” requires action aligned with faith. Paul reinforces the allusion to the Shema in Romans 2:15a, consistent with Moses calling on the ancient Jews to demonstrate their wholehearted love of God (Deut 6:5) by their actions. Thus, Romans 2:13–15a is an allusion to the Shema and addresses aspects of Paul’s understanding of justification.

*4.3. Romans 3:29–31: “Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.”*

This allusion is strategically located in the discourse unit of Romans 3:27–31. Paul uses the credal statement of Jewish monotheism to illustrate that there is but one God for Jew and Gentile. God is not the exclusive property of any one nation or ethnic group. Further, the one God will equally judge

Jew and Gentile. Therefore, God is the God of the Jews and the Gentiles. The key point is that the confession that “There is only one God” drawn from this text—the Shema—was ubiquitous in first-century Judaism, as determined by this study.

The one God is the sole source of justification and salvation, arguably the most significant contribution to our understanding of Paul’s Christology found in Romans. Paul has extended the Jewish sense of the exclusivity of God as described by the Shema so that all people may declare that “The LORD our God is one LORD.”

*4.4. Romans 5:5: “Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”*

The first echo identified by this study is centrally located within the discourse unit of Romans 5:1–11. Paul describes the blessings that accrue to one justified by faith in verses 1–5 as (1) having peace with God, (2) being facilitated by Jesus Christ (v. 1), and (3) resulting in the love of God instilled into the heart of every believer through the Holy Spirit (v. 5). Paul refers to peace as the state of being, spiritually, when in this relationship with God. Reconciliation of humanity with God is a central concept in Paul’s Christology.

Similarly, the Shema calls for those who love God to demonstrate their wholehearted love through obedience to the covenant, demonstrating their faith that God will fulfill his promises. Obedience is rewarded to the Israelites as described by the blessings enumerated in Deuteronomy 28, as are the curses for disobedience. However, observance of the rites of the Law is not evidence of a hearer’s change of heart. In a commercial sense, in

general, the Jews expected blessings from God in return for strict adherence to the Law that does not necessarily reflect a change of heart.

The similarity of the concepts just described suggests the presence of an intertextual reference to the Shema, although the evidence for the presence of an allusion is not strong. Because an intertextual echo does not require intentionality by the writer nor recognition by the recipient, a reasonable interpretation is that Romans 5:5 represents an echo of the Shema.

*4.5. Romans 6:16–18: “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”*

The second echo identified by this study is found in the discourse unit of Romans 6:15–23, in which Paul portrays obedience as leading to slavery, either to sin or to righteousness. The intertextual presence of the Shema in these verses is based on the similarity of speech and grammar patterns found in the Shema.

The study identified seven points of similarity in literary structure and expression that strongly suggest the presence of an intertextual allusion to the Shema. For example, consider the following literary parallel. The collective disobedience of the first generation resulted in the nation’s physical death and forfeiture of the promised land (ironically, after experiencing physical freedom). In this case, disobedience is a sin that results in physical death. The next generation responded enthusiastically



to Moses' declaration of the Shema and, by doing so, was allowed to enter the promised land, a picture of physical and abundant life. Paul asserts that obedience to God results in righteousness; spiritual slavery to God produces eternal life. Disobedience results in spiritual slavery to sin, producing spiritual death. A second example: The Shema presents the image of a transfer of allegiance from the Egyptian religious influences and the first generation's yearning to return to the slavery of their former lives, to Paul calling for believers to make God their sole master voluntarily, in heartfelt obedience that results in spiritual life.

*4.6. Romans 7:12: "The Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good."*

This allusion appears at the close of the discourse unit Romans 7:7–12. Paul states that the Law is holy, righteous, and good because God was the creator of the Law; thus, the "commandment" (Greek: singular) is also holy. To which commandment does Paul refer? James Dunn (1998, 385) has suggested ἡ ἐντολή (the commandment) is a reference to the "law as a whole, seen archetypally in Genesis 2:16-17." If so, because the Jews viewed the Shema as a succinct distillation of the Decalogue, as noted earlier, then Paul is alluding to the Shema. Paul's six references to "the commandment" in Romans 7:8–13 reinforces the assertion that Paul alludes to the Shema.

*4.7. Romans 7:22: "For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man."*

This allusion concludes the discourse unit of Romans 7:13–25 that addresses the spiritual war that rages within every believer. Paul refers to the "law of

God in the inner man” that is waging war with “a different law,” that is, “the law of sin” (v. 23). For Paul, obedience to the Law represents the means for demonstrating one’s gratitude to God. Nevertheless, strict obedience to the Law is not a means of salvation nor does obedience truly reveal the truth of one’s spiritual condition.

Paul’s reference to the “law of God” is suggested to be a reference to following the Torah, which contains the ruling principles for expressing a person’s gratitude. Moses likewise considered God’s command to wholeheartedly “love the LORD your God” as the essence of or a condensation of the Law, as does Jesus in Mark 12. Paul refers to the “inner man” in verse 22, which indicates the heart or the center of “man’s rational nature,” as was believed by Moses and the first-century Jews. Moses called upon the ancient Jews to wholeheartedly love God with their entire being, heart, soul, and strength (Deut 6:5). Thus, Paul alludes to the Shema when he refers to the “inner man.”

*4.8. Romans 9:4: “Who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises.”*

The discourse unit Romans 9:1–5 finds Paul speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit (v. 1) about his love of his people and the tragedy of unbelief. The allusion to the Shema is strategically placed at the beginning of Romans 9, where Paul provides a Christological explanation for the salvation of the Gentiles by faith.

Verse 4 lists seven advantages that God has bestowed on the nation of Israel to stand out as his chosen over all other nations. The seven advantages collectively represent a solid and consistent intertextual

reference to the Shema. The Shema was the nation's first national "motto" or declaration or creedal statement that summarized the nature of the new nation's renewed covenantal relationship with God. Paul's allusion is meant to encourage the Jewish believers in the Roman church to rejoice in their status as now members of God's chosen people.

Further, Paul states that all the listed privileges God bestowed on Israel have now been afforded to all believers through the blessings of the New Covenant, representing God's election and adoption of believers into the family of God (John 1:12). Paul states that God has now extended to all believers the same rights and privileges that were previously unique to Israel. Paul's reinterpretation of the unique features of Jewish history is now extended to the Gentiles. Paul has applied his understanding of the oneness of God to the church in Rome and, by doing so, alludes to the Shema.

*4.9. Romans 10:6–8: "But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down), or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).' But what does it say? 'The word [message] is near you, in your mouth and in your heart'—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching."*

Deuteronomy 30:14, "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, so that you may follow it," is documented early in the study as an intra-biblical allusion to the Shema by Moses. In Romans 10:8, Paul reads into Deuteronomy 30:14 the arrival of Jesus the Messiah. Paul's broad understanding of Deuteronomy led him to quote this passage as a suitable expression of God's grace in his dealings with believers. God brought his

covenant, through Moses, close to Israel (expressed by the Shema), and now God had brought Jesus Christ close to the Jews and Gentiles, based on one's faith and obedience. Paul is essentially replacing the word "word," also translated as "message," in this passage with "Jesus Christ." This equivalency is a significant Christological statement concerning salvation history.

Paul inserts this allusion to the Shema in the critical space in which he declares that Jew and Gentile alike may never argue that God has not fully revealed himself through the person and work of Jesus Christ. All peoples justified by faith are members of the family of God, each one enjoying all the rights and resultant privileges.

*4.10. Romans 10:17: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."*

The allusion is strategically placed in the discourse unit of Romans 10:14–21, which addresses Israel's guilt that cannot be circumvented by pleading lack of opportunity. Paul summarizes his argument presented in Romans 10:14–16 in this verse as to why Jews generally have not believed the gospel. He concludes by stating that faith comes by hearing the "word of Christ."

In like manner, Moses prophetically spoke the Shema, commanding the ancient Jews to hear and respond in obedience to the word of God. The ancient Jews demonstrated their faith by their wholehearted dedication to God and believing, in faith, that he would fulfill His covenantal promises. To "hear" represents the act of cognitively listening but with a mind to act in obedience to those words. Hearing is experiential for the ancient and first-century Jews. The responsibility to act is also found in this verse, although in verse 18 Paul confirms that the Jews have heard the message proclaimed

to the entire world but failed to act in obedience. In the same way, Moses called the ancient Jews to be hearers and doers of the Shema, and an entire generation failed to act in obedience.

## 5. Conclusions

Paul often uses allusions or echoes to amplify and sharpen his arguments when he presents or explains a particular aspect of his Christology. Paul's arguments are strengthened when he alludes to or echoes the Shema when instructing the Jewish and Gentile Christians. The presence of the intertexts strengthens Paul's argument rather than carrying the entire weight of his argument, particularly when addressing Christological topics such as the oneness of God, justification, and righteousness. The allusions and echoes Paul employs in Romans are best interpreted as a "force multiplier" in his arguments rather than the "tip of the spear."

Further, Paul reinterprets the Shema in a midrashic sense to declare that the one God of the Jews is also the one God of the Gentiles. Paul has extended the interpreted meaning of the Shema beyond the exclusive province of the Jews to a universal understanding of the Shema within Paul's Christology in Romans so that all people may declare that "The LORD our God is one LORD."

Finally, Paul does not employ the Shema as his central Christological argument at any time (although Romans 3:29–31 comes close). His allusions and echoes of the Shema are often subliminal.

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# King Ahasuerus and the Motif of Vengeance in the Book of Esther: A Narrative Theological Analysis

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## **Abstract**

Several scholars have criticized the book of Esther, particularly for seeming to justify vengeance. Vashti, Haman, Esther, Mordecai, and eventually the Jewish people are engaged in total revenge after the failure of Haman's plot. Throughout, the king plays a central role in that he sometimes initiates and signs edicts of vengeance. From the above perspective, some scholars have therefore criticized the central role of revenge that King Ahasuerus played in Esther's narrative. The main research problem may therefore be stated as follows: What are the exact narrative and theological contributions of King Ahasuerus to the overall motif of vengeance in the book of Esther?

To solve the main problem, I attempt to examine vengeance in a literal and theological manner. The book's plot development and the critical role of King Ahasuerus as it relates to revenge are analyzed. This approach

is applied holistically to illuminate the fundamental understanding of biblical texts.

## 1. Introduction

The book of Esther is the foundation for the Jewish nation's celebration of the happy holiday of Purim (Rossel 2007, 212–213; Clines 1984). Over the centuries, different scholars have disputed the historical accuracy of the book. Some have considered it fictional literature, while others have found it authentic (Vanhoozer 2008, 142).

From the perspective of the book of Esther as a historical text among others found in the Bible, it is necessary to emphasize the book's theological character (Goldingay 2003; 2006; 2009). It is correct to argue that the plot behind Esther's story is primarily theological, even if it is not made explicit (Barton 2001, 26–27). Even though some scholars mention the omission of God's name from the book of Esther, this does not mean that God is not present in the book, but rather that he is simply hiding (David 1972; Pedersen 2002; Klooster 1988). Because wherever the people of God are, God is also present through the events of his covenant history (Childs 1979; Fuerst 1975). Yahweh's silence among his people does not mean he is absent. It may be that God is not mentioned in Esther's narrative since it emphasizes God's providence (Murphy 1981, 156; Childs 1979, 599; Fuerst 1975; Humphreys 1973).

Furthermore, the book of Esther, and more specifically the extensive information about vengeance that occurs in it, has both intrigued and been criticized by several scholars. It appears that the root of the problem lies in how investigators interpret King Ahasuerus's role in the vexed question of vengeance in Esther. Most scholars (Dunn 2003; Scott 1990; McBride 1991; Kugel 2007; Fox 1991) focus on the climactic and problematic element

of the mass vengeance taken by the Jews against their enemies. However, Ahasuerus also plays important roles from the beginning of the narrative concerning Queen Vashti, through the middle until the climax. Accordingly, the main research objective is to determine exactly King Ahasuerus's narrative and theological contribution to the overall motif of revenge in Esther.

Through a literary and theological analysis of the theme of vengeance, I attempt to precisely characterize this role, and analyze the development of the plot and King Ahasuerus's crucial role in the matter of revenge. His role is crucial for at least three reasons. Firstly, it is the king who initiates and signs the edicts that effect vengeance, and thus cannot be ignored in the assessment of the motif. Secondly, from a theological point of view, the likely theocentric narrator was bound to contrast the conduct of Ahasuerus as a pagan king with Yahweh's role as the avenger, "נָקָם" *nâqam* of his people. Thirdly, I also emphasize how to reconcile the theme of vengeance in Esther, which is justified as the providence and justice of God, with Jesus's teaching as the Christian church's responses to the world.

In the book of Esther, King Ahasuerus plays a central role in initiating and signing edicts of vengeance. On that level, in this article, I do a literary analysis of the role of King Ahasuerus in the theme of vengeance in the book of Esther, make a theological assessment of that role, and implications of the study. My contribution shows how the hand of God is at work behind the central theme of vengeance in Esther's narrative, and the conclusion draws together these reflections.

## 2. A literary analysis of the role of King Ahasuerus in the motif of vengeance in the book of Esther

The literary analysis critically examines the different textual elements under investigation. This was done to appreciate and understand why the author used specific ideas, word choices, or literary idioms and structures to convey his message. This analysis was based on the plot, structure, characters, settings, events, and other techniques that the author used to holistically generate the text's meaning (cf. Baloiian 1992; Schumann 2010; Kelley 1992). In Schumann's (2010, 1194–1195) description, vengeance is both a desire and an act. An act of revenge occurs when a victim injures the offender after having been wronged. Thus, revenge refers to paying someone back (retaliation); accordingly, people can feel revenge in their hearts (Nozick 1981, 366–368; Tomas 2011, xxvi–xxvii). According to McKee (2008), vengeance can be distinguished from “general aggression, deviance, anger, and resentment.” Aggression, revenge, and deviance do not require a provocative or infuriating offense. Resentment and anger, on the other hand, are entirely emotional reactions to injury rather than behavioral reactions (Elster 1990, 862–885).

The plot of the book is structured around banquets. However, the motif of vengeance begins with the pericope in which King Ahasuerus takes revenge on Vashti (Esth 1:1–21), then continues with Haman's plan to destroy the Jews in the Persian Empire (Esth 3:1–15), with King Ahasuerus and Queen Esther taking revenge on Haman (Esth 7:1–10), and King Ahasuerus giving the Jewish people the power to take revenge on their enemies (Esth 9:1–19). The Jewish people take bloody revenge against their enemies (Esth 9:1–10) on the orders of King Ahasuerus. Accordingly, the plot of the book can also be arranged around this motif of vengeance. Ahasuerus also serves as the “characterological center of the chiasm”

(Freedman 2000, 63), respectively facilitating the connections between himself and Vashti, Haman and Mordecai, Vashti and Esther, and the Jewish people and their enemies in the empire. In all these situations he plays a critical role in reversing the roles of the key characters (Vanhoozer 2008, 144–146; Wenham 2000; Wiebe 1991). In his empire, he played a key role in the decision to carry out a genocidal plot. Ahasuerus is the pivotal character who catalyzes the vengeance motif and spiral (Wenham 2000; Wiebe 1991; Berg 1979; Fox 1991). Moreover, some scholars (Dunn 2003; Scott 1990; Vanhoozer 2008; Wenham 2000; Wiebe 1991) have rightly criticized the confused and illogical role King Ahasuerus played in Esther. Persia was always characterized by bloody conflicts, rebellions, and wars against enemies (invasions) or foreign nations in which Persian kings were the warrior leaders (Richards 1991, 325–326; Ruiz-Ortiz 2017).

The king's approval of these bloodthirsty decrees could have confused the population, as the two edicts were duly signed, sealed, and handed over swiftly to the various governor's provinces for implementation (Attias 2004, 41–42; Schwartz 1997; Gordis 1976; Cook 1983; Frye 1983; Freedman 2000; Olmstead 1979; Bausani 1971).

Despite this, Ahasuerus had every right and power to exercise a peaceful role in his realm without prejudging justice. He could have incorporated joint problem-solving techniques such as dialogue, reconciliation, mediation, and accommodation to reach a consensus. The empire had protected and safeguarded the so-called enemies of the Jews by punishing those who violated the law of the country, which strived for peace and tranquility (Dickson 2000, 156–173).

The study of the text concludes, therefore, that it is literary, but I also assume that the document is theologically framed and serves a divine purpose. God's actions behind the scenes reveal a profound truth about

his active presence in the history of the magnificent panorama of people's salvation. The primary purpose of the theological step is to record the relationship between God and Jewish people in the narrative (Dunne 2014; Simon 1997; Turner 2013). This then is linked to the theological designs of the author (Bourdieu 1996).

### **3. Theological assessment of the role of King Ahasuerus in the motif of vengeance in the book of Esther**

The word vengeance comes from the Hebrew verb, **נִפְּלַח** *niphal* infinitive construct from the root **נָקַם**+ prefix **לְ** (to, for), and means to avenge, take vengeance, revenge, avenge oneself (Esth 8:13). From the above, I discover that revenge (**נָקַם**, *nāqam*) is very significant in the context of the Jewish people and their history found in the OT in general (Dillard and Longman 1977). Vengeance (divine vengeance “**נָקַם** *nāqam*”) can be described as a judgment when God is involved in the action (Deut 32:35; Isa 63:4). Smick (1980, 598) declared that vengeance (divine vengeance “**נָקַם** *nāqam*”) was understood as the justice of God and its effect on man as a sinner. Vengeance “**נָקַם** *nāqam*” in the OT is a consolation “for those who have suffered prejudice, injustice, war and not only in the sense of satisfying an individual need for retaliation but rather in the sense of objective recognition of the criminal experience and social recovery balance between conflicting parties” (Lilley 1993; Dillard and Longman 1977).

In the book of Esther, the motive of vengeance “**נָקַם** *nāqam*” is seen as part of God's restorative and retributive justice (Lev 19:18; 1 Sam 14:24; Leggett 1974; Mendenhall 1974). The vengeance of blood descendants, therefore, falls within the legal classification of revenge and clarifies its theological characteristics (Mendenhall 1974, 77). A royal decree of the



Persian Empire regulated this violence as vengeful justice (Leggett 1974, 110; Peels 1995, 81).

Unwittingly, the king unleashes pagan vengeance, only to be outwitted by Yahweh, the King of Israel. In the book of *Ešther*, revenge is also treated as a divine precept that must be obeyed (Ruiz-Ortiz 2017). People appeal for this form of vengeance (נָקָם *nâqam*) so that justice may be seen to be done not merely at the human level. In *Ešther*'s narrative, divine vengeance (נָקָם *nâqam*) is understood as teaching Yahweh's holiness and righteousness and its consequences for man as a sinner (Fletcher, et al. 2008; Lilley 1993; Wenham 2000; Wiebe 1991; Berg 1979).

It is also in this theological context that the concept (חֵרֶם *hērem*: holy war) remains significant in *Ešther*'s narrative. It offers a powerful metaphor for God's might acting in salvation history that will eventually culminate in the destruction of all the sinful and rebellious people who defy him (Berg 1979; Fox 1991; Dunn 2003; Scott 1990). It may also refer to the actual act of consecration to God and extermination of the enemies.

The concept *hērem* applied only occasionally to plunder found in *Esther*'s narrative and not to idolatrous objects, but in its application to enemies it involved extermination, and thus the verb acquired its secondary sense of destroying (*Esth* 8:1–10:3; Hobbs 1989; Hanson 1984). In addition, from this perspective, the divine vengeance found in the narrative of *Esther* also has the same connotation as the *hērem* (destroy or devote) established in the OT. It seems Yahweh will avenge the blood of his children and take vengeance himself on his adversaries. This *hērem* is connected to the issue of love, loyalty to Yahweh, and his covenant (Good 1985; Stone 1991; Eberhard 1984).

In his divine plan, Yahweh intended to judge the Jewish people to restore them to appropriate devotion, and ultimately bring them back to

the Holy Land. Throughout Esther, Yahweh emphasizes that he did not abandon the Jewish people in judgment. Despite God's desire to save them, malicious enemies sought to destroy them. It was God's divine justice and providence that saved the Jewish people (Craigie 1978; Lilley 1993). Through human wickedness, God works for divine good.

Esther considers revenge a divine precept that is appropriately enforced. It is in this theological context that the concept of נָקָם *nâqam* (vengeance) remains significant in Esther's narrative. As a metaphor for God's might acting in salvation history, it illustrates how sinful and rebellious people will ultimately be destroyed by his wrath (Schiffman 1999; Lilley 1993; Soggin 1972; Wood 1980).

To understand the divine vengeance (נָקָם *nâqam*), or holy war (חֵרֶם *hêrem*) found in the book of Esther, primarily readers must know the history and theology of the OT (Israel and its neighbors) in general. The concept of God as an avenger or warrior played a fundamental role in Israel's religious and military experiences (Lawson and Lawson 1990; Schiffman 1999; Craigie 1978).

According to the story of Esther, Israel would defeat the Amalekites in this ancient battle. From this viewpoint, every province was to issue the same document as a law: it was to be displayed publicly to all the people so that the Jews could avenge themselves on their enemies on that day (Esth 8:13). Feldman (2004, 8–9) argues that this was to be restricted to those of the seed of Amalek who was their principal enemies, but no doubt it included all who might revolt against them (Deut 25:17–19, 7:1–15, 25:16–18). In post-biblical times, Jews often associated contemporary enemies with Haman (Amalekite), and some Jews believed that pre-emptive violence against such enemies was acceptable. Masalha (2000, 129–130), Hunter (2003, 99–101), and Stern (2004, 360) suggest that Amalekites have come to symbolize

an “eternally irreconcilable enemy” that wants to murder Jews. A reader needs to know something of Haman’s lineage to understand Esther’s motif of vengeance (Stone 1991; Good 1985).

As a result, I demonstrate that the Jewish people understood this battle to be a continuation of the war between Israel and the Amalekites. God promised to fight for Israel. This conclusion brings to a climax all the literary devices used throughout the book. Considering literary and theological interpretations of the Esther narrative, a more detailed examination is needed to clarify the role of King Ahasuerus in the central motif of vengeance (Niditch 1993, 21; Ruiz-Ortiz 2017).

Analysis of the book’s theological content revealed what it teaches about vengeance and God’s plan. The role of King Ahasuerus in Esther’s narrative needs to be clarified considering the theology of the narrative to elucidate the central motif of vengeance. From a theological perspective, the likely theocentric narrator had to contrast Ahasuerus’s conduct as a pagan king with Yahweh’s role as the avenger “נָקַם *nâqam*” of his people (Smick 1980; Dillard and Longman 1977).

A more important point is that the interface between God’s providence and human vengeance is such that it is acceptable to criticize a vengeful king while also acknowledging and recognizing how God uses vengeance for his covenantal purposes. From the viewpoint of theology above, the vengeance found in Esther’s narrative can be seen as divine, which means the God of Israel is involved in human action to destroy enemies who work against his will. God uses the role and power of King Ahasuerus to implement his plan for delivering God’s people to the Persian Empire (Keil 1970; Wright 1970; Clines 1984; Jones 1977).

The omission of the name of God from the book of Esther does not mean that God is absent in a significant and absolute sense. There is,

rather, a dissimulation, because wherever God's people are, there is also his presence and manifestation. The role of King Ahasuerus in the central motif of vengeance in the light of the theology of Esther's narrative remains in the context of God's plan. In the book of Esther, God was willing to work with a flawed human being, King Ahasuerus, so that his plan could be fulfilled to save his people in the Persian Empire (Dumbrell 2002; Van Wees 2010; Creach 2013).

The literary device of divine vengeance (נָקָם *nâqam*), or holy war (חֶרֶם *hērem*), in the book of Esther became a tool to demonstrate how God is involved in history to fight to protect the Jewish people in the empire (Carolyn 2009; Simon 1997). Esther provides a unique insight into God's providence and justice contrary to some critics' interpretations of King Ahasuerus's role in the narrative. Through King Ahasuerus, Jewish revenge on their enemies was a providential order from God (Schumann 2010; Kelley 1992; Moore 1971).

The word "plunder" as a noun (בַּזָּה *baw-za*) and as a verb (בָּזַז *baw-zaz*) occurs only here in Esther 3:13 and 8:11. The act of plundering a fallen adversary evokes the desire to observe holy-war protocol (Sharp 2009, 69; McKane 1961, 46–47). The Jews in Persia, as portrayed in Esther chapters 8 and 9, may have been inserted to redeem the failure of Israel under King Saul's theft of plunder (1 Sam 15). Here, Mordecai may be seen as Israel's redeemer, particularly for correcting King Saul's foolishness (Goldingay 2003; McKane 1961; Ruiz-Ortiz 2017).

Even though the conflict was more than simply political, the Jews did not touch the plunder. When viewed from the perspective of maintaining a sacred discipline of war in the context of plunder, it can be understood how deeply God intervened to save his people. In the question of the war, Goldingay (2003, 76–78) notes that there is a resemblance between the

*hērem* in the book of Esther and what is related in the Deuteronomist story, appropriating its language and its protocol (Deut 2:35; 3:7; 20:14; Carolyn 2009, 69).

Israel's religious and military experiences were shaped by the concept of God as a warrior. Moreover, the interface between God's providence and human vengeance is such that it is reasonable and even acceptable to criticize a vengeful king while simultaneously acknowledging that God uses vengeance for his covenantal purposes. King Ahasuerus's role and power were used by God to deliver his people from the Persian Empire (Dunne 2014; Simon 1997; Turner 2013).

As a result, some scholars (Greidanus 1988, 116; VanGemeren 1988, 288) avoid discussing the theocentricity and anthropocentricity of the book of Esther by arguing that Esther 4:13–14 is a veiled reference to God's participation since the absence of God implies his presence. According to some, Esther's numerous "coincidences" create an umbrella of divine providence under which the characters exist. Also, they may indicate a synergy or complementarity between human initiative and divine actions (Baldwin 1984, 40; Welbedacht 1987, 17; Clines 1984, 266–273).

It sufficed to invoke God's ancient enemies and Israel's kingship to treat Esther as another, albeit somewhat alien, account of God's dealings with his people. This reading is supported by more subtle references (Childs 1979; Bartlett 2008). As a result, Esther becomes more of a "traditional" biblical historical account than it really is and doesn't take seriously its intentional veil over God's acts and Israel's responses (Ruiz-Ortiz 2017).

Different scholars condemn the massacre that permeates the Esther narrative (Dunn 2003; Scott 1990; McBride 1991; Kugel 2007; Fox 1991). Whether it was an intervention by God or by King Ahasuerus, the action of killing people was evil. The OT's complex material like "holy war" or

*hērem* reinforces the point that God was egomaniacal, genocidal, avenging, abusive, and a killer. Yahweh achieves his purpose of divine providence through a malevolent, wicked, and evil approach (Bourdieu 1996; Ruiz-Ortiz 2017).

In the OT, Yahweh is arguably the most hostile character: jealous and proud; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; and an infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, and capriciously malevolent bully. Theologically speaking, different scholars have criticized God for being involved in the killing plot (Dunn 2003; Scott 1990; Vanhoozer 2008; Wenham 2000; Wiebe 1991).

Esther describes the bloody battle between the Amalekites and Israel that lasted for many years. To our minds, what is captivating is that the attempt by Haman to destroy the Jews may well have been a direct result of Israel's and the Amalekites's history. Many people find the accents of vengeance in Esther embarrassing (Niditch 1993, 21; Ruiz-Ortiz 2017; Dalley 2007; Bechtel 2002). However, throughout Esther's narrative, Billheimer (1983, 94) explains that God's providence is the proper reaction that transforms evil into good, shame into honor, visible into invisible, and death into salvation not once, but in every situation. Much more thoughtfully, Esther's narrative is intimately related to the divine deliverance of the Jews. Theologically speaking, the liberation of the Jews from the hands of their enemies is based on God's mysterious providence (Tenney 1975, 765; Carson 2016, 4–6).

Therefore, reading Esther theologically means recognizing God's work, presence, and providence, even when it is not overt. Greidanus (1970, 215) states that Esther's narrative, as the redemptive-historical hermeneutics, proclaims God's acts in the context of vengeance. Yahweh/God of Israel is involved in human action to confound enemies who work against his will (Lane 2016; Romulus 2012; Harvey 2003).

#### **4. Evaluation of the Hypothesis**

Based on the collection of data and the analysis of it in a literary and theological manner, the author demonstrates the motif of vengeance in Esther's story. Findings from testing the hypothesis indicated that it addressed all the different research questions raised by this article. It provides an exact solution to the research problem. The central preoccupation was limited to contrasting Ahasuerus's conduct as a pagan king with Yahweh's role as the avenger of his people. So, Yahweh's role as the avenger seems to be at the core of the hypothesis.

The research topic and focus are clearly defined. This hypothesis has been successfully demonstrated through the interpretation and analysis of the data. A study like this comes together here. This research developed a theory that can be applied beyond the scope of the study. In light of the corrective insights gained during the research process, I evaluate my hypothesis as accurate and relevant. The significance of the study is directly related to this question. As a result of the theoretical implications, the findings of this article can be interpreted in relation to the research questions that guided it.

#### **5. Implications**

Using the implication, I demonstrate how Esther's vengeance can be reconciled with Jesus's teachings as the Christian church's responses to the world. Based on a thorough understanding of its literary characteristics, I can correctly evaluate its implied theological message within the Christian church. Rhetorical strategies are used to communicate its theology to contemporary readers. It is also a direct response to the scholars' criticism of the vengeance, effected through King Ahasuerus, that they rightly condemn.

### *5.1. Divine vengeance*

From a theological perspective, the king's central role in Esther signifies his transformation into God's agent. As a result, Esther's story illustrates how God indeed governs, administers, and controls whatever happens, from the smallest to the largest thing, the most dangerous, and the vilest. Esther's narrative illustrates how God's direct intervention in human affairs combined with a human's desire for revenge to save the Jewish people. With the help of both likely and unlikely people working behind and alongside his creation, he achieved his purpose.

Christian churches today are affected by this surprising teaching in a variety of ways. The contemporary lesson is that, despite some scholars' assertions, the throne of King Ahasuerus was only a foundation on which God wanted to build the history of Esther and his people. Hermeneutically applying the results of Esther's narrative to contemporary Christians' spiritual lives, one must consider the degree to which divine vengeance is reflected in the statements. Using Yahweh's expression of vengeance as the basis for the literary device in Esther, I evaluated Esther's literary device of vengeance attributed to King Ahasuerus theologically.

As the redeemer of the world in the NT (John 3:16), Jesus Christ is a central part of the contemporary Christian church. Christian theology uses saving as a metaphor for what the atonement accomplishes. Ultimately, God will inflict incredible destruction because of man's sin, iniquity, and arrogance. Despite revenge or judgment, God is love, and he does not want people to be separated from him. Every individual has the power to choose, and he or she must decide whether to repent. Through the story of Esther, Christians worldwide can learn that God is the only one who initiates vengeance against those who reject Christ.



## 5.2. *God's providence*

The book of Esther is theological in that it teaches God's providential care and his continuing relationship with his people. Providence is a characteristic of God's work, since he is sovereign over his creation. The rule of God over all things was more significant than any other confession that was thrown into the crucible of time. As Esther's narrative unfolds throughout history, God's providence dominates the human experience of the faith and how different speakers, and cultures express themselves. For God to accomplish his purpose, King Ahasuerus was the providential instrument. The plot of revenge in Esther's narrative is theologically embedded in the cause of divine providence.

Furthermore, the book of Esther illustrates how God intervenes in human affairs to fulfill his covenantal promises through the actions of King Ahasuerus. There have always been questions raised about God's providence by people facing sickness, suffering, and death. In times of deep crisis, the question confronts people more directly and disturbingly. As the Church of Christ faces these times, she must ask herself whether she still has the courage, profound faith, and in boundless confidence, to proclaim God's providence. In the world, God's control may take the form of governing, protecting, sustaining, preserving, and caring for people.

As a result of the cross of Jesus Christ, Christian churches have experienced a decisive reversal of predictable outcomes. Despite secular and ungodly events, God is working providentially to save his people and culminate history in Christ. Fortunately, Jesus Christ is the lamb that God offered to take away the sin of the world. Throughout history, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ have been the most significant events.

According to God's eternal plan and his divine providence in human history, all evil, including moral evil, is subject to redemption and salvation

precisely through Christ's cross and resurrection. Thus, the cross of Christ gives definitive eschatological meaning to the truth of divine providence.

### *5.3. God's justice*

Esther's narrative illustrates God's justice and his faithfulness to the role he establishes for Israel. There is a sense of justice in the narrative when things are made right after a dispute has been settled. Yahweh's kingship is closely associated with his prerogative of justice.

Accordingly, the book of Esther reinforces the need for justice and God's desire for justice in the Christian church. The survival of God's people and the destruction of enemies are expressions of divine justice. God used the king to dispense justice to spare the Jews all the evils that were to annihilate them in the Persian Empire. Nevertheless, Almighty God, in Christ, reaches beyond justice to annihilate the enemies of his Christian church. In Jesus Christ, God's anger against offenders is poured out. Christ's cross demonstrates God's justice and justifies those who believe in him by showing that he is just.

### *5.4. Religion and vengeance: Abuse using the name of God*

Revenge, terrorism, and political violence have repeatedly been mobilized by the appeal to the identity of religions and their people. There is a difference between religious extremism and someone who is extremely devoted to religion. This article should not be misconstrued as an attack on Christianity, but seen as an investigation of the connections between violent right-wing extremism and its views on Christianity and other religions, to better understand how extremists around the world are recruiting, radicalizing, and mobilizing their terrorist attacks. These armed conflicts

have resulted in the emergence of a variety of religious factions, some of which are more radical than others.

Other dominant religions use force and aggression as well to extend their influence. Historically, religious wars have been sparked by and fueled by the diversity of religious identities. As a result, religions are continuously dishonored by pitting God's children against each other. Religions tend to clash more frequently within themselves than between each other, which is ironic.

However, when religious people and religions act out of revenge and kill and terrorize people around the world in the name of God, it is wrong or inappropriate manipulation. According to Esther, vengeance does not have a general justification, nor does it teach people to use violence or revenge for political, religious, or ethnic reasons. This article proves, both theologically and exegetically, that the divine vengeance found in the OT and NT is justifiable and can be proved. Among contemporary scholars, this is probably the most pressing concern about the misappropriation of divine vengeance in the Bible.

According to Matthew 28:19–20, Jesus Christ's mission is to make disciples of all nations. It is the responsibility of the Christian church to teach Christians to love their enemies as themselves. This is to promote reconciliation between Christian belligerents in the conflict and to forgive them within Christian society. According to Matthew 5:16, Jesus commanded his Church to let their light shine so that men might see their righteous works and glorify their heavenly Father.

## **6. Contributions of the research**

My contribution is that I showed the hand of God at work behind the central motif of vengeance in Esther's narrative. Despite its theological nature,

Esther's narrative fails to mention God's name throughout. It also served as a timely means for expressing the theological message regarding King Ahasuerus's role in the overall motif of vengeance. Throughout Esther's narrative, God plays a key role as an avenger of his people.

In Esther's narrative, King Ahasuerus is correctly portrayed as the promoter of vengeance. Nevertheless, the theological analysis reveals what the whole book teaches about vengeance in relation to God's plan to protect the Jewish people. It is reasonable to assume that King Ahasuerus's role in the motif of vengeance has theological resonance throughout the OT.

It is clear from Esther's narrative that vengeance illustrates Yahweh's holiness, providence, and justice, as well as its effects on a sinner. Behind the scenes, God's actions reveal a profound truth about his active presence in the history of his people. Through Esther's narrative, God uses human wickedness for divine purposes. In the book of Esther, the name of God is not mentioned, but rather its "dissimulation," since where God's people are, so is God's presence and manifestation.

Thus, it is hardly surprising that vengeance, terrorism, and political violence have been motivated by religious identity and appeals to religion. In my opinion, Esther's narrative does not set out an example for contemporary readers to follow or emulate regarding divine vengeance. Instead, divine vengeance is found in the OT and NT, especially in the book of Esther. In the name of God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, or angels, no society, government, or religion can commit vengeance, genocide, or terrorism against another religion or other people.

In the context of Christian ethics, this concept remains central and significant. In his relationships with human beings, deities, and Satan, who has a vengeful spirit, vengeance belongs to God. According to Jesus's teaching, which is a renewal of the OT and NT commandments, the

kingdom of God's mission is for people to love their "enemies" (including enemy nations) and spread the kingdom's good news to them. Throughout history, suffering and death have been eradicated as a result of the love of God through Jesus Christ.

Through reconciliation, the Christian church and other religions can restore God's love on earth. This element is necessary for eradicating hatred, vengeance, conflict, terrorism, suffering, and war. It is the role of the Christian church to bring reconciliation, love, peace, and healing to human relationships as a prophetic entity.

## **7. Conclusion**

The study is literary, but it also reflects a divine purpose theologically. In the Esther narrative, King Ahasuerus plays a fundamental role, and he is the key influence in reversing the purposes of the main characters. This suggests that Esther's vengeance plot is primarily theological, even if it is not explicitly stated. From the perspective of theology, the vengeance in Esther's narrative can be seen as Yahweh/the God of Israel intervening in human actions to destroy those who oppose him. Throughout the Persian Empire, King Ahasuerus played an influential role in implementing God's plan for delivering God's people. The theology of Esther's narrative places King Ahasuerus in the context of God's providence and justice in the central motif of vengeance. God's hidden hand is revealed in Esther's book through divine providence, God's covenantal relationship with the Jewish people.

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# A Biblical Theology of Sabbath-Keeping Based on the Cosmic Temple Understanding of Creation, Especially for Lay Shepherds in Cornerstone Church in Simi Valley, California

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## **Abstract**

The Sabbath has long been debated, contested, and often ignored. It has fallen prey to legalistic overreach and new covenant apathy. This thesis seeks to develop a biblical theology of the Sabbath that will restore Sabbath-keeping to the twenty-first-century church without falling into Sabbatarianism or discounting the Sabbath as an old covenant relic. The major claim is that understanding the seventh day of creation as God taking up residence in his cosmic temple clarifies a biblical theology of Sabbath-keeping. The implications of this Sabbath rest are applied to the non-vocational lay shepherds at Cornerstone Church in Simi Valley, California.

The thesis concludes that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance that God intended for all people at all times. “Sabbath-keeping” is defined as stopping one’s everyday work for one day each week, understood as a spiritual discipline, not a rigid, legalistic demand. The conclusions suggest that the ancient Israelites would have understood the Genesis creation narrative as describing God creating a cosmic temple during the first six days, that he entered his cosmic temple on day seven to rest, and in so doing, he established and defined the Sabbath for all time. The implications of God entering his cosmic temple on the seventh day of creation demonstrate that the Sabbath is not a day for adhering to burdensome rules but a day to stop normal activities and demonstrate one’s radical trust in a God who provides all that is needed for life. There is freedom and flexibility in how that day is experienced, but it is a day to experience peace and stability in trusting him. These conclusions are applied to the lay shepherds at Cornerstone Church, encouraging them to stop their everyday work for one day each week. This weekly practice should provide an environment for spiritual growth and restoration, enabling them to continue their faithful service.

## **1. Introduction**

The original readers in the ancient Near East (ANE) would have likely understood creation week as God inaugurating his cosmic temple (Walton 2009, 7–13). Scholars, theologians, and even Scripture suggest that God’s created cosmos functions as a cosmic temple. God created the universe and then took up residence in that universe to rule and reign over all his creation (2 Sam 22:7;<sup>1</sup> 1 Kgs 8:12–13, 27; Ps 29:10; 78:68–69; 132:8, 14; Isa 66:1; Rev 11:19; 15:6–8; Bakon 1997, 81–84; Beale 2004, 60–64; Davila 2002, 7;

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, scripture references are taken from the ESV.

Laansma 1997, 67–76; Levenson 1988, 100–III; Lioy 2010, 39–51; Walton 2009, 77–85; Wenham 2015, 16–17).

This understanding of the universe as God’s cosmic temple influenced the construction of Israel’s tabernacle and temples, as well as many other temples in the ANE. Levenson wrote that the connection between creation and the ancient Near Eastern temple generally has been missed (1988, xiii), but as seen above, later theologians made the connection more conclusively. Beale states that Eden was the first temple (2005, 7) and that ancient Near Eastern temples symbolized the cosmos in various ways (2004, 54). Davila uses Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice from the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) to demonstrate that the tabernacle and later the temple were based on the cosmic temple (2002, 1). Morales says that the “analogy between cosmos and temple was commonplace” and that the cosmos was “understood as a large temple and the temple as a small cosmos” (2015, 40). Lioy takes the temple motif in Scripture even further, tracing it throughout the entire Bible and building a robust biblical theology of God’s place or presence. His underlying premise is that since the beginning of time, creation has been God’s temple, and he sees the Garden of Eden as a “primordial temple or sacred space for humankind” (2010, 5).

The scriptures cited above present a convincing picture of creation inaugurating a cosmic temple as a place for God to rest (Gen 2:2–3). God hears David’s cry for help from his temple (2 Sam 22:7). When Solomon dedicated his temple, he acknowledged that not even the universe was a sufficient temple for God, let alone the lavish building he had just completed (1 Kgs 8). Many Psalms (11:4; 29:10; 78:68–69) indicate that God’s dwelling place is far above the earth. In Isaiah 66:1, God speaks of heaven as his temple/throne room where he takes his rest. The seven angels with the seven bowls of wrath come out of the heavenly temple in Revelation 15:6–8.

Middleton clarifies that God’s heavenly throne room does not lie outside of creation but, based on Israel’s worldview, would be part of the created cosmos (2005, 86).

God set up the cosmos to serve as his temple, and then on the seventh day of creation week, he entered that temple and took up his rest (Gen 2:2–3). Rest is associated with the Sabbath (Ex 20:11; Deut 5:14; Laansma 1997, 63–67) and informs how old covenant people practiced the Sabbath. Two Hebrew roots are translated “rest” in the OT: שבת (cease) and נוח (rest). They have different nuances of meaning that are important for understanding what God did or did not do on the seventh day of creation. The word for rest in the Decalogue passages (Ex 20:11; Deu 5:14) is נוח (rest). The word for rest in the manna passage in Exodus 16:23 and 30 is שבת (cease). The word used for what God did on day seven of creation is שבת (cease), but many versions translate it to “rest” (ESV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, and others). Both terms are critical to understanding that the creation intent of the Sabbath was to cease one’s activity and productivity so that he or she might rest.

The fourth commandment in Exodus 20 refers to creation week as the basis for the commandment (Lioy 2004, 66). Moses uses נוח for God’s rest. Since the fourth commandment in Exodus 20 connects Sabbath-keeping to creation week, the Sabbath command should be seen as a creation principle, not just a commandment for the nation of Israel. Deuteronomy 5 also states the Sabbath command but connects it to Israel being freed from slavery in Egypt. The basis of the Sabbath in Deuteronomy 5 does not supersede or replace the purpose of the Sabbath in the Exodus 20 passage, but these different bases “complement each other and both emphasize man’s dependence on God” (Craigie 1976, 157).

Laansma ties together rest (נוח) and the temple, seeing the temple as Yahweh’s resting place (1997, 19). Walton goes even further in tying together



the temple motif and rest when he states that the ancient Near Eastern world teaches that deity rests in a temple, and only in a temple (2009, 71). Levenson points out that a deity finding rest in his temple is not just an ancient Near Eastern idea but also an OT idea (1988, 107). Beale takes the biblical phrase “You who are enthroned upon the cherubim” (Ps 80:1; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kgs 19:15; 1 Chr 13:6) as indicative of God resting in his temple because he had no fear of opposition (2004, 63). Andreasen had hinted at the same much earlier (1972, 174–175). Creation, temple, and rest are inseparably linked in the ANE (Walton 2001, 146–148), and this connection is supported by Scripture.

Deities in the ancient Near Eastern world would enter their temples and rest, but rest for them is what resulted when they resolved a crisis, when they achieved stability, or when they conquered their enemies. When these deities rested in their temples, it meant that they were mounting their throne and taking command of their realm (Walton 2009, 72–74). When God entered his cosmic temple on the seventh day of creation, he stopped (שבת) and rested (נוח). He took up his rule because he had completed creation and established stability in the realm (Walton 2011, 100–121; Wenham 2015, 6–13). He had completed his creation intent of bringing “order, control, and stability to the creation” (Lioy 2004, 66). This understanding of what God did on the seventh day of creation must inform the further application of what Sabbath-keeping might look like for following generations and cultures.

## **2. Summary of the Research Methodology**

The research methodology of this thesis is primarily in the field of biblical theology. The methodology used is an exegetical analysis of the biblical text that leads to biblical theology. A modified form of the Osborne method

(Smith 2013, 49–56) is used, moving the results from theory to practice. Browning asks a poignant question that will help accomplish this move from theory to practice: What specific means and strategies should be employed to bring about genuine transformation? (Browning 1991, 55–56). The resultant biblical theology of the Sabbath must speak into the life of the congregation (Browning 1991, 3–4), specifically Cornerstone Church, and seek to bring life transformation.

The primary research question driving this thesis is: In what ways does an understanding of the seventh day of creation as God taking up residence in his cosmic temple clarify a biblical theology of Sabbath-keeping for lay shepherds in Cornerstone Church in Simi Valley, California? Answering this primary question requires exploring several biblical texts and ancient Near Eastern texts that demonstrate that in the seven days of creation, God was creating a cosmic temple from which he would rule over his creation. The seventh day, on which God rested, was when he entered that cosmic temple and took up his rule and reign.

### **3. The Lay Shepherds at Cornerstone Church**

The findings of this thesis are focused on the lay shepherds at Cornerstone Church in Simi Valley, California. These lay shepherds live busy lives and find it challenging to practice Sabbath-keeping. They are church members who typically have full-time jobs outside of the church but still give a significant portion of their time and energy to leading and shepherding smaller groups of people. Many live in Simi Valley for a safer quality of life but commute to Los Angeles, sometimes up to two hours each way. Many serve in law enforcement and firefighting. Their schedules are anything but ordinary: a typical firefighter could work for four straight days at a time. The cost of living in Southern California is one of the highest in America

(Austin 2016), often leading to both husband and wife working, working multiple jobs, or taking all the overtime available. These lay shepherds are essential for a church to accomplish its mission of making disciples, as there is far more work than paid vocational pastors can do. These servants run a higher risk of burning out because of their more significant investment, and the loss of their ministry activity will have a more substantial negative impact than the loss of other less involved church members.

The act of God entering his cosmic temple on the seventh day of creation informs what Sabbath could look like for these lay shepherds: in entirely ceasing from regular work activities for one day each week, they can enter a place of security, order, and stability by completely trusting God and resting in his sovereign care. That is something followers of Jesus should do every day, but by stopping productivity for one day each week, they display it. It is highly improbable that lay shepherds will ever have all their crises resolved or find complete stability in their homes and workplaces. Sabbath for these busy lay shepherds has more to do with accepting and resting in God's sovereign rule in his cosmic temple.

There is a lack of theological consensus on how the Sabbath is to be understood and practiced today. There continues to be disagreement regarding the connection between God resting in his temple and Sabbath-keeping. Some hint at the connection (Lioy 2010, 14; Walton 2009, 71–76; Wenham 2015, 6, 16–17), while some deny the connection (Andreasen 1972, 120–121; Laansma 1997, 64). Some scholars consider the Sabbath command as no longer valid over new covenant believers (Blomberg 2011, 351; Cole 1973, 211; Hays 2001, 30; Vine 1971, 190). Others agree that the Sabbath command is a creation principle, but under the new covenant, the day has changed from the seventh to the first, often called “the Lord's day” (Pipa 2011, 165; Piper 2005, n.p.). Donato's book (2011) offers four different views

of Sabbath-keeping,<sup>2</sup> with rebuttals for each of those views, but even these four views do not cover all the theological possibilities for understanding the Sabbath under the new covenant.

These divergent theological opinions can create uncertainty about Sabbath-keeping for the busy lay shepherds at Cornerstone Church who are seeking to obey Scripture and follow Jesus. This uncertainty can lead to theological frustration to the point of completely disregarding any aspect of Sabbath-keeping and continuing to live a busy, relentless pace of life. It is this lack of clarity that motivates this thesis. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to bring consensus to all these Sabbath questions, it does seek to further the discussion by narrowing the focus to the lay shepherds at Cornerstone Church.

#### **4. Key Findings of the Research**

This section summarizes the key findings of the entire thesis. These findings are based on the exegetical analysis of numerous passages of Scripture supported by ancient Near Eastern texts that represent the worldview of the OT.

The etiology of the Sabbath is creation week. God established the seven-day rhythm of working six days and stopping work for one day at creation. Unlike the day, month, or year, the seven-day rhythm is found nowhere in nature. God alone instituted the seven-day-week time rhythm. God instituted the seventh day as the Sabbath. He entered a day of rest even

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<sup>2</sup> Four different theologians explain these views and can be summarized as follows: (1) the Sabbath as the seventh day only, (2) the Sabbath as having moved to Sunday and Sunday is now the only Sabbath, (3) Luther's view of the Sabbath, that it is a day to focus on God's Word, and (4) the Sabbath is no longer a literal day, but a spiritual rest found in Christ's salvific work.

though he did not need to rest; rather, he modeled the seven-day rhythm for all humanity. Therefore, the Sabbath is a creation ordinance, along with marriage and work, intended for all humanity for all time.

The Sabbath is a day to rest, but the Hebrew word שבת, often translated as “rest,” means “to stop or cease.” The Sabbath is a day to stop one’s regular work. Along with an understanding of creation week as God creating a cosmic temple and entering it on day seven, the Sabbath is a day to cease one’s normal labors and bask in the serenity of knowing God sovereignly rules over his realm.

The Sabbath was established at creation and understood as a weekly rhythm before the giving of the Ten Commandments. The narrative found in Exodus 16 describes God’s instructions for his provision of manna when God virtually forced Israel into a weekly Sabbath rhythm. This narrative takes place before the giving of the Decalogue on Mount Sinai and assumes Israel had some understanding of the Sabbath. However, it was unlikely that Israel practiced the Sabbath during their 400 years of slavery in Egypt.

God codified the Sabbath as the fourth commandment for the nation of Israel. This thesis concludes that the Decalogue is a unified whole that describes God’s moral will for all humanity. It is universal and timeless and speaks to twenty-first-century followers of Jesus as much as it did to ancient Israel.

NT passages found in Luke 6 and Mark 2 describe Jesus seeking to return the Sabbath to its creation intent and remove the cumbersome rules that had accumulated over the centuries. Jesus did not violate the original Sabbath intent but confronted the abuses of the Sabbath. His succinct statement in Mark 2:27, “the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath,” is a clear indicator that from the very beginning of creation, God intended the Sabbath to be a blessing, not a burden.

Paul went even further and taught that the church no longer needed the cultic aspects of the Sabbath that God required of Israel. The etiology of the Sabbath at creation week and the NT removal of Jewish cultic elements open the door of new covenant freedom and flexibility in Sabbath-keeping. The one-in-seven rhythm still stands, but there is freedom in which one of the seven days each person chooses to keep the Sabbath. The demands of life and vocation in twenty-first-century Simi Valley make it impossible for everyone to observe a Sabbath day on the same day each week.

Creation, temple, and rest are tightly linked in the ANE and the OT. This thesis demonstrates that earthly temples in the ancient Near Eastern world were models of the cosmic temple, and temples were built as places for the gods to rest after conquering their enemies and bringing order to the chaos. This “rest” of the gods were not so much relaxation as taking up their rule over the realms that they had conquered.

Another key finding is that God was building a temple for himself in the first six days of creation, then on the seventh day, he entered that temple to “rest.” The created universe is God’s cosmic temple, where he sovereignly rules over his created realm. Even though Israel built earthly structures as places for God to be present with his people Israel, Scripture makes it clear that God’s ultimate resting and ruling place is in the heavens, the cosmos. The tabernacle and the temple were earthly buildings modeled after God’s heavenly, cosmic temple.

During creation week, God brought order to the chaos, stability filled his created universe, and the heavenlies were his cosmic temple. Then he entered that temple to rule and reign over his newly ordered world. The Sabbath rest that this thesis proposes is a place and time of peace, serenity, and harmony. The Sabbath is a day to rest in God’s sovereign control over all things, no matter how disordered, and trust in his absolute goodness, provision, and care.

The purpose of the Sabbath is for humanity to demonstrate their trust in God's sovereign provision and control over all of life. Contrary to the implications of God entering his cosmic temple, lay shepherds in Cornerstone Church may not have ordered all the chaos in their lives. They likely have not conquered all their "enemies" and achieved stability in their homes and workplaces. By stopping for one day each week, the follower of Jesus acknowledges that he or she is neither in control nor self-sufficient to resolve all the issues in his or her life, but chooses to rest in the God who is.

This thesis does not argue that the Sabbath is a legalistic requirement and does not suggest a return to rigid Sabbatarianism. Rather the Sabbath should be seen as a spiritual discipline or a "gospel duty" (Baab 2005, 17) that creates the space to stop the frenetic pace of life and rest in God's sovereign control and provision.

This summary of the significant findings explained in this thesis informs a fresh understanding of what Sabbath-keeping can and should look like for the lay shepherds at Cornerstone Church. It is one day each week when the regular work of life ceases, and one can rest in the tranquility that comes from knowing and embracing that God is in control. God is in his holy temple and has provided all that each person needs for life and godliness; each person declares trust in a good, good father by stopping his or her own frenetic pace for this one day.

## **5. Biblical Theology of Sabbath-keeping**

The biblical research, supported by ancient Near Eastern texts, produced the key findings noted above. These results and findings are then synthesized into fifteen foundational principles that support a cohesive Biblical theology. This biblical theology informs Sabbath-keeping for

the lay shepherds at Cornerstone Church. The fifteen principles are summarized in the following paragraphs.

God instituted the Sabbath for all humanity for all time on the seventh day of creation, and it is thus a creation ordinance. Sabbath-keeping is a significant and ongoing part of God's moral will for all humanity when each person stops working for one day every week. The Sabbath is a gift of time given by God to his people to nurture and develop their relationship with God. There is freedom in how one observes the Sabbath, and the Sabbath can look many different ways for different people and situations. This principle is essential for the lay shepherds of Cornerstone Church who work unusual and varied schedules. The Sabbath looked different for the nation of Israel than how it might look for the church today, and it continues to unfold differently in changing times and cultures. There are even hints in Scripture that the Sabbath will continue for all eternity into the new creation. Sabbath-keeping demonstrates trust in God's sovereign control and is an antidote to the potential idolatry of self-sufficiency. One way to understand how to keep the Sabbath is to stop being productive. The ability to stop being productive for a full day can reveal that one finds his or her identity and worth in Christ alone, not in what he or she produces. Spending time in God's creation, in the world of nature, is a critical part of Sabbath-keeping and can take one's focus off of self and human production and onto God's creation of a vast and diverse world. The Sabbath is best kept with others in the body of Christ, not in isolation. Keeping the Sabbath in the twenty-first century is not a legal requirement; it is not demanded or binding in an old covenant way. Instead, Sabbath-keeping should be seen as a gospel duty or a spiritual discipline.

God created a cosmic temple in the first six days of creation, a place from which he would rule and reign as sovereign over his created universe.



He entered that temple on the seventh day to “rest,” and that “rest” informs what Sabbath rest should look like for all humanity. The “rest” that God engaged in on the seventh day of creation was primarily about God’s sovereign rule over his newly created realm after the chaos of Genesis 1:2 had been ordered, and he achieved stability. Human followers of Jesus are not sovereign over their realms, but they can ‘rest’ in the profound reality that they have a personal relationship with the sovereign God who only does what is best for his children.

The Sabbath God inaugurated on the seventh day of creation is a place and time of peace, serenity, and harmony. God brought order to the chaos, and stability filled his created universe. For twenty-first-century followers of Jesus who live in a fallen, sinful world, chaos and instability seem to reign supreme. The Sabbath is a day to rest in God’s sovereign control over all things, no matter how disordered, and trust in his absolute goodness, provision, and care. It is a day to focus on how good his created world is and bask in the wonder of having a relationship with this sovereign creator God.

The Sabbath should be a day when the regular pace of life stops. Contrary to the implications of God entering his cosmic temple, lay shepherds in Cornerstone Church may not have ordered all the chaos in their lives. They likely have not conquered all their ‘enemies’ and achieved stability in their homes and workplaces. There are unfinished tasks, whether laundry, housework, yard work, repairs, or phone calls. All that chaos and unfinished business can be released because God has conquered all their enemies, and he is working to resolve the conflicts and chaos. By stopping for one day each week, the followers of Jesus acknowledge that they are not in control and are insufficient to resolve all the issues in their lives, but they rest in the God who is. The Sabbath is a day when followers

of Jesus relinquish any perceived idea of control and fully trust God to keep the world spinning and their hearts beating.

## **6. Practical Implications**

The fourth and final secondary research question asked: What are the pastoral implications of a biblical theology of Sabbath-keeping for lay shepherds in Cornerstone Church in Simi Valley, California, and what new avenues of research do these implications present? Biblical theology must bring about life transformation (Browning 1991, 3–4), or it runs the risk of becoming “knowledge that puffs up” that Paul warned about in 1 Corinthians 8:1. In his theological method, Browning’s fourth fundamental question asks what specific means and strategies bring about genuine spiritual transformation (1991, 55–56). How does one practice the Sabbath, based on the biblical theology developed in this thesis, to bring genuine life change?

When discussing or teaching about a renewed focus on keeping a Sabbath day, one of the first questions people ask is what to do on a Sabbath day. Lynne Baab summarizes this line of questioning in her helpful book by asking, “what shall I cease from doing on the Sabbath? and what shall I do on the Sabbath?” (2005, 21). Since these questions can become legalistic and Sabbatarian quite quickly, they need to be addressed cautiously. Any suggestions or ideas about what to do or cease from doing must be rooted in freedom and not be viewed as legalistically binding.

Nevertheless, because the general church culture of the twenty-first century has either ignored or distorted the creation ordinance of Sabbath-keeping, some guidance is appropriate. If one chooses to take his or her Sabbath day on Monday, how will Monday look different from the other six

days of the week? What sorts of things will one do, and what sorts of things will one avoid doing?

This thesis offers several practical ideas that seek to answer those questions. These suggestions are only starting points, not rigid rules. Sabbath day activities should be different from the normal duties of the work week. For example, if one works a physically demanding job, sitting still, taking a nap, and refraining from physical exertion might be appropriate. However, if one works a sedentary job such as sitting at a desk all week, physical exertion such as hiking, raking leaves, or mountain biking could be an appropriate Sabbath day activity. One's Sabbath day could be a time for more extended Bible reading or prayer or other spiritual disciplines. Sharing a leisurely meal with friends would be a fitting Sabbath activity. Spirit-driven creativity is essential for keeping the Sabbath in the twenty-first century, but the focus should always be on learning how to rest and "be," not so much on what to "do."

## **7. Conclusion**

There has been no shortage of theological research and writing on the Sabbath over the centuries, but there appears to be a growing resurgence of interest in the Sabbath as the twenty-first-century proceeds (Tonstad 2009, 502). The current thesis is part of that resurgence but with a unique perspective. Seeing creation as God building a cosmic temple for himself and understanding that he entered that temple on day seven informs a fresh understanding of how the church should view the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day to stop one's normal weekly work activities. The Sabbath is a day to be settled and quiet and find stability, security, and calmness in God's absolute sovereign rule. The Sabbath is a place and time of peace, serenity, and harmony.

This thesis can hopefully be instrumental in retrieving the Sabbath for the church today. To a great extent, the training and care of the lay shepherds at Cornerstone Church have been the author's responsibility, and he desires this small addition to the Sabbath literature help them flourish in their passion for serving Jesus.

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# ΛΟΓΟΣ ΓΝΩΣΕΩΣ as a Prophetic Speech-Act: A Theological and Biblical Evaluation of the Gift of the Word of Knowledge

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## **Abstract**

This systematic theological study seeks to provide an account of the nature and purpose of λόγος γνώσεως (*logos gnōseōs*), the spiritual gift variously translated as a word, message, or utterance of knowledge in 1 Corinthians 12:8. It was shown that throughout history, there has never been a time where there has been a unified understanding of the gift. It has been interpreted in one of three ways, namely, as a gift that provided either (1) academic insight into the Scriptures, (2) an ability to teach, or (3) supernatural knowledge that allowed the recipient to minister effectively within a particular context. The study argues that while this third understanding comes close to accounting for all the biblical data, it is not sufficiently distinctive to warrant classifying it as something separate from prophecy, a defining characteristic of which is the miraculous provision, and subsequent utterance of special knowledge. The study employs

speech-act theory as an exegetical tool, examining the locutionary and illocutionary acts within three select biblical passages where prophecy features. It argues that there were three knowledge components common to prophecy—reception, comprehension, and transmission components—and that it is the transmission component where the spiritual gift of λόγος γνώσεως finds expression. More specifically, the study argues that λόγος γνώσεως is an informative-assertive component of the broader prophetic speech-act that articulates supernaturally revealed information about matters past, present, or future, for edifying, or motivating the hearer(s) to conform or adhere to the will of God.

## 1. Introduction

The nature and purpose of λόγος γνώσεως (*logos gnōseōs*), the spiritual gift listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8 is ambiguous. This ambiguity is due, firstly, to the charism being variously translated as a word, message, or utterance of knowledge, with each modern English translation eliciting different possibilities of interpretation. λόγος γνώσεως translated as a “word of knowledge” might be understood to refer simply to the verbal communication of knowledge. Alternatively, it may be understood to pertain to a divine revelation of knowledge, an interpretation not uncommon in some circles, where believers actively seek to receive special and personal divine guidance or insight, often referred to as a “word from the Lord” (Lawrence 2011). λόγος γνώσεως translated as a “message of knowledge” suggests that it could be something received (a special insight from God for the benefit of the recipient) or perhaps even something relayed (by the recipient for the benefit of a third party). Again, λόγος γνώσεως translated as an “utterance of knowledge” could either be taken to refer to a premeditated and organized conveyance of a body of information for the



making of a point or as an extemporaneous, perhaps even ecstatic outburst. A second reason for the ambiguity is because λόγος γνώσεως is only listed once in the Bible, with no explicit example of it functioning practically. Any definition of the charism must therefore contain elements of both deduction and speculation. This challenge raises a third reason for the ambiguity, namely, that there are inconsistencies of interpretation among contemporary scholars as they have attempted to define λόγος γνώσεως.

A review of contemporary scholarship revealed that some scholars, including Walvoord (2008a, ch. 20; 2008b, ch. 4), Johnson (2004, 221), Soards (1999, 258), and Woodhouse (1987, 53) have been noncommittal in their handling of the charism, arguing that the exact nuance of what Paul intended to impart in his mentioning of λόγος γνώσεως is perhaps forever irrecoverable and that there is, therefore, no merit in trying to define it. Others, such as Thiselton (2000, 941), Fee (2014, 656), and Keener (2001, 116), have added that knowledgeable utterances were part of the Corinthian culture, that γνῶσις (*gnōsis*, knowledge) was a Corinthian catchphrase, and that Paul may have intentionally borrowed the term, to “rescue” the charism for legitimate Christian use. This certainly adds a layer of complexity for those attempting to determine Paul’s precise understanding of this manifestation of the Spirit. Nevertheless, some contemporary scholars have risen to the challenge, offering arguments in favor of one of three major interpretations, categorized in the study as the academic, pedagogical, and revelatory views.

It was Origen (2014, 73100) who was the first to propose what has been described in this study as the “academic view,” namely, that λόγος γνώσεως provides special insight, specifically into the hidden truths of Scripture. Contemporary scholars who share this perspective include Neece (2005, ch. 2) and Wagner (2012, 148), who similarly argue that λόγος γνώσεως

is academic, providing the recipient with a special ability to thoroughly analyze, comprehend, systematize, and summarize biblical teachings. While proponents of this view confirm that the gift finds expression when the acquired knowledge is communicated with others, their emphasis upon the cognitive component of the gift fails to fully account for Paul's use of the word λόγος (*logos*, word), which suggests that the gift has a strong oral component (Arndt et al. 2000, 599).

One of the ways in which scholars have attempted to account for this clear oracular component is by proposing that λόγος γνώσεως is pedagogical, that is, of or related to the gift of teaching. This perspective finds much support in contemporary academic circles (Gee 2012, ch. 5; Kistemaker 2004, 421; Thiselton 2000, 938–44; Grudem 2000, 293–302; Garland 2008, 581; Williams 1990, 355; Carson 1987, 38; Keener 2001, 115). The contention is that with such minimal evidence available, it is safest to avoid dogmatizing and to rather associate the charism with a type of ministry that finds regular expression within the church—that of the teacher. It is suggested that the recipient of the charism has, through years of study, meditation, and the practice of godly living, developed an intimate and personal acquaintance with God and his word and has been shaped by the Holy Spirit to speak in such a way that special, knowledgeable insights are conveyed to others. While the “pedagogical view” seems like an appealing proposition, it struggles with at least two shortcomings. Firstly, although some proponents of this view are careful to note that it is not the knowledge itself the spoken message that qualifies as the charism (Garland 2008, 581; Williams 1990, 355; Carson 1987, 38; Keener 2001, 115), the pedagogical view emphasizes the temporal dimension of preparation and learning. This fails to fully account for the fact that λόγος γνώσεως is a φανέρωσις (*phanērōsis*, manifestation or disclosure) of the Holy Spirit, and therefore potentially

spontaneous. Secondly, if Paul had intended to equate λόγος γνώσεως with the gift of teaching, he could simply have called it the gift of teaching, as he had consistently done throughout his other writings (Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11), employing different variations of the Greek root διδασκω (*didaskō*, to teach).

A third perspective, classified in this study as the “revelatory view,” seeks to account for the fact that (1) Paul qualified λόγος γνώσεως, together with the other charisms in 1 Corinthians 12, as “manifestations of the Spirit,” (2) the charism is positioned between “revelation” and “prophecy” in 1 Corinthians 14:6, and (3) it will cease, along with prophecy and tongues, at the eschaton (1 Cor 13:8). In broad terms, proponents of this perspective argue that λόγος γνώσεως should be understood as a spiritual utterance characterized by some type of revelation (Fee 2014, 657; 2009, 167). While those who argue for the “revelatory view” generally agree that λόγος γνώσεως is extemporaneous, with sudden flashes of insight inspiring spontaneous or impromptu speech, the understanding of the precise content of the revelation differs from one interpreter to the next. Some argue that the insight is specifically into relevant scriptural truths or principles of doctrine that may be brought to bear upon a practical issue within a church context (Duffield and Van Cleave 1983, 332; Horton 2005, 273). Others have argued that the revelation can be extra-biblical, providing insight into the situation, yearnings, thoughts, character, or even sins of another person, empowering the recipient to deal with a unique situation (Bennett and Bennett 1998, 165; Bloesch 2000, 293; Martin 2003, 825; Schreiner 2018, 257). As with the other views, the “revelatory view” also struggles with a major shortcoming in that it is not sufficiently distinctive to warrant classifying λόγος γνώσεως as something separate from prophecy, a defining characteristic of which is the miraculous provision of knowledge, which cannot have been acquired naturally.

The main objective of the study was to address the disparity evident within modern scholarship regarding the nature and purpose of λόγος γνώσεως by defining the charisma that accounts for all the biblical data. This is that the gift is a φανέρωσις τοῦ πνεύματος (*phanerosis tou pneumatos*, a manifestation of the Spirit), which contains or is characterized by γνώσεως (*gnōseōs*, knowledge), and finds expression as λόγος (*logos*, an utterance). Furthermore, given that biblical prophecy is often similarly characterized by the supernatural provision and subsequent articulation of special knowledge, the study also needed to account for the possibility of a relational interplay between λόγος γνώσεως and prophecy.

## 2. History of Scholarship on λόγος γνώσεως

The study begins with a consideration of how λόγος γνώσεως has been interpreted by prominent theologians throughout the history of the church. It was shown that perspectives on the spiritual gift of λόγος γνώσεως, and the person and work of the Holy Spirit in general, were largely shaped by key events that occurred throughout the history of the church, as well as by the various movements that grew out of them.

In the Ante-Nicene period, various movements, including the Gnostics, Montanists, Judaizers, and Marcionites, were emerging and flourishing, seeking to blend various religious and philosophical systems (Walvoord 2008a, 239). To protect herself from the influence of both syncretism and mysticism, the Catholic Church institutionalized, placing absolute authority into the hands of the bishop, and marginalizing any groups that emphasized blended faith or extra-biblical revelation (Hyatt 2015, 24). During this period, the idea that λόγος γνώσεως was a revelatory gift exercisable by the common man would have been counterproductive for the Catholic Church. Perhaps instinctively, many of the writers from

the first three centuries, therefore, tended to avoid mystical interpretations of λόγος γνώσεως, favoring interpretations that would allow for the gift to find expression almost exclusively within the confines of formalized Christian ministry (Clement of Rome 2005, 93; Didachist 2005, 328; Martyr 1885, chaps. 39, 61; Irenaeus of Lyons 1885, 2; Clement of Alexandria 1885, 2, 4; Tertullian 1885, 5; Origen 1885a; 1885b; 1897b, 497–98; 1897a, 337; 1979, 133).

During the earlier part of the Nicene period, the church was occupied with opposing Arianism (Ritzema 2016). They argued that the Holy Spirit acts as God, providing miraculous manifestations that cannot be accounted for naturally and that he should therefore be viewed as consubstantial with, or of, the same substance or essence as God. The tendency in the fourth century, then, was for λόγος γνώσεως to be presented as something more than a natural ability, or even a supernatural augmentation thereof (Hilary of Poitiers 1899; Cyril of Jerusalem 1894, §§ 5, 16; Gregory Nazianzen 1894, §§ 2, 14, 32; Basil of Caesarea 1895, § 204; Ambrose of Milan 1896, 2). By the fifth century, despite the academic world being dominated by Neoplatonic philosophy, a transition from an ancient to a medieval worldview had begun, as is evident in the work of Augustine, who grappled with the relationship between faith and reason. For Augustine, λόγος γνώσεως was a rational gift, of the cognizance of temporal, practical matters (Augustine of Hippo 1963, 5, 12, 13; 1953, 427; 1888a, 629; 1888b, 98; 1887, § 16). Cyril of Alexandria (2016, §§ 55, 113, 116, 129) similarly shied away from a mystical interpretation of the charism.

By the pre-Reformation period, spanning the twelfth through sixteenth centuries, the Roman Catholic church was cemented as the arbiter of all things regarding the Christian faith. It emphasized formal liturgy, participation in the sacraments, and the need for the Scriptures to be interpreted exclusively by the clerics. Mysticism continued to abound, but the influence of humanism during the Renaissance (with an influence

on rationalism and empiricism), as well as scholasticism (with an emphasis on dialectical reasoning and inference), would soon challenge mystical interpretations of λόγος γνώσεως (Walvoord 2008a, 245–46). Those who wrote in this period favored views that stressed human involvement, particularly the exercising of reason and deduction. This was the time of Aquinas, who understood λόγος γνώσεως to render the human mind “amenable to the promptings of the Spirit,” not only providing knowledge of divine things but empowering a person to participate with the Spirit as they together communicate and defend the faith (Thomas Aquinas 2013).

During the Reformation period, the sixteenth-century Reformers rebelled against the Roman Catholic Church, promulgating the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*, and insisting that the common man, with the help of a Bible and the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, could navigate his way through the Christian life (Walvoord 2008a, 246). Their passion to drive this agenda also influenced how the gift of λόγος γνώσεως was interpreted in this period, as was demonstrated in the writing of Calvin, who argued that the charism serves to “illumine” the Scriptures, allowing a person to explain the truths already revealed in God’s closed canon (Calvin 2011; Calvin and Owen 2010).

The seventeenth through nineteenth centuries brought with them the Age of Enlightenment and the post-Reformers found themselves having to defend and uphold the principles of *Sola Scriptura* and the illumination of the Spirit in a world that was becoming increasingly humanistic and rationalistic in its approach to faith (Walvoord 2008a, 249; Stout 1990). Contributors like John Owen, Matthew Henry, and John Wesley showed evidence of this tension by favoring interpretations of λόγος γνώσεως that emphasized not only a special insight into the mysteries of the Scriptures but also an ability to teach and instruct others (Owen 1674, 9; Henry 1994, 2265–66; Wesley 2010, 6384).

In the modern era, delineated in this study as the period spanning the nineteenth century to the present day, several renewal movements served to curb the rationalism of the Enlightenment and inspire a renewed interest in the person and work of the Spirit. These included the Second Great Awakening, various expressions of the holiness movement, and the Pentecostal and charismatic movements (Guelzo 1992, 163; Raser 1990; Cross and Livingstone 2005, 324, 1262). These movements inspired an abundance of publications on the Holy Spirit and his gifts, with contributors providing varied interpretations of λόγος γνώσεως in an attempt to account not only for the biblical evidence but also for the experiential aspect of the work of the Spirit within their traditions (Smeaton 1882, 50–53; Gee 2012, ch. 5; Williams 1990, 330–56; Fee 2009, 159–68).

The chapter demonstrates that no scholarly consensus has ever existed regarding the nature and purpose of λόγος γνώσεως. The academic, pedagogical, and revelatory views have all been presented in some form or another throughout church history. In some instances, contributors have hinted at the interrelatedness of λόγος γνώσεως and prophecy, without fully exploring the possibility. It is concluded that there remains a gap in the scholarship and that further exploration was both viable and necessary.

### **3. The Nature and Purpose of Biblical Prophecy**

A brief prolegomenous study of the concept of knowledge in the Scriptures generally, and in 1 Corinthians specifically, reveals that it was Paul's conviction that there was a close relationship between knowledge and prophecy and that the religious speech of the Corinthian believers extended beyond the rhetorical ability to Spirit-inspired, knowledgeable prophetic utterance. This relationship is shown to be supported by several contemporary scholars, who are referenced as part of an exegesis of key

verses in I Corinthians, including 1:4–7; 12:8; 13:2, 8–10, and 14:6 (Fee 2014, 37, 701, 734; Taylor 2014, 289; Ciampa and Rosner 2010, 632, 656, 679; Vaughan and Lea 2002, 135; Baker, Martin, and Toney 2009, 192; Hays 1997, 237). These findings serve as an exegetical basis for a more thorough investigation into the nature and purpose of the prophetic phenomenon in the Bible.

### *3.1. Old Testament prophecy*

The nature of OT prophecy is investigated firstly through an exploration of the various designations for the OT prophet. These include *nābîʾ*, which highlights the messenger function, followed by *ḥōzeh*, which emphasizes the ability to see into the spiritual realm and to receive divine revelation, and finally *rōʾeh*, which underscores the prophet as something of an intermediary between God and man (Fenlason 2014; Stökl 2012; Swanson 1997; Jenni and Westermann 1997; Holladay and Köhler 2000; Redditt 2008). It is shown that while a study of these designations does provide some insights, an etymological study on its own is insufficient to fully describe the phenomenon.

The nature of OT prophecy is, therefore, further investigated through a consideration of (1) modes of inspiration, (2) modes of delivery, and (3) the limitations of human involvement. In terms of inspiration, it is seen that God communicated his message to his prophets through extremely diverse means. The most common was a direct revelation, which may or may not have been accompanied by an ecstatic or “revelatory trance experience” (Osborne 2006, 267; Elwell and Beitzel 1988, 1770–74; Aune 1991, 86). God also communicated with his prophets through visions and dreams, by opening their eyes so that they might see into the spiritual realm, and even by having them enact elaborate dramas so that they might perceive the symbolism therein (Stead 2012, 819–22; Kaiser 1996, 644; Friebel 2012,



708). It is determined that because the Scriptures do not provide insight into either the mechanics of inspiration, or the psychological experience of the prophet, it is best not to conjecture, but to conclude that inspiration was a miracle (Oswalt 2012, 282; Hoad 1996, 966; Choi 2016). In terms of modes of delivery, it is shown that the prophets discharged their responsibilities to communicate the divine will through several means, including the skillful use of prose, poetry, and rhetoric (Lundbom 2010, 2; Cook 2012, 307–8; Weeks 2010, 25–29). This shows that they had enough of a command of the specially revealed information to know what mode of delivery would be most appropriate to relay the message. It is also shown that two of the common themes present in prophetic speech—that of judgment and salvation—demonstrate an extremely high level of certainty on the part of the prophet that what they were communicating had been revealed to them by God (Osborne 2006, 268; Aune 1991, 92). The prophets were not without their limitations, however; the fact that prophecies were often conditional or even sequentially fulfilled meant that prophecies could at times be seen to be imprecise, or even inaccurate (Redditt 2008, 6–8; Chisholm 2014; Kaiser 1996, 645).

As it pertains to purpose, the study shows that some modern scholars perceive the prophet as a diviner, namely, someone whose role it was to interpret and explain divine activity (Kelly 2016; Nissinen 2005; Kim 2003, 255; Kitz 2003, 41; Nissinen 2010; Grabbe 2010). However, given that divination was forbidden (Deut 18:10), the more popular conception is of the prophet as God’s spokesperson or intermediary (Fee and Stuart 1993, 182; Matthews 2012, 625). Again, however, one of the primary responsibilities that the prophets had was to critically assess and speak into their contexts. It is shown, therefore, that the purpose of OT prophecy is best understood through the conceptualization of the prophet as both forthteller and

foreteller. At times, they fulfilled the role of “forthtelling,” pointing out deviations from the revealed will of God and advising stakeholders on what might transpire should there be no attempt at reform. At other times, they fulfilled the role of “foretelling,” relaying their privileged information in the form of a prediction of what would come to pass in the future (Grabbe 2010, 125; Goldingay 2003, 678–83; Kaiser 1996, 645; Osborne 2006, 265; Lundbom 2010, 32–33; Redditt 2008, 1). The key concepts from the exploration of the nature and purpose of OT prophecy is assimilated into the following working definition of the phenomena:

Prophecy occurs when an individual (a) through various means, including vision, trance, auditory experience, audio-visual appearance, dream, or the like, (b) becomes consciously aware of having received divinely imparted knowledge of facts past, present, or future, and (c) experiences a divine compulsion to convey this revelation in either a verbal (speech) or non-verbal (symbolic acts and writing) form, (d) for the purpose of motivating the hearer(s) to either conform or adhere to the will of God.

### *3.2. Prophecy in the Second Temple or intertestamental period*

The chapter then briefly explores the prophetic phenomenon in the Second Temple period. It is seen that the proliferation of false prophets, the gradual transformation of prophecy into an apocalyptic scribal phenomenon, and a preoccupation with Torah piety in intertestamental Judaism resulted in those who were claiming for themselves the ability to prophesy being viewed unfavorably. Nevertheless, it is seen from the writings of Josephus that there were prophets during the Second Temple period who were

exercising prophecy in much the same vein as their ancient counterparts, albeit in something of a lesser degree. It is shown, furthermore, that the four major types of prophecy that have been identified as prevalent in the Hellenistic and Roman periods—apocalyptic literature, eschatological prophecy, clerical, and sapiential prophecy—all contain an element of special revelatory knowledge or insight (Stronstad 2012, 32–35; Aune 1991, 104; Gray 1993; Sommer 1996; Aune 1991, ch. 5).

### 3.3. Early Christian prophecy

The chapter moves on to an exploration of early Christian prophecy, beginning with a consideration of various contemporary conceptualizations of the prophet: as an inspired exegete, a pastoral preacher, an expositor of the kerygma, and an interpreter of inspired thoughts. It is shown that each of these conceptualizations highlights certain aspects of the charism while neglecting others (Blaylock 2019).

An investigation into Greek designations for the prophet is also conducted. It is shown that the term *prophētēs* refers to someone who could acquire information by special revelation, make proclamations on behalf of God, and expound on divine matters, interpreting the will of God to man. Moreover, the fact that the term *prophētēs* was used in the NT to refer to OT prophets, and that it was used in the Septuagint as the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew designation *nābîʿ*, suggests that for the early Christians, the NT prophet resembled the old. It is shown, furthermore, that the pagan Greek terms *mainesthai* (to be possessed), *mantis* (diviner or seer), and *mania* (manic inspiration) are largely absent from the works of early Christian writers, suggesting a conviction that these characteristics were foreign to early Christian prophecy (Louw and Nida 1996, 542; Liddell et al. 1996, 1540; Arndt et al. 2000, 890; Gillespie 1994, 133; Aune 1991, 195–98).

### *3.4. Prophecy and prophesying in early Christian literature*

The chapter continues with a study into the portrayal of the prophet and prophesying in the NT, specifically 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, Romans, and the book of Acts. Collectively, these resources show that early Christian prophecy did not fit any one pattern. While all believers were potential prophets, some individuals prophesied regularly and were specifically designated as prophets. Within the early Christian period, the ministry of the prophets was predominantly supralocal in nature, that is, the prophets operated primarily within itinerant groups, traveling to minister within the various Christian communities. By the post-apostolic period, however, there appears to have been a move towards prophets operating independently, either within or apart from a worship setting. As a rule, however, prophecy was a predominantly church-based practice, forming part of early Christian liturgy. During a designated part of the service, prophets would take turns prophesying, in the modern vernacular, even as they became aware of the fresh provision of special revelatory knowledge. This practice suggests that the prophetic messages were not preconceived, but that they were immediately and miraculously given, and that the prophets were in full control of the exercising of the charism. The NT writers portrayed the Holy Spirit as the divine agent who not only empowered prophecy but also ensured its efficacy, working within the consciousness of the hearers, strengthening, encouraging, and comforting them through the utterance. Prophecy was contextual and while messages were occasionally directed at individuals, they were generally directed at the broader, gathered Christian community. Early Christian prophecy was also depicted as being prone to error and imitation, which led to all prophecies having to be subjected to a test of conformity to the gospel message to be accepted as genuine (Beale 2003; Aune 1991; Gillespie 1994;

Witherington 2006; Schreiner 2018; Thiselton 2000; Fee 2014; Ciampa and Rosner 2010; Carson 1987; Dunn 2016; Peterson 2009).

It is concluded that in terms of its fundamental nature, prophecy has been consistently depicted throughout the canon as occurring when an individual, through various means, becomes aware of having received divinely imparted knowledge and experiences a compulsion to convey this revelation to a third party. In terms of purpose, apart from motivating the hearer(s) to either conform or adhere to the will of God, early Christian prophecy carried with it the added purpose of edifying a gathered community.

Having determined that the supernatural provision and subsequent utterance of divine knowledge formed a crucial part of the prophetic phenomenon, the study seeks to identify a suitable hermeneutical tool that could be used to analyze a selection of biblical prophetic speeches, and thereby further explore the possible relationship between λόγος γνώσεως and prophecy. Given that the study concerns itself with gifts of utterance, it was deemed appropriate to explore the relevance of speech-act theory as such a tool.

#### **4. Speech-Act Theory and Biblical Speeches**

The exploration of the suitability of speech-act theory as a hermeneutical tool begins with an overview of the development of the theory, focusing specifically on the contributions of J. L. Austin (1962) and John Searle (1969; 1979). It is shown that the key tenets of the theory may be derived from the collective works of these two contributors alone (Briggs 2001, 43–63). The study then moves on to consider the work of Jacques Derrida (1977), a literary critic whose theory of deconstruction threatened to undermine the relevance of speech-act theory for the study of texts. It is shown that

while Derrida has influenced how speech-act theory has been adopted in literary-critical circles, his theories are self-defeating and have in no way derailed the appropriation of speech-act theory within the field of biblical hermeneutics (Geisler 2002, 167; Thiselton 2015, 278).

The study proceeds to explore how the theory has been applied in theological circles, considering especially the works of Anthony Thiselton (1992), Richard Briggs (2001), Francis Watson (1997), Kevin J. Vanhoozer (1998), and Nicholas Wolterstorff (1995). It also provides a brief overview of a sample of publications, demonstrating the varied ways in which the theory has been effectively utilized within the broader theological arena. Consideration is then given to some of the limitations inherent in the use of speech-act theory for the study of biblical texts. It is shown that these limitations can be effectively overcome if the exegete faithfully considers the socio-historical and literary contexts as part of the hermeneutical process, and takes seriously the rules of language and culture that would have been pervasive for the author (Poythress 2008).

The study then goes on to consider precisely how the theory might be applied to an analysis of biblical prophetic speeches. It proposes that biblical prophecy is comprised of three distinct knowledge components—reception, comprehension, and transmission—and that various elements of speech-act theory are suited for the analysis of these components. Firstly, it suggests that a study of the locutions, both explicit and implicit in the text, would highlight the reception component, where the prophet received divinely imparted, special hidden knowledge, which could not have been acquired through any other means. Secondly, it is put forward that a consideration of context, convention, illocutionary stance, and the illocutionary force of an utterance, would serve to confirm the occurrence of the comprehension component, that is, that the prophet had developed

a comprehensive depth of understanding while processing the specially revealed knowledge. Thirdly, it is proposed that by seeking to identify the type of illocutionary act being performed, speech-act theory would serve to highlight the transmission component, where the prophet skillfully articulated the specially revealed and comprehended knowledge. The study is therefore positioned to apply speech-act theory as an analytical tool to highlight these various components of knowledge that form part of the prophetic phenomenon, and thereby further explore the possible relationship between λόγος γνώσεως and prophecy.

## **5. Λόγος γνώσεως as a Prophetic Speech-Act**

The objective of this exegetical section is to show continuity throughout the Bible regarding the consistent place of the utterance of specially revealed knowledge within biblical prophecy, positioning the study to clarify the relationship between λόγος γνώσεως and the transmission component, which it proposes form part of the broader prophetic phenomenon. To do so, it is necessary to (1) select prophetic utterances from historical contexts that demonstrate not only the nature but also the role or function of the utterance in that setting, and (2) select passages that would represent the general canonical groupings of the Bible. For these reasons, the study focuses the exegesis on three carefully selected passages. These included the OT account of Nathan’s prophetic rebuke of David in 2 Samuel 12:1–15, the account of Jesus’s prophetic engagement with the Samaritan woman in John 4:1–26, and the account of the interaction between Peter, Ananias, and Sapphira in Acts 5:1–11.

A thorough background is provided for each account, demonstrating that Nathan, Jesus, and Peter all operated according to the “felicitous conditions” applicable to prophetic pronouncements. That is, they all

adhered to the appropriate conventions or rules of engagement, upholding the cooperative principle, thereby ensuring that their speech-acts were legitimate and effective (Baldwin 1988; Parks 2016; Payne 1994; Vannoy 2009; Lo 2014; Lange and Schaff 2008; Kruse 2017; Parsons 2008; Peterson 2009; Trites and Larkin 2006).

The exegetical analysis considers the locutions of YHWH to the prophets, both implicit and explicit in the text. It also considers the illocutionary stance of the prophets, the illocutionary acts themselves, and the illocutionary force of these acts. It demonstrates that each of the pericopae fully accounted for the existence of all three components of knowledge that are proposed to form part of the prophetic phenomenon, namely, the reception, comprehension, and transmission components (Morrison 2013; Fee and Hubbard 2011; White 2000; Vannoy 2009; Lange and Schaff 2008; Kruse 2017; Dunn 2016; Parsons 2008).

The exegetical analysis, therefore, shows continuity throughout the Bible regarding the consistent place of the utterance of specially revealed knowledge within biblical prophecy, positioning the study to further clarify the relationship between λόγος γνώσεως and the transmission component, which was proposed to form part of the broader prophetic phenomenon. These findings served as suitable grounds for the study to move on to develop a theology of λόγος γνώσεως as a prophetic speech-act.

## 6. Conclusion

The concluding chapter begins with a summary and analysis of the technical and exegetical findings of the study. Following this, the research project is positioned to provide a systematic-theological formulation that accounts for all the data regarding λόγος γνώσεως and its relationship to biblical prophecy.



It is argued that by applying speech-act theory, and examining the locutions and illocutions present in three select biblical passages where prophecy features, the study demonstrates that there were three knowledge components common to prophecy—the reception, comprehension, and transmission components. It is argued, furthermore, that the “transmission component” pertains to the articulation of supernatural knowledge after it had been received and subsequently comprehended by the prophet. Significantly, it is noted that the features of this “transmission component” are identical to those of λόγος γνώσεως, which is defined in the study as a charism that supernaturally enabled individuals to articulate specially revealed knowledge of some sort for the advantage of the gathered community. It is concluded, therefore, that the study successfully demonstrates that biblical prophecy often contained an element of supernaturally inspired, knowledgeable utterance and that this element might be what Paul was referring to in 1 Corinthians 12:8 when he spoke of λόγος γνώσεως, the “word of knowledge.” The following systematic-theological formulation is proposed:

The spiritual gift of λόγος γνώσεως (logos gnōseōs, the word of knowledge) is an informative-assertive component of the broader prophetic speech-act that articulates supernaturally revealed information about matters past, present, or future, for the purpose of edifying, or motivating the hearer(s) to conform or adhere to the will of God.

The study goes on to defend this theological formulation against competing views. It argues that each of the prevalent understandings of the spiritual gift of λόγος γνώσεως encapsulates some key element necessitated by the text, but neglects other elements. It notes that while this is a charism characterized by knowledge, it is not exclusively cognitive or theoretical;

neither is it singularly scholastic or didactic. The positioning of the charism among other manifestations listed in 1 Corinthians 12 suggests that in its operation, there is a divine disclosure of the very Spirit of God, demanding that it be understood as something supranormal, transcending all natural conceptualizations or communications of knowledge common to man. Again, it is not enough to concede that the charism pertains to knowledge of some revelatory kind, without also acknowledging its oracular nature, and thereafter explaining how it relates to prophecy, which is itself characterized by the articulation of special, revelatory knowledge. The formulation proposed in this study accounts for these revelatory, cognitive, and articulative components. At the same time, it explains how the charism serves to complement, and not compete with that premier charism, which is common throughout Scripture, and consistently portrayed as one of the preferred vehicles of communication, employed by YHWH to relate to his people. Prophecy, it is argued, includes three distinct knowledge components, whereby special revelatory information is received, comprehended, and eventually transmitted, to call people into a right relationship with God. Definitions of λόγος γνώσεως don't need to be devised if the charism is simply taken to be synonymous with this transmission component, a proposition that faithfully accounts for all the data.

Mention is then made of some of the unique contributions of the study, including, (1) the provision of a framework for understanding the various ways in which the spiritual gift of λόγος γνώσεως has been understood, classifying the differing interpretations into three novel categories, namely, the academic, pedagogical, and revelatory views; (2) a critical analysis of each of these views; (3) a unique review of how the gift of λόγος γνώσεως has been understood throughout history; (4) the

conducting of an interdisciplinary study by employing speech-act theory for the analysis of a particular spiritual gift; and (5) the offering of a novel hypothesis, namely, the suggestion that the gift of λόγος γνώσεως should be understood as a component of prophecy. More specifically, the study argues that the prophetic phenomenon contains three knowledge components—the reception, comprehension, and transmission components—and that it is the transmission component that constitutes the gift of λόγος γνώσεως.

Finally, the study concludes with a consideration of its implications for theology and praxis. As it pertains to theology, two implications were drawn: (1) there is margin for a publication that serves to provide clarification and a more nuanced understanding of the nature and purpose of the gift, and (2) there is merit in further research, exploring the possibility of interpreting λόγος σοφίας, the “word of wisdom,” as a component of prophecy as well. In terms of praxis, it is argued that an unbalanced understanding of the gift of λόγος γνώσεως can place an addressee at risk, with a dishonest person claiming a revelation for exploitation or the pursual of dishonest gain. The adoption of the proposed definition put forward in this study will eliminate these potential dangers since both the addressor and addressee will understand that the charism consists not only in the reception of the special knowledge but in the relaying thereof, along with the positive purpose of restoration

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# A Missiological Exploration of the Encounters Between Reuben Omulo and the Church Missionary Society in Central Nyanza, Kenya

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## **Abstract**

This article explores the mission praxis features of Reuben Omulo, a Luo mission innovator, and his encounters with the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in setting up the Anglican Church in Central Nyanza. Applying Kritzingler's (2008) seven-point "praxis matrix" in an "encounterological" approach, it examines the dynamics of these encounters and their interactions, focusing on each of the seven dimensions. The article shows that Omulo and his Luo community in Central Nyanza were active recipients of the Christian message from the CMS missionaries. It brought to light tension between the mission praxes of Omulo and the CMS, both of whom were committed to establishing an indigenous church (Williams 1991, 38). The CMS looked to interpret the Luo worldview to permeate it with

the message of Christianity. On his part, Omulo attempted to incorporate the Luo community into Christianity by harmonizing the demands of Christianity with the duties of being a Luo. This article highlights how the innovating Christian praxis of Omulo and others met spiritual needs that the Luo religion could not provide, by eliminating its ambiguities and allowing an easier transition to Christianity.

## **1. Introduction**

The dearth of studies on African pioneer Christians obscures their missiological contribution and innovation, thereby presenting a distorted history. Western mission chroniclers ascribe the success in establishing the Anglican Church in Central Nyanza to the CMS missionaries, ignoring the contribution made by the local Luo people and pioneer converts, in either shaping the missionaries, their mission praxis, or African mission praxis during the venture. For instance, Richard (1947, 15) praises Walter Edwin Owen during his twenty years in Nyanza as the Archdeacon of Kavirondo, as a champion for African liberty, for his courage, progressive ideas, and his social welfare activities. Owen could not have done that by collaborating only with his European colleagues. The evidence of the role of his African colleagues in the mission is often not acknowledged.

Farrimond (2003, 3) noticed this unfavorable coverage given to the pioneer generation of indigenous Christians. So, he called for the recognition of non-Western mission operators in establishing the church in the local situation and raising their voices in mission discourse. Such converts, trained and recruited to serve on the mission fields alongside the CMS missionaries, included Reuben Omulo. Although he was acknowledged by the Anglican Church leadership for being a “great influence on the development of the church in Nyanza” (PUR 1994, 80),

this article explores what was peculiar to Omulo's mission praxis and his interaction with the CMS missionaries' praxis between 1906 and 1970.

## 2. General Overview

Establishing a church among the Luo at the beginning of the twentieth century was an incredibly challenging task. The mission arena of Central Nyanza, where the CMS established the Anglican Church, had intricate transformational encounters and showed diverse African responses to European impetus. There are many insights, drawn from the experience of that time, that need to inform mission practice today.

Reuben Omulo, born in 1895, was from the Luo people living in Nyanza. According to Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo (1989, 19–21), they emigrated from South Sudan through Uganda and settled around Lake Victoria by the sixteenth century. In the five centuries of their movement, they sparked ethnic conflicts, displaced populations, and established new settlements (Ogot 2009, 497). Their settling in Nyanza allowed the Luo to form a nation by assimilating the Bantu communities who had preceded them in the Victorian area (Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo 1987, 275–9). It is through this formation process, the ability to assimilate, that the Luo society crafted its societal cohesion, not from a pure ethnic origin as some genealogies may suggest (Ogot 2009, 387–93, 520). Paradoxically, the Luo created an elaborate genealogy to prove the common origin of the Luo, despite existing proof that they assimilated Bantu and other Nilotic groups.

Omulo's people had a dominant cultural-religious norm they developed over the years. Ogot (2009, 486–7) observed that the Luo inculcated the notion of God by adopting certain aspects of Bantus concepts, including the name Nyasaye. Although the Luo people assimilated the peoples and cultures they encountered, they resisted Islam

and were not yielding to early Christian missionary impetus. Changing to Christianity was, therefore, an improbable prospect. During his first tour to Kisumu in 1904, John James Willis, the pioneer CMS missionary to the Luo, met a Roman Catholic priest, Fr Clarke, with a Sunday congregation of some 40 people. Requesting a few Luos among them for the CMS's work, the priest told Willis: "Luo? not one. They are quite hopeless. You might as well attempt to convert sheep." Further, Fr Clarke dissuaded Willis from his enthusiasm, warning, "I know these people (the Luo), and I tell you frankly you must not expect to see any sort of result of your work for at least ten years." (Willis 1949, 48)

But things changed. There was an increase in the number of Christians by 1918. The CMS Gleaner (1918, 138) reported 5,706 out of 11,534 catechumens in the Diocese of Uganda. This was about half of the total and most were from Maseno. Over two hundred a day would join in for special instruction and examination (Pleydell 1919, 133).

Three probable drivers for change led to the acceptance of Christianity: the imperial allure, the CMS mission praxis, and the impetus from within the Luo society.

Inspired by their diviners (Ogot, 2009), Omulo's people of Gem accepted the Europeans before they arrived. They experienced comparative prosperity under Odera Ulalo and now wanted more Westernization from the missionaries. Some of the CMS missionaries, being Europeans and associated with the colonial enterprise, saw themselves as "civilizing" agents (Stanley 2001, 14). This association shaped the Luo impression of the Christian mission as the door to prosperity that Europeans portended. The CMS established the Anglican Church in Nyanza, among people who expected much from them.

Taking advantage of colonial-era policies, the CMS used education to open the doors of progress. It envisaged using education and regarded

Maseno School for the training of chiefs' sons, as their best path to establishing the church and transforming the society (Willis 1949, 51). But schooling—and what it offered in scriptural translation, development of orthography, and the missionaries' acts of love—had a slow uptake.

At first, the Luo leaders were cautious of the missionaries and the mission school. The chiefs, Omulokoli (1981, 111) observed, “did not give their own sons, but their relatives, or even simply some boys who happened to reside with them in their homesteads.” Between 1906 and 1908, there were very few students. But this changed after 1908 when elders ruled not to disregard the diviners' admonition, and to honor their commitment to colonial administration. Omulo's father Owiti, also a seer, sent him to Maseno at the age of thirteen.

While the mission work at Maseno was getting established, the CMS could not stay away from Kisumu for long. The Luo government workers forced them to work there earlier than they planned. Mission work in Kisumu was spontaneous, beginning after Willis' meeting in March 1909 with a congregation comprising African government workers. Jairo Owino, a government interpreter, initiated that meeting (Willis 1909, 219). Willis deployed the Maseno students with outstanding abilities in church and class, such as Reuben Omulo. In this venture, the colonial administration, the CMS missionaries, and the Luo themselves instigated a mission project that later proved a pivotal mission center in the region.

As a teacher in Maseno (1914 to 1923), Omulo developed a missions approach that his students emulated. By using Christian religious texts for literacy classes, he exposed his learners to the Christian religion, such that they recognized it when the gospel was preached. His students went to their villages and gathered people, teaching them as he had taught them. This model spurred the spontaneous growth of schools and multiplied numbers of Christian catechumens. According to Pleydell (1919, 132), the

catechumenate was, “fired with evangelistic zeal and became voluntary unpaid teachers in their districts, so keen were they and their disciples that congregations existed in places of which we had no cognizance.”

The Luo became enthusiastic agents of the Christian faith. Wright (1914) and Matthews (1918) found three unique aspects of their agency. First, the young Luo embraced the new faith in the name of schooling, despite their elders’ resistance. Second, they asked for no pay. Wright (1914, 2) observed, “These recent converts from heathenism are gathering the men and women and children together, and without payment, are teaching them to read the Gospels in their own language.” Third, they had zeal. Matthews (1918, 138) quips, “Their natural independence is a useful factor in spreading the gospel. As each one gets to know it, he wishes to pass on the news. In fact, they wish to evangelize their own people.”

The literacy explosion further propelled the mass movement that began in 1914, for according to Pleydell (1911, 132–3), “the demand for books was so great that editions of five or ten thousand were quickly swallowed up and, when the new edition arrived, my office was besieged with readers eager to buy Gospels and Luo primers.” According to records, the CMS sold 2,125 copies of the gospel in 1915, but this rose to 7,215 in 1917. Pleydell observed that “people often walked thirty to forty miles for the book that was now so precious to them ... They read it so often that they could recite whole passages by heart” (Pleydell 1911, 132–3).

Although their report on growth was impressive, Willis (1918, 304–5) acknowledged that they “leave out of account the tens of thousands who are under more or less direct influence” of the mission. A lot more happened. As sound as the CMS mission praxis was, it took African involvement and their mission praxis to succeed. The CMS mission praxis provided the base upon which Omulo and his people developed and ran the mission, which forced changes on the CMS that it never expected.



### 3. Methodology

To discuss this complex mission context, I found in Kritzinger's (2008) encounterology<sup>1</sup> approach an appropriate theoretical framework. The Anglican Church among the Luo emerged out of the encounters between the mission praxis of the CMS and the mission praxis of pioneer Christians, such as Omulo, in a dynamic colonial era. So, before analyzing encounters, one must first make a "thick" description of each mission praxis, using the seven dimensions of the praxis matrix: spirituality, agency, contextual understanding, ecclesial scrutiny, interpretation of tradition, discernment for action, and reflexivity (Kritzinger and Saayman 2011, 4). Then one would analyze the encounters between the mission praxes, investigating the influence the mission praxis of the CMS and Omulo had on one another between 1906 and 1970. Thus, Omulo and the CMS encounters in this study confirm Kritzinger's (2011, 3) key conclusion that mission encounters transform the missionaries' witness as much as that of the "receivers." This process allowed for an incisive analysis of the rich history of that era, the findings of which the contemporary church can find essential for her mission praxis. In the end, these transformative encounters unearthed new areas of mission knowledge, affirming Bosch's (1980, 248) and Jansen's (2010) persuasion of mission as the crossing of boundaries.

In this article I highlight certain points of the mission praxes formed through reciprocal interaction that led to the Anglican Church's founding and describe forms of emerging mission praxis produced by the earlier encounters.

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<sup>1</sup> The term developed and used by Kritzinger (2008, 770) describes the reflections on all the factors shaping the intentional encounters between followers of different religious ways in missiology.

## 4. Mission Praxes from 1906 to 1970

We can divide Omulo's peculiar interaction with the CMS missionaries into three stages: the inauguration stage from 1906 to 1920, the indigenization stage between 1921 and 1945, and the independent stage between 1946 and 1970.

### *4.1. Inaugural stage*

During the inaugural stage (1906 to 1920), Reuben Omulo's praxis represented the mission recipients, while the CMS's missionaries were the purveyors of the Christian message.

In Central Nyanza, the mission praxis of the CMS dominated the inaugural stage of setting up the Anglican Church between 1906 and 1920, during which Reuben Omulo's praxis developed as he learned from the CMS. During this time, the want of personnel and resources plagued the CMS, hindering them from meeting the educational demands of the people. However, the enthusiasm of the Luo people, who depended on their resources, both human and material, met this lack. Willis observed that the entire work of evangelization and education was the toil of African teachers, such as Omulo and the communities' resources (Ogot and Welbourn 1966, 24; Pleydell 1919, 132). The spiraling demand for schooling, Omulo's and the CMS's mutual interest, led to a literary revolution and the quick spread of Christianity among the Luo. The Luo people used education as a ladder to the colonial regime's new opportunities.

The CMS's commitment to translating Christianity and the Scriptures, in which Omulo played an essential part, eclipsed the dominant role of missionaries as evangelists and elevated the local agents (Sanneh

1989, 158). Omulo and his people discerned in Christianity a different message from its educational and social aspects, which attracted the Luo.

Embracing Christianity put Omulo into a bind between his traditional past and his new faith. The challenge lay in integrating biblical guidance with Luo customs. The interplay between Omulo's and the CMS's approaches showed a tension between Luo customs and Christianity. It showed Omulo's attempt to balance Christianity's demands with traditional responsibilities to situate the Luo in Christianity. At the same time, Willis and the CMS intended to penetrate the Luo worldview and infuse it with Scripture and "civilization" to ease proclaiming the Christian faith.

Meanwhile, Christianity provided the converts with structured liturgical worship that the Luo religion lacked. The African believers picked up the vernacular Scriptures and soon became missionaries to their people. Translating Christianity and availing the vernacular Scriptures as God's words removed the ambiguity in the Luo religion, making it easier for African agents to spread the gospel within their society. This sacramental spirituality Omulo imbibed and taught to his students and people as a service to both God and humanity.

#### *4.2. Indigenization stage of the church*

The innovative mission praxis of Omulo sprouted during the indigenization stage of the church (1921 to 1945). Significant social upheavals and political changes ushered in harsh colonial policies during this era.

The colonial impulse to subjugate Africans forced the CMS to adjust its mission policies to support Africans. The CMS's involvement in the 1923 Devonshire White Paper was pivotal because of the paper's impact on the colony (Maxon 1993, 279). It made the African interests paramount, although it slowed the pace of independence agitated for

by African leaders. How Omulo and the people of Nyanza responded to these policies developed as they involved the CMS. At first, the Luo people directly resisted the regime, but then they changed course and cooperated with the colonial regime (Ogot 1963, 264). Owen organized the converts into a pressure group, the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association, through which they engaged the government (Richard 1947, 15).

They saw this as a spiritual response, which weaved together faith and social action, the forerunner of a justice spirituality. Had Omulo and his people not protested the colonial policies and formed the Young Kavirondo Association, the CMS would not have acted on social justice matters that soon. The CMS had to weigh its Victorian worldview against the Scriptures and the regime's actions. In Owen's actions, the CMS mission is thought to have engaged in a campaign for justice on behalf of Africans (Owen 1927, 245). They flourished together in a justice spirituality, which became a hallmark of the Anglican Church in Central Nyanza for many years to come.

The post-World War I challenges forced the CMS to speed up the indigenization of its Nyanza mission. It appointed Africans to mission leadership (Omulokoli 1981, 288–90). This new crop of leaders reshaped the mission and texture of the emerging church, including Reuben Omulo, who transitioned from teaching at Maseno to heading a mission station in Kisumu. His innovative mission praxis became plain at K'Omulo, the school under his charge.

Omulo improved K'Omulo to comport with the government recommendation of the Phelps Stoke Commission. He considered the school an asset for the Nyanza people, irrespective of their ethnicity or denomination. Although the CMS considered the government's regulating education intrusive, both the CMS and Omulo had to adjust to survive in the new era, for the mission had invested heavily in education.

At K'Omulo, Omulo adapted the church liturgy, translating the Psalms and hymns, besides developing new songs. These adaptations made worship more contextual. Omulo contextualized and indigenized his faith, bringing a fresh approach to missions. He built on what he learned from the CMS missionaries, by developing the liturgy and operating ecumenically. These actions attracted more Luo people to join the Christian faith.

The CMS espoused a faith that emphasized belief characterized by confession, which produced many nominal Christians. This gave rise to innovative movements, which rejuvenated a superficial and dwindling church. The movements represented unique expressions of Christianity. These included the Roho, which was charismatic with an open manifestation of the Holy Spirit (Hoehler-Fatton, 1996, 12–8), and the East African Revival Movement (EARM), an evangelical movement emphasizing being born again (Gehman 1986, 36). As observed by Barrett (1968, 258), the CMS forced the Roho adherents out after the death of their leader in 1934. However, Taylor (1958, 15) notes that the CMS integrated the revival movement within the Anglican Church.

#### *4.3. Independent Anglican Church*

Between 1946 and 1970, the CMS transitioned the indigenous African Anglican Church it planted into an independent Anglican Province of East Africa and later into the Church of the Province of Kenya (CPK) (PUR 1994, 112–3). During this era, the church became independent, with African leadership, and reorganized into pastorates. The CMS's diocesanization<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Diocesanization was a CMS policy aimed at handing control to a diocese out of the churches formed in its mission while remaining under Canterbury. It comprised little more than giving control to the missionaries as officeholders in the church. It involved integrating Africans into the new administrative machinery.

process, which began with indigenization, introduced African padres and teachers who moved to pastoral service. So, in 1970, this church became an Anglican province within the Anglican Communion.

The post-World War II (WW2) upheavals influenced the direction and shape of the mission in Central Nyanza. Ogot (1963, 269) contends that Africans, agitating for a better future, compelled the government to relax its earlier restrictions. That triggered a wide range of changes, touching on economic, social, and political issues, which affected the church.

The colonial government's post-WW2 policies opened opportunities for Africans to take part in the national economy (Swynnerton 1954, i), entering national trade and cash crop agriculture. While they seized the shift in economic policies, Dugdale (1950, 1303–12) noted that Africans rejected the education reforms enshrined in the Beecher Report (Beecher 1949). They demanded greater access to education and called for quality higher education. These reforms led to direct elections and African representations in the Legislative Council, culminating in Kenya's independence in 1963.

During this period, the CMS mission praxis changed from schools to pastorate/parish churches, but a lack of personnel soon crippled efforts to staff churches, which was made worse by a schism in 1958. So, it used the EARM as a solution. The cruel ironies of the EARM are plain. Reed (2007, 12) observed that the movement increased church membership through its zealous evangelism, injected spiritual life into the pastorates, and became a reliable source of human and financial resources. However, according to Pickens (2004, 93), controversies springing from the EARM led to the tragic 1958 schism in Central Nyanza's Anglican Church. While Reed (2007, 13) notes that EARM members became custodians and exponents of the church's teachings (catechism), the movement elicited controversial theological debates that dominated the church around that time (Warren 1954, 50–1).

During this period, the dominant spirituality in the Anglican Church was deeds of justice and evangelical revival, which was manifested in the leaders such as Omulo, who had joined the EARM. The revival movement further complicated the intersection between the Christian faith and Luo customs on marriage issues such as polygamy and divorce, on which the church had to pronounce itself in Lambeth resolutions. Although Omulo affirmed the missionary teaching on polygamists, he differed with the way that missionaries treated them and pushed the CMS to grant those affected more latitude, thereby strengthening Luo Christianity.

## **5. Theological Reflection on Omulo's Mission Praxis**

The mission praxes of Omulo and the CMS over the three stages of the establishment of the Anglican Church, as discussed above, showed theological perspectives and revealed some issues that the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) is yet to resolve today. These issues include African agency in mission, the message of the gospel to the converts' ears, the challenges of translation, and the link between Christian faith and Luo identity.

### *5.1. African agency*

The issue of African agency was central to the CMS mission from the outset. Omulo's mission praxis stands out as a lesson for the ACK today, for he was an innovative agent of mission. His efforts in contextualizing the faith opened doors for the Luo in Central Nyanza. He not only translated the message but addressed his people's nagging questions. Yet, in a salient way, he made connections linking his past with the new faith, showing us that Christianity is not alien.

The ACK's present quest to increase numbers relies on the clergy. Kagema (2008, 70) suggested that success in evangelism will rest on the

shoulders of trained leaders, implying the clergy. However, Omulo's praxis showed the immense contribution of the laity to the mission (Wright 1914, 2). Advancing the priesthood of believers may replenish the dwindling numbers faster than the current focus on clericalism.

While establishing herself in the Anglican Communion, the ACK must avoid mimicking foreign mission approaches and rather consider the contextual mission as shown in Omulo's mission praxis. Hence, the ACK mission praxis must reaffirm culture and speak to the people's core needs. In doing so, the church should restore the Luo lexicon lost in the CMS translation.

Omulo's mission praxis, alongside the CMS's, brought to the fore the hitherto concealed mission praxes of indigenous Christians (Farrimond 2003, 3). Significantly, it showed how intricately interwoven the mission praxes of the CMS and the converts were. From the very beginning, those praxes constantly influenced each other. Omulo's praxis projects the voices of indigenous Christians to the global mission discourse. Although suppressed before, this article documents his efforts to contextualize and indigenize his faith. His role in scriptural translation, translating the Psalms (Pleydell 1934), and developing Luo hymns (Odonde 1934) grounded the church during the stage of establishing the Anglican Church in Kenya. It involved developing contextual liturgy and creating new hymns and spiritual songs aligned with the Luo worldview.

## *5.2. Luo Conversion*

That just a few missionaries managed to establish a growing church among the Luo in such a brief time is a puzzle. In 1904, Willis experienced the reticence of the Luo to foreigners, making the prospect of success unlikely. But the unexpected happened. The 1910 baptism of the first converts at



Maseno triggered a people's movement to Christianity (Omulokoli 1981, 225). However, the CMS's approach was not the only factor in the conversion of Omulo's people. Its model, which included translating the Scriptures, inculturation action, the setting up of schools, and Westernization, could not in itself have had such success. Studying Omulo's praxis shows how religious and non-religious outliers in their societies influenced their reaction to Christianity. This accelerated the uptake of the new ways. The Gem people joined Christianity in line with what their seers had prepared them to believe. The CMS's invitation comported with what the diviners and seers adjured. Three factors aided the CMS mission: the impetus for progress from within the Luo society, the role of the seers, and the impact of African agents.

Christianity met the spiritual needs that the Luo religion could not fulfill. The Luo people's second experience was in the inculturation of their deity, this time by the CMS missionaries when they translated the word "God" in the Scriptures with Nyasaye, the Luo name for God. This convinced Omulo and his fellow converts that the missionaries did not proclaim a strange god. The success in vernacular translation inadvertently diminished the dominant missionary role, by elevating the role of local agents (Sanneh 1989). In addition, the Bible's eschatological message clarified the faint hope of life after death, with its double accent on God's heavenly kingdom and justice on earth (Ocholla-Ayayo 1976, 171).

## **6. Conclusion**

This article found the encounterological approach of Kritzinger (2008) fruitful for the study of missions. The approach employs three dimensions, namely historiography, praxeology, and encounterology (Kritzinger 2022). Historiography involves writing mission history from documents,

archives, and interviews, while praxeology means analyzing mission as an intentionally transformative praxis by using a praxis matrix. It juxtaposes the interacting praxes of the “inside” and “outside” agents of change. Finally, the encounterology dimension explores the dynamics of the transformative encounters that have taken place between them. Pursuing these three dimensions allows one to view mission praxis from multiple angles across a time. The approach has also proved an effective way of gathering detailed information regarding Omulo and the CMS mission praxes (see Omondi, 2022).

The analysis of the unfolding mission praxis of Rev. Reuben Omulo, a Kenyan pioneer Anglican, as shown in his life and ministry, provided hitherto unknown insights into Central Nyanza’s Anglican Church history. The Anglican Church of Kenya can now have a clearer understanding of its mission history as it appreciates and reclaims the formative role of Luo mission innovators such as Omulo and rethinking its present mission praxis by employing a praxis matrix. Kenyan nationals’ collective experience can improve mission praxis within our changing context. The church can rejuvenate its mission work in Africa by giving serious attention to its current contextual and missiological challenges and prioritizing the nationals’ perspectives.

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# Polity of the New Apostolic Movement in Light of Biblical and Historical Precedents in the Christian Church<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

The New Apostolic Movement (NAM) is marked by two tenets: the legitimacy of the ministry of modern-day apostles and “theocratic single-headship” of churches by apostolic leaders. There is a lack of specialized research regarding the polity of NAM networks and NAM churches. What is the polity of the New Apostolic Movement, and how can that polity be evaluated in the light of biblical and historical precedents?

New research found that local-church polity in NAM churches is consistently autocratic but with enough plurocratic<sup>2</sup> function to provide a

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<sup>1</sup> This summary article is used with permission by the Pharos Journal of Theology. The original article is available here: [https://www.pharosjot.com/uploads/7/1/6/3/7163688/article\\_21\\_vol\\_104\\_2\\_stellenbosch.pdf](https://www.pharosjot.com/uploads/7/1/6/3/7163688/article_21_vol_104_2_stellenbosch.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> “Plurocratic” refers to a system of government in which power is shared by a group of people. This is in contrast to an autocratic system, in which power is concentrated in the hands of one person.

measure of accountability. There is little to no democratic function in NAM churches. Research into the polity of the trans-local networks of the NAM found an absence of autocratic control, contradicting previous assumptions in the literature. Biblical exegesis concluded that the primacy of apostolic ministry is given to building the church, not governing it and that the governing role of NT apostles was conducted collegially, not autocratically.

## 1. Research Purpose

The NAM, also known initially as the New Apostolic Reformation is “a new ecclesiological paradigm focused on the installation of modern-day apostles” (Gingerich 2019, 44). With its roots in the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, the NAM is a significant and growing segment of worldwide Christianity.<sup>3</sup> Identified and popularized by C. Peter Wagner as the New Apostolic Reformation, the modern NAM is distinguished mainly by its insistence that Jesus continues to give apostles to the church, and those apostles are meant to lead and govern the church. Many have made a case for the legitimacy of modern-day apostles (Wagner 1999; Cartledge 2000; Torres 2001; Harvey 2004; Kay 2007; Devenish 2011; Caron 2013; Scott 2014; Ahn 2019; Woodroffe 2019), and substantial refutations have come in response (Ross 2005; Resane 2008; Chitty 2013; Geivett and Pivec 2014; Weaver 2016; Williamson 2016 and Harold 2017). However, lacking in the scholarly literature is a thorough identification and evaluation of the polity of the NAM. The polity of the NAM needs to be identified and evaluated on two levels: the local church level and the trans-local network level.

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<sup>3</sup> Population estimates vary depending on how the New Apostolic Movement is defined, but Geivett and Pivec (2014, ch. 2, §1) put the estimate of New Apostolic Reformation adherents close to 400 million worldwide.



There is a need for the polity of the NAM to be appraised in the light of biblical and historical precedents. Are there biblical and historical precedents for the types of local and trans-local church polity practiced in the NAM? Is the polity of the NAM a matter of preference, power, and pragmatism or can we find similarities in the pages of Scripture and the annals of church history?

Those who write about the NAM are rarely objective in their evaluation. There are strong theological and pragmatic convictions both for and against the idea of a modern charismatic apostolate. This research aims to identify the governing structures within the NAM and provide an objective evaluation of those structures. Some sociological evaluation of NAM polity has been done (Corbett 2004; Clifton 2009; Christerson and Flory 2017; Yoon 2019) and more sociological studies would be an important tool in validating/invalidating the authority structures of the NAM. However, historical and biblical theology is the order of this research, to search out church polity precedents from the primitive church through to the modern era. An objective evaluation of the polity of the NAM can be done in light of biblical and historical precedents. That is the purpose of this research.

## **2. Research Design and Methodology**

The study begins with a review of the scholarly and popular literature addressing the polity of the NAM. Next comes a survey of the governance practices of the churches of the NT era, exploring the question of a normative NT polity and identifying and evaluating NAM views on the governing role of the apostle found in Scripture. Following is an extensive survey of the history of church polity in the different eras of the Christian

church to identify ecclesiology in harmony or at odds with the polity of the NAM. A survey<sup>4</sup> of eleven major Western apostolic networks and their flagship churches is then conducted to help clarify the nature of NAM polity on the local and trans-local levels.

A distinct methodological approach is used in the identification of ecclesial polities. The categories of autocratic, plurocratic, or democratic (APD) are employed rather than the traditional categories of episcopal, congregational, or presbyterian (Brand and Norman 2004, 19). The APD categories are seen as simpler, more encompassing, more objective, and less partisan than traditional classifications.

### **3. Literature Review**

Certain cogent and helpful observations came from the literature review. NAM proponents and critics agree that the fundamental principle of new apostolic polity has to do with the investment of governing authority in the church to individual charismatic apostles (Williamson 2016, 2; Ahn 2019, 16). In addition, the vast majority of new apostolic churches are independent with most also being charismatic (Ross 2005, 10; Harold 2017, 40). Further, the NAM has become broader than C. Peter Wagner's New Apostolic Reformation as some NAM proponents have diverged from Wagnerian ecclesiology, theology, and eschatology (i.e., Harvey 2004; Kay 2007; Budiselić 2008; Clifton 2009; Devenish 2011; Ekman 2012; Scott 2014). Moreover, restorationism is a theme found throughout NAM literature—especially the restoration of the five-fold ministry of Ephesians 4 with the re-emergence of the apostle and the prophet (Caron 2013, 170; Eckhardt 2017, 28). Additionally, most definitions of apostles by NAM advocates are a

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<sup>4</sup> Employing constitutions, bylaws, annual reports, website assertions and leadership interviews of the studied local churches and trans-local networks.

mix of reasonable deductions from NT passages and personal experiential inductions crafted to fit a self-reflecting vision of a modern apostle (Devenish 2011, ch. 3, §1; Eckhardt 2017, 100–103). Furthermore, common in NAM literature are mostly extra-biblical contrivances identifying numerous types of apostles (Wagner 2006:90–94; Ahn 2019:103–106). It is worth noting that a key question, “Are apostles meant to govern?” is regularly addressed in the literature with the three main scriptural references being 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 2:20 and 4:11 (Budiselić 2008, 215; Resane 2008, v). Moreover, practitioners and theologians in the NAM have a strong aversion to democratic/representative local church government, and there is little or no accommodation for a democratic form of local church government in the NAM (Resane 2008, 75; Geivett and Pivec 2014, ch.4, §5). Additionally, how apostles are meant to function in the local church is a topic of some disagreement, even among NAM practitioners (i.e., Devenish 2011, ch.10, §1; Caron 2013, 60). Furthermore, there is a lack of specified and standard local-church polity structure in the NAM (Yoon 2019, 175). In addition, a number of trans-local apostolic networks exist that are paradigmatically different from traditional denominations and have the potential for exponential growth (Wilkinson 2016, 48; Christerson and Flory 2017, 65). Lastly, the major sociological problem with NAM polity is the perceived lack of accountability of autocratic leadership, especially on the local church level (Wagner 2000, 68; Crosby 2006, 163).

#### **4. Biblical Precedents**

The study of biblical precedents begins with a survey of the identifiable polities of the geo-historical churches found in the NT record with an eye toward any autocratic, plurocratic, or democratic tendencies in the governing leadership in these churches. Next is an exegetical study of 1

Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 2:20 and 4:11, the three main Scripture passages used to support the idea of the governing function of apostles. The biblical precedents section closes with a discussion on “the question of normativeness”—whether it can be effectively argued that there was a normative form of local church governance in the NT church that was also meant to be normative as the church age progressed.

#### *4.1. A survey of NT churches*

When looking for church polity precedents, the churches at Jerusalem and Antioch (Syria) and in Asia Minor present virtually all the church polity examples found in the NT, with the most known about the Jerusalem church. Of the practices deemed to have implications for church polity, some were more compellingly autocratic, plurocratic, or democratic. Others were considered less compelling but still possibly one of the three. Fifty-four incidents or statements that had potential implications as a polity practice were identified. Of the fifty-four, twelve could be seen as potentially autocratic, twenty-nine could be seen as potentially plurocratic and fifteen could be seen as potentially democratic (see next page).

The survey of the churches of the NT did not lead to an indisputable conclusion for a prevailing autocratic, plurocratic, or democratic church polity. However, examples of plurocratic governing precedents were the most numerous and compelling. The authoritative leadership of Peter, James, and Paul was considered exemplary but not necessarily governmental. Moreover, while there were examples in the Book of Acts of the entire church being convened, apprised, consulted, and involved when it came to important decisions, democracy, as a ruling function, was not observable as part of early church polity.

Church	Scripture Reference	Polity, Governance and Leadership Observations	A	P	D
Jerusalem	Acts 1:12-26	Peter's prominent role in the upper room.	✓		
		Peter quotes Psalm 109:8 in replacing Judas. The Greek term used is ἐπισκοπή denoting a collective leadership/oversight of the twelve.		✓	
		The mandate to restore the full complement of witnessing apostles.		✓	
		'Casting of lots' possibly meaning 'stretching forth the hand' to vote.			✓
	Acts 2:1-41	The Holy Spirit was poured out on every person in the upper room.			✓
		Peter was the singular spokesperson and preacher on the day of Pentecost.	✓		
		Peter 'stood up with the Eleven' when he addressed the Pentecost crowd.		✓	
		The crowd responded in their conviction to both 'Peter and the other apostles'.		✓	
	Acts 2:42-47	The church 'devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching'.		✓	
		'Many wonders and signs performed by the apostles'.		✓	
	Acts 3:1-4:31	Peter heals man at the Gate Beautiful and preaches to the crowd and Sanhedrin.	✓		
		John is with Peter, also speaks to the crowd and the Sanhedrin.		✓	
		The upper room is shaken in response to corporate prayer.			✓
	Acts 4:32-36	'With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection...'		✓	
		Monies were 'put at the apostles' feet'.		✓	
	Acts 5:1-11	Peter singularly meting out the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira.	✓		
	Acts 5:12-41	Peter's shadow heals.	✓		
		The apostles collectively perform miracles, are arrested, are delivered from prison, preach in temple courts, are re-arraigned, give their defense, were flogged and released and continued to preach in temple courts and from house to house.		✓	
	Acts 6:1-7	'The Twelve gathered all the disciples together' to propose a solution to a problem.		✓	✓
		The disciples chose the Seven from among themselves.			✓
		The Seven were presented to the apostles for ordination and are presumed to function collectively.		✓	
	Acts 6:8-7:60	Stephen singled out and martyred after boldly preaching.	✓		
	Acts 8:1	The apostles remain together in Jerusalem amid persecution.		✓	
	Acts 15:1-29	A delegation from Antioch is sent to Jerusalem to see 'the apostles and elders'.		✓	
		The entire church is gathered to hear the testimonies of Paul and Barnabas and some believing Pharisees make a proposal in the hearing of the entire assembly.			✓
		'The apostles and elders' met to consider the Gentile question.		✓	
		'The whole assembly' is referenced as being part of the deliberation.			✓
		The opinions of Peter, Paul, Barnabas and James are represented in the narrative.		✓	
		James makes the concluding and apparently decisive statement on the issue.	✓		
		'The apostles and elders with the whole church' chose delegates to go to Antioch.			✓
		The letter to the Antiochian believers was from 'the apostles and elders'.		✓	
	Acts 21:18	Paul arrived in Jerusalem and 'went to see James and all the elders were present'.	✓	✓	

Church	Scripture Reference	Polity, Governance and Leadership Observations	A	P	D
Antioch	Acts 11:19-30	No indication of any designated overseers, only those ministering as evangelists, teachers and prophets.		✓	✓
		Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught for an entire year.		✓	
		'The disciples ... decided to provide help' for the church in Judea.			✓
	Acts 13:1-3	'Prophets and teachers' are identified in the church at Antioch.		✓	
		The calling by the Holy Spirit to the church to set apart Barnabas and Saul.			✓
		The commissioning and sending of Barnabas and Saul conducted by the church.			✓
	Acts 14:26-28	Paul and Barnabas gathered the church together for missionary report. Still no indication of designated overseers.			✓
		Paul and Barnabas 'stayed there a long time with the disciples'.		✓	
	Acts 15:1-4	Certain people from Judea came and were teaching the need to adhere to the Law.	1		
		Barnabas and Saul stood against the teachers and their teaching.		✓	
		Barnabas and Paul were appointed (presumably) by the church and sent by the church to go to Jerusalem.			✓
	Acts 15:30-35	The letter from Jerusalem was delivered to the entire church			✓
		'Paul and Barnabas ... and many others taught and preached the work of the Lord'.		✓	
		No identification of church elders or overseers	2	3	4
Asia Minor	Galatians 2:11-15	When Peter came to Antioch, Paul 'opposed him to his face' for leading many, including Barnabas, into hypocrisy.	✓		
	Acts 14:1-25	Paul and Barnabas's teamwork.		✓	
		Elders are appointed in Lystra, Iconium, Antioch (Pisidia) and Philippi.		✓	
Ephesus	Philippians 1:1	Paul salutes the church at Philippi 'together with the overseers and deacons'.		✓	
	Acts 19:19	Paul taught the disciples at Ephesus for two years operating in the miraculous.	✓		
	Acts 20:17-38	Paul's exhortation to the Ephesian elders.		✓	
	1 Timothy 3:1-13	The qualifications of overseers and deacons.		✓	
	Revelation 2:1	The 'angel' of the church of Ephesus interpreted as 'the pastor'.	✓		

*Checkmarks under the A, P, D classifications indicate that the scriptural observations listed have been, or possibly can be, interpreted as indicating autocratic, plurocratic or democratic governing function in the New Testament churches. Some observations are more compelling than others in translating to a definitive form of church polity.*

<sup>1</sup> New Apostolic advocates would conceivably argue that the exercise of autocratic leadership would have precluded the allowance of a platform for these teachers and the need to bring the question to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> The probability of a monoepiscopal authoritative leader at Antioch is implausible.

<sup>3</sup> If there is any identifiable overseeing leadership at Antioch, it is Barnabas and Saul

<sup>4</sup> Antioch is taken as a precedent for collectivism in early Quakerism and the Plymouth Brethren, both which eschewed human leadership altogether (see chapter 4).

#### *4.2. Exegesis of the primary texts used to support the governing role of apostles*

The three most cited texts for the NAM and its polity are 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 2:20 and 4:11. The exegetical work was concerned with ascertaining if there may be found in these texts any coherent rationale for the governing role of apostles on the local or trans-local church level.

It was concluded that 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 2:20 and 4:11 affirm the importance of apostolic ministry for the church and carry rhetorical weight in defense of a modern charismatic apostolate. However, these scriptures do not provide a compelling argument for a monarchical governing role for the apostle. These three passages are much more about the apostles' significant ministry role than any assigned governing role. The descriptions found in these passages are about ministry gifts, not organizational positions.

To extrapolate a governing assignment for apostles from their eminent ministry assignment goes beyond the meaning of each of these three main scriptural passages. The authority of apostles is still being determined. Apostles did/do speak, preach and instruct with eminent authority. Apostles and prophets were/are given to the church to equip for service, lay the foundation on which the church is built, and provide the most significant ministry in the church. However, Paul's apostolic authority in dealing with matters in the church that needed to be put in order was influential, not coercive.

#### *4.3. The question of normativeness*

A review of biblical scholars from various church backgrounds found that scholars disagree on whether one type of governance polity could be considered normative in the NT era. Scholars who come from Episcopal

traditions take one of two tacks: that there was no normative NT polity (Haight 2004, 195–196) or that plurocratic governance was the norm for the churches of the NT era and the tripartite schema later developed by divine sanction (Sullivan 2001, viii; Elliot 2008, 687, 693). Scholars from congregational traditions typically contend that there is not a normative NT polity, but certain democratic “principles” could be found in the narrative (Orchard 2009, 107; Winslade 2009, 2). Scholars from Presbyterian and plural-elder backgrounds are much more likely to make the case that the plural-elder model was the NT norm and precedential for the entire church age (Strauch 1997, 44–45; Waldron 2004, 213–214; Grudem 2009, ch. 47, §1).

Regarding the question of a normative NT governance model and the developing patterns that followed, three answers are most plausible:

1. The plurocratic model was normative in the NT churches and meant to be the pattern for the church through the ages.
2. The plurocratic model was normative in the NT churches but not necessarily meant to be the pattern for the church through the ages.
3. Local church polities were diverse and fluid during the NT era setting a precedent for diversity in church governance in times to come.

## **5. Historical Precedents**

The emergence of monoepiscopal local church government and the related establishment of the tripartite standard in the second and third centuries of the Christian church remains the most significant polity development in the church’s history. Understanding the reasons for the transition from “presbyter to priest” provides a foundational understanding of subsequent developments in polity throughout



the church age. Transitions to and from plurocratic, autocratic, and democratic forms of church polity can be observed in different eras and locales of the Christian church.

Restorationism has significantly influenced polity change and development throughout church history. The Donatists, the Mendicants, the Waldensians, the Anabaptists, the Disciples of Christ, and many other restorationist movements, including the NAM, advocated for significant changes in church governance structures in pursuit of their restorationist ideals. At their inception, the majority of these restoration groups identified the bipartite governmental system as the definitive, desirable, and duplicatable NT model.

Identifying the loci of vested authority in any governmental system is the key to understanding polity. The East-West Schism, the Protestant Reformation, the separatist movement, and the New Apostolic Reformation were all partially or fully responses to perceived inequities, deficiencies, or abuses in ecclesial authority. The rise of the papacy was another significant development in the history of church polity. Within the Roman Catholic Church, the monastic movement, Catholic Reformation, and conciliar movement came as propositional reprieves to perceived entrenchments of repressive polity and conduct.

The Protestant Reformation was irrepressible and opened the door to new and different church governance structures leading to a flood of new denominations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During the first 1,500 years of the church, some significant but repressed dissenting groups advocated reform of church polity. Two significant church polity developments in the Western church in this era were the rise of Calvin's Presbyterianism and the establishment of democratic ideals in both the church and society through the separatist and

congregationalist movements. Dozens of autocratic, plurocratic, and democratic church government hybrids have since come on the scene, most born on American soil.

For the most part, the history of denominations is a history of their founders—persons who garnered a significant following with uncommon zeal, expressive authority, and a resonating message. Notably, the ecclesiology of the founders of denominations and movements did not necessarily translate to an enduring ecclesiology employed by those denominations and movements. An important finding of the historical survey is the fluidity of denominational polity. Many denominations have changed their local and trans-local polity over time with alterations between plurocratic, autocratic, and democratic governance practices, with much of Western Protestantism gravitating towards democratic polity on the local level.

Are there precedents for the polity of the NAM found in the history of the Christian church? Certainly. The strongest and clearest precedent for NAM polity is the rise of the monoepiscopacy in the second-century church. The historical, sociological, and theological reasons<sup>5</sup> for the rise of the singular local church overseer resound into the twenty-first century.

A compilation of the autocratic, plurocratic, and democratic tendencies of the major churches, denominations, and movements

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<sup>5</sup> “Various causes or reasons for the rise and spread of the monarchical episcopate have been suggested, among them the following: a natural tendency towards concentration of authority with growth, increasing need for full-time pastoral care, desirability for having locally a central spokesman for the congregation with relationship both to internal affairs and to outside contacts, the administration of church finance, leadership in worship (especially in connection with the Eucharist), the spread of the concept of a sacrificing high priest and a priestly succession, decline of spiritual gifts, and the very real need for consolidation in the face of persecution and assault from heretical movements” (Strand 2016, 77).

in the pre-Reformation worldwide church and the post-Reformation Western church is found in the following chart.

**APD Polity Differentiations in the Historical Christian Church**

Key: A-Autocratic, P-Plurocratic, D-Democratic, (O)-Originating, (H)-Historical (M)-Modern

Century	Church/ Movement	Polity, Governance and Leadership Observations	A	P	D
First	Corinth	Clement's letter indicates a plurality of presbyters/bishops and deacons		✓	
	Antioch	The Didache advises the appointment of multiple bishops and deacons		✓	
Second	Smyrna	Polycarp's letter to the Philippians is from 'Polycarp and the presbyters with him'.		✓	
	Philippi	Polycarp instructs the church at Philippi to be subject to the presbyters and deacons.		✓	
	Rome	The Shepherd of Hermas speaks of 'the elders who preside over the church'.		✓	
	Antioch	Ignatius of Antioch differentiates between the bishop and the presbyters and deacons requiring submission to the bishop.	✓		
	Smyrna	Irenaeus commends obedience to the presbyters, successors to the apostles.		✓	
		According to Irenaeus, the presbyters work together with the episcopate.	✓	✓	
Third	Montanist	Bishops, presbyters and deacons are all identified in Montanism with regional bishops called <i>koiononos</i> and with women ordained to these positions (Tabbernee 1993:250).	✓	✓	
	Alexandria	Clement of A. is first to identify the tripartite 'bishops, presbyters, deacons'.	✓	✓	
	Carthage	Tertullian says, 'the elders preside over us' but identifies the bishop as 'the chief priest'.	✓	✓	
		Later in life, as a Montanist, Tertullian decried the overreach and compromise of the episcopacy.	✓		
	Rome	Hippolytus prescribed the ordination of bishops by bishops with elders present and the church affirming.	✓	✓	✓
	Carthage	Cyprian affirmed the authority of bishops over presbyters in certain matters and saw the collegiality of the bishops as the highest authority in the church.	✓	✓	
	Alexandria	Dionysius is the last of the bishop/presbyter breed with the 'bishop' becoming distinguished from the 'priest' as the tripartite polity comes into vogue.	✓		
Fourth	Nicene	The establishment of authoritative church councils.		✓	
	Donatist	The prolific growth of the church under the apostolic leadership of Donatus.	✓		
		The retention of monoeiscopal oversight in the local church with diocesan authority replaced by collegial authority of local church bishops.	✓	✓	
		The revitalization of a collective presbytery in the local church.		✓	
	Arian	The retention of the tripartite system.	✓		
	Nestorian	The retention of the tripartite system.	✓		
Fifth	Monasticism	Monarchical polity with submission to the abbot.	✓		
	Nestorian	The retention of the tripartite system.	✓		
	Western	The intransigent of the tripartite system with the addition of archpresbyters, subdeacons, exorcists, readers, acolytes, and doorkeepers.	✓		
	Eastern	The intransigent of the tripartite system with the addition of subdeacons and readers.	✓		
Sixth	Roman	Establishment of the papacy.	✓		
	Byzantine	The patriarchies.	✓		
Seventh	Roman	The primacy of the papacy.	✓		
	Byzantine	The primacy of ecumenical councils.		✓	
Ninth	Roman	The enforcement of clergy celibacy	✓		
Eleventh	Roman and Byzantine	The Bishops of Rome and Constantinople excommunicate one another.	✓		
	Roman	Consolidation of papal power with the establishment of the legati and the curia.	✓		

<b>Twelfth</b>	Waldensians	Elimination of bishops with lay preachers, including women, and pastoral 'barbas' meeting together in regional synods.		✓	✓
	Cathars/ Albigensians	Early 'perfects' carried supreme spiritual authority. Later Catharism established regional bishops with local assemblies led by 'elder son', 'younger son' and deacons.	✓	✓	
<b>Thirteenth</b>	Roman	The mendicant friars. <sup>1</sup>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Fourteenth</b>	Roman	The papal schism finally ended by the councils of Pisa and Constance.		✓	
	Lollards	Priest and deacon only. Empowerment of laity. Charismatic leadership.		✓	✓
<b>Fifteenth</b>	Hussites	Critical of corruption of church hierarchy with major reforms in the Czech church but keeping the tripartite system and eventually returning to Roman fold.	✓		
	Unity of Brethren	Rejection of diocesan bishops in favour of a 'inner circle of elders' and the eventual reestablishment of 'presbyters' in local churches.		✓	
<b>Sixteenth</b>		Reverence of and submission to early apostolic leader, Matthew of Kunwald.	✓		
	German Lutheran	Monarchical pastors in Erastian system. Prince electors acting as bishops.	✓		
	Swiss Zwinglian	Elimination of bishops and monasteries. Major changes in liturgy. Priests replaced with monarchical pastors. Continued magisterial oversight.	✓		
	Swiss Anabaptists	Anticlericalism and the elimination of clergy distinctions.			✓
	Dutch Anabaptists	Elimination of priesthood. The ordination of plural elders.		✓	
	Reformed Presbyterian	Collegial elders with a trans-local consistory. Distinction between teaching elders and ruling elders.		✓	
	Church of England	Historical tripartite.	✓		
	Puritans	Brought the Church of England into presbyterial governance temporarily.		✓	
	Hutterites (O), (M)	Overseeing 'Vorsteher' for all Hutterites and a 'Minister' chosen by lot for each colony.	✓		
	Church of Scotland	The 'session' of elders directs the affairs of the church.		✓	
<b>Seventeenth</b>	English Separatists	Advocating for a free church and congregational rule.			✓
	Plymouth Pilgrims	Separation of church and state. No distinction between teaching and ruling elders. Perpetuity of elders. Both elder and congregational function.		✓ 2	✓
	Baptists	Elected elders and deacons. No distinction between teaching and ruling elders		✓ 2	✓
	Quakers (O)	No clergy, ordinances, sacraments or liturgy. Reliance on the 'inner light'.			✓
	Quakers (M)	Clerk oversees monthly and yearly 'meetings' looking for 'consensus'.			✓
	Cambridge/ Savoy	Doctrinal platforms that endorsed the 'congregational way' and the principle of 'mutual consent'. Distinguished between ruling and teaching elders.		✓ 2	✓
	Pietism	Emphasis on individual piety and the forming of collegia pietatis leading to a decentralization of religion and the weakening of Erastianism.			✓
<b>Eighteenth</b> c. 1700	Amish	The Amish bishop is the authoritative leader in the community and church.	✓		
	Mennonite (O)	Palatinate immigration to America. Plural elders.		✓	
	Mennonite (H)	'Minister' or 'Preacher' ruling oversight.	✓		
	Mennonite (M)	Representative form of local church government with congregational ratification of pastors and lay leaders.			✓
1708	Brethren (O)	Oversight by 'true shepherds' with the consensus of the 'brethren'.		✓	✓
	Brethren (M)	'Limited congregational polity'.		✓	✓

<sup>1</sup> The mendicant friar movements were 'lay pietistic movements' (Lawrence 2013:33) which were collegial on the local level and submitting to the authority of a 'Minister General' elected by provincial ministers every three years (Roest 2015:148).

<sup>2</sup> Elder-rule with democratic function limited to the choosing/deposing of the pastor.

1729	Methodist	Clear lines of hierarchical authority under the autocratic authority of John Wesley.	✓		
1795	Methodist Episcopal (O)	Hierarchical and episcopal.	✓		
Nineteenth	United Meth. (M)	Church council is the executive agency of the local church and the pastor is the administrative officer.			✓
	Christian Church (O)	Elders ruling, deacons serving, evangelists preaching.		✓	
1803	Christian Church (M)	Churches overseen by an elected administrative board			✓
1814	Triennial Bap. Conv. (O)	Singular pastor, plural elders and deacons, autonomous congregational authority.			✓
1816	African Meth. Episcopal (O)	Hierarchical, complex and regimented. Episcopal.	✓		
	African Meth. Episcopal (M)	Episcopal with singular monoepiscopal local pastors. Local pastor can be overruled by 2/3 vote of local church council. 21 regional bishops oversee General Conference.	✓	✓	
1827	Plymouth Brethren (O)	No ordained ministry or recognized eldership.			✓
	Plymouth Brethren (M)	Recognized elders but with no formal ecclesial authority.			✓
1830	Mormons (LDS)	Hierarchy of church government beginning with ward bishop on local level to stake president on regional level and presiding apostle on international level.	✓		
1843	Wesleyan Meth. (O)	Split from Methodist Episcopal Church over slavery issue. Rejected episcopal polity in favour of 'republican' polity.			✓
	Wesleyan Church (M)	Congregational polity. Pastors elected for specified terms.			✓
1845	Southern Baptists (H)	Singular pastor, plural elders and deacons, autonomous congregational authority.			✓
	Southern Baptists (M)	Autonomous congregations under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes.		<sup>3</sup>	✓
1845	Northern Baptists (H)	Singular pastor, plural elders and deacons, autonomous congregational authority.			✓
1850	Seventh-day Adventist (O)	Apostles, evangelists, elders and deacons.		✓	
	Seventh-day Adventist (M)	Centralized and hierarchical on trans-local level. Pastors appointed by SDA Conference. Church council-ruled on local level.	✓		✓
1860	Free Meth. Church (O)	Split from Methodist Episcopal Church over slavery issue. Retained episcopal polity.	✓		
	Free Meth. Church (M)	Episcopal on trans-local level and congregational on local level. Pastors appointed by denomination.	✓		✓
1865	Salvation Army (O), (M)	Military regimentation of over 100 leadership positions with clear lines of authority under the direction of the General.	✓		
1872	Jehovah's Witnesses (O)	Congregationally elected elders and deacons.			✓
	Jehovah's Wit. (M)	'Theocratic polity' (centralized hierarchy) with local church elders appointed by Circuit Overseers.	✓		
1881	Ch. of God, Anderson (O)	Elders and deacons on the local level and 'general eldership' on the national level.		✓	
	Ch. of God, Anderson (M)	Autonomous and congregational.			✓
1887	Ch. & Miss. Alliance (O)	'Combined Congregationalism and Presbyterianism'.		✓	✓
	Ch. & Miss. Alliance (O)	Elders direct the affairs of the church on the local level with a 'non-sacramental episcopatism' on the trans-local level.	✓	✓	
1895	National Bap.	Singular pastor, plural elders and deacons, autonomous congregational authority.			✓

<sup>3</sup> Hundreds of Southern Baptist churches have moved away from democratic processes to plural-elder rule.



	Conv. (O)				
	National Bap. Conv. (M)	'Functional autocracy'. Congregation chooses pastor. Autocratic authority entrenched over time as pastor becomes known as bishop.	✓		✓
1895	Church of the Nazarene (O)	A 'mingling' of congregational, presbyterian and episcopal.	✓	✓	✓
	Church of the Nazarene (M)	Congregational on the local level and episcopal on the trans-local level.	✓		✓
1897	Ch. of God in Christ (O)	General Overseer and Chief Apostle appoints state overseers who, in turn, appoint local autocratic pastors.	✓		
	Ch. of God in Christ (M)	Presiding bishop appoints jurisdictional bishops who, in turn, appoint local pastors who have authority over an administrative church council.	✓		
Twentieth	Church of Christ (O, M)	Autonomous local churches ruled by elders.		✓	
1906	Ch. of God Cleveland (O)	Independent congregations of mutual consent with either congregational or elder governance.		✓	✓
1907	Ch. of God Cleveland (H)	"Theocratic" governance with a singular leader.	✓		
	Ch. of God Cleve. (M)	"Centralized" denominational governance with monoepiscopal pastors appointed by state overseers.	✓		
1908	Apost. Faith Miss. SA (O)	Regional Overseers, local 'elders', 'deacons' and 'local preachers'.		✓	
	Apost. Faith Miss. SA (M)	'New Apostolic' polity.	✓		
1914	Assemblies of God (O)	Autonomous local churches. No prescribed form of church government. Recognized the offices of elder, evangelist, exhorter and deacon.			
	Assemblies of God (M)	Denominational requirements and prescriptions including congregational church government.			✓
1924	Zion Chr. Ch. of SA (O, M)	Dynastic revered leader with complete authority. 'Ministers' of local churches aided by evangelists, deacons and prophets but have decision-making authority.	✓		
1925	United Ch. Of Canada (O)	Congregational polity at the discretion of the local church. Presbyterian 'session' on lowest trans-local level and democratic on highest levels.	✓	✓	✓
	United Ch. Of Canada (M)	Democratic on local and denominational levels.			✓
1927	Foursquare Church (O)	Flagship church was autocratically ruled by founding pastor Aimee Semple McPherson. Local Pastors were elected for one-year terms but were authoritative.	✓		
	Foursquare Church (M)	Local congregations under supervision of district supervisors who appoint pastors. Authority in local church invested in church council.	✓		✓
1937	Ass. of God Australia (O)	No prescribed local church polity. Denomination had a general presbytery.		✓	
	Aus. Christian Churches (H)	Congregationalist form of governance on the local level with a national assembly that conducted its business at a democratic biennial convention.			✓
	Aus. Christian Churches (M)	Autocratic on local level with collegial apostolic leadership on the denominational level.	✓	✓	
1945	United Pent. Churches (O)	No prescribed local church polity. Denomination had a general presbytery.		✓	
	United Pent. Churches (M)	Locally, congregational. Denominational, modified presbyterian.		✓	✓
1957	United Ch. Of Christ (O, M)	Congregational on local level, presbyterian on mid-level, democratic General Synod.		✓	✓
1982	Vineyard Ch. Intern. (O)	Autocratic on denominational, regional and local levels.	✓		
	Vineyard Ch. Intern. (M)	Plurocratic on national and regional level. Local churches have church councils with authoritative pastors.	✓	✓	
c. 1990	House Church Mov.	Autonomous/anti-hierarchical 'stand-alone' churches, some in voluntary networks. Some have plural elders and some have 'no official leader'.		✓	✓

## 6. A Survey of NAM Churches and Networks

In a survey of eleven of the largest “apostolic networks” and their flagship churches, two significant findings countered common criticisms of the NAM. The first finding was the lack of autocratic control and hierarchical dictates in the studied networks. Most networks are voluntary associations of churches and ministers, some emphasizing shared resources and some offering relational connection and encouragement. Only one network showed a high degree of denomination-like oversight from leadership. C. Peter Wagner and some other early New Apostolic Reformation dominionists envisioned hierarchical geographic networks of apostles that would unite the church and be instrumental in bringing kingdom values to bear on societal structures and institutions (Caron 2013, 173). There is a little vestige of that vision found in the surveyed networks and the theology of their leaders.

The other unexpected finding was the provision for plurocratic function in the constitutions of the majority of the studied NAM churches. NAM churches are certainly autocratic—that is one of the two major factors in defining them as part of the NAM. Nevertheless, for the most part, NAM flagship churches are not without a measured check on authoritative control—most have a path for removing the lead pastor in the case of spiritual abuse or moral failure. These churches have elderships, some with more functioning authority than others, all empowered to instigate the removal of the lead pastor if need be. Still, a strong *primus inter pares* role and constitutional protections for the senior pastor make these flagship churches more autocratic than plurocratic. The provision for collegial accountability found in these flagship churches does necessarily mean all NAM local churches have such legislated accountability.

Some apostolic networks offer licensing and ordination, some do not. Most have formal educational institutions associated with their network or flagship church. Most networks for second-tier membership require monthly offerings, dues, levies, or tithes. Most networks have thousands of participants and receive millions of US dollars (or an equivalent) from their members. A chart comparing the surveyed networks, using ten different metrics, is presented on the next page.

## **7. Conclusion**

In evaluating the polity of the NAM, a search was made for biblical and historical precedents. The search comprehensively identified autocratic, plurocratic, and democratic practices. In the search for biblical precedents, it was concluded that the primary apostolic function is not governing the church but expanding and equipping it. The governing authority in the NT churches was exercised primarily collegially, not autocratically. In the search for historical precedents, multiple and fluid forms of autocratic, plurocratic, and democratic church governance were discovered. The rise of the monoepiscopacy in the church's adolescence is seen as the most considerable historical precedent for the autocratic church polity of the NAM.

A survey of modern apostolic networks and churches found that the networks are not fraught with authoritarian control, as sometimes assumed, and that the churches of these networks are autocratic, but not without some plurocratic function. The survey also revealed a diversity of thought and practice and an increasing departure from the theology and sociology of C. Peter Wagner.

Even though there is a restorationist ideal in the NAM, the legitimacy of NAM polity is mainly contingent on an adiaphora position



NAM Network	Apostolic Leader	Individual Members	Affiliated <sup>1</sup> Churches	Member <sup>2</sup> Churches	Level 1 Dues <sup>3,5</sup>	Level 2 Dues <sup>4,5</sup>	Annual Income <sup>6</sup>	Licensing & Ordination	Education Institution	Degree of Oversight <sup>7</sup>
Harvest International Ministry	Che Ahn	40,000	—	25,000	—	Donation <sup>8</sup>	>12 mil	No	Yes	Low
Bethel Leadership Network	Bill Johnson	20,000+	—	—	\$37	\$175	23 mil	No	Yes	Medium
Morningstar Fellowship of Churches & Ministries	Rick Joyner	600	20	400	\$25	\$25	25 mil <sup>9</sup>	Yes	Yes	Medium
Gateway Church Network	Robert Morris	1250	12	1250	\$0	\$400	6 mil	Yes	Yes	Low
Hillson Leadership Network	Brian Houston	51,000	131	671	\$0	\$36	300,000	No	Yes	Low
International Coalition of Apostolic Leaders	John Kelly	1000-2000	—	—	—	\$37	1 mil	No	No	Low
C3 Church Global	Phil Pringle	—	500	—	—	Levy <sup>10</sup>	1 mil	Lic: Yes Ord: No	Yes	Medium
Christian International Apostolic Network	Bill Hamon	3000+	300-500	2000+	\$50	Tithe <sup>11</sup>	17 mil <sup>12</sup>	Yes	Yes	High
Newfrontiers	Terry Virgo	2000-3000	1500	—	—	—	270,000	No	No	Low
Global Awakening	Randy Clark	10,000+	—	603	5 Levels <sup>13</sup>	5 Levels <sup>13</sup>	21 mil	Yes	Yes	Low
New Covenant Ministries International	Dudley Daniel	1000+	400	—	—	—	190,000	No	No	Medium

<sup>1</sup> Affiliated Churches are churches that have a formal association with a network as their primary trans-local affiliation.

<sup>2</sup> Member Churches are churches that receive resource and relational benefits as a secondary trans-local affiliation.

<sup>3</sup> Level 1 typically includes access to media resources only.

<sup>4</sup> Level 2 typically includes prophetic, strategic and personal counselling interaction with network representatives.

<sup>5</sup> Dues are monthly, listed in US dollars.

<sup>6</sup> Latest available figures in US dollars.

<sup>7</sup> For level 2 members and member churches.

<sup>8</sup> HIM requires a monthly donation from member churches 'as the Holy Spirit leads' suggesting 5% of a church's mission budget and a minimum of \$550 annually.

<sup>9</sup> Total income of all Morningstar entities.

<sup>10</sup> 3% of all non-designated church income (C3 global 2012, \$6.1a)

<sup>11</sup> A tithe of all personal income plus 3 to 10 percent of undesignated church income (CI 2021, membership).

<sup>12</sup> Total income of Christian International Ministries (<https://www.zoominfo.com/z/christian-international/25254647>).

<sup>13</sup> 'Fire Starter', '\$25/month'; 'Bridge Builder', '\$50/month'; 'Global Vision Caster', '\$100/month'; 'Master's Commission', '\$500/Month'; 'President's Council', '\$1000/month (Global awakening 2021, partner

regarding a scripturally normative form of church governance. The biblical paradigm that best reflects the apostolic-prophetic leadership model of the NAM is not the collegiality of the NT churches but the “theocratic single-headship” of Moses and the succeeding line of prophetic judges through Samuel.

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# A Study on the Lived Experience of *Koinōnia* in a Post-apartheid, Post-Armstrong Congregation: A Transition From Power Imbalance to *Koinōnia*<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

The triune God reaches from within his perichoretic unity (Eugenio 2014, 156), into his creation, inviting all of humanity to participate in the triune community of “shared participation—a participation together—in the perichoretic community of Trinitarian persons” (Grenz 2003, 268). Within this community, humanity finds its made-in-God’s-image value and is enabled to live in the freedom of God’s communion (Knight 2007, 1).

This article considers the experience of *koinōnia* in a church where membership lived through transitions of both apartheid and legalistic

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<sup>1</sup> This summary article is used with permission by the Pharos Journal of Theology. The original article is available here: [https://www.pharosjot.com/uploads/7/1/6/3/7163688/article\\_18\\_vol\\_104\\_2\\_stellenbosch.pdf](https://www.pharosjot.com/uploads/7/1/6/3/7163688/article_18_vol_104_2_stellenbosch.pdf)

religion simultaneously, based on the research question, “What is the lived experience of *koinōnia* in the post-apartheid, post-Armstrong Grace Communion International Johannesburg congregation.” Where genuine, evangelical, trinitarian *koinōnia* exists, there appears to be blockages in the progressively deepening of life in community.

With significant input from the work of Lincoln (2009), *koinōnia* is explored through five considerations, namely; identity, the common life of believers, virtuous life, ubuntu, and practical sharing. *Koinōnia* in the lived experience of people who have traversed the ills of apartheid and the transitions of legalistic religion they have encountered, exposing the beauty of diversity, the need for common values, and the commitment of time together in Scripture. Responding to eight meaningful moments (Frankl 2006) towards Christlikeness by the power of the Spirit, not the flesh (Gal 5:13–22), appears to significantly draw believers into the unity that Jesus prays for in John 17.

A more faithful practice is envisioned where believers build trust in the Spirit’s unifying power and presence and, from within the identity of Christ, are encouraged to explore various responses to meaningful moments toward Christlikeness. As the article and antecedent research suggest, widening and deepening individuals’ awareness of common life may build the connectivity of the visible vessel fulfilling its mandate to reflect God to the world. The church is like a diverse tapestry attending to the calling of mending what was broken by harmful religious and political practices.

## **1. Introduction**

The Worldwide Church of God (WCG) practicing Armstrongism since its inception on the radio (1937) by Herbert W. Armstrong (1892–1986),

considered its exclusivity on earth as a preparation for its future kingdom calling. While the denomination would much later change its doctrine and name to Grace Communion International (GCI), it started as an American-based, Adventist-related, religious organization (Mazur 2014, 1085). British-Israelism, Holy Day observance, dietary laws and the seventh day Sabbath observance were firm practices that distinguished the church from other Christian denominations.

According to Armstrong, God's chosen people were those of Britain and British colonies, including the United States, as they were seen to be descendants of ancient Israel (Jenkins and Thomas 2009, 113–14) fueling racial biases in Armstrong's denomination. Armstrong's conviction in Deuteronomy 32:8 is that when "the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance (speaking of land or geographical boundaries) when he separated [notice – he separated] the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people ..." (Armstrong 1985, 149), and this perpetuated a Gentile-subordinative stereotyping blending the identity of non-Anglo members with a misinterpretation of the dogs mentioned in Matthew 15:27.

WCG offered members identity, community, and relationships that bound them in a unique "otherness" (Jenkins and Thomas 2009, 126), with a "profound sense of belonging" (2009, 126) in stark contrast to the political action in South Africa at the time, influencing the lived experience of *koinōnia*. The calling to be unstained by the world by obedience to legalistic laws projected a high standard of living that morphed into a WCG identity. For many people of color, this offered a lifeline, in one sense, as apartheid began stripping racial groups of their cultural identity, and in another, a noose, as many simultaneously embraced Anglo-Saxon, patriarchal paradigms of thinking.

Entire denominations became "victims of their own prejudices and captives of the apartheid system that ruled South Africa until 1994" (Resane



2017, 169) blending misinterpreted Scripture into political agenda, a “law unto themselves” (2017, 122). Fisher (2011, 6) reminds us that sacred texts interpreted by white Christianity during this era can produce “negative, oppressive and regressive realities” for non-white people. Such realities cannot be ignored in post-legalistic, post-apartheid *koinōnia*.

Engaging perceptions and paradigms of thinking through the understanding of Bourdieuan fields, practice, and capital (Grenfell 2014; Burawoy and von Holdt 2012) offers a rich description of existing and emerging *koinōnia* both during the WCG-era and the subsequent GCI (post name change) era. The article (and research) suggests that lived experience of *koinōnia* speaks to the authentic, heart-invested practices of both eras, while simultaneously pointing to the concern that a more full-bodied experience of a progressive revelation and internalization of *koinōnia* may be thinned and/or decelerated by legalistic practices and oppressive regimes. Scott discusses the veiled ideological resistance that is “disguised, muted, and veiled for safety’s sake” (Scott 1990, 137). Disguising and surviving as alternative ways of intercepting the progressive reality of *koinōnia*.

Resane (2017) posits that “the educationally and theologically elite devised and entrenched a system that polarized and, to a certain degree, destroyed the essence of the communion of the saints” (2017, 113). The considerations of identity in Christ, the common life of believers, values of a virtuous life, ubuntu, and practical sharing, are evidence that *koinōnia* exists in the lived experience of GCI members. Though they are often confused as to the exact steps required to engage more deeply, the authentic desire to face a common future in unity, embracing the freedom and responsibility to choose (Frankl 1988), and taking steps to initiate change is evident. Herein lies humanity functioning in its unique design as the *imago Dei*.

### 1.1. *Research problem*

The research problem can be postulated in the following manner, the practice of *koinōnia* in the GCI Johannesburg congregation may be a hybrid of Armstrongism, amplified by an apartheid-induced thinking paradigm that may impact negatively the practice of the biblical understanding of the theology of *koinōnia*.

### 1.2. *Research question*

What is the lived experience of *koinōnia* in the post-apartheid, post-Armstrong Grace Communion International Johannesburg congregation?

### 1.3. *Subsidiary questions*

- What does *koinōnia* appear to look like in GCI Johannesburg: an evangelical, Trinitarian congregation of humanity, seen as both spiritual and physical, within the context of South Africa? The pre-reflective stage of phenomenological inquiry of the research supporting this article is observation and consideration of the socio-anthropological context within which it is practiced (Swinton and Mowat 2016). Critical race theory, power and capital realities, and present global sensitivities are invited into the conversation that attempts to respond to this pre-reflective question, while holding to the reality that “the truth of the gospel reaches across barriers of age, race, and class” (Chester and Timmis 2008, 202).
- What is the actual lived experience of *koinōnia* in the GCI Johannesburg congregation? Hoping for an authentic description of *koinōnia* in GCI Johannesburg, the research begins with human experience (Swinton and Mowat 2016, 11). This question explores

the responses of humanity (ibid) in their lived experience of *koinōnia*.

- How is one to theologically understand *koinōnia* from an evangelical, Trinitarian perspective? This question engages the relationship of the divine Persons (Volf 1998, loc. 5568) and their relationship with humanity through Christ. A reflection of *koinōnia* through five considerations offers an opportunity to explore the triune God’s fullness.
- In what way might GCI Johannesburg respond toward an authentic, faithful practice of *koinōnia*? This question not only engages responses to previous sections, but invites, and even propels, the church towards repentance, action, and a more faithful practice based on God’s creative, expansive, and transitive love (Harper and Metzger 2012, 22). The “next steps” of unity in diversity are explored.

#### 1.4. *The research aims and objectives*

The research aims to offer practical theological insight into the lived experience of *koinōnia* in the post-apartheid, post-Armstrong era within the context of GCI Johannesburg, and potentially into the wider denomination. It is hoped that the practical theological relevance may be assessed and applied to existing knowledge, enabling more faithful practices.

#### 1.5. *Theoretical framework*

The theory guiding the understanding of *koinōnia* incorporates Torrance (Tyler 2019, Eugenio 2014), Grenz (Grenz 1996; 2000; 2005), and Harper and Metzger (2012) in co-authoring conversation with the voice of the participants of the research in question.

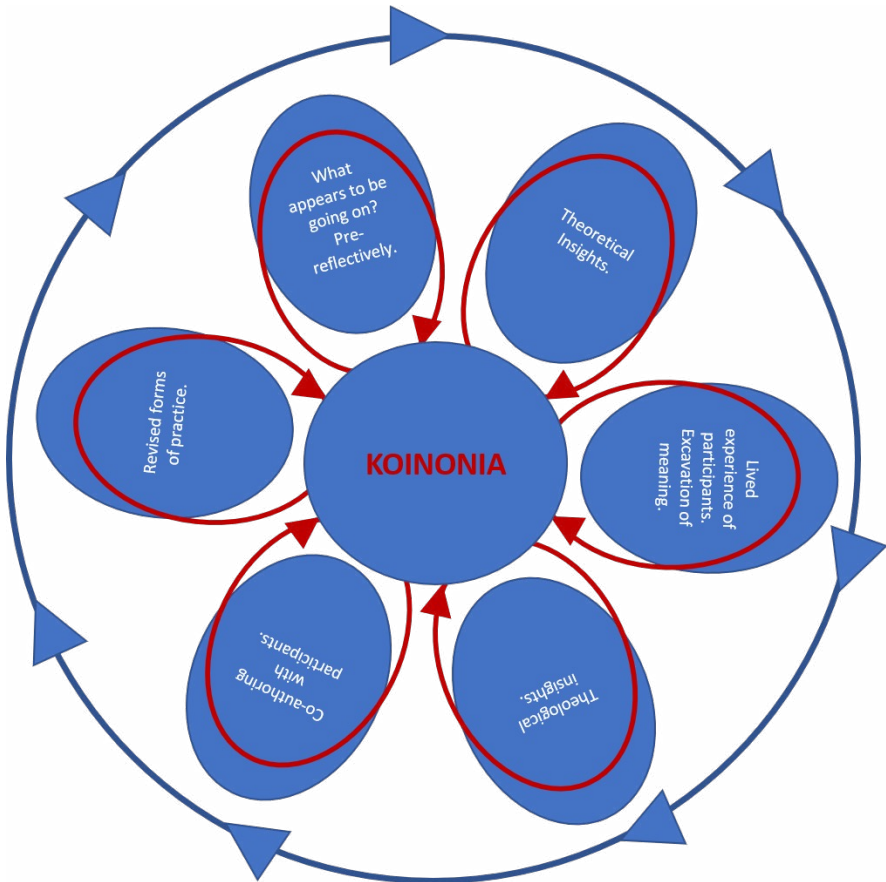


Figure 1: *Hermeneutical Phenomenological Circle*

The hermeneutical circle (Gadamer 2003; 2004; Bultmann 1955; Ricoeur 1969; 1988) is employed as the theoretical framework within which *koinōnia* is central and the search for meaning moves from “whole to part and back to the whole” (Gadamer cited in Swinton and Mowat 2016, 111). The authority of the meaning is shared, co-authored, and prioritized in

a dynamic, evolving community incorporating participants, academia, the researcher's insight, and biblical authority. The hermeneutical circle is an ongoing movement of and towards responsibility, power-balancing, vulnerability, and creativity.

### *1.6. Research design*

As a qualitative research approach is adopted in this study, using hermeneutical phenomenology to engage lived experiences (Van Manen 2014) to give life experiences meaning” (Burns, Grove, and Gray 2015, 20), it invites Frankl (2019) and Swinton and Mowat (2016) into dialogue to more thoroughly investigate the meaning and its created, given and/or ensuing properties. A clean, raw description of *koinōnia* through human experience is expected such that a deeper understanding of its meaning is plausible (Swinton and Mowat 2016, 101).

Assuming that phenomena are already meaningful, hermeneutic phenomenology is a suitable approach for providing them with a voice so that they may be understood or explained (Van Manen 2014). The phenomena of *koinōnia* are observed considering meanings, metaphors, symbols, descriptions, etc. as a characteristic of qualitative research (Lune and Berg 2017) within its current post-apartheid, post-Armstrong context. The participants interpret their unique experiences as the starting point and encounter the meaning that is brought into authentic co-laboring conversation toward broader generalizations and theories, understanding and deepening meaning through critical thinking (Swinton and Mowat 2016, 108–12).

Based on the work of Swinton and Mowat (2016), the research investigates the empirical, descriptive, critical, and constructive dimensions within practical theology through the following four questions:

1. What appears to be going on? (Pre-reflective stage)
2. What is going on? (Cultural/contextual analysis)
3. How are we to understand the problem? (Critical, theological faithfulness)
4. How might revised forms of practice be formulated? (Faithful and authentic)

### *1.7. Research methodology*

The research methodology considers population sample, data collection, and data analysis and interpretation.

#### *1.7.1. Population sample*

Homogeneous purposive sampling is utilized to explore *koinōnia* in the lives of those who have lived through the transitions of both apartheid (April 1994) and Armstrongism (December 1994). Minor scale stratified random sampling and random sampling in an attempt to enhance the validity and efficiency of the selection process. The result was a group of participants of varying age, affluence, and gender that represented black, white, and colored cultural groups who lived through the above-mentioned transitions and were considered congregants of the GCI Johannesburg congregation.

#### *1.7.2. Data collection*

Significant attention is brought to power imbalances within the research processes. While all participants are competent in English, which is the research language, the limitations of language in expressing oneself in sensitive spaces as one engages in sensitive themes are considered. Entering

an already meaningful narrative, as a process of empirical theory building, a triangulation empirical evidence approach was employed as a process of empirical theory building. Three data-gathering techniques were carefully selected in an attempt to authentically and respectfully capture the lived experience of *koinōnia*, namely, hermeneutical phenomenological interviews, a focus group, and observations.

### *Hermeneutical phenomenological interviews*

Firstly, data was gathered through semi-structured hermeneutical phenomenological interviewing related to the participants' lived experience of *koinōnia*. Identity in Christ, the common life of believers, living a virtuous life of values, ubuntu, and practical sharing framed these interviews. The interviews were transcribed and the themes that emerged through a narrative analysis were brought to the group for verification, namely exclusivity, fear, brotherhood and loneliness, race, and identity. This forms data set A.

### *Observations*

Participants were invited to explore the collective themes amidst a herd of horses. This outdoor experience engages all five senses to stimulate deeper, more vibrant knowledge of lived experience. The effectiveness of the observations is in the subconscious self-sharing with the conscious mind that may have been forgotten, blocked, or buried. Facilitators observe the movement of the horses and people through specific activities based on extrapolated themes, and when sharing these observations with the participants invites collaborative exploration of meaning. The symbols of identity and common life were introduced as the framework within which the other themes were engaged. This data forms data set B.

### *Focus group*

Multi-method exploration adds value to the research process because the dynamic of the lived experience is altered when drawn into focus (Swinton and Mowat 2016, 47). The focus group brings both individual narratives and interpreted observations into a new context and scrutinizes their validity in group interactions. This also authenticates existing data and again offers another opportunity to respond to the meaning in the moment of the conversation, adding to existing knowledge.

Data set A is compared with data set B from the observations within the herd of horses and is brought to the focus group for interrogation informing, thickening, and authenticating the emerging narrative.

### 1.7.3. Data analysis

Collaborative conversation, reflections, and spontaneous iterative data alongside data set A and B were examined through Swinton and Mowat's six stages of analyzing data (2016, 269–74), narrative analysis (Barusch 2015), and the hermeneutical circle (Heidegger 1927; Gadamer 1990). Each step was utilized to direct and structure the research as the picture of *koinōnia* in GCI Johannesburg emerged.

#### *Six stages of data analysis (6 Cs)*

While some certain Cs are repeated due to the circular process of data analysis, the general order is complexification/simplification, categorization, critical thinking, creation of coherence, casting, and constructive criticism (Swinton and Mowat 2016, 269).



### *Narrative analysis*

Drawing the interpreted responses to meaningful moments within the narratives of individual participants into a multi-voiced, co-authored collective expression of both words and images was important to the research aims. While narrative analysis is complimentary and perhaps replicatory, this resource brought the unique perspectives of discrepancies, commonality, dominant narratives, and counter-narratives (White and Epston 2019) bringing to light values, beliefs doubts, and what is personally meaningful (Figgou and Pavlopoulos 2015).

### *Hermeneutical circle*

Gadamer's hermeneutical circle (Heidegger 1927; Gadamer 1990) is employed as a way to orchestrate words, observations, academia, biblical insights, participant revelation, and researcher interpretation to a coherent, authentic expression of the lived experience of *koinōnia* in GCI Johannesburg.

## **2. Literature Review**

The research situates *koinōnia* within Trinitarian perichoresis, expressed through a Spirit-held, circulatory model illuminating relationships of God with himself, God with humanity, humanity with humanity, and humanity with God.

While the mystery of God may not be fully comprehensible, our “growth is in coming to know what the mystery of God is” (Weinandy 2000, 22) through human inadequacies that invoke meekness, repentance, curiosity, hunger, and motivation. The Trinity progressively reveals itself to humanity in a love offering situatedness within which to view *koinōnia*.

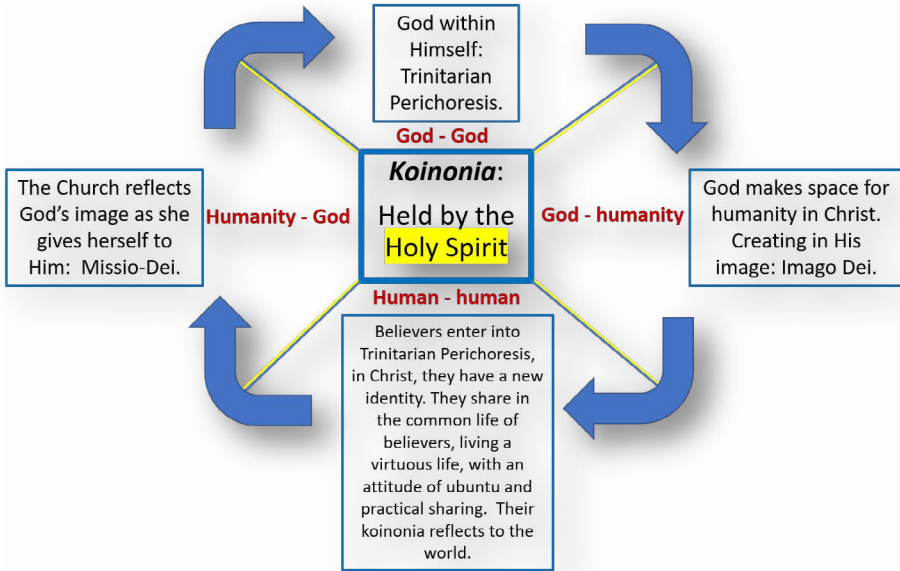


Figure 2: *Koinōnia held by the Holy Spirit*

Torrance (1984, 265) encourages believers, “to discover the relations of things and events at different levels of complexity, and to develop our understanding and expression of them in such a way that their real nature becomes progressively disclosed to us.” Chester and Timmis (2008, 43– 44) emphasize the priestly role of making God known to the nations, because they are in him, and he is in them, and there is a community within each other. The church is the fullest reflection of the *imago Dei*, the mission Dei complete, but not yet,

Being an icon of the Holy Trinity, the church is called to reflect in her spatiotemporal reality, in Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the dynamic relationships existing eternally

between the divine persons, as described by the concept of Trinitarian perichoresis (Manastireanu 2005, 116).

The study of *koinōnia* is organized around key constructs of God as a social Trinity, and *koinōnia* as a creative, expansive, transitive expression of himself, the God who is love (Harper and Metzger 2012). The revealing of himself through creation (including mission Dei), Scripture, and incarnation offers a more clearly understood *koinōnia* when viewed within various cultural contexts, as God overflows as an extension of himself. Thomas F. Torrance (1913–2007) as a significant voice in the transformational theological journey of GCI and Stanley J. Grenz (1950–2005) offer perspectives influencing the research outcome. Harper and Metzger (2012) and Chester and Timmis (2008) are also influential voices engaged in literature reviews.

The social Trinity, “the divine community of love” (Sexton 2013, 87–114) affords humanity a view of the community as first from above, then from below (Harper and Metzger 2012) because humanity receives what is given through God’s self-revealing knowledge (Torrance 1998, 116–18). Torrance contends that it is through obedience to God’s self-revelation that one is included in his communion as a participant, and through this participation, their knowledge of him increases (Torrance 1996b, 97). Grenz adds that divine fellowship and community, from whence all culture and diversity emanates, define human fellowship in the community (Sexton 2013), trusting that the sincere reality of who God is, is being genuinely revealed. The research contends that a fuller picture of God will be found in a relational community that includes diverse cultural and contextual experiences.

A deeper understanding of God’s love through his self-revelation of creation, Scripture, and incarnation lays a foundation upon which to consider identity in Christ and the common life of believers where *koinōnia*

is born and bears fruit in virtuous living (values), ubuntu, and practical sharing, among others. *Koinōnia* of the triune God reflected the world through the church is as Grenz (cited in Sexton 2013, 155) posits “the divine image only in community.”

Literary works from Chester and Timmis (2008), Grenz (1997; 2004), Harper and Metzger (2012), Torrance (1980; 1981; 1989; 1994; 1995; 1996a; 1996c; 2003; 2008; 2009), and Yarnell (2016) as the primary voices that bring evidence to God as a social trinity in the research are engaged within the themes of creation, Scripture, and the example of Jesus, which overflows as an extension of himself, *koinōnia*, God’s creative, expansive and transitive expression of love.

### **3. Value of the Research**

The research questions how the church might fulfill its purpose to be the “primary conduit of God’s self-revelation” (Tyler 2019, loc. 948), to reflect the triune God’s unity and love in his kingdom on earth, so that through the glory that God gave Jesus which he gives the church, it may be one as the Trinity is one, such that “the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:22–23). The dynamic of an ever-changing, growing knowledge and understanding community is brought into focus as *koinōnia* is researched within the GCI Johannesburg congregation.

Within *koinōnia* a collective response in and to God includes all tribes and people in Christ, where there is no distinction between them (Gal 3:28). However, their individual made-in-God’s image uniqueness remains intact, invited, and interdependent (Barth 1962, 353). By the blood of Christ, all people are drawn into one body, establishing them in *koinōnia*, bearing the fruit of ubuntu and reconciliation. The research purports that

communion ecclesiology is the dialogue, not merely a “path to dialogue” (Doyle 2016) as God expressed himself to the world through those made in his likeness, individually unique, and complete within one another, all in a transformational journey towards Christlikeness.

As there has, to date, been no research conducted in the GCI Johannesburg congregation on the topic of *koinōnia* in a post-apartheid, post-Armstrong community of believing participants, this research hopes to offer insights to the local church, national leadership, as well as the international denomination, as it relates to trinitarian *koinōnia*. In addition, the research hopes to invest in evangelicalism in South Africa and practical theology as it explores the theory of trinitarian theology in praxis.

It is hoped that the research offers a valuable contribution towards practices that assist the church in responding to post-apartheid, post-Armstrong paradigms taking culture and context into consideration.

#### **4. The Truth of the Gospel, or Convincing Performance?**

The research explored *koinōnia* in the GCI Johannesburg congregation, within critical race theory, power and capital considerations, as well as globally charged sensitivities, within the South African context. In the chapter that engages what *koinōnia* appears to look like, the research considers the pre-reflective stage of phenomenological inquiry where the socio-anthropological context invites attention (Swinton and Mowat 2016). While Chester and Timmis (2008, loc. 1040–1047) contend that, “evangelicalism has become a largely middle-class, professional phenomenon,” and that churches they observe tend to have a common social-economic status, and thus would invite similar “classes” to church, enlarging a singular demographic, the research concludes that this may not be accurate when considering the GCI Johannesburg congregation.

It is, at least in appearance, a congregation of diversity, from the outside, reflecting the image of God.

Pierre Bourdieu's field theory (Grenfell 2014, 2) is drawn in to assist in understanding the experiences of *koinōnia* while holding reflexivity in hand, considering those who may be vulnerable to "implicit or explicit exploitation" (Swinton and Mowat 2016, 60). Social suffering, symbolic violence, and probable hysteresis limit the capital with which people traverse different fields, in this case, the fields of WCG and apartheid, to the present-day GCI and democracy. People make sense of their present experiences through the lens of their individual habitus. The exploration of what appears to be going on in GCI Johannesburg, the renamed WCG, is observed while considering racial, cultural, and philosophical climates in both pre- and post-transition eras.

The research queried whether it is performed through false consciousness and forced compliance (Scott 1990, 60), or the work of the truth of the gospel, where each person brings their acquired capital into a relationship with the Holy Spirit, taking up the space uniquely designed for each individual, in relationship with others, within the identity of Christ? Is there a deep love for Jesus where love for one another offers unity, shared experiences, equality, *koinōnia*? Or, as the research queries, is there a concentration camp of the mind defined by dominant and dominated fields, sin, and flesh that is reducing the experience of *koinōnia*? What is inscribed in the hidden transcript of congregants, protected by fear and/or discomfort in conflict? Is there a process of deconstructing inequalities, racial complexities, and binary thinking taking place?

With Delgado and Stefancic's (2017, 47) affirmation of immense challenges in "bridging the gap in thinking between persons of good will whose experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds are radically different"

the research queries fear of punishment, divergent interests, and lack of time investment in the progressive experiential potential of *koinōnia* towards a common life, mission and eternity. There is the plausibility that people attending GCI Johannesburg may be “tactically” surviving while “strategically sustaining quite other orientations, beliefs, desires, needs.” Is a gathering of diverse cultures, with varying life experiences, influences, and capital “inhibited hidden discourse[s] offstage” (Scott 1990, 136), or might the “convincing performance onstage” by John 17 unite, within Jesus Christ, namely, *koinōnia*?

## 5. In the Field

The research considered the lived experience of the participants in three spaces, two of which were literally in the field, amidst a herd of horses. For the researcher, considering the essence of what makes one human was foundational in considering engaging lived experiences. Havanga-Coetzer (2003, 8–10) shares the view that the spiritual, alongside the freedom and responsibility to choose to reach above oneself to others and God is uniquely human. Humanity is “conscious of his responsibility” (Frankl 2011, 67) as well as both unconscious instinct and unconscious spirituality from which to draw in life. For believers, the triune God is the source of life, knowledge, and meaning. As the Trinity’s *koinōnia* overflows into humanity as God’s redemption action, humanity is invited to respond (Swinton and Mowat 2016, 11) and engage the progressive reality of Trinitarian *koinōnia*, as a free-will response, spirit with Spirit. Life thus offers endless meaningful moments in that every moment is full of the meaning that God ascribes to it by his intentional redemption purposes (Phil 2:13; Rom 8:28).

To effectively observe lived experiences is to view life narratives unfolding, at the moment, as humanity responds through their creativity/

work, receiving an experience, and/or through their chosen attitude toward life's "unavoidable suffering" (Frankl 2019). The researcher considered the above responses as an opportunity to capture the authentic *koinōnia* narrative, whether between God and God, God and man, man and man, and/or man and God.

Meaning is viewed through the chosen responses to life's circumstances as shared by the participants through triangulation empirical evidence collection. The considerations of *koinōnia*, namely identity, common life, virtuous living, ubuntu, and practical sharing framed the process. As the research recognizes the potential power imbalances present within the process, themes that emerged from the semi-structured, one-on-one, hermeneutical phenomenological interviews were explored as a group within a herd of horses. Outdoor experiences stimulate deeper, more detailed content as the five senses engage the environment (Eagala 2019; Norcross, Krebs, and Prochaska 2011) and the subconscious self is revealed to the conscious mind through triggers, or responses to meaning, "paving the way for ever-deepening exploration" (Mandrell 2006). Focus group conversations are utilized to bring observations of the horse and people to the participants' attitudes such that opportunities for co-authoring shared meaning might be plausible.

Data from interviews, observations, and focus group conversations were authenticated, reflected on, and then analyzed through narrative analysis (Barusch 2015), the hermeneutical circle (Heidegger 1927; Gadamer 1990), and the six stages of analyzing data of Swinton and Mowat (2016, 269–74). The findings were rich, vibrant, thickened narratives from which complexities could be held up to theological understanding, toward more faithful practices.



## 6. A Theological Understanding of *Koinōnia*

From the Tower of Babel, it was evident that the ‘unity’ humanity might fathom of its own accord would bear the fruit of independence from God, forgetting its need for God (Gen 11). According to McNeil (2020, loc. 323) humanity’s inability to “fill the earth with the imago Dei” is due to human “mastery and imagination” in homogenetic unity separate from God, until Pentecost where God brought the same diversity he created at Babel into one space where “diverse languages served to bring people together ... one new humanity” (2020, loc. 352).

Through the five considerations mentioned in the research (identity, common life of believers, virtuous living, ubuntu, and practical sharing), reflecting on *koinōnia* explores the Triune Subjects, and the relationship of the divine Persons (Volf 1998, loc. 5568). This is he who is “unquestionably a God of justice and compassion” (Harold 2018, 21). From within Triune *koinōnia* the Church is born and reflects him to the world (Volf 1998, loc. 5603).

The research suggests that it is in Christ, within the unity of God, that believers find their completion, and experience *koinōnia*, as an extension of God through the sacrifice of Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, “an event which has happened once and for all time” (Barth 2003, 5) offering humanity an identity, a future, and a family. As a communion of believers there is a shared common life that the Holy Spirit holds in balance (see Figure 2), based on who Christ is, and which is not reliant upon what people do or are. It exists because Christ exists, as a common spiritual life, the bride of Christ, already but not yet (Finger 1989, 247–69). The research claims that from within the common life of believers, John 17 unity is visible.

Ubuntu is an African philosophy from which the research borrows to consider an attitude of submission to others, an awareness of salvic-love that actively chooses to challenge the behaviors and views of others. By the Spirit of God, this is illuminated and change is made possible, “since through him the gospel bears fruit in every creature under heaven” (Basil 1980, 104). The fruit of a virtuous life, living by values assigned by one’s new identity in Christ, humility, hope, and joy, “not only transforms persons but rearranges relationships and structures” (Clemmons cited in Yong 2012, loc. 1592). *Koinōnia* challenges prejudices and selfish motives, as the Spirit flows from the good of one believer to others, and then into the world beyond (Gal 6:10–11).

*Koinōnia* made visible to others and the world through practical sharing, as “all members complete the body of Christ in the unity of the Spirit, each member assisting the others with aid provided by the unique gifts it has received” (Basil 1980, 94). This sharing goes beyond the world’s sharing, as it is an extension of the love of God through the church, empowered by the Spirit, rebuilding what was broken and restoring what was ruined.

Culture and context are considered when examining the *koinōnia* word group from a Pauline perspective, more specifically in his writing to the Philippians and Romans as the meaning found within *koinōnia* is meaning from the essence of the Triune communion (Harper and Metzger 2012; Torrance 2009, 370). Through faith and baptism (Harper and Metzger 2012, 50; Hellerman 2001, 221; Lincoln 2009), the Spirit connects believers as communion. Paul’s letters illuminate his concern regarding communion (Lincoln 2009) and are thus emphasized in the research alongside his focus on the Spirit’s connecting work. The research attempts to remain within the participatory, lived experience of the *koinōnia* word group, as it is

supported by the research methodology (Swinton and Mowat 2016) and confirmed by Paul's dividing of the hearers and doers in Romans 2.

The church is mobilized "beyond the shelter of their own people" (McNeil 2020, loc. 352), by the Holy Spirit, as a reflection of God that is "multicultural, multilingual, multi-ethnic, and multinational" (2020, loc. 2276). Resane (2017, 32) succinctly summates that when people are in communion with the triune God, they are in communion with each other, to which Yong (2012, loc. 3306) adds that it should thus bear evidence of the character and essence of the triune God: love, gratitude, service, speaking up against injustice, living by kingdom values, and so on.

## **7. Authentic, Faithful Practice of *Koinōnia***

The research hopes to be one of many catalysts that might encourage the self-transcendence of believers towards each other and the world in more faithful practice through authentic new knowledge, presented through the five considerations, within the Trinity's creative, expansive, and transitive love (Harper and Metzger 2012, 22).

While Resane's (2017) concerns that post-apartheid South Africa is polarized on Sunday mornings did not prove to be the case for the GCI Johannesburg congregation, there appears to be a block in penetrating the next step in deepening *koinōnia*. While Fisher's (2011) concerns present lingering negative effects of the legalistic Christian religion, the research contends that there appear to be more positive effects when observing *koinōnia* in those who have journeyed through the WCG-GCI transition. All participants experienced the complexity of spiritual transformation during the transition from WCG to GCI. While their commitment to Christ was challenged, it was a commitment that existed before the WCG doctrinal

changes of 1994. Not one participant claimed to have found Christ in the transition, as they had accepted Christ within the WCG regime, but rather that their depth of commitment was challenged. Though the fear of the “lake of fire” (Tkach 1997) was no longer a motivating force, and doctrinal changes shook their very identity, all, without exception, chose prayer and humility before God, waited on him for clarity, and chose to remain in GCI, no longer (if ever) attempting to avoid a worse spiritual fate (Fisher 2011; Nell 2019; Resane 2017).

As fieldwork unveiled the commitment to Christ of WCG membership during legalistic religiosity, it simultaneously revealed three observations from this era. Firstly, identity may have been significantly linked to WCG, and the void that WCG left may have affected participants’ confidence in living out their present-day freedom in Christ through interracial relationships. Secondly, while equality is spoken of, the evidence of interracial responses to meaningful moments appears limited to white-savior-to-black, misuse of ubuntu between black people, and poverty mentality beyond materialism to spiritual gifts presenting. Lastly, *koinōnia* is more apparent within homogenous groups. Uncomfortable topics are avoided (racism, genderism, Armstrongism, apartheid, etc.) and at the time of the research, members would wait on the elders for the next steps, and if they weren’t presented, the congregants reverted to that which was most comfortable and safe, setting up the church and waiting.

A theology of dignity (Harold 2022) is considered as participants engaged in one another sharing their calling to remain in GCI, though uncomfortable and with some experiences of loneliness. Humanity’s value at creation (Mason 2021, 33–34) may be the framework for the catalysts of change (McNeil 2020), and recommendations of the final chapters of the research. Considering the research outcomes, it may be that GCI

Johannesburg is living *koinōnia* and reflecting an image of God without a full awareness of its profound impact on both the individual and collective.

Exploring culture through Scripture (Sexton 2013), social justice, deconstruction of racism, remorse, and repentance, and lamenting in solidarity are but a few of the responses to meaningful moments the church is invited to, even expected to, engage. When the church is gathered, it is in existence, called together by the God of the universe in worship, through the Spirit (Harper and Metzger 2012, 100–102).

## 8. The Emerging Tapestry

As a multi-racial congregation, GCI Johannesburg is a picture of socio-economic, racial, and ethnic diversity. While *koinōnia* exists, it is not experienced in the abundance that would be possible when authentic, integrated relationships are developed through time and commonalities. Catalysts of change towards ultimate meaning (Frankl 2011) are in motion per participants' recommendations. Trust and safe spaces for change (McNeil 2020) are materializing, where meta-identity infuses sub-identity, inviting the brilliance of unity in diversity into the emerging tapestry of the "perichoretic community of Trinitarian persons" (Grenz 2003, 268), past, present, and future.

The responses of individuals towards the life of Christ offer a decolonization of the mind, that does not redefine identity, but realigns one with one's original identity, on route to the wedding supper of the Lamb (Matt 26:29, Mark 14:25, Luke 14). The bride of Christ is known and sustained by God's love (Bird 2020), her desire only for her husband, as he rebuilds what was destroyed and replants what was desolate (Ezek 36).

## 9. Further Investigation

While this research discusses identity in Christ as the origin of *koinōnia*, it fails to draw on the value-at-creation of the individual that is brought into the community to fulfil a meaningful purpose/function in the body. Though individualism causes division, uniqueness has a purpose. Further investigation into drawing the value of the created being into the redemption story, is needed. Might it be that the value-at-creation of the individual, brought into the community, completes the tapestry of *koinōnia*, and what might be asked of a more complete *koinōnia* in its mandate to reflect God to the world (John 17)?

## 10. Conclusion

This research confirms that *koinōnia* is not thwarted by social injustice but affords humanity a space to find community, bring their made-in-God's-image uniqueness, and participate in the diverse brilliance of the tapestry of the church, confronting social injustice with one voice. Though there is a block in GCI Johannesburg's full experience and expression of unity in diversity, the opportunity to enter into the tension between who the church is today, and who it is becoming is engaged. A discovery of raw, ethnic beauty is being discovered through catalysts of change (McNeil 2020).

From the starting point of identity in Christ, reaching back into the value at creation, and forward into bold, explorative, godly activism, the church is called to reflect triune *koinōnia* to the world (John 17). When choosing to respond to meaningful moments by the Spirit, not the flesh, it achieves this mandate and participates in the Spirit's ongoing transformative presence in the community (Sagovsky 2000, 127).

Will the church have the courage to fully embrace its identity in Christ, restored to its truest created value (Mason 2021), embodying its ultimate meaning and purpose as that which reflects God to the world, complete, whole, visible, and audible, as it continues in its Father's business. As the research concludes so too does the article, "The words from Isaiah whisper across the wilderness, 'Whom shall I send?'... are we not chosen for a time such as this?" (Esth 4:4; adaptation).

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# A Critical Analysis of Christology in N.T. Wright and Wolfhart Pannenberg: Implications for a Christo-Centric Homiletic

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## **Abstract**

The Christo-centric homiletic is considered one of the leading contemporary approaches within the evangelical hermeneutic and homiletic society. However, its popularity has not made this approach immune to criticism. This article seeks to point out that the Christo-centric homiletic is embedded in a Christology from above, which contributes to its strengths and weaknesses. It explores the implications of the from below Christologies of N.T. Wright and Wolfhart Pannenberg on the Christo-centric approach. The article suggests that if the Christo-centric method takes the from below Christologies of Wright and Pannenberg seriously, it can address specific weaknesses and find resources to enhance some of its strengths without negating its central conviction of preaching Christ in every sermon. It defends the unique proposal that the Christo-centric method can address its criticisms without becoming more Theo-centric.

## 1. Introduction

Every generation, from the first century until now, has endeavored to answer the question Jesus posed to his disciples in Matthew 16:15, “But who do you say that I *am*?” (italics mine; ESV). This figure has continually occupied the thinking of some of the greatest minds over the past two millennia. Considered more prominent than even Socrates (Pelikan 1985, xxi), the story of Jesus of Nazareth has been told and retold through the centuries. Consequently, the meaning and significance of his person and work have been interpreted in several ways in numerous contexts through various ages. Each epoch of history provides a continuity and discontinuity of images and titles for Jesus according to their historical contexts and fundamental questions (Moltmann 2015, 113; Pelikan 1985, 2), which leads Kärkkäinen (2016, 1) to ask, “How are we to speak of Jesus Christ in the third millennium?” A contemporary homiletical model that endeavors to interpret the Bible through the lenses of Jesus Christ and that seeks to speak about him in every sermon is the Christo-centric homiletic.

## 2. Referentes Teóricos de la Investigación

### *2.1. Introduction*

Since the days of the early church, the redemptive-historical approach, also called the Christo-centric approach, has had a checkered story which ebbed and flowed in and out of mainstream hermeneutics and homiletics (Chapell 2018b, 1–3; Chow 2016, 115; Peppler 2012, 120). Due to the historical abuses of biblical theology, which forms the foundation of the Christo-centric method, biblical theology and its role in our preaching were pushed to the margins fifty years ago. However, around the 1960s and 1970s, certain conservative voices arose again, reminding the church of the necessity of



using the grand meta-narrative of the Scriptures to interpret individual texts. This resurgence of the importance of biblical theology impacted homiletics, which led to the modern development of the Christo-centric approach. Today, the Christo-centric homiletic is considered one of the four main contemporary approaches within the evangelical hermeneutical and homiletical society (Gibson and Kim 2018, 4).<sup>1</sup> The main contributions to the Christo-centric homiletic, as shown by scholars such as Chapell (2018a, loc. 143), Prince (2011, 87), and Gibson and Kim (2018, 4), have been made by North American scholars Edmund Clowney,<sup>2</sup> Sidney Greidanus,<sup>3</sup> and Bryan Chapell.<sup>4</sup> The contribution of these scholars to the Christo-centric approach centers on providing theological justification, practical guidance, and demonstrative examples of Christo-centric sermons.

## *2.2. Shortcomings in current scholarship on Christo-centric homiletics*

A central theological conviction of these three Christo-centric scholars is that for them, Jesus Christ is the apex of God's progressive, organic, and redemptive revelation in Scripture and, therefore, if preaching is going to

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1 The other three homiletical approaches presented by Gibson and Kim (2018, 5) are the christiconic (pericopal) theological approach, the theocentric approach, and the law-gospel approach.

2 Although Clowney functioned in various roles, one constant in his ministry was his unwavering commitment to redemptive-historical preaching, which flows from a Christo-centric biblical theology (Johnson 2009, 17–19). This commitment led to the fact that many now consider Clowney the most influential proponent of Christ-centred preaching in the twentieth century (Allen 2011, 43).

3 No other scholar has been a more influential proponent of the Christo-centric approach to preaching at the start of the twenty-first century than Sidney Greidanus; hence, some have referred to his work as generally representative of the approach (Allen 2011, 84; Chapell 2018a, loc. 143; Price 2018, 70).

4 Chapell represented the redemptive-historic view in the recent publication *Homiletics and Hermeneutics* (2018), wherein the four most prominent contemporary preaching models were presented.

be faithful to the Bible, then it must find its focal point in the person, life, and teaching of Jesus Christ. However, if this model applies this conviction in an unbalanced manner, it can lead to certain shortcomings.

### 2.2.1. Duplication of sermon goals

Because of the biblical theology behind the Christo-centric method, for most of its proponents, preaching Christ in every sermon is not only a good option, but a necessity (Sequiera 2018, 182; Allen 2016; Greidanus 1999, loc. 2682). In other words, every text must be presented in relation to Christ (Chou 2016, 115). Instead of seeking to employ the different functions of preaching, as Block (2018, 15–17) shows, the Christo-centric method chooses to duplicate its function, namely, to speak about Jesus and his saving work. Consequently, the Christo-centric approach leads to preaching that functions on a general repetitive level, seeking to convey general canonical truths from every text (Price 2018, 84). Gibson and Kim (2018, 162) conclude, “In Christ-centred preaching there is the risk that all sermons may sound the same and do not account for the biblical author’s intentions.”

### 2.2.2. Insufficient application of sermons

Due to its emphasis on God’s redemptive actions through history and ultimately in Christ, which elevates the grace of God and the fallenness of humanity, Christo-centric sermons often lack appropriate applications. Its bias towards preaching about the grace of God risks negating personal responsibility before God. It is concerned with the preaching of moralistic and legalistic sermons and therefore tends to avoid preaching about human obedience and good works (Chapell 2018a, loc. 4905–4906; Horton 1996, 5; Greidanus 1999, loc. 987–999). However, in practice, the result is

“sermon application often becomes ‘Jesus accomplished everything for us, we cannot obey on our own’; therefore, the unintended consequence may be that listeners do not need to bother trying” (Gibson and Kim 2018, 162).

### 2.2.3. Overemphasis of soteriology

Redemption is an essential notion in the Christo-centric approach to preaching, particularly substitutionary atonement. Advocates of this method are convinced that the preacher must illustrate that the redemptive work of Christ is the apex and central idea of the Scriptures (Sequeira 2018, 182). Consequently, Gibson and Kim (2018, 159–160), Chou (2016, 133–134) and Kuruvilla (2013, 259–260) criticize the Christo-centric approach for ignoring the details of the text by being overly concerned with linking the text to NT soteriology. Moreover, Price (2018, 80–81) shows that right at the core of the Christo-centric approach is the prominence of Christ’s passive obedience. It focuses on redemptive history, which emphasizes God’s redemptive work towards his people, which reached its climax in Christ and therefore refers mostly to Christ’s passive obedience.<sup>5</sup>

### 2.2.4. Unbalanced image of God

With its major emphasis on the redeeming work of Christ and Christ as the apex of the Scriptures, the Christo-centric homiletic is in danger of creating an unbalanced view of the Godhead. In practice, the Christo-centric approach, although embedded in the doctrine of the Trinity, emphasizes one person, namely, Christ (Beale 2018, 87; Greidanus 2018, 105; 1999, loc. 2105; Peppler 2012, 125). This can distort and confuse the image of the Trinity because focusing on one person can lead to the neglect of the other two

<sup>5</sup> Horton (2011, 999) defines the passive obedience of Christ as a “term used to express Jesus Christ’s suffering the penalty of sin and death on behalf of his people.”

persons (Chou 2016, 133). Price (2018, 87) legitimately asks, “If redemption is the work of the triune God, with every person of the Godhead actively involved in our redemption, why should the Son be prioritized over the Father and the Holy Spirit?” Likewise, Langley (2018, 35–36) and Kuruvilla (2018, 31) point out that the main character of Scripture is not Christ but the triune God, which speaks of his nature and work, and which should not be limited to only his grace and redemption.

### *2.3. Christo-centric homiletics’ embedded Christology*

There is a strong connection between these shortcomings and the Christo-centric approach’s embedded Christology. The Christo-centric method seeks to preach Christ in every sermon since he is the apex of Scripture. However, the issue is that there are different Christological lenses through which to approach and understand Jesus’s person, life, and teaching. The two sides of this spectrum are called Christology from above and Christology from below. The conclusions about Jesus Christ that one seeks to bring into conversation with the rest of the Scriptures, if one follows the Christo-centric approach, depends on the type of Christological lenses one looks through. Kärkkäinen (2016, 6) points out that the emphasis on a single Christology runs the danger of being one-dimensional in its understanding and description of Jesus. In other words, the overreliance on one type of Christology can lead to hermeneutical and homiletical blind spots. To suggest that every hermeneutical and homiletical model consciously chooses either a strictly Christology from above or from below would be an oversimplification. It is not so simple because the Christology embedded in such a model is mostly hidden like lenses one puts on, and it might very well have connections to both sides of the Christological spectrum.

In other words, a preaching model might use the type of lens that consists of a mixture of the characteristics of both Christologies. However, even without a clearly articulated declaration of the type of Christology behind a homiletical method, through observation, Christological connections can be identified from the type of Christology emphasized.

From examining Clowney, Greidanus, and Chapell's work, it is evident that there are strong connections with the Christology from above approach to understanding and explaining Jesus Christ. This can be seen by their posture of faith in the validity of the Scriptures, particularly the NT. Consequently, they accept and advocate for the NT writers' claims about Jesus Christ. They see no need to treat the Scriptures, nor the faith statements of the NT writers, with any suspicion. Likewise, when examined through the criteria of the six key questions of the Third Quest for the historical Jesus, we also see their preference for a Christology from above rather than from below. It is noted that where "from below" scholars, such as Pannenberg, emphasize Jesus as the representative of true humanity, the Christo-centric scholars emphasize Jesus as the representative of God who has come into this world to redeem and restore it. This contributes to their focus on Jesus from an ontological rather than a functional perspective, as seen in Wright and Pannenberg. All these emphases are indicative of a Christology from above.<sup>6</sup> But what would the implications of from below Christologies (that affirm the deity of Christ) be on Christo-centric homiletic? To this consideration, we now move.

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6 Kärkkäinen (2016, 4) and Welker (2013, 75) describe the Christology from above approach as an analysis of Jesus, which finds its starting point in the NT's theological interpretation of Christ.

### 3. N.T. Wright's Christology

Wright's Christology has been informed and shaped by scholars, such as Reimarus and Käsemann, who convinced him of the importance of historical study around Jesus of Nazareth (Wright 1996a, 13–19, 23; 1996b, 405; 1998a, 49). However, in terms of the historical inquiry process, none were more influential to Wright's Christology than Albert Schweitzer and Ben Meyer. Schweitzer imparted to Wright the conviction that the historical study of Jesus of Nazareth must place him firmly within an eschatological Jewishness (Wright 1996a, 19; 1996b, 405; Dunn and Wright 2004, 3; Allison Jr 2009, 91). Meyer taught him a unique way of approaching the study of the historical Jesus by placing the focus on the Jewish worldview of the first century, Jesus's mindset within that worldview, and, ultimately, Jesus's aims and beliefs (Wright 1996a, 100–109; 1996b, 409; 1998a, 49). It is abundantly clear that Wright belongs to the Third Quest for the historical Jesus and develops his Christology under the six key questions of the Third Quest: How does Jesus fit into first-century Judaism? What were his aims? Why did he die? How did the church come into being? Why are the gospels what they are? And how does the historical Jesus relate to the contemporary church and world (Neill and Wright 1988, 398–401; Wright 1996a, 90–117; 1998d, 107)?<sup>7</sup> Wright addresses these key questions through his hypothesis that Jesus was a Jewish eschatological prophet who believed that the climax of Israel's history, her return from exile, the return of YHWH to Zion, and the defeat of her enemies, were occurring in and through him, his work, and his imminent death on the cross (Wright 1998b, 106–107; 1997, 365–366).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The first four of these questions were considered in detail here, whereas questions 5 and 6 were explored in 5.1 below.

<sup>8</sup> Blomberg (2009, loc. 100–102) simplifies Wright's hypothesis by claiming that it can be drawn down to the idea that Jesus came announcing the longed for "end of exile," through his person and deeds, without meeting the characteristic expectations held by the Jewish nation, such as the defeat of the Romans.

First, Wright's answer to the question, "How does Jesus fit into first-century Judaism?" is that Jesus was most fundamentally an "oracular" and "leadership" prophet (Wright 1996a, 160–162). However, Jesus did not see himself as only a prophet, but as the one through whose praxis, words, and symbolic acts the history of the Jewish nation was being brought to its climax (Wright 1996b, 406). Wright (1996a, 225) argues that Jesus's announcement of the kingdom of God provided a new variation on a basic Jewish story and worldview. That is, this announcement reaffirmed her most basic hopes—namely, the return from exile, a return of YHWH to Zion, and the defeat of evil—even as it radically redefined them by declaring that these hopes were being realized through Jesus himself (Wright 1996a, 226, 243).

Second, Wright addresses the question, "What were Jesus's aims and beliefs?" by arguing that Jesus believed that he was Israel's Messiah and that this belief is most clearly demonstrated in Jesus's actions in the temple and the surrounding riddles (Wright 1996a, 490–491; 493–511). Included in this belief of his messiahship, Wright shows that Jesus saw himself as the leader and focal point of Israel's return from exile as he believed that he was embodying and symbolizing in himself this return from exile (Wright 1996a, 477; 2018, 301–302). Furthermore, Wright (1996a, 614–615) highlights that the symbolic action of Jesus's journey to Jerusalem indicates that Jesus aimed to symbolize and embody YHWH's return to Zion. Jesus believed he would be vindicated and exalted as YHWH's agent to share YHWH's throne. He believed that his vocation was to do and be what only Israel's God did and was (Wright 1998a, 53).

Third, Wright answers the question, "Why did Jesus die?" which also formed part of his aims and beliefs, by pointing out that Jesus believed that through his impending fate, he would accomplish the new exodus by overthrowing the evil power of this world by a greater power, namely, the revolutionary power of God's love, which, according to Wright, is explicitly

and implicitly implied by Jesus's symbolic action of the Last Supper (Wright 1996a, 556–562, 610; 2006, 87–88). According to Wright, Jesus knew that he was about to die and that his death was part of an eschatological plan to usher in the kingdom of Israel's God. He believed his death would be an eschatological event leading to the new exodus, a return from exile, the forgiveness of sins, and the new covenant.

Fourth, Wright believes that the answer to the question, “How did the early Christians who were Jewish monotheists come to worship Jesus of Nazareth?” is that the early church believed that two actual events occurred; namely, Jesus's tomb was empty on the third day after his execution, and he appeared bodily to his followers after that (Wright 1996a, 658–659; 2003, 587; 2008a, 49). These two events led them to conclude that Jesus rose bodily from the dead. Although the resurrection by itself did not prove Jesus's messiahship, nor his divinity, Wright believes that, along with Jesus's messianic career and death and through theological reflection, the early Christians concluded that Jesus truly was Israel's Messiah (Wright 2003, 576; 1998d, 114). As part of his messianic profile, they considered him the *Kyrios*, Lord of the world (Wright 1998d, 122; 2003, 728–730). Furthermore, Wright suggests the progression of thought about Jesus after his resurrection did not end there; the early Christians' train of thought led them to conclude that Jesus as the *Kyrios* was the personification and embodiment of YHWH (Wright 1998a, 46; 2003, 563). In this way, Wright concludes that, although early Jewish Christology believed that Jesus was somehow divine, they did so within the Jewish framework of monotheism.

#### **4. Wolfhart Pannenberg's Christology**

Pannenberg (1966, 17–19) was resolute that the task of Christology must be based on historical facts rather than the preaching of the early church or



contemporary experiences (*gegenwärtigen christlichen erfahrung*). In other words, he was concerned about what events caused the early church's preaching. Therefore, his method of Christology has Jesus's message and fate at its heart rather than the incarnation, as we find in the "from above" approaches (Pannenberg 1966, 24–30). Additionally, Pannenberg (1966, 31–32, 41) was adamant that although Christology and soteriology are inseparable, our need for salvation must not dictate who Jesus of Nazareth was historically. He proposed that soteriology and Christology "*sind als verschiedene aufeinander bezogen*" (are related to each other as distinct; p.32). The structure of his Christology followed the following sequence: (1) he dealt with the relationship of Jesus to God, (2) the fulfillment of human destiny through Jesus, and (3) the relationship of his divinity to his humanity.

First, Pannenberg addressed the issue of Jesus's relation to God, particularly to the God of Israel (Pannenberg 1966, 30). This discussion was grounded in his investigation of the resurrection of Jesus. For Pannenberg, the pre-Easter claims to the authority of Jesus are not a sufficient basis for faith in his divinity nor the grounds for considering his relation to God the Father. Rather, the resurrection formed the basis for faith in the deity of Christ (Pannenberg 1974, 139–140; 1966, 108; 1975, 92). He argued that through the resurrection, God validated the pre-Easter claims of the authority of Jesus, which means that Jesus's relation to God must be expressed as God's self-revelation (Pannenberg 1966, 127–129). Moreover, this led Pannenberg to conclude that Jesus was part of the essence of the God of Israel. He maintained that this was the case from the beginning of Jesus's existence by applying the conclusions reached from the resurrection retrospectively (Pannenberg 1966, 134–135).<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the only appropriate way to speak

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9 Although he considered the virgin birth of Jesus to be a myth, he argued that the essential unity with God points to the eternity of Christ (Pannenberg 1972, 71–77; 1966, 150).

about God's presence in Jesus is as revelatory presence (Pannenberg 1966, 114–131).

Second, Pannenberg investigated the humanity of Jesus. He proposed that Jesus revealed the essence of humanity and fulfilled human destiny through both his proclamatory career and fate (Pannenberg 1974, 147; 1978, 110; 1973, 68). Jesus's vocation as a man was to call people to the imminent kingdom of God, which gave them an openness to God and the future resurrection (Pannenberg 1966, 232–235). This, he argued, was eschatological salvation since it revealed humanity's essence consisting of openness to God. Pannenberg also contended that through the resurrection, Jesus had fulfilled the destiny of humanity, namely, to be raised from the dead (Pannenberg 1966, 195–196). When it came to the theology of the cross, he insisted that Jesus accepted his fate because of his devotion to the mission of proclaiming the imminent kingdom of God (Pannenberg 1988, 167; 1969, 133). For Pannenberg, it is the resurrection that brings the cross of Jesus into perspective, and it is by this event that the salvific nature of the cross comes to the fore (Pannenberg 1966, 252; 1974, 140; 1975, 92; 1988, 170). Due to the resurrection, through which God affirmed the career of Jesus, Jesus was declared free from blasphemy, and those who accused him were confirmed to be the blasphemers (Pannenberg 1966, 267). He showed that Jesus's death had a universal significance because all of humanity were shown to be blasphemers.

Third, Pannenberg examined the relationship between Jesus's divinity and humanity. He pointed out that the incarnational Christologies had difficulties articulating the relationship between the Logos and the human person, Jesus of Nazareth (Pannenberg 1966, 299–301). These Christologies' attempts to describe the unity of the person whilst maintaining the integrity of Jesus's humanity are futile (Pannenberg

1966, 306–307, 318–319). Instead, Jesus had a self-consciousness about his mission and not his divinity (Pannenberg 1966, 345). As a human, Jesus lived into his mission with a self-sacrificial dedication through which he was shown to be the Son of God (Pannenberg 1966, 346–347; 1994, 373). In other words, Pannenberg believed one cannot answer the unity of the Son of God directly but must answer it from the perspective of his relation to the Father. Consequently, his sonship is established through his dedication to the Father and his will.

## **5. Critical Analysis of N.T. Wright's and Wolfhart Pannenberg's Christology**

It would be naïve to suggest that every conviction of Wright's and Pannenberg's Christologies should be applied to the Christo-centric method since both have lenses of their own. Wright comes from an Anglican tradition and Pannenberg from the Lutheran tradition, both of which have rich liturgical rituals. Therefore, both had a particular pair of lenses through which they interpreted the findings of their historical research, which shaped their conclusions and provided them with a strategy for coherency. Consequently, both scholars have strengths and weaknesses in their Christologies, which stem from their theological influences, traditions, and backgrounds.

### *5.1. Strengths of N. T. Wright's Christology*

Four helpful implications have been identified in answering the question of what relevance Wright's Christology has for the twenty-first-century church. First, Wright's Christology provides valuable connections between the OT and Jesus as the fulfillment thereof (Wright 1996a, 163; 1998a, 47;

1998b, 110–111). Second, Wright’s Christology prescribes a manner of treating the Gospels that takes seriously what they are fundamentally about; namely, the story of the kingdom of God coming to earth through the public ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth (Wright 2008b, 29). Or, to put it differently, Israel’s God reclaiming the entire world in and through Jesus. Third, Wright’s Christology is not a repetition of abstract ideas but has practical and political implications for the followers of Jesus (Wright 2008c, 2017b). Wright (2011, 220) argues that Jesus continues to establish the kingdom of God on earth as in heaven through his followers. He believes this is done through the witness of his followers in word and deed, holding this world, its rulers, and the church to account, and loving one another by laying down our rights for each other (Wright 1998e, 152–153; 1991, 50–53; 1998c, 53). Lastly, it provides Christians with a new perspective on speaking about God. Whereas there is a tendency among conservatives to define what God is like and then try to place Jesus within that definition, Wright describes what God is like by looking at the historical Jesus (Wright 2013, 1234).

### *5.2. Weaknesses of N. T. Wright’s Christology*

On the negative side, although Wright’s epistemology allows for both theology and history to be taken seriously, when they clash, Wright’s default position is to choose history over theology (Wright 1996a, 8–11; Borg and Wright 1999, 15–27; Hays 2011, 63). In other words, he willfully brackets out Christian theological tradition and assumes an adverse position toward dogmatic traditions. This adverse stance against tradition can be seen in his omission of the Gospel of John from his presentation (Thompson 2011, 26–27). Another of Wright’s weaknesses is his interpretations of the Synoptic Gospels. Wright interprets the Gospels’ stories through the lenses

of his hypothesis and, at times, forces the Gospels' material through that grid (Bock 2009, loc. 1399–1400; Johnson 2009, loc. 2811–2812; Hays 2011, 61). Finally, although we must praise Wright for placing Jesus within a Jewish eschatology, we must question Wright's notion that Jesus's eschatology should be limited to the Jerusalem events of AD 70 (Wright 1996a, 468–472; Eddy 2009, loc. 670–674; Bock 2009, loc. 1521–1524).

### *5.3. Strengths of Wolfhart Pannenberg's Christology*

Pannenberg's universal historical approach to Christology and his anthropological emphasis led to distinct contributions to the field. Directly related to his approach are the connections that he made between Christology and anthropology, whereby he showed that humanity's essence consists of openness towards God, an openness that Jesus's proclamation of the nearness of the rule of God emphasized (Pannenberg 1966, 197, 233–234; Whapham 2017, 90–91). Additionally, Jesus's fulfillment of humanity's destiny, namely, to be raised from the dead, empowered humanity to live into another destiny, namely, to be in community (Pannenberg 1966, 232–233; 240–241; 1976, 59). This anthropology has practical implications; specifically, Pannenberg's Christology reminds us of the church's vocation to live as a sign and foretaste of the future kingdom of God (Pannenberg 1966, 387–388; 1988, 167). Correspondingly, God requires certain conduct from those who call themselves followers of Jesus, which has implications for human relationships, ecumenical discussions, inter-religious conversations, and the stewardship of creation (Pannenberg 1966, 388–390; Harvie 2008, 155; Pannenberg 1978, 108; Rise 2010, 227–228; Mattes 2017, 137–140).

Pannenberg's approach also provides helpful language to engage with a post-Enlightenment culture regarding the historical validity of Jesus's claims. It appeals to history as the medium by which it affirms the

deity of Christ, whether through an investigation of the resurrection or a description of Jesus as the self-revelation of God in history (Pannenberg 1966, 129–131; Peters 2014, 368). This historically grounded approach assists the contemporary church in addressing certain Christological statements and ideas solely based on contemporary experience. It reminds us that Jesus cannot be what he never was historically (Pannenberg 1966, 15–19). Lastly, Pannenberg gave us a fresh way to speak about the grounds of Jesus’s divinity, this time not concerning the Logos but the relation to the Father (Pannenberg 1966, 338–345).

#### *5.4. Weaknesses of Wolfhart Pannenberg’s Christology*

Conversely, on the negative side, Pannenberg’s work does contain certain issues. An emphasis on the resurrection of Jesus is central to Pannenberg’s argument, which is commendable; however, this led him to interpret the cross of Jesus only through the lenses of the resurrection, rather than taking Jesus’s implicit and explicit words and symbolic actions seriously (Pannenberg 1988, 170; Kärkkäinen 2016, 120). Pannenberg’s understanding of the authority of Scripture led to an inconsistency in his interpretation of Scripture, whereby certain events or words are valid, and others are mythical or legendary (Pannenberg 1997, 212–213; 1970, 4–5; 1972, 71–77; 1994, 315–319; Chiavone 2009, 248–250). Furthermore, although Pannenberg was adamant that Jesus must be understood historically within the Jewish context, he refused to describe Jesus within Jewish categories that were very prominent in the first century (Pannenberg 1966, 28–29, 132–133; 1970, 26–27). Lastly, Pannenberg had an adverse stance towards discussing the relationship between Jesus and the Logos, which is unnecessary, especially since the Christologies that deal with this notion begin where Pannenberg ends, namely, the incarnation (Pannenberg 1966, 295; McDermott 1974, 720; Owen 1967, 59; Medley 2013, 94).

## 6. Implications for a Christo-Centric Homiletic

### *6.I. Overcoming the shortcomings of Christo-centric homiletics*

It is unrealistic to assume that if the Christo-centric homiletic incorporates a more balanced Christology, all its shortcomings will disappear. Nevertheless, there are certain implications Wright and Pannenberg's "from below" Christology will have on Christo-centric homiletics' shortcomings, especially because of its embeddedness in the "from above" method. By expanding its foundational Christology with these two Christologies, the Christo-centric approach can address some of its shortcomings without neglecting its major methodological convictions.

Through an exploration of the implications of the strengths of Wright and Pannenberg's Christologies on the shortcomings of the Christo-centric homiletic, these Christologies: (1) Provide the Christo-centric method with a holistic approach to forming creative sermons with diverse sermon goals that are based on the spiritual needs of the congregation. These contributions can be made in sermon content—descriptive and prescriptive—and form, such as biographical sermons. (2) They challenge the Christo-centric homiletics' application process by presenting Jesus in a way that demands private, public, and political commitment. The Jesus presented by these two Christologies confronts the unintended consequence of Christo-centric preaching, namely, that because Jesus accomplished everything for us and we cannot obey because of our fallen condition, we should not even bother trying. Instead of being content with the spiritual privatization of faith, these two Christologies demand being a practical follower of Jesus. (3) Wright and Pannenberg's Christologies can broaden the redemptive paradigm of the Christo-centric method by linking the theology of the cross and kingdom theology. This

maximizes the homiletical value of the Gospels and offers a balanced framework for missions that focuses on both evangelism and social issues. The new movement of the Christo-centric homiletic was birthed in the cultural and historical context of the “Great Reversal” and, therefore, these two Christologies can provide the Christo-centric method with a more balanced structure for missions. Consequently, from such a balanced missiological framework, the Christo-centric homiletic can ground their sermons in the reality of human experiences such as poverty and suffering. (4) They provide the Christo-centric homiletic with avenues to present a more balanced view of God by offering resources that link God to Jesus’s life and provide means through which to explain the relationship of Jesus with the Father better, which safeguards the Father’s reputation. By applying these two Christologies, the Christo-centric method could be enriched and challenged without diverting from its primary aim of preaching Christ.

### *6.2. The strengths of Christo-centric homiletics*

Although the Christo-centric homiletic has certain hermeneutical and homiletical shortcomings, which stem from its significant connections to a Christology from above, it also has significant strengths. As with the shortcomings, there are definite connections between the homiletical strengths of this approach and a Christology from above. Nevertheless, these two “from below” Christologies provide a new perspective that might enrich these strengths.

These two “from below” Christologies, if taken seriously, have implications for certain strengths of the Christo-centric method: (1) The Christo-centric method has an impressive ability to preach Christ from the OT by providing various paths to Christ. However, these two historically based Christologies, with their deeply Jewish undertones, especially



that of Wright's, offer various specific links to the OT that provide a fresh strategy to preach Christ from the OT. (2) The Christo-centric homiletic has a noble ambition to consistently preach the gospel due to its benefits to both unbelievers and believers. But, due to its focus on substitutionary atonement in its presentation of the gospel, Wright's robust presentation of the Christus Victor aspect of Christ's atoning work can provide the Christo-centric method with a more holistic presentation of the gospel. (3) The Christo-centric method has an unwavering commitment to avoiding moralistic sermons that leads to self-righteousness or despair by relating all imperatives to Christ. Wright and Pannenberg's strong emphasis on the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the start of the Christian movement challenges the Christo-centric method to consider the connection between moral imperatives and Christ's work in light of the resurrection. (4) The Christo-centric approach effectively addresses secular culture prophetically by addressing culture and exposing its lies. Wright and especially Pannenberg's work provides the apologetic and anthropological resources to address two key aspects of secular culture, namely, rationalism and modern individualistic anthropology. By applying the findings of these two Christologies, the Christo-centric method can address secular culture not only prophetically, but can speak to secular culture's rationalism apologetically and challenge its modern individualistic anthropology.

## **7. Conclusion**

With its robust biblical theology and practical guidance, the new movement of the Christo-centric homiletic is a useful model to help address Kärkkäinen's (2016, 1) question, "How are we to speak of Jesus Christ in the third millennium?" However, due to its presuppositions about the Bible and its related embedded "from above" Christology there are certain

glaring shortcomings. Nevertheless, by applying the strengths of Wright and Pannenberg's "from below" Christologies, the Christo-centric method can address specific weaknesses and find resources to enhance some of its strengths without negating its central conviction of preaching Christ in every sermon. In other words, the Christo-centric method can address its criticisms without becoming more Theo-centric.

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# Establishing a Model of Ecclesiastical Discipline in the Church of Pentecost-Ghana

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## **Abstract**

The Church of Pentecost-Ghana (CoP-Ghana) is a Ghanaian classical Pentecostal church with a transnational reach. In this study, ecclesiastical discipline, as part of pastoral care, as practiced in the CoP-Ghana is analyzed with the view to developing a model of ecclesiastical discipline for the church. Osmer's (2008) research method was used to help develop the envisaged model. Thirty participants including ministers, presbyters, and members of the CoP-Ghana in Accra were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire.

Participants viewed ecclesiastical discipline as relevant to the CoP-Ghana to show the church, Christ's bride, as holy and to protect the church's reputation and aid it in fulfilling its divine mandate of preparing for Christ's return. The major concerns raised by the participants regarding the application of ecclesiastical discipline in the CoP-Ghana include the absence of clear guidelines for ecclesiastical discipline, lack of counseling resources for both pre- and post-discipline phases, the aggressive approach

of the process, lack of confidence in the reliability of the investigative process, and lethargy in carrying out discipline due to criticism of the practice in contemporary times.

For this reason, church membership should be classified into new members, members, presbyters, ministers, and leaders in higher calling for purposes of ecclesiastical discipline, and disciplinary measures be rated from leniency to severe sanctions in that order. Education on ecclesiastical discipline should be integrated into the church's discipleship program. Further, in sanctioning the offenders, COP-Ghana should prayerfully consider the nature of the offense, status of the offender, attitude of the offender, mode of disclosure of offense, and type of offense. Finally, the church must deliberately ensure that sanctioned members are assigned mature believers or counselors to assist in their reconciliation and restoration to fellowship.

## **1. Introduction and Research Method**

Ecclesiastical discipline is a controversial praxis to promote in a secularized society that is dominated by human rights. In addition, younger Christians perceive it as outdated and unnecessary, while older Christians consider it relevant. This study explores the praxis within the COP-Ghana, and proposes a model for adoption.

Rev. James McKeown, a missionary of the Bradford Apostolic Church, UK arrived in Ghana (then the Gold Coast) in March 1937 and was stationed at Asamankese, a town in the eastern region of Ghana, where he began his missionary work (Larbi 2015, 106). This culminated in the establishment of the Gold Coast Apostolic Church in 1953. When the Gold Coast attained independence and the name Ghana replaced the Gold Coast, the church became known as the Ghana Apostolic Church and on August

1, 1962, the Ghana Apostolic Church adopted the Church of Pentecost as its new name (Church of Pentecost 2016, 24).

The CoP lays much emphasis on fundamental values like individual conversion, belief in the speaking of tongues as the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and demonstration of the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as working in miracles and healing (Asamoah-Gyadu 2013, 1–4). According to Koduah (2004, 49), the CoP also emphasizes what is called the “the four-square gospel” which portrays Jesus Christ as the Savior, the healer, the baptizer in the Holy Spirit, and the soon coming king, and these are part of the tenets of the church and enshrined in the church’s constitution and ministerial handbook.

The church’s vision is to become a global Pentecostal church that is culturally relevant in vibrant evangelism, church planting, discipleship, and holistic ministry (Church of Pentecost 2017, 2). Additionally, the stated mission of the church is to establish responsible and self-sustaining churches filled with committed, Spirit-filled Christians of character, who will impact their communities (Church of Pentecost 2017, 2). Presently, the church exists in over one hundred countries.

Certain distinctive attributes help to identify The CoP, namely, self-supporting attitude, faithfulness and integrity, distinctiveness in prayer, church discipline without fear or favor and irrespective of status or ethnicity, congregational worship without emphasis on the physical structure or location, respect for authority, mutual respect, sacrificial service to the church without expecting a pecuniary reward, total abstinence from alcohol, tobacco and narcotics, community-based churches, monogamous marriage and chastity before marriage, heterosexual marital relationships, and paternal inheritance (Church of Pentecost 2008, 14–16). The entire membership of the church is expected to uphold and practice these attributes.

The founder of the church, Rev. McKeown, did not relent on corrective discipline at all. Thus, article 25 of the CoP constitution intimates that the church believes that the purpose of church discipline is for the glory of God, the purity of the church, and the spiritual benefit of members (Church of Pentecost 2016, 106). It serves as a warning to the congregation, and also averts reproach upon the name of Christ and for the transgressor; especially, that he/she may repent and be saved.

However, like other Pentecostal churches, the CoP faces the challenge of drifting members because of disciplinary actions taken against them. It also must address and find a balanced approach to diverse views from older church members and younger church members about the praxis of ecclesiastical discipline. Hence the study explores the complex and significant matter of ecclesiastical discipline within the sub-discipline of practical theology. Practical theology is a branch of theology that attempts to examine Christian practices to understand the extent to which they are faithful to God's nature and purposes with a desire to transform them so that they may be more faithful to God and more relevant to people (Smith 2013, 21). Thus, the study asks: What model of ecclesiastical discipline can be established for the CoP-Ghana?

It uses Osmer's (2008) research methodology with its four phases: The descriptive-empirical task, the interpretative task, the normative task, and the pragmatic task. These phases ask: What is going on? Why is this going on? What ought to be going on? Then, finally, how might we respond? (Osmer 2008, 4–29). The following four sub-questions based on Osmer's method assist to answer the main question: (1) How has ecclesiastical discipline been conducted in the CoP-Ghana over the generations? (2) What has influenced the CoP to practice ecclesiastical discipline? (3) What do theologians and the Scriptures teach about ecclesiastical discipline?

And, (4) what model of ecclesiastical discipline can be established for the CoP-Ghana?

The study presents the answers to the sub-questions using the following sections: the theological perspective on ecclesiastical discipline, ecclesiastical discipline in COP-Ghana, an analysis of ecclesiastical discipline in the CoP-Ghana, and the proposed model for ecclesiastical discipline in the CoP-Ghana. The study used purposeful sampling to conduct face-to-face interviews with thirty participants consisting of ministers, presbyters, and members from thirteen (Osmer 2008, 13) local assemblies of the CoP in Accra.

## **2. Brief Theological Perspectives on Ecclesiastical Discipline**

Ecclesiastical discipline is part of pastoral care. The theological basis for the practice of ecclesiastical discipline can be found in these six biblical texts: Matthew 7:1–5; Matthew 18:13–18; Acts 5:1–11; 1 Corinthians 5:1–8; 1 Timothy 1:18–20; and Hebrews 12:6–11.

While the church has, for abbreviated stints in its history, upheld the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and practiced ecclesiastical discipline, the practice of ecclesiastical discipline has been disconnected from a robust doctrine of the priesthood of all believers (Bulley 2000, 256). According to Smith (2013, 4), churches persevered in keeping the doctrines and practices regarding ecclesiastical discipline from the seventeenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. Duncan (2010, 1) contends that one of the significant problems about ecclesiastical discipline is the negative connotation it has acquired. Cloud (2017, 32) notes that ecclesiastical discipline is a difficult praxis since there are frequent uncertainties and worries. Long (2015, 3) notes that instead of loving people enough to guide them when they go astray, contemporary churches ignore

the problem and hope it will disappear. He further contends that this hurts the offender, the church, and the community at large. The offender suffers because he or she continues to walk in unrepentant sin thinking the church does not care, thus jeopardizing his or her soul. According to Wills (2012, 150) the abandonment of ecclesiastical discipline is linked to the church's creeping accommodation of the contemporary societal culture of moral individualism.

Ecclesiastical discipline is a ministry derived from “a life of prayer, discipleship, and the struggle for holiness” (Leech 1977, 78). In this sense, ecclesiastical discipline is an integrating force that operates in a positive sense through repentance, restoration, and reconciliation (Duncan 2010, 4).

### **3. Brief Ecclesiastical Discipline in the Church of Pentecost**

Rev. McKeown's teachings on holiness, anchored on Hebrews 12:14b, “without holiness no one will see God,” seemed to suggest that holiness was a prerequisite for salvation. Members of the CoP were instructed to offer their bodies as temples to the Holy Spirit and those who fell into known sins or visited questionable places were disciplined (Church of Pentecost 2005, 53–54).

The strong holiness ethic is noticed in several of the songs of the church (Church of Pentecost 2005, 54), the official greetings of the women's ministry of the church, “holiness unto the Lord,” and the approach to disciplining pastors and church officials. These songs include:

#### **COP Hymn 1136**

When going your way, remember to be holy unto the Lord  
In your way of life, remember to be holy unto the Lord  
Holiness unto the Lord

Holiness unto the Lord

In all your life, in the secrecy of your closet

Be holy unto the Lord

**COP Hymn 1215**

If you have seen Jesus, let his character be seen in you

All people are watching, your good character

All people are watching, your good conduct

If you have seen Jesus, let his character be seen in you.

When dealing with disciplinary matters, the church classifies three membership status types: members, ordained officers, and ministers. A district minister can suspend a member, but not an ordained officer. The minister cannot restore a suspended officer to full membership, which is the responsibility of the area head. The district minister cannot excommunicate a member, which is the sole responsibility of the executive council. The area head is responsible for all disciplinary matters involving ordained officers in the area, but not ministers. The executive council is responsible for the discipline of ministers and discipline involving sanctioning by excommunication (Church of Pentecost 2018, 83).

The cardinal principle of ecclesiastical discipline is the right of the accused person to be heard and to know clearly what they are being accused of. Every opportunity should be given to the person to present their defense, call witnesses, seek appropriate counsel, and cross-examine anyone who testifies against them (Church of Pentecost 2018, 188). There is an appeal process for disciplined persons who desire to appeal the decision. An appeal is to go through the district executive committee, then to the area executive committee, and finally to the executive council. The review of a



disciplinary action that has been appealed shall be done by the next higher authority so that a decision taken by the area executive committee would be reviewed by the executive committee upon petition by the affected party (Church of Pentecost 2018, 83).

Restoration is the process of bringing back a disciplined offender into fellowship and makes the process of discipline complete (Church of Pentecost 2018, 188). Members who are suspended may be restored to full fellowship by the district pastor by announcing in the congregation or through circulars at the level where the discipline was implemented. Restored members could be made officers later if found fit. However, restored members can only be recommended for full-time ministry after the area or national head has consulted the chairman of the church. Any officer who falls into open sin and is suspended from membership and office may be reinstated to full membership, but not to his or her former position or office. Where reinstatement to officer status becomes necessary, the area head may consult the chairman; and in the mission nations, the national head may consult the international missions director (Church of Pentecost 2018, 82).

The church's guidance is that a counselor or a mature Christian is assigned to the person under discipline for counseling and support to be able to go through the process of ecclesiastical discipline (Church of Pentecost 2018, 188). Once restored, the person is relieved of the limitations imposed by the disciplinary procedure and could be called into a leadership position later if they exhibit a commitment to the church and the congregation expresses readiness to have the person in leadership (Church of Pentecost 2018, 188).

Dismissed ministers who warrant suspension are suspended by the executive council and are restored to fellowship when appropriate, but not into full-time ministry. Such restored ministers could be brought into lay

leadership positions (Church of Pentecost 2018, 186). Getting other ministers and church members to fellowship with suspended ministers during the suspension period and assigning counselors to suspended ministers has been a challenge faced by the church.

An excommunicated member who repents and wants to come back to the church is to personally initiate the process at the local (assembly) level, where the presiding elder will then inform the district pastor. The person then must go through a formative ecclesiastical discipline-like membership class and have the right hand of fellowship extended to them before being restored to fellowship (Church of Pentecost 2018, 188).

#### **4. Analysis of Ecclesiastical Discipline in the Church of Pentecost**

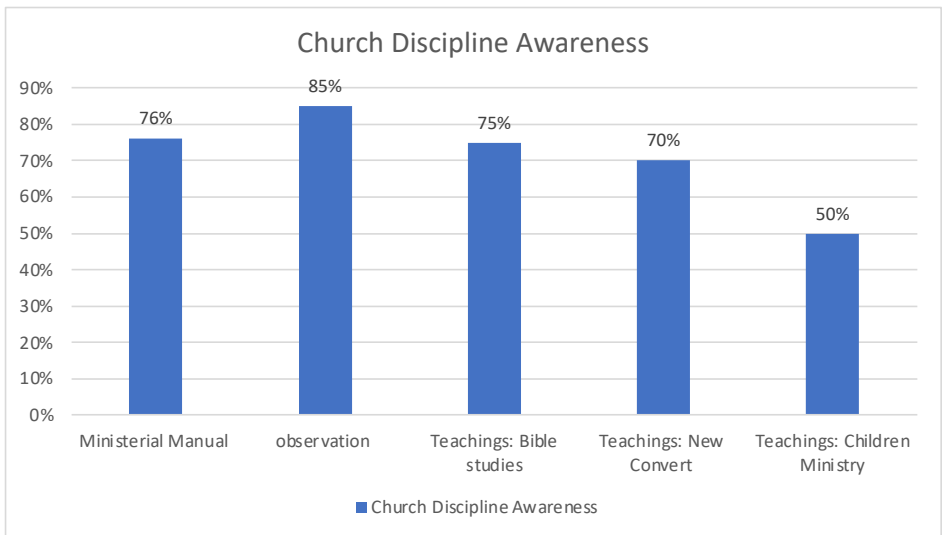
A semi-structured questions instrument was used to conduct interviews to arrive at a detailed description of the practice of ecclesiastical discipline in the CoP-Ghana over the past thirty years and across generations. The section discusses the field research findings considering the church's regulations and practice of ecclesiastical discipline. Additionally, perceptions of leaders and members on ecclesiastical discipline as practiced in the CoP are covered.

The findings of the study reveal that the majority of the participants who were involved in this study were males. That is, 28.5 percent of the participants were females while 71.5 percent were males.

##### *4.I. Awareness of ecclesiastical discipline*

The study probes to find out whether the participants are aware of ecclesiastical discipline in the CoP-Ghana. From the findings, all the

participants reiterated that they are aware of the church’s practice of discipline. The participants were later asked to explain how they learned about ecclesiastical discipline in the CoP-Ghana. From the findings of the study, the participants stated that they learned about it from the ministerial manual, observation, and teachings such as Bible studies, new convert classes, and children’s ministry classes. As seen in Figure 1, the findings of the study revealed that almost 85 percent of the total participants said they became aware of ecclesiastical discipline through observation. This was followed by ministerial manual (76%), Bible studies teachings (75%), new convert classes (70%), and children ministry teachings (50%).



*Figure 1: Ecclesiastical Discipline Awareness*

#### 4.2. Following ecclesiastical procedure

From the findings of the study, most of the participants reiterated that a procedure was followed before disciplining a church member. That is, 88.9 percent of the participants reiterated that a procedure was followed (twenty-nine ministers, twenty-seven members, and twenty-four presbyters) while 11.1 percent indicated that no procedure was followed (six presbyters, three members, and one minister). The entire procedure is outlined in the Church of Pentecost (2014, 44, 73).

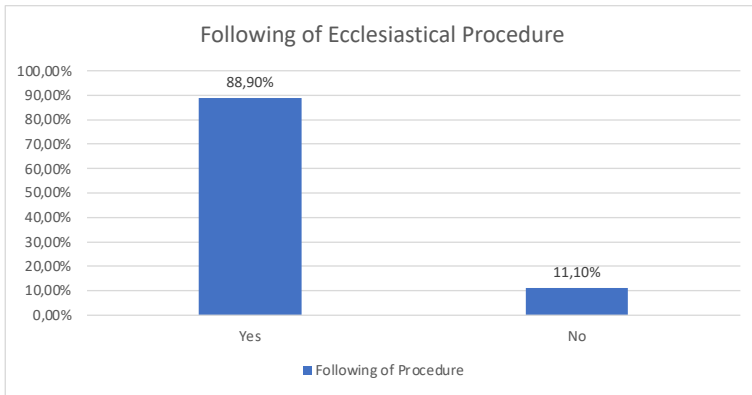


Figure 1a: Following the Ecclesiastical Procedure

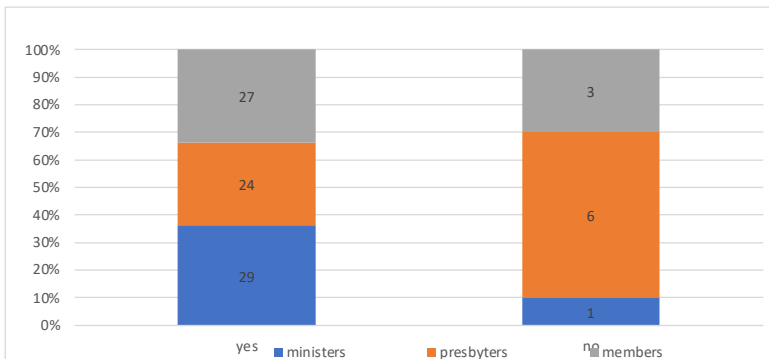


Figure 1b: Following the Ecclesiastical Procedure

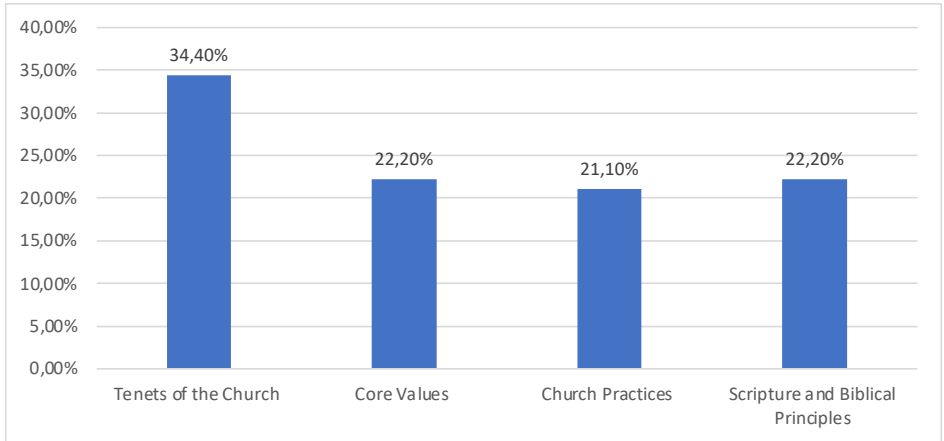
In the findings of the study, some of the participants indicated that they are aware of the procedure. However, when asked to explain the procedure used in carrying out church discipline, they could not. Likewise, the study findings do not explicitly show a systematically laid-down procedure. However, the assertions made by the participants had some steps running through the views made by the participants. Notable among the steps mentioned include: setting up an investigative committee to investigate the matter, calling a person in front of the congregation, narrating the offense, applying the necessary sanctions, and then praying for the person. However, the participants did not elucidate all these steps in the points they made. Some mentioned parts of them or gave inferences that were similar to the points being made. This situation seems to show that the ministers and most presbyters are aware of the disciplinary procedure and are certain that they are followed. However, some members, presbyters, and a minister were not convinced that there was a clear procedure for applying ecclesiastical discipline.

The responses indicate that ministers, presbyters, and members were not very clear about the procedure being used in handling issues of ecclesiastical discipline although they believed some procedures exist. Such a situation may create arbitrariness in dealing with offenses and cause disquiet in those disciplined and in the observers.

#### *4.3. Factors influencing the ecclesiastical discipline*

The study went further to find out what informs ecclesiastical discipline. The findings of the study revealed that a considerable number of factors inform ecclesiastical discipline. Notable among these are the tenets of the church, the church's practices, Scripture, and the core values of the church.

Figure 2 below shows the percentage of respondents who indicated the various factors that inform ecclesiastical discipline in CoP.



*Figure 2: Factors Informing Ecclesiastical Discipline*

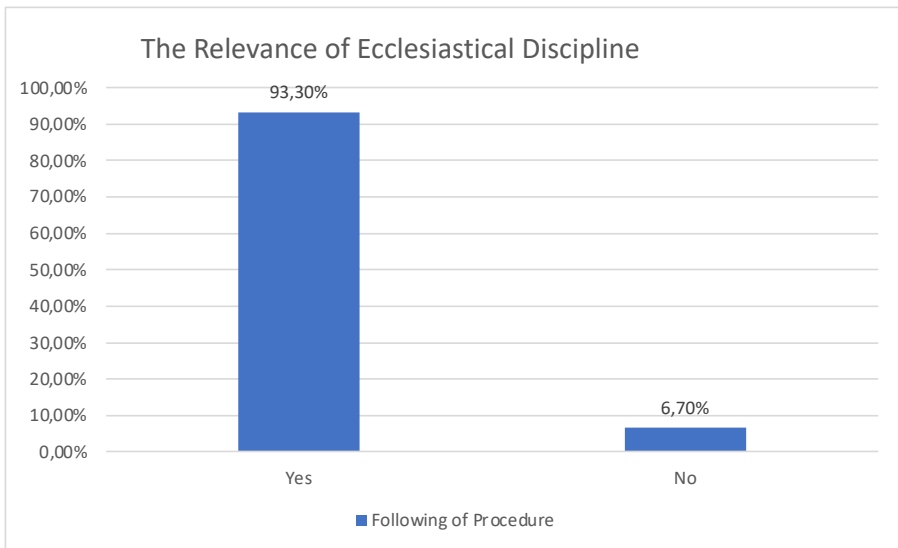
From the findings of the study, 34.4 percent of the respondents reiterated that church discipline is informed by the tenets of the church while 22.2 percent of the respondents reiterated that it is informed by the core values of the church, as well as Scripture and biblical principles. Also, 21.1 percent said it is informed by church practices.

The opinions of presbyters certainly were not limited to the biblical point of view and its implementation as an act of the church’s doctrine or principle. Others viewed it as a neo-coercion on the church to pursue laid-down rules from the past and as such had to because they are compelled to. Others stipulated that the focus is to bring reformation and change, and yet still others deem it to be an act of punishment mainly for “seen” sin and gross “specific” misconduct.

Views of members generally range between the authority of, and as stipulated in, the word of God, the principles of human governance, and doctrinal dictation, and reformation and helping reform others.

#### 4.4. *The relevance of the ecclesiastical discipline*

From the findings of the study, most of the participants indicated that they see ecclesiastical discipline to be relevant in this present time. From the findings, 93.3 percent of the participants reiterated that ecclesiastical discipline is relevant today while 6.7 percent of them indicated that it is not relevant in these present times. Overall, the ministers indicated that they see ecclesiastical discipline to be relevant. However, five presbyters and one minister indicated that they do not see ecclesiastical discipline to be relevant in the present times. The assertions made by the participants have been illustrated in Figure 3a and 3b.



*Fig 3a: The Relevance of the Ecclesiastical Discipline*

Most ministers cited biblical reasons for the relevance of ecclesiastical discipline for the church, ranging from presenting the bride of Christ as holy, to discipline as an expression of God’s love. Others explained that it is beneficial in the reformation of the believer and in serving as “checks and balances” to the church. The relevance to the CoP-Ghana, is to save its image and be able to fulfill the divine mandate of the church. The biblical views expressed were that: it enhances the spiritual growth of the local church; it encourages holiness; it is biblical and enforced by God; it encourages morality and teaches the believer the right path to take; and it serves as a deterrent to others. Other views expressed dealt with the overall public image of the CoP-Ghana as being enhanced by the procedure and that public sin must be dealt with publicly.

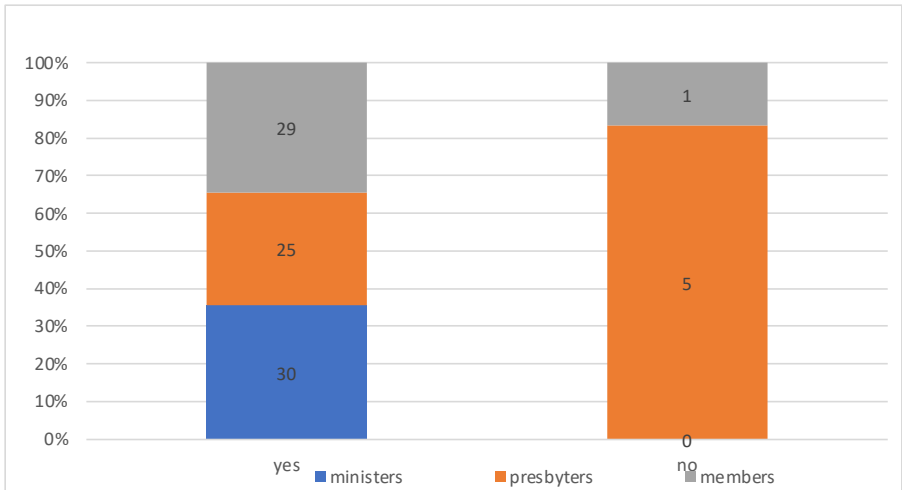


Fig 3b: *The Relevance of the Ecclesiastical Discipline*



Ordinary church members conceded that ecclesiastical discipline is relevant in keeping orderliness in the church, improving the church's outward image, and giving clear blueprints of acceptable conduct. From a biblical point of view, many asserted that it is in the word of God to punish wrongful attitudes as it is a kingdom principle, some also explained that it is an important part of the transformation experience, with many others mentioning that it is the nature of God to be holy and the church of God must strive to emulate his example.

The responses from the opinions of ministers, presbyters, and members, show a train of thought regarding the key areas where ecclesiastical discipline is relevant as: in holiness, as an expression of love, the Christian's reformation and transformation experience, as a warning, in church image preservation, and as a part of discipleship.

From the findings of the study, a majority of the presbyters who indicated that ecclesiastical discipline is not relevant did not justify their assertions.

#### *4.5. Concerns about Ecclesiastical Discipline*

The findings of the study identified several concerns regarding church discipline in CoP-Ghana. Notable among these issues were ones related to disciplining people who are remorseful about what they have done, leaders not being gentle when punishing offenders, lack of counseling to people who are disciplined by the church, informing the whole congregation of the wrong someone has done, overdoing the punishment, and applying different sanctions for the same or similar events.

From the outlook of ministers, the major concerns classified in key thematic areas are: the lack of clear-cut outlines for ecclesiastical discipline; the lack of counseling avenues both pre- and post-discipline; the validity of

the report provided and the trustworthiness of the personality behind the report; both the sloth and the fear to discipline in the church in modern times due to critics of the process and the multitudes of congregations; the process of ecclesiastical discipline being devoid of the Holy Spirit's influence and direction; other ministers wielding discipline as a weapon of "mass destruction" rather than as an instrument of love; and the absence or inadequacies of teachings on the topic generally.

The concerns postulated by presbyters paint a picture of the lack of a suitable methodology, the humanitarian perspective that the process leaves much to be desired, the credibility of the herald or witness to the sin committed, the inadequacy of communication to church members on the sin of the punished, the relative neglect of younger generations to their sin and the lack of teachings for them.

However, others queried the necessity of the discipline of the church since supposed "giants" of the faith or leaders also sometimes falter, the weakness of the entire system and some leaders are afraid of general opinion. A few also suggested that ecclesiastical discipline should be done away with in some instances, or milder forms of punishment employed in some cases and not suspension in almost all cases.

The outmoded nature and impropriety of the current system; the inadequacy of practice in some areas; the scarcity of appropriate teachings on the topic; the deficiency of counseling applied in the process; the resulting confusion in the punished; the rather opulent vibrancy of announcing the sin of the defector and condemning them; and the resolving ineffectiveness and absolute irrelevance of the process, are major areas of concerns noted by many members.

In summary, ministers, presbyters, and members alike question the quality of the system, the methodology of the system, the lack of information about this doctrine to members, the continuous oscillation of

this system amongst different congregations and ministers, and common to them all, the lack of counseling for offenders, whether before or after the discipline.

#### *4.6. Addressing Concerns about Ecclesiastical Discipline*

To address the concerns being raised, the participants intimated that there should be regular counseling sessions for those who are disciplined, not all ecclesiastical discipline should be done in public, and there should be increased education on ecclesiastical discipline matters and visitation to victims.

Candid opinions shared among ministers were not dissimilar to the petition of presbyters in citing the need for counseling sessions for culprits, and the use of love as light to shine on the sin punished.

The presbyters affirmed the early stands of the church on ecclesiastical discipline but appreciated the need to rework the execution of the practice by mentioning the need for education in members and the church, counseling for the accused, and preservation of the image and dignity of the offending person by removing the public display from the process. Other measures to be adopted include post-discipline follow-up and counseling, Spirit-led intervention, and re-strengthening of the whole system by viewing it as necessary in church communal life.

The main position of the church members was that while they supported ecclesiastical discipline as a necessary part of church life they were against the current method of publicly displaying the offender and declaring their offense with disciplinary measures. They suggested that the process should involve counseling sessions, closed punishment, reduction of the embarrassment caused, and the appropriation of love instead of “assault” on the offender.

As such, the position of ministers, presbyters, and members interviewed could be summarized as bolstering the process with love, applying an enormous amount of counseling to the process, teaching offenders the need to be disciplined, reducing the harshness of the procedure, doing it regardless of how anyone feels about it, and, of course, never forsaking the Spirit's counsel on each individualized matter.

## **5. A Proposed Model for Ecclesiastical Discipline in The Church of Pentecost, Ghana**

A pedagogical system, which is the interrelated ways necessary for the creation of organized and resolute pedagogical influence on personality formation with the set qualities and implementation of ecclesiastical discipline is developed here as a model of ecclesiastical discipline for the church. The CoP leaders (ministers and presbyters) and members are keenly aware of both the necessity and the perils of ecclesiastical discipline to the Christian life. This is exemplified in two stances of Pentecostal ethics and government: its quantitative concern with accessibility and its qualitative concern with piety.

A gradational and distributive approach to ecclesiastical discipline in the CoP-Ghana, which calibrates disciplinary demands according to the convert's level of "spiritual maturity" among others is proposed.

The proposed model for ecclesiastical discipline in the CoP-Ghana covers specifics for ecclesiastical discipline, determinants of sanctions, and procedures for restoration.

### *5.1. Specifics of cases for ecclesiastical discipline*

In ecclesiastical discipline, extreme care should be exercised, as the Bible does not warrant the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline for an individual's or a church's proscriptions or prohibitions. The Bible, not personal sentiments or aversions, must be the guide for what are sins and warrant ecclesiastical discipline. Further, the CoP-Ghana must not become hypercritical, "speck inspectors" or "Pentecost police" (as a respondent put it). Heathley III (2004, 3) notes there must be general and specific causes that should precipitate ecclesiastical discipline.

#### 5.1.1. General causes

These involve conduct that is prejudicial to good order and discipline in the church. Such issues include disorderly conduct that is clearly out of line with biblically-prescribed commands and which negatively impacts the testimony and unity of the church (2 Thess 3:6–15).

#### 5.1.2. Specific causes

Specific causes that would warrant ecclesiastical discipline include.

- Difficulties that arise from relationships between members at the interpersonal or small-group level (Matt 18:15–17).
- Contentious or factious people cause divisions in the church which, if unchecked, could disrupt the unity in the body of Christ (Rom 16:17–18; Titus 3:9–11).
- Immoral conduct including sins of the type mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5, such as incest, immorality, covetousness, idolatry, abusive speech, drunkenness, swindling, or idle busybodies who refuse to work and run around spreading dissension (1 Cor 5:1, 11; 2 Thess 3:10–15).

- Doctrinal breaches involving false teaching or teaching erroneous doctrine and views which concern the fundamentals of the faith and not lesser differences of interpretation (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 2:17–18; also implied in Rev 2:14–16; Phil 3:2–3, 15–19; Rom 16:17–18). The church could deal with people whose teachings are particularly contrary to the tenets of the church.

The key concerns that serve as a guide in these cases are the holy character of God, the testimony of the church, the effect upon the unity and purity of the flock, and the edification and restoration of the individual. Any one of these factors is crucial enough to warrant action to be taken, although not always culminating in a sanction.

### *5.2. Determinants of sanctions*

The goals or purposes of ecclesiastical discipline should govern the spirit in which all ecclesiastical disciplinary action is to be taken. Therefore, the attitude of the ones offering discipline and the offender are crucial in determining sanctions in ecclesiastical discipline.

The following serve as a useful guide to those offering sanctions:

- Ecclesiastical discipline must be done by those who are spiritual, truly walking by the Holy Spirit and growing in the Lord (Gal 6:1).
- Ecclesiastical discipline must be done in a spirit of humility, gentleness, and patience, being wary that we are not tempted as well (Gal 6:1–2; 2 Tim 2:24–25).
- Ecclesiastical discipline must be done without favoritism or prejudice, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality (1 Tim 5:21).
- Those who walk disorderly are to be admonished, warned, and appealed to in love (1 Thess 5:14–15; 1 Tim 5:1–2; Eph 4:15; 2 Tim 4:2). This admonishing is not restricted to church leaders but may

be done by any person in the body with another if that person is Spirit-controlled and spiritually minded (cf. 1 Thess 5:14 with Gal 6:1).

The attitude and disposition of the offender are also crucial in determining sanctions. Depending on the nature of the offense and the disposition of the offender, private rebuke might suffice. However, if there is no response in repentance and obedience, then the sinning party is to be rebuked publicly and members of the body are to withhold intimate fellowship through the ecclesiastical disciplinary process coupled with social ostracism. If there is still no response in repentance and obedience, the church is to apply the procedures of suspension or excommunication as directed in Matthew 18:19. The sanctions are aimed at indicating to the offender that the offense has dishonored the Lord and has caused estrangement in the harmony of the body, and to be a deterrent to the rest of the membership as a warning against sin (1 Tim 5:20).

Factors that determine the kind of sanction to be given to an offender must include maturity, nature of the offense, status of the offender, attitude of the offender, mode of disclosure of offense, and type of offense. All these factors ought to be considered, analyzed, and conclusions made to determine what to do about an offender vis-à-vis the dynamics of the offense. This will ensure that offenders are not lumped together in the sanction they receive irrespective of where they are at in their spiritual journey. Table 1 below gives an objective means of assessing and making decisions on individual bases, taking cognizance of their peculiarities. The offense is evaluated and scored based on the factors, where each factor is scored objectively on the traits under the assessment of the factor. The cumulative total score is then used as a guide in determining the appropriate sanction. The goal is always the restoration so that the person is still to be counted as a brother (2 Thess 3:14–15).

Factor	Key Traits	Scale (1-5)	Assessment of Factor
<b>Maturity</b>		1-5	
<b>Nature of Offense</b>			
	Accidental	1	
	Misled	2	
	Premeditated	3	
	Premeditated/Orchestrated	4	
	Premeditated and adamant	5	
<b>Status</b>	<b>New Member</b>	1	
	Member	2	
	Presbyter	3	
	Minister	4	
	High Calling	5	
<b>Attitude</b>			
	Repentant	1	
	Concealing	2	
	Unrepentant	3	
	Unrepentant and litigating	4	
	Unrepentant and abusive	5	
<b>Mode of Disclosure</b>			
	Prompt self-disclosure	1	
	Reported as afterthought	2	
	Saw risk and reported	3	
	Another person reported	4	
	Challenging the evidence	5	
<b>Type of Offense</b>			
<b>Factor</b>	<b>Key Traits</b>	<b>Scale (1-5)</b>	<b>Assessment of Factor</b>
	Interpersonal relationship challenges	1	
	Intimacy	2	
	Concealed intimacy/false teaching	3	
	Abomination	4	
	Abomination and obstinate	5	
<b>Total Score</b>			

*Table 1: Weight of offense with the corresponding discipline*



Assessment key: Private rebuke: 6–11; public rebuke: 12–17; suspension (Dismissal in the case of ministers): 18–23; excommunication: 24–30.

The procedure to be adopted in sanctioning offending members will depend on the nature of the sanction, the scope of influence of the offender, the nature of the offense, and the goal of ecclesiastical discipline, among other things.

The scope of influence of the offender has implications for the extent of circulation of information about disciplinary measures meted out to the individual, especially measures that demand sanctions like suspension or excommunication. Information about members may be circulated within the local or district church of the individual being sanctioned and any other districts the member associates with. The area circular should inform the entire membership in the area if the issue relates to a presbyter. Worldwide circulars should inform the entire church community if the disciplinary issue involves a minister. The principle should be that the level at which the decision is taken is the level from which information is shared on decisions made.

Since the goal of ecclesiastical discipline is to lead to repentance and restoration of the offender, the mode of announcement of the sanction should not make it more difficult for the offender to be fully restored. In this regard, public rebuke and sanctioning that involves calling the offender in front of the whole congregation and while standing there stating the details of the offense and sanctions may be reviewed. The name of the person should be mentioned, the offense narrated, and sanctions announced and prayed for without calling the person forward. Such a form will ensure the entire church's participation in the ecclesiastical discipline of the offender without aggravated embarrassment for the offender and subsequently afford an easier task of restoration.

The nature of the offense determines, to a large extent, the form of sanction. In cases where the offense is not deemed grievous, and/or the offender shows signs of repentance together with other mitigating factors, private rebuke and admonishment may be offered. However, if the offense is public knowledge together with other auxiliary factors, the sanction ought to be public, albeit rebuke, suspension, or excommunication. This is to save the church from rumors and other tendencies that would affect the unity and purity of the body of Christ.

The nature of the sanction as to whether it is to be a public or private rebuke will determine the form in which the presentation will go. Private rebuke and admonishment if so agreed to by the leadership will mean the matter will not be publicly announced in the church. Rather some leaders, particularly the minister, will be assigned to rebuke the offender and offer guidance on steps to take as a step to repentance, reconciliation, and restoration as applicable.

### *5.3. Procedure for restoration*

The end state of ecclesiastical discipline is the reconciliation and restoration of the offender. To restore an offender requires intentionality in the efforts geared towards its implementation so that the restored individual can function effectively in the church. The procedure for restoration should include clemency, godly counseling, and ministry of love on the part of the church community and through pastoral counseling.

#### *5.3.1. Clemency*

Clemency is in keeping with the goal of restoration, the role of the church as an instrument of correction must change into it being an agent

of reconciliation and restoration after there is repentance. This means accepting the person and forgetting the past as alluded to in 2 Corinthians 2:7a; “so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him.” The challenge is how to determine when there is genuine repentance. The key is when the sinning party acknowledges their wrong and “bring[s] forth fruits in keeping with repentance” (Luke 3:8). Again, as Acts 26:20 says, “that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.” Genuine repentance will make itself evident by its deeds and attitudes. The repentant person will:

- Freely acknowledge their sin (1 John 1:9; Prov 28:13a).
- Cease from participating in the activity for which they were disciplined or at least seek help if it is a case of life-dominating patterns (Prov 28:13b; Gal 6:1; Jas 5:19–20).
- Make restitution, apologize, and seek forgiveness from those hurt as applicable (Phil 18–19; Matt 5:23–24).
- Demonstrate a genuine change of heart, a real concern, and godly sorrow over their actions, not to be forgiven, but because of the harm caused to the glory of God and the hurt caused others (2 Cor 7:8–11; Ps 51:17).
- Begin to manifest the fruit of the Spirit and a concern for the things of Christ (Gal 5:22–23).

When the sinning party has shown some of these signs as proof of repentance, the church ought to show mercy and compassion and forgive so that the sinning party can be restored to fellowship. Restoration should not be time bound but dependent on the fruit of repentance borne by the offender. On the other hand, the church must wholeheartedly forgive a repentant member and facilitate full restoration to God and the church.

### 5.3.2. Godly counseling

Godly counseling, particularly by the spiritually mature and the minister, will be required to get the sinner to repent and be shown clemency. Godly counseling entails offering the sinning party support, and encouraging, exhorting, and challenging them to move past the offense and get back to God for they do not be overwhelmed with excessive sorrow (2 Cor 2:7b). There must be inwardness in the provision of pastoral care and counseling where the minister or other delegated believers meet with the disciplined member at least twice a month for engagement. In the case of a sinning minister, other senior ministers may be assigned to provide pastoral care to them. Also, other presbyters can be assigned to provide pastoral care and counseling especially where the offender is a member, from the biblical admonition that where there is an offending brother or sister, those who are spiritual are to assist in their restoration (Gal 6:1). There is a need to support the offender to appreciate the gravity of the offense, the justification to the ecclesiastical discipline, and the need to return to the fold of the church and how to do so. This needs to be done with humility, scripturally, and prayerfully.

### 5.3.3. Ministry of love

The ministry of love should be the foundation of godly counseling by which reconciliation and restoration can be achieved in the sinning party. This involves showing God's nature and loves to the sinner to the extent that everything possible is done to bring the lost brother or sister home and not be rather overly angry at their sin, to the extent that we become a hindrance to their return as in the case of the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:31–32: "His father replied, My son, you're always with me,

and everything I have is yours. But we should be glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but now he's alive. He was lost and has now been found." This requires having patience with each other as the Scripture enjoins: "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other" (Col 3:12–13). Patience during the offense and disappointment are one of the most shining examples of biblical love. Amid the offense, we should not withhold forgiveness but rather "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col 3:12–13). When we are hurt by offenses, it is tempting to reserve a secret place in our hearts to nurture bitterness, even long after apologies have been exchanged, and this may lead to a wish to change or even break off relationships; true forgiveness reconciles and restores. This is the shepherd's heart (Luke 15:1–7) and brings us closer to the Lord. The ministry of love brings healing to the body of Christ: "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (Jas 5:16). In the case of offenders who held positions of leadership, there should be a time of testing to demonstrate their qualifications by proving themselves, and they may not hold the same positions as before.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Ecclesiastical discipline has been a controversial praxis in this contemporary world of rights. The CoP-Ghana has had to deal with this subject as one of the challenges to pastoral care, church culture, growth in membership, and image to the outside world. To resolve the challenges faced by CoP-Ghana due to ecclesiastical discipline, this paper sought to answer the

main research question: What model of ecclesiastical discipline can be established for CoP-Ghana?

This is arrived at by analyzing the views of ministers, presbyters, and members interviewed about ecclesiastical discipline in the CoP-Ghana. In as much as the respondents appreciated the value of the ecclesiastical discipline, they had concerns about the procedure and implementation. A model was developed that considers the sinning party's maturity, status, attitude, nature of the offense, mode of disclosure, and type of offense.

The participants' opinions could be summed up as follows: support the process with love, apply a great deal of counseling to the process, teach offenders the need for discipline, lessen the severity of the procedure, do it regardless of how anyone feels about it, and, of course, never forsake the Spirit's counsel on each unique matter to correct the situation and make the practice of ecclesiastical discipline achieve its goal of restoring sinning parties.

The following recommendations are made:

- A systematic means and pastoral care to ensure reconciliation and restoration of offenders should be developed and adopted which involves clemency, godly counseling, and ministry of love.
- Further research is to be done to ascertain the extent to which previous offenders were properly healed, reconciled, and restored after undergoing ecclesiastical discipline.

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# An Evangelical Protestant Theological Aesthetic: A Response to Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Critique

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## **Abstract**

This article develops an evangelical Protestant theological aesthetic. Hans Urs von Balthasar critiqued Protestantism for lacking a theological account of beauty. Balthasar claimed that Protestants explore the relationship of theology and worldly beauty in its various forms, but do not provide a theological account of beauty. In light of this critique, this article presents an evangelical Protestant theology of beauty and its perception. I begin with an explanation of different types of theological aesthetics and present Balthasar's critique of the Protestant theology of beauty. I then provide an overview of current evangelical Protestant approaches to theological aesthetic concepts. I also provide a summary of Balthasar's theological aesthetics and the biblical teaching on theological aesthetics, focusing on the Johannine corpus. Based on these things, I present a summary of a distinctively evangelical Protestant theological aesthetic.

## 1. Introduction

Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988) was born in Lucerne, Switzerland. He studied German literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries at the University of Zurich, where he wrote his thesis, “The Apocalypse of the German Soul.” He became a Jesuit priest in 1936 but left the Jesuits in 1950 to establish the Community of Saint John with Adriene von Speyr. The Community of Saint John was a secular institute for lay people to live out a celibate and “consecrated life” (Nichols 1998b, 8). He was a prolific writer and lecturer. In 1988, he passed away at Basel three days before his investiture as cardinal.

Balthasar’s famous trilogy is structured around the transcendentals of goodness, truth, and beauty. *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics* (seven volumes) explores the transcendental of beauty, *Theo-Drama* (five volumes) explores goodness, and *Theo-Logic* (three volumes) explores truth. Balthasar argued that beauty is the neglected transcendental in theology. To counteract the negligence, Balthasar made beauty and theological aesthetics the starting point of his theology of the transcendentals.

This article offers an appreciative critique of the theological aesthetics of Hans Urs von Balthasar to develop theological aesthetics from an evangelical Protestant perspective. The first section explains the nature of theological aesthetics and presents Balthasar’s critique of the Protestant theology of beauty. I then summarize the current context of evangelical Protestantism to examine if Balthasar’s critique applies. Next, I present a summary of Balthasar’s theological aesthetics. The following section provides a summary of the Biblical teaching on theological aesthetics, focusing on the Johannine corpus. In light of this, I conclude with a summary of key elements for developing a theological aesthetic from an evangelical Protestant perspective.

## 2. Two Streams of Theological Aesthetics

The study of aesthetics is often shrouded in confusion and ambiguity from the existential nature and multiplicity of tastes and perspectives about the nature of beauty (Poynthress 2014, 226). The same can be said of theological aesthetics. The opacity of the concept of “theological aesthetics” has led to a variety of definitions and methodologies. Some consider theological aesthetics an exploration of theology that is shaped by aesthetic principles (Bychkov 2008, xii). This approach emphasizes the beauty that is inherent in God’s revelation and seeks to allow the theological method to reflect and reveal this beauty.

However, two main approaches to theological aesthetics have emerged. One of these approaches views theological aesthetics as a field of study that examines the revelation of God in the beauty of creation and the arts (Thiessen 2005, 2). This type of theological aesthetics shares similarities with studies on the intersection of theology and the arts, but differs in the emphasis on discovering what God has revealed through a particular work of art. This approach traces its influence to Karl Rahner’s transcendental theology (Viladesau 1999, 38).

Balthasar developed the other dominant approach. For Balthasar, theological aesthetics is the theology of the perception of the splendor of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ and all reality in him (Dupre 1988, 300; McInroy 2014, 134; Viladesau 1999, 34). This approach offers a theological account of beauty that centers on the theology of the perception of the beauty of God in Christ.

These divergent approaches are not simply complementary but reveal a fault line within theological aesthetics. They represent two competing philosophies of beauty that arise from a perceived tension between spiritual and material beauty. This perennial tension was observed

at least as early as philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle (Sammons 2014, 15). These approaches to theological aesthetics take different starting points: one with material beauty and the other with spiritual. Those influenced by Rahner begin with material beauty. His approach is better termed “aesthetic theology.”

Balthasarian theological aesthetics has Barthian influences and emphasizes the necessity of revelation from outside of the human experience and condition. A theological account of beauty can be given based on the revelation of God in Christ. Balthasar was comfortable constructing a theological aesthetic that incorporates this worldly beauty only after considering the primary revelation of the nature of beauty and its perception revealed in Christ. Balthasar’s emphasis on the necessity of a Christ-centered theology of revelation for the development of a theology of beauty makes him a better conversation partner for evangelical Protestants than theological aesthetics influenced by Rahner.

At the same time, Balthasar (1982, GL 1, 56–57) strongly critiqued the Protestant approach to beauty: “Contemporary Protestant theology nowhere deals with the beautiful as a theological category ... The only question posed by Protestants is that concerning the relationship between revelation and this worldly beauty—certainly a justified question, but not a sufficient one.” It is interesting to note that Balthasar’s critique of Protestantism could also be applied to the stream of theological aesthetics influenced by Rahner. The issue is that the emphasis falls on an examination of the intersection of theology and aesthetics, or “this worldly beauty,” rather than an emphasis on the theological nature of beauty.

Balthasar admitted that Protestants do discuss the relationship between theology and the arts. His specific criticism was that even though that is the case, they have a truncated theology of beauty and have eliminated beauty from theology as superfluous and even dangerous. This has

implications for theology itself as well as the relationship between theology and the arts. Balthasar (1982, GL 1, 70) notes, “Such elimination has meant, broadly, the expulsion of contemplation from the act of faith, the exclusion of ‘seeing’ from ‘hearing’, the removal of the *inchoatio visionis* from the *fidis*, and the relegation of the Christian to the old age that is passing away.” In other words, Balthasar argued that those who emphasize the aesthetic experience of created beauty at the expense of having a developed theology of beauty are trading their birthright for a bowl of soup. The question of the intersection of theology and the arts is a “justified question, but not a sufficient one” (ibid, 56).

The following section will survey the current state of theological aesthetic concepts in evangelical Protestantism. While Balthasar’s critique of Protestantism can be applied to current evangelical Protestantism, there is a tacit and developing theological aesthetic in current evangelical Protestantism.

### **3. Theological Aesthetics in Current Evangelical Protestantism**

The term “evangelical” is difficult to define. In this article, evangelicals refer to what Bird (2020, xxviii; cf., McGrath 1995, 51; Reeves 2022, 37) describes as “historic Christian orthodoxy combined with energetic fervor to promote the gospel of Jesus Christ.” While there are many subgroups of evangelicals, they often share family resemblances and similar doctrinal commitments.

Balthasar’s critique against Protestants applies to evangelicals as well. Like the Protestants critiqued by Balthasar, even when they are concerned about the intersection of theology and the arts, they do not have a robust understanding of the theology of beauty and its perception. However, evangelicals reveal a tacit theology of beauty in their theology of God, creation, Scripture, and culture.

The most thorough treatment of theological aesthetics from an evangelical perspective is from King (2018). For King, the heart of theological aesthetics is the beauty of Christ in his person and work and his ongoing work through the Holy Spirit (ibid, loc. 228). Although King's work filled a lacuna in evangelical scholarship with his treatment of theological aesthetics, there is still much more work to be done. King's emphasis falls heavily on the objective aspects of the beauty of the Lord. The subjective aspect of perception needs more development in evangelical theology.

The evangelical approach to art also reveals some aspects of an evangelical theological aesthetic. Unfortunately, evangelicals are often associated with kitsch art (Brown 2000, 140–141; Balmer 2000, 55). Kitsch, here, does not refer to popular art, but an art that tends toward the merely pretty and sentimental (Balmer 2000, 50–51). Kitsch art is particularly detrimental to the theological aesthetic project because it evokes religious sentimentality without truly meeting and encountering God. It reveals a truncated theology of beauty because it presents a world without the fall and redemption (Brown 2000, 141; Scruton 2009, 190–191; Pearcey 2010, 272).

However, some evangelical artists have a deeper and more robust theology of beauty behind their art. This is especially seen in the works of authors and artists such as Sayers, Lewis, Begbie, Peterson, Powers, Kaai, Boomer, Wilson, and Fujimura. These artists, while they do not present a developed theology of beauty, intuitively understand the connection between the arts and God's beauty and between spiritual and created beauty. In a sense, their art reflects Balthasar's claim that beauty is not known through definition, but through experiencing it (Balthasar 1985, TL 1, 136).

The evangelical emphasis on the experience of beauty may be traced back to the concept of *Sehnsucht* (longing) in Lewis's writings. Lewis's influence on evangelicals is seen in many ways, one of them being

how his concept of *Sehnsucht* has influenced the evangelical approach to beauty and art (Carter 2012, 200; McGrath 2013, 371–376; Peterson 2019, 67). The concept of *Sehnsucht* is implicitly or explicitly present in many of his works and is described as longing, yearning, or homesickness for beauty (Crawford 2015, 46; Lewis 1955, 7, 17–18; 1988, 22; 1992, 7, 202–204). It is, “the longing ... to find the place where all the beauty came from” (Lewis 2012, 75). Lewis implies that the fulfillment of *Sehnsucht* is met in the weight of the glory of Jesus Christ (Lewis 2001, 151; 1955, 238).

Lewis’s concept of *Sehnsucht* and its influence on evangelicalism is important for theological aesthetics. This is because it assumes the objective nature of beauty, but also that beauty evokes an aesthetic response in the subjective perceiver. Furthermore, it implies that the longing is fulfilled only in God through Jesus Christ and the gift of heaven. Thus, the beautiful is a signpost that points to its source. This is in keeping with a summary of evangelical theological aesthetic commitments.

A survey of evangelical literature reveals that the tacit evangelical theological aesthetic has certain commitments. First, there is a Creator-creature distinction, and that distinction cannot be blurred in any way (Frame 1987, 21; Cole 2007, 54; Grudem, 2009, 164; Lister 2012, 291; Horton 2011, 35–43; Erickson 2013, 285–286; Poythress 2014, 44, 263; Wellum 2017, 36; Treier 2019, 128; Smith 2021, 18; Bray 2021, 15–16). Second, evangelical theological aesthetics is centered on Jesus Christ and his work on the cross (Piper 1998, 82; 2018, 82; Ortlund 2009, 309–310; King 2018, loc. 2730). Third, the revelation of God’s beauty is accompanied by an appropriate aesthetic response of reverence, delight, desire, awe, fear, and wonder (Piper 2011, 32, Tripp 2015, 12, King 2018, loc. 1106). Fourth, God is the primary source of beauty and the artist of all beauty. All creativity is an imitation of his artistry (Sayers 1987, loc. 311; Terry and Lister 2018, 21–39; cf. Wilson 2013, loc. 492; Rigney 2015, 30; Terry and Lister 2016, 32–34; Fujimura 2017, 28; Barrs

2013, 20). Fifth, God has revealed himself through the beauty of creation (McGrath 2008, 59; Wilson 2013, loc. 1067; Rigney 2015, 85). God’s beauty can also be seen in arts and culture, but this is a less reliable revelation because it is tainted by the effects of the fall and sin (Wolterstorff 1980, 192–193; Mouw 2002, 36; Dyrness 2001, 140–141; Fujimura 2009, 17; Begbie 2018, 131). Sixth, the beauty of God is revealed in the text of Scripture (Vanhoozer 2009, 234; 2016, 60).

These commitments reveal a tacit theological aesthetic that needs further development and articulation. Despite a couple of notable exceptions, Balthasar’s critique of the Protestant approach to beauty rings true for evangelical Protestantism as well. In the next section, I provide a summary of Balthasar’s theological aesthetics. While there are some key differences, Balthasar’s theological aesthetics provides a good model for developing a distinctive evangelical Protestant theological aesthetic.

#### **4. Balthasar’s Theological Aesthetics**

Balthasar’s theological aesthetics recognize both the subjective and objective aspects of beauty. However, Balthasar emphasizes the subjective side of human perception. For him, “existential Christianity” is the goal of the whole study of theological aesthetics (Balthasar 1982, GL 1, 298). At the same time, Balthasar holds to objective truth and the objective nature of beauty. For Balthasar, while perception and true sight are emphasized, he did not believe that beauty is in the eye of the beholder in a way that undermines its objectivity. The objective reality of revelation outside of the perceiver is the foundation of his work. The emphasis on subjective perception and interiority can only be thus rightly understood in the broader structure of his metaphysics and theocentric theology (Levering, 2019, 45). Balthasar (1961, 283) critiques liberal Protestant theology for the



“*Verflechtung der objektiven Evidenz in die innere Erahrung hinein*” (a conflation of the objective evidence with the inner experience). Balthasar (ibid) said this is “*die Tragik des Protestantismus*” (the tragedy of Protestantism). He refuses to fall into this tragedy even though his emphasis begins with the subjective and existential nature of true perception.

Balthasar examines both the subjective and the objective aspects of theological aesthetics in Volume 1 of his project: *Seeing the form*. “Seeing” and “form” respectively refer to the subjective and objective aspects. Indeed, this programmatic volume defines the nature of the subjective aspect of “seeing” and introduces the objective concept of “form” (Schindler 2004, 12).

Every form and the whole of receiving its meaning from Jesus Christ. This is because Jesus Christ is the super-form (*Übergestalt*) who is the telos and unifying form of all created reality (Balthasar 1993, *My Work in Retrospect*, 118; Balthasar 2004, *Epilogue*, 89). It is important to note that the form of Jesus Christ includes both his person and his work, especially his work on the cross. Balthasar (1982, *GL 1*, 432) notes, “If this form really is the crowning recapitulation of everything in heaven and on earth, then it also is the form of all forms and the measure of all measures, just for this reason it is the glory of all glories of creation as well.” Jesus Christ then is the central form of revelation and the one through whom splendor radiates. It is through Jesus that “God’s incarnation perfects the whole ontology and aesthetics of created Being” (ibid, 29). Jesus Christ fills all of reality with the splendor of his being and theological aesthetics seeks to perceive the splendor of his form.

Because of Jesus Christ and his work, all created reality is inherently enchanted with the grandeur of God. Created beauty finds its meaning in the form of Jesus Christ. Therefore, every created entity has an eternal and

mysterious “more” that it reveals (1985, TL 1, 136). Balthasar says this is the remedy for boredom. Every created form, when seen in light of the form of Christ becomes a “perennially inexhaustible wonder” (ibid, 143).

Therefore, for Balthasar, theological aesthetics has to do with perceiving the splendor of the form of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the primary form of theological aesthetics and is the place where God’s self-giving (goodness), self-showing (beauty), and self-speaking (truth) are most clearly seen. When the perceiving subject sees this revelation, the subject-object distinction is maintained, but the perceiver experiences a rapture and transformation by this perception. Balthasar (Balthasar 1982, GL 1) explains, “Before the beautiful—no, not really before but within the beautiful—the whole person quivers. He not only ‘finds’ the beautiful moving; rather, he experiences himself as being moved and possessed by it.” The rapture of the subject at the beauty of Christ begins the transformation of the believer so that he or she reflects the beauty of Christ in the world. This in turn leads to the theo-drama.

In light of this, it is possible to more fully understand Balthasar’s critique of the Protestant approach to beauty. Balthasar’s theological account of beauty in his theological aesthetics reveals a metaphysical grounding in God, who revealed his splendor in the form of Jesus Christ. Balthasar’s critique of Protestantism is that it needs to develop a theological account of beauty rather than merely speaking of the intersection of theology and the arts. God’s glory is most clearly displayed in the incarnation of Christ and his exaltation on the cross. The glory of the incarnation explained and gave meaning to the glory of God revealed in creation. All true perceptions of God’s glory must be seen through the perception of faith in Christ.

## 5. Theological Aesthetics in the Johannine Writings

Balthasar's theological aesthetics are profoundly influenced by the "Johannine Christology of glory" (Nichols 1998a, 238). This is because John the Elder provides some of the clearest texts that deal with theological aesthetic motifs. Not only this, but John takes up theological aesthetic themes developed in the OT and interprets them in light of the incarnation of Christ. The Johannine writings,<sup>1</sup> therefore, are representative of what the Bible teaches with a focus on Jesus Christ and the perception of his glory.

In surveying the Johannine writings, one must look no further than the prologue of John's Gospel (John 1:1–18) to find implications for both general aesthetics and theological aesthetics. The prologue describes both the objective glory of God seen in the incarnation of the Word as well as the perception of that glory. The prologue situates the incarnation in the context of creation and thereby establishes the goodness of material creation. John is also clear that the Word which was God took on flesh or materiality and manifested the glory of God (John 1:14). Creation, therefore, is the stage of the incarnation and has inherent value. The prologue assumes the goodness of creation because of its source and presents it as finding its ultimate meaning in the Word and the incarnation of the Word (Morris 1995, 71). The creation event and creation itself anticipate the incarnation (Carson 1991, 115), but also is used as a metaphor to explain the importance of the incarnation. Created realities such as light and life become metaphors for what was accomplished in the incarnation, and all of creation can be understood in light of Jesus Christ and his incarnation. Just as God created the world and brought life and light, so now the Logos will enter the world

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<sup>1</sup> In my thesis, I argue for the inclusion of the book of Revelation in the Johannine writings.

and bring light and life to the spiritual darkness (Keener 2012, 385–386). The Logos is the source of both physical and eternal life (Harris 2015, 23).

The glory of God, even though it is clearly displayed in creation, cannot be fully perceived apart from Jesus Christ (Carson 1991, 120; Keener 2012, 386). The theological aesthetic concept developed here is that true perception of God’s glory may only take place in relation to Jesus Christ. The Gospel of John develops a theology of perception for theological aesthetics.

The phrase “No one has ever seen God” (John 1:18) poses a problem for theological aesthetics that only Jesus Christ provided the answer for. God’s invisibility would make seeing God impossible. However, it is important to note that the Son alone sees God the Father and it is because of the Son’s perception of and relationship with God that he can manifest the Father (Holmes 2012, 52). Jesus is the unique “eyewitness” of the Father (Thomas 2015, 35). The eternal Son perfectly perceives the Father. Because of the Son’s direct, eternal, and unmediated vision of God, he is in the unique place of displaying the Father perfectly in the flesh (*ibid.*). Therefore, Jesus manifested God from within creation to the senses. The one who saw the Father eternally, now allows others to look on him in the flesh and see the invisible God manifested (*ibid.*; John 14:8–9). The Gospel of John emphasizes sight and eyewitnesses because the invisible God has now become perceptible. The incarnation made theological aesthetics a possibility. John 1:14 indicates this by the pronouncement that the result of the incarnation of the Word is that we have seen God’s glory.

John notes that the light and glory of Christ were manifested, but humanity’s sinfulness leads people to love the darkness and refuse to see the light. True perception is hindered because of a moral inability and love for evil rather than the glory and beauty of God. This is seen in John 1:11 and

developed further in John 3:16–21. John 3:19 echoes 1:11 with the statement that the light has come into the world but gives a further explanation of why his own people did not come to the light. John explains, “The light has come into the world, and the people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hate the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed” (John 3:18–20). The glory was manifested and seen but it was not known or received because of the hatred of the light. To remedy this love for darkness, a person must become born again to truly perceive God. True perception of the person who has been born again allows the individual subject to perceive Christ truly and, subsequently, to understand all created reality in light of him. For this person, creation can be used as an analogy for teaching about Christ and salvation, and Christ in turn explains the meaning of creation. This type of perception provides an all-encompassing vision of the world.

In John 3, Jesus revealed to Nicodemus that regeneration, or the new birth was needed for true perception. Therefore, true perception, in the theological aesthetic sense, has regeneration as its prerequisite. The individual has this regenerated perception if he or she sees the glory of God manifested in the climactic event of the cross and believes in Jesus Christ. The glory of God manifested in the cross is clear in the “lifted-up” sayings in John (3:14–15; 8:28; 12:32–33; Keener 2012, 881; Lett 2016, 169). Therefore, theological aesthetics is not only Christ-centered but also cross-oriented. At the cross, the glory of God was perfectly demonstrated. Through regeneration and belief and love, people are now enabled to see God and are brought into fellowship with the triune God (John 17:1–5).

John’s theological aesthetics emphasize the glory of God displayed in the incarnation and the cross and the necessity of the new birth and

faith for perceiving God in Christ. The book of Revelation also reveals an emphasis on the future sight of God and the eschatological redemption of created reality that impacts the present age.

Revelation 21:22–22:5 especially develops the eschatological aspect of theological aesthetics. The context of this passage is John’s final vision of the new creation. Revelation 21:9–22:5 is the seventh and climactic segment of the book (Beale 1999, 1040). The eschatological hope of theological aesthetics is to see the face of God, which is promised in Revelation 22:4. However, this beholding of God is also transformative and participatory. The one who beholds God has been redeemed and saved from all evil and is eternally purified to behold, serve, and reign with God Almighty. This eschatological vision of God remains the teleological end of theological aesthetics. Theological aesthetics, therefore, must always be oriented eschatologically.

The eschatological vision of God will take place in the new heavens and the new earth. This will be a created place similar to the old earth, but with the curse and sin forever removed (Rev 21:1; 22:4). The city described in these chapters has the “glory of God” (Rev 21:11) and is described as having the appearance of jasper, the same “rare jewel” that described the one seated on the throne in Revelation 4:3. Revelation 21:11–21 then describes the brilliance or splendor (*φωστήρ*; Rev 21:11) of this city that shines with God’s glory. Koester (2014, 814) notes that *φωστήρ* usually refers to a light-giving body. Therefore, the city itself shares in the glory of God which it radiates. From a theological aesthetics perspective, it is notable that the glory of God and the splendor is described using material creation. The glory of God in this passage is directly linked with precious stones that are the materials that make up the new Jerusalem and its decorations. This emphasizes the dignity and value that God places on material creation. He does not simply

recreate using a different substance besides matter but rather recreates the new heavens and earth with the most precious and beautiful matter. The new creation is more beautiful but is made from the same substance.

The glory and honor of the nations, which is the culmination of the material and cultural wealth and the beauty of common grace, will be brought into the eternal kingdom and utilized for the glory of God. Revelation 21:26 explains, *καὶ ὄσουσιν τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν τῶν ἔθνῶν εἰς αὐτήν*, (the nations will bring their glory and honor into the new Jerusalem). This eschatological perspective reaches back into the present to establish the legitimacy and purpose of wealth, art, and culture. Everything that the nations produce which have truth, beauty, and goodness will be eschatologically redeemed for the worship and honor of God Almighty.

In this eschatological vision, the new heavens and earth will similarly radiate the glory of God as our current world does. As Balthasar notes, “The bride of the Lamb does not go up from earth to heaven; together with Christ she comes ‘down from God’ (Rev 21:10)” (1982, GL I, 662). The glory of God will shine in creation with eschatological fullness and clarity without the effects of sin in the creation of the perceiver.

## **6. An Evangelical Protestant Theological Aesthetic**

### *6.1. Seeing the beauty of the Lord*

This section offers a summary of some important features of a distinctively evangelical Protestant theological aesthetic based on the previous sections. This section will begin with a summary of the objective aspects, move to the subjective aspect of perception, and conclude with some implications by showing the relationship of theological aesthetics to the theo-drama. As noted in previous sections, an evangelical Protestant theological aesthetic

must hear the validity of Balthasar’s critique and develop a theology of beauty, especially regarding the perception of beauty.

To understand the theological nature of beauty, evangelical theological aesthetics must distinguish between *ad intra* glory, the glory of God experienced within the Trinity, and *ad extra* glory, the glory of God displayed outside of himself in creation. Barth offers the clearest definition of the immanent glory of God (2004, Church Dogmatics II.1 § 31, 643, 645) as the “fullness, the totality, the sufficiency, the sum of the perfection of God.” It is important to remember the Trinitarian implications of this. The “fullness, the totality, the sufficiency, the sum of the perfection of God” is experienced eternally in the triune unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit (relationship between Father and Son; John 3:35; 4:34; 5:18–23; 7:16, 28–29; 8:16–19; 10:46; 12:45; 14:9–11; 15:23; 16:15; 17:1–5; Spirit: 14:15–21, 26; 15:26; 16:7–11, 12–15).

Glory and beauty, technically speaking, are different, but fundamentally related (King 2018, loc. 922). Barth claims that beauty is a subset of God’s glory (Barth 2004, Church Dogmatics II.1 § 31, 643, 645), but it may be more accurate to see beauty as a quality of God’s glory. God’s “glory” emphasizes the objective nature of the worth and majesty of God, while the “beauty of the Lord” emphasizes the intrinsically aesthetic dimension of God’s glory when it is perceived.

The glory of God is displayed in creation and it is inherently beautiful. The beauty of creation reveals God and is by nature theophanic (Louth 1998, 75). This does not undermine the orthodox and evangelical doctrine of the creator–creature distinction. The fullness of God’s Trinitarian glory and beauty inclined him to freely display and share that glory and beauty with creatures outside himself (Gibson 2008, 60; Miller 2018, 9). Evangelical theological aesthetics follows Edwards who distinguishes between primary and secondary beauty. Primary beauty is



the spiritual beauty of God himself, while secondary beauty was a physical revelation of that primary beauty (WJE 8:565).

Therefore, there is no objective tension between the beauty of God and created beauty. Any tension between the beauty of the Lord and the beauty of creation is anthropological or existential because man refuses to see God's beauty in creation, but rather worships and seeks to possess created beauty without reference to the glory of God (Rom 1:18–24). For this reason, the evangelical Protestant theological aesthetic must take into consideration a theology of sin, an area where Balthasar's theological aesthetic is deficient. Sin distorts the perception of created beauty and keeps people from seeing spiritual beauty. This is why regeneration and the giving of a spiritual sense are needed. Without this spiritual sense, the person who is bound in sin will not be able to see the beauty of God or spiritual things. The heart is "dead in sin" (Eph 2:1) and without the new birth, there will be no way to perceive the beauty of God (John 1:13; 3:1–15). Those who are outside of Christ may have experiences of the sublime or transcendent, but it will not be an experience leading to worship of the triune God.

Even though he does not have a developed theology of sin, evangelical Protestants can follow Balthasar in emphasizing the central importance of Jesus Christ in theological aesthetics. Jesus Christ and his work on the cross dealt with the fall and sin and both the objective and subjective hindrances to beauty. Jesus Christ is the solution to the problem of sin through his work on the cross and resurrection. The cross accomplished redemption objectively and is applied to the personal subject by the Spirit. In the event of regeneration, the ability is given to truly perceive and respond properly to spiritual beauty. An evangelical theological aesthetic, therefore, should be based on a theology of the cross, where worldly beauty is restored and humanity's bondage to sin is dealt with.

Those who respond to Christ in faith are those who have been regenerated and now have a spiritual sense. The spiritual sense is the result of the new birth and allows all of reality to be seen in the light of Christ's work on the cross and resurrection. The spiritual sense also informs the use of the physical senses and allows the physical senses to perceive God's beauty revealed in creation. The spiritual sense, when it is properly developed, also opens humanity's eyes to the wonder of God in all reality. Those who have the spiritual sense see all things concerning God. Because of this, creation and worldly beauty may be enjoyed with wonder and delight because they reveal God's beauty (Strachan 2019, 53; McGrath 2020, 143).

The Holy Spirit works alongside and within the believing individual's spiritual sense so that the person begins to love the things that God loves. The believer's mind begins to think God's thoughts after him as it is shaped by the Scriptures. Not only that, but the spiritual sense begins to form a bodily basis of holiness (Smith 2013, 113). Therefore, not only is the believer's mind formed, but the practices and habits of formation and way of being in the world are also transformed (ibid, 114).

## 6.2. *Theological aesthetics and the theo-drama*

Evangelical Protestants can also learn from Balthasar about the inherent connection between theological aesthetics and the theo-drama. The person who perceives the beauty of the Lord plays a part in the theo-drama. Balthasar's second series of work in his trilogy, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory* (four volumes), focuses on the theo-drama. Although most treatments of theological aesthetics fail to recognize the connection between theological aesthetics and the theo-drama (Jantzen 2002, 428), Balthasar insists that the theo-drama rests on a proper understanding of

theological aesthetics (1983, TD I, 15). This is because there is an inherent connection between beauty and goodness (Garrett 2011, 413).

The “theo-drama” is God’s action in the history of redemption that invites the audience to participate in this drama and play their part (Balthasar 1983, TD I, 151; Vanhoozer 2005, 78; Pearcey 2010, 275; Potter 2013, 137; Falconer 2016, 126; Farlow 2017, 2). In the theo-drama, the cross and resurrection of Christ are central. In that event, moral beauty or goodness is re-established in the middle of the broken stage in the cosmic drama. As people respond in faith to the splendor of the good news of what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross and resurrection, they are united with Christ and become like him as they behold him. One of Balthasar’s paradigmatic texts describing the connection between aesthetics and drama is 2 Corinthians 3:18, “And we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.” The one who beholds Christ through faith is immersed in the “unfolding action” and “performative nature” of believing (van Deventer 2021, 168; Pearcey 2010, 275). The work of the Spirit forms the believers into the image of Christ and presses the drama of Jesus’s self-giving life into the lives of believers. The Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity who “breathes beauty into the world” (Sherry 2002, 82). One of the ways the Spirit does this is by beautifying the lives of believers and sending them out into the world.

In this way, the eschatological reality that the believer will shine like the sun at the sight of Christ has been experienced already in this life (Matt 13:43). The splendor of the treasure in the weak clay pot shines through with radiance (2 Cor 4:7–9). This is what Balthasar (1961, 26) means when he says, “*Die gelingende Gestalt des Christen ist das Schönste, was es im menschlichen Bereich geben kann*” (the successful Christian form is the most beautiful thing in the human realm). The life of a believer is a work of

art. God is the Master Artist who sculpts and crafts a beautiful life for the watching world to see and glorify him (Matt 5:15).

Theological aesthetics teaches that each believer will be enraptured by the beauty of Christ and his work and live a life that reflects him. This will look different for every person depending on context, personality, and situation. Each individual creates something new and beautiful given their particular circumstances and part in the theo-drama.

## **7. Conclusion**

Theological aesthetics provides a theological account of beauty based on the splendor of God revealed in Jesus Christ. He is the “beauty at once so ancient and so new” (Augustine 1961, Confessions X.27, 231). In this article, I have responded to Balthasar’s critique that Protestants do not have a theological account of beauty. I began by presenting theological aesthetic concepts that are present in current evangelicalism. I then summarized Balthasar’s theological aesthetics and what the Johannine writings teach to develop an evangelical Protestant theological aesthetic.

I argued that an evangelical Protestant theological aesthetic emphasizes the need for the incarnation, especially the cross, to restore beauty. The cross was outwardly a gruesome and ugly event, but it displayed the glory and beauty of God. The resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee of a future eschatological kingdom where we will see God. At that time, all the effects of sin, both objective and subjective, will be removed.

Another key aspect of a distinctively evangelical Protestant theological aesthetic is the place of the new birth. While Balthasar implies that all people have a tacit awareness of God’s beauty, evangelical Protestants emphasize the need for the spiritual sense to see God rightly. The new birth imparts the spiritual sense, which enables the person to perceive the beauty

of God through faith. While Balthasar's doctrine of sin was undeveloped, evangelical Protestants emphasize the blinding nature of sin. Sin and the love of evil keep people from seeing God even though he has clearly revealed himself through creation. The spiritual sense enables the perception of spiritual beauty but also enables people to perceive created beauty rightly. The spiritual sense transforms the physical senses so that the believer can sense the beauty of God in created beauty.

As the believer perceives the beauty of God in Christ and created beauty, he or she is transformed and drawn into the theo-drama. I argued that evangelical Protestants can learn from Balthasar who builds a connection between theological aesthetics and the theo-drama. The person who sees the beauty of God is transformed into his likeness and generates a beautiful life as he plays his part in the theo-drama.

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# Evangelization in the Candoshi Ethnic Group of the Chapuri River: A Missiological Approach from the Perspective of the Three Missionary Waves

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## **Abstract**

This research analyzes the context and cultural practices of the Candoshi of the Chapuri River, the effects and consequences of Protestant evangelization, and the challenges in rethinking missiology from the perspective of contextualized integral mission. With a conceptualization of culture, cross-cultural mission, interculturality, and the perspective of incarnation, we assess foreign mission (first wave), the legacy of mestizo missionaries (second wave), and the moment when the Candoshi took on the task of local evangelization (third wave). Finally, we delve into the third wave which includes our critical reflection on the challenges for the exercise and practice of contextualized mission. It considers the importance of evangelization and theology among indigenous peoples from the logic of

cultural interaction, the non-imposition and appreciation of social reality, and the spiritual memory of native communities.

## **1. Introduction**

In many sectors linked to the churches, there is a tendency to confuse the clearness of the gospel with the simplicity of its communication. Often Christian doctrine is reduced to theological aspects such as repentance from sin or the traditional eschatological dimensions of the evangelical faith. However, these reductionist conceptions of Christian theology are a barrier when it comes to communicating the gospel in those contexts in which the way of understanding the world does not necessarily come from Christianity, but from other spiritualities. This is the case of the original indigenous cultures where concepts such as sin, repentance, or the image of God itself have connotations different from those written in the Bible, as is the case with the Amazonian Candoshi ethnic group, who have built their worldviews and senses of belonging to the community based on animistic culture, whose conception is based mainly on the fact of keeping the spirits still to achieve a tranquil life and harmonious environment in the community.

The present study corresponds to the description and critical analysis regarding how the evangelical missionaries developed their mission project and evangelization strategy among the Candoshi, which includes their cultural disagreements, theological re-learning, and missiological reconstructions. To this end, in addition to the construction of an ethnography on the Candoshi ethnic group, our work emphasizes the recovery of the evangelical missionary memory developed among the Candoshi community, taking into account what we call the “three missionary waves (MTO).” With this, we want to contribute to rethinking the importance

of knowing and valuing the practices and cultural memory in the context in which the gospel is communicated, based on assuming responsibly the theological perspective of the incarnation that gives relevance to the image of God who became human and came to dwell among us. In this sense, our study opens doors to evaluate how our missionary projects in Latin America correspond to the integral perspective of the mission and the incarnational proposal of the mission of Jesus.

## **2. Problem Statement**

With the arrival of evangelical missions to the Candoshi indigenous communities, there has been an awakening to reflect on the meaning of the gospel within this social reality in this region. These missions, which have been working for more than 70 years, deserve an evaluation. A historical journey of evangelization is important since it helps to understand how the relationships between the different actors have taken place concerning God's mission and how they affected the lives of individuals and their people. To better understand their current situation, it is important to take a historical approach to understand the development of missionary activity in the Candoshi ethnic group. The few general studies that have been conducted are written in English and some cases only for internal knowledge of the missions:

- A historical tour. First, in 1946, the presence of foreign evangelical missions began with the arrival of the Summer Linguistic Institute (ILV) and later the Swiss Mission in Peru (MSP) arrived in 1959 and remains to the present day, we will call this initiative the "first missionary wave."
- Second, we saw the interest and awakening of some mestizo missionaries and missionary movements, with their attempts to

do missions in Candoshi communities. At this stage, we will call it the “second missionary wave.”

- And thirdly, we discovered the path of evangelical Candoshi leadership from a historical missiological perspective. At this time, we will name it the “third missionary wave.”
- Finally, we will reflect on having an appropriate missiological approach.

### **3. Justification**

In this presented research work it will be made known, following history, the evangelization within the Candoshi ethnicity, with the final goal of formulating a way of working from the approach recommendations of the MTO. We will take into account the different missionary approaches and evaluate the successes and failures of the cultural reality of the ethnic group to be served.

As a guest participating in the orientation and service program (POS) led by the ILV in the Peruvian Amazon, I had the opportunity to accompany linguists of different ethnicities. I was struck by the cultural differences between them, as well as the development of the program excessively focused on the translation of the NT. As a mestizo from the Peruvian highlands, I was almost always at the center of these two worlds; on the one hand the indigenous and on the other the North American linguists. I had a lot of questions regarding how we worked; the approach and dealing with people, the emphasis on completing projects, the value of giving attention and priority to what or to whom, and what did the word teach? Also, I wondered: What am I doing here? What is my role? Is it to be a wall between these two worlds to make one work effective? Of course, from my perspective, I realized that something was not right—it was necessary



to intersect or close those differences, especially if I had the desire to reach those people with the gospel.

A constant question in my mind was how to do it properly. After a few years of being in the mission field, Dr Tito Paredes invited me to study at the Amazonian Andean Missiological Evangelical Center (CEMAA), a center where I obtained my Bachelor's and Master's degrees. I took courses in integral mission, gospel, and culture, cultural anthropology and examined the development of Christ's ministry in the context of Jewish culture, his teachings were contextualized to the reality of the people, to reach their hearts with the announcement of the coming of the kingdom of God and his justice. These were the elements used by God to discern the path I should follow to answer my question of "How?" They also helped me understand how the language, culture, worldview, and context of an individual in a society, are so relevant to be able to assimilate the new teachings of the gospel.

I lived for more than 10 years with the Candoshi, amongst and with them. After my first studies at CEMAA, my eyes were opened, I had tools that I started using, and I had cultural immersion. I decided consciously, to unlearn from mine and to learn from them, to know them and to listen to them in another way, and to know from their reality who they were, because I had a great desire to understand their hearts. It was an exploration process full of experiences and learning. I realized that the good desires and intentions to reach them with the gospel were not enough. In the field of missions, the emphasis was on crossing geographical borders, but no attention was paid to crossing language, cultural, social, ideological, or philosophical borders. In the words of Samuel Escobar: "Today the missionary task of Christians has been subjected to the relentless scrutiny of historians, anthropologists, and ethnologists. It would be naïve if missionaries continue to believe that

they can claim they have good intentions to conceal or cover up gross errors” (Citado por Paredes 1989, 4). I sensed frustrations and tension on the part of the missionaries and also of the Indians, now I know that they mostly occurred due to cultural clashes. However, to this day I realize that most of the evangelical missions and many of the churches, in their missionary programs, still do not consider the cultural characteristics of the peoples relevant, nor do they see indigenous people as capable of carrying out missionary work among their peoples and even less entering into a long-range ministry, believing they should only receive the “well-designed” projects that come from outside.

#### **4. Theoretical Framework**

In the 60s Latin American society was going through an era of military dictatorships, terrorism, guerrillas, and several very strong movements arose against imperialism. In the Christian environment, liberation theology came to move the scope of the church and the centers of theological studies. Many theologians began to reflect on the role of the local church in and from Latin America. Major missionary reflection events were held. The First Latin American Congress of Evangelization CLADE I (1969) “Action in Christ for a Continent in Crisis” in Bogota, Colombia focused on the search for an incarnation theology, which could be dialogic with the reality of suffering and oppression that was lived throughout Latin America. Samuel Escobar gave his presentation on “The Social Responsibility of the Christian,” which had a tremendous impact. Since then, these congresses have been led by the Latin church and with the participation of Latino speakers.

The big question and reflection in the evangelical sphere was: what is the role and mission of the church in her social reality and in this time of her history? In CLADE II of 1979, “Let Latin America Listen to the Voice of

God,” the emphasis was on how Latin America was going to participate in evangelization in the 80s. As a CEMAA student, I attended several of these events which were strengthening and established the service, by the grace of God, amongst the Candoshi of the Peruvian Amazon. CLADE III with its motto: “The whole gospel for all peoples from Latin America,” with themes such as cross-cultural mission, gospel, culture, integral mission, etc., were very relevant in my missionary life and gave me great encouragement and vision to move forward. So much richness in the presentations helped me to find my role as an integral missionary to the Amazonian ethnic groups. They helped me to give an official missiological name to everything I had been doing as part of my Christian walk, so I could understand that my mission was being fulfilled naturally in practice. The following terms were the ones that impacted me and came to life in me, since then they are a very important part of this work.

#### *4.1. Culture*

The fact that a person is born with all their cultural baggage by which they are affected in their whole being, invites me to pay special attention. Recognizing that I need to know, learn and understand their culture, takes time. It is a process where there has to be coexistence, dialog, friendship, and staying with them. There is no other way to do it. Paredes (1989), defines the word culture in this way:

“By culture, we refer to the entire experience of a people in a given geographical space. This experience includes religious beliefs, ideas, values, and perceptions about what is good and bad; the way a people organizes their family, community, social, life, etc. as well as their way of working and earning a living” (Paredes 1989, 127, 128).

According to the Willowbank Consultation Report (1978, 5):

“Culture is an integrated system of beliefs (about God, reality, or death), values (about what is true, good, beautiful, and normative), customs (how to behave, relate to others, talk, pray, dress, work, play, trade, eat, perform agricultural tasks, etc.), and institutions that express these beliefs, values and customs (government, courts, temples or churches, family, schools, hospitals, factories, businesses, unions, clubs, etc.) that unites society and provides it with a sense of identity, dignity, security and continuity.”

#### *4.2. Cross-cultural mission*

How important it is that when the Lord calls us to serve in societies that are not our own, we do not put our emphasis only on crossing geographical borders, which is practiced even by people who do tourism. We need to cross the cultural, social, linguistic, and spiritual boundaries of managing feelings and emotions. To facilitate this journey, it is necessary to resort to the social sciences, useful tools to understand the society where we are going to serve with love, persons, cultures, and peoples, especially where the “how” to comprehend the good news makes us sensitive to understand that more important than our plans or the “famous projects,” are people. As Escobar states, it is necessary: “the effort to achieve a social practice and social science, in which science and faith are combined with knowledge and commitment to the poor.” “The social practice that springs from the Christian spirit needs the tool of the social sciences” (Citado por Paredes, 1989, 4).

Concerning evangelization and culture, as recognized in the Lausanne Covenant Declaration of Faith (1974):

“Too often, missions have exported, along with the gospel, a foreign culture, and churches have sometimes been more enslaved to culture than Scripture. The evangelists of Christ must humbly seek to empty themselves of everything but their personal authenticity in order to become servants of others, and the churches must seek to transform and enrich the culture, all for the glory of God.”

#### *4.3. Mission integral*

It is God’s way of revealing to us throughout the OT that he did not separate spiritual experience from the daily life of each person, whether he was in and with his people or with his prophets. But at the same time, he guided them, provided them with light at night, sent them manna, comforted them in sorrow, encouraged them in fear, sent them crows, and so on. Each of these acts of mercy teaches us to take into account the basic needs of the human being, the mandate is not only to save souls. God sends us to take his gospel to people who are spiritually hungry and to whom we must disciple, but we cannot ignore the value of teaching in his word when there is hunger, injustice, disease, inequality, and pain or misery. The integral mission is long-term, is to live with and among them, and is to give meaning to human dignity. Several missiologists define it as word and deed. For example, the Mission’s Hispanic American Dictionary (online) explains integral mission as:

“It is the proclamation, in word and action, of an integral gospel, which contemplates the satisfaction of all human needs, and proclaims in Christ a salvation which reaches all spheres of life and human relations ...”

According to C. René Padilla, “At the very heart of the mission is the proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord, whose sovereignty extends over all creation. Consequently, it has its sights set not only on the geographical extension and numerical growth of the church, but on the complete fulfillment of God’s purpose in every aspect of human life in its personal dimension and in its social dimension.”

#### *4.4. Contextualization*

One of the first questions I asked myself, being in a community, was how to explain to my brothers “that Jehovah is their Shepherd, and they will lack nothing.” In the Amazon, there is no figure of a sheep-shepherd. Since childhood, that approach to God was transcendental in my life and even knowing that figure, because I am from the mountains, I did not understand the part that says: “The sheep hear my voice and follow me,” because in my land I saw the shepherd go after the sheep, it was the shepherd who came to the sheep (to drive or move the cattle). Contextualization is the start, when I understood it, it pushed me to be attentive to so many different behaviors, reactions, thoughts, and worldviews and to look for answers to the questions: What? Why? What for? How? When? Where?

Each culture has its context which is the framework of its identity, so I have to understand it so that all teaching is established and understood using the inductive method of teaching. From the point of view of Bembibre (2010):

“When we talk about contextualizing, we are referring to the action of putting something or someone in a specific context. Contextualization is a tool characteristic of the social sciences that suppose that individuals can never be isolated from their surroundings as it happens with natural sciences and that,

therefore, they must always be analyzed in relation to the set of phenomena that surround them.”

For his part, Van Engen (2011, 65), considers that:

“The concept of mission and the process of theological work in mission need to be contextually appropriate for each context. So, every relevant tool of the social sciences needs to be used and applied to shape a mission theology that is appropriate to, and embodied in, each particular context.”

#### *4.5. Gospel and culture*

The gospel is the good news, which every Christian must make known to those who do not know. It is full of principles that confront every person and every culture. As we understood from the beginning in our classes at CEMAA, there is no good culture, there is no bad culture, and they are all different, but at the same time, they were all affected by sin and they all need Jesus Christ to touch their lives. The missionary comes with their family culture, from their society, from their denomination to another culture in which they will serve, at the same time they are on the path to holiness themselves. They must understand that these people are also affected by their family culture, by their society, and in some cases, by what they received as gospel.

For example, it was interesting to discover that for the Candoshi killing is bad, but killing for revenge dignifies the person. How to understand this? Is revenge a value? Why? Who takes revenge and why? Is there only one form of revenge? What does it mean to die? In other words, that idea of revenge alone already made me ask many questions and I cannot just sit a person down and give them a piece of paper to answer my questions. Even

now I continue to encounter some surprises. It is through coexistence that such deep issues can be discovered. The hope is that the gospel will come to touch their culture and when they understand it, they will then be freed from that act of revenge. It is therefore essential to remember, as Segura (2015) says:

“All theology or theologies are culturally conditioned. We can read about other theologies and learn from them, but always remember that there is no theology that is universal. Africans, in their theology of dance, have as much to teach us in their reflection, as Bonhoeffer’s writings for the Latin American church. Both theologies are different, perhaps one simpler than the other, but both are equally valid.”

#### *4.6. Incarnation*

The example we have of incarnation is in Jesus, as Paul describes it in Philippians 2:5–8. His focus on people reveals his great unconditional love. Jesus identifies with the human race, his creation. The most surprising thing is that he was born in a rather complex society. The Jewish people were chosen by God to carry out universal redemption. After living amongst them for almost thirty years, Jesus made his life public and through his teachings, we realize that he knew the culture very well and taught through parables and facts of the daily life of this people, contextualizing his eternal kingdom teachings. Using the words of the Quito Declaration, CLADE III (1992, 861):

“The incarnation is the model for the mission of the church. In his incarnation, Jesus identified himself with sinful humanity, sympathized with them in their aspirations, anxieties and weaknesses, and dignified them as a creature made in the image



of God. The church is called to face its mission in the style of Jesus. This compliance demands the crossing of geographical, cultural, social, linguistic and spiritual borders, with all its consequences.”

#### *4.7. Interculturalism*

It is the unity that is sought between people of various cultures through coexistence, where each member seeks to understand the other based on respect and from a platform of equality, especially in our case as Christians who understand that before God, we are all of equal value. It is something that I continually experience, especially in the unified work we have within the MTO. We share a “dynamic cultural interaction”; sometimes we laugh, admire, and learn from each other. We recognize the importance and value of interdependence, consult with each other, ask for help, and this is reciprocal. With much dialogue and enrichment, we assimilate and value other customs, values, and norms. It is a fairly new term in the field of social sciences. From the position of Imaginary (2020):

“The word interculturality refers to the relations of equal exchange and communication between cultural groups that differ with attention to criteria such as ethnicity, religion, language or nationality, among others ... It refers to the processes of interrelation and communication of knowledge, codes, patterns and values between different cultural groups, understanding that there is equality between subjects, regardless of the position they occupy in the system.”

Similarly, the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), understands that interculturality “refers to the presence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the

possibility of generating shared cultural expressions, through dialog and mutual respect.” As Ucha (2011) notes: “We talk about interculturality, when two or more different cultures begin to interact in a horizontal and synergistic way, that is, in this state of affairs none of the groups that intervene is above the other, but all are on an equal footing.” This, of course, contributes to the integration and peaceful coexistence of the affected people.

## **5. The Three Waves Movement**

The MTO, is a phrase coined by Henrique Terena, an indigenous pastor and the current president of the Trans-Amazonian Network, with whom we have been working in the three waves team (ETO) since 2008. At a meeting of the network in 2014, Henrique shared that, at an international conference in 2009, he heard André Whong, a Chinese pastor and missiologist from Sydney, Australia, using the wave model, when he told the story of how the gospel had come to Asia. Henrique asked for the floor at that great conference, because from his experience and his indigenous context in Brazil, he told everyone that the Lord showed him that in Brazil: The first wave was the arrival of American and European missionaries to the Brazilian Amazon, the second wave was the arrival of national missionaries, and the third wave includes the movement of indigenous peoples as part of the missionary force. But there is more, Henrique said: “These three waves are important, and necessary and must work together to carry out the great commission and thus fulfill the evangelization of the more than two hundred indigenous communities that remain to be reached in our Amazon.”

My passion to work in the Amazon began in January 1977. In 1994, we had a meeting with Pablo and Robin Johnson, missionaries who worked with the New Tribes Mission (NTM), in the Araona ethnic group in Bolivia. We took trips together to several ethnic groups of the Peruvian Amazon.

We spent hours talking to the indigenous leaders, in their homes, on their farms, on our trips by canoe, and while we ate when they played football. When we had to leave, we left many friends. Robin attracted the women, cooked with them, and learned about their lives as wives, mothers, and in the community. Pablo had many skills for hunting and fishing, so he rode (hunt wild animals) and fished with them. We tried to stay about twelve days in each community. From the beginning, I was surprised to see an American couple, who, like me, did not bring projects, were not looking at their watch, nor running to fulfill their activities. We spent almost all day with people participating in some way in their daily living and learning.

Pablo is a visionary without limits, at night he always had a thousand questions and reflections about what he lived during the day and he wrote it (he always had his notebook). We sat around the fire of the wood-burning kitchen, the three of us talked about what happened during the day, the smallest cultural details of men, women, and children, the similarities and differences of each ethnic group, the traditional missionary work, and its complexity and sensitivities. In those encounters, we discovered that they and I had the same love, feeling, and vision for the Amazonian indigenous groups. In those days I shared how much I was amazed when, in general, missions gave more value to their projects than to people. We agreed that one of the biggest gaps was that, in the missionary field, the indigenous voice and presence had not been taken into account in the elaboration of the projects. Although they would be the ones who were going to be affected, the projects that were going to be carried out in their communities came from the outside, were thought out outside, and were planned outside.

In December 1999, the Johnsons formally invited me to work with them. We thought it would be good to start building a different way of working amongst and with our indigenous Amazonian brothers, with the

vision of coming alongside them, and empowering them to fulfill the many dreams they had and had shared with us. I thought it was a good idea and I accepted. In January 2000, I was diagnosed with breast cancer, underwent a radical mastectomy, and had eleven months of chemotherapy. Meanwhile, Paul and Robin traveled through several states in the USA and Canada, presenting the idea of this missionary work with a different vision. There was great interest from many churches and friends. In 2001, I was invited by Pablo and Robin to the USA to rest and meet the people who would be in charge of the administrative part of our mission, Amazon Focus (AF). I also traveled to Puerto Rico and the Emmanuel de las Piedras Church adopted me and sent me as its missionary. In 2002, Pablo traveled to Brazil and was impacted by the united work between the National Council of Indigenous Evangelical Pastors and Leaders (CONPLEI) and the Association of Brazilian Transcultural Missions (AMTB). With that vision he returned to the USA and called upon the many people and churches he had contacted and the NGO Amazon Lowland Tribal Empowerment Coalition (ALTECO), a consortium of organizations, missions, and individuals working with indigenous people groups in the Amazon and lowland region of South America was formed. In 2003 and 2004, ALTECO invited Henrique Terena (of the Terena ethnic group), president of CONPLEI, and another indigenous brother, Eli Ticuna (of the Ticuna ethnic group), both indigenous leaders from Brazil, to be keynote speakers. The participants of ALTECO were convicted because Henrique and Eli told them with much sincerity that they were very grateful for the missionaries that had served in their villages and for the work of the missionary agencies in their tribes, but they would like them to make changes and see them (indigenous people) as an active part and allow them to work together. In 2007, at the request of a group of indigenous leaders from five of the Amazonian countries (Bolivia, Peru, Paraguay, Ecuador,

and Brazil), the leaders representing these Amazonian countries met for the first time in Iquitos, Peru. This meeting was key because, for the first time, indigenous people not only from different ethnic groups but also from different countries, came together. In 2009 these leaders decided to form the Trans-Amazonian Network of Evangelical Indigenous Leaders. As a biblical concept, they say, they joined together to form a united work following as a principle the example of Brazil.

Thus, the movement called the MTO in Latin America was born. It is a movement made up of Christian leaders and organizations from different Amazonian countries and cultures that involve the three missionary forces represented by: the foreign church called the first wave; the non-indigenous church of each country called the second wave; and the indigenous church that is known as the third wave. From experience in ministry, we have realized that each missionary wave has its strengths and values. Therefore, we are being strengthened as we work together in reaching more efficiently the more than six hundred ethnic groups of the Amazon that still need to be reached with the gospel. To this end, an indigenous network has been formed in each Amazonian country that is affiliated with the Trans-Amazonian Network. Also, in each country, there is a consortium made up of institutions, missionaries, and national and foreign missions of the first and second waves. In this way, they can work together on the responses to the needs that are being presented comprehensively or holistically. This movement was born in response to the continuous interaction with the Amazonian indigenous leadership. The MTO focuses on accompanying the sustainable progress of the gospel among indigenous Amazonian peoples and contributing to the formation of networks and consortia in countries that do not yet have them. The purpose of the movement is to reach and disciple with the gospel, listening to and accompanying the integral

development of the tribal nations of the Amazon basin and the lowlands of South America. As a movement, we develop strategic alliances with entities that share our mission and vision. Some of the purposes of this movement are: To continue working on the elaboration of updated statistical data; to achieve the objectives in a strategic way and to share those who need it; to accompany indigenous Christian leadership in its establishment and consolidation; to learn from interculturality through relationships; and to train and mobilize the church of the Lord in the integral missionary vision toward unreached indigenous peoples.

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# El desamparo de la mujer y la misión de Dios: Mujeres provenientes de entornos familiares violentos

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## **Autora de la Tesis**

Mi experiencia pastoral y como profesional de la psicología, en la atención de mujeres, niñas y niños víctimas de la violencia en sus entornos familiares, me ha llevado a investigar las manifestaciones de la violencia y su relación con el estado de desamparo que generan las experiencias traumatogénicas que relatan.

La pandemia ha llevado a la iglesia y a los profesionales de la salud a atender en forma virtual en Argentina y en otros países. En el período 2020–2021 aumentaron las consultas por tratamientos psicológicos. El contexto de la pandemia se caracterizó por confinamientos y cuarentenas preventivas, por lo que no se podía transitar libremente, el aislamiento como medida preventiva frente al coronavirus incrementó el estrés, la ansiedad y la incertidumbre.

## 1. Planteamiento del problema

Como consecuencia de la problemática, la salud física, emocional y espiritual de las poblaciones se vio afectada. Se hizo patente el temor al contagio, a la muerte, a la falta de vacunas, el sufrimiento por las pérdidas de seres queridos, y la dificultad para hacer los duelos, no poder velarlos, no poder visitar a los internados generó angustia, depresión en las familias. También la violencia intrafamiliar —dada la convivencia forzada por los confinamientos—, incidieron en la reactualización de traumas no elaborados, y la incrementación de consultas a profesionales de la salud mental. La pandemia y el aislamiento han incrementado el malestar psíquico y social, profundizando las crisis personales y familiares.

El haber realizado sistemáticamente consejerías con mujeres cristianas en Argentina, y en otros países, me permitió investigar las situaciones traumatogénicas experimentadas, relacionadas con la violencia padecida en entornos familiares en contextos de vulnerabilidad.

Aprovechando el recurso de la tecnología, Zoom, WhatsApp, emails, he podido continuar atendiendo profesionalmente y ministrar pastoralmente durante la pandemia y continuar haciéndolo en la actualidad.

He observado y analizado el tema de la vulnerabilidad, los traumas, y las experiencias de desamparo de las mujeres atendidas. Los relatos de las mujeres, escuchados en Consejería Pastoral, sus historias, me transmitieron el sufrimiento oculto padecido en los entornos familiares, sociales, eclesiales, como así también, la resiliencia frente a situaciones adversas y la restauración realizada por Dios en sus vidas y en sus familias. La percepción del sufrimiento experimentado en sus vidas, el análisis de las representaciones, vínculos generados en sus entornos familiares,

eclesiales, y sus testimonios respecto a la relación espiritual con Dios, me ha posibilitado la realización de esta tesis.

La relectura de los textos bíblicos que narran las historias de algunas mujeres controversiales de la Biblia, abusadas, abandonadas, como lo fueron Tamar, Agar, Rahab, Betsabé, entre otras fueron inspiradoras para realizar este trabajo. Fueron mujeres subversivas del A.T, es decir, mujeres que han contrariado el sistema patriarcal establecido, y la violencia de la cual fueron objeto. Esos textos han servido para reflexionar, tomar consciencia sobre la incidencia que tiene la violencia sufrida en los diferentes entornos y el desamparo de ellas y de sus hijos a causa del pecado personal, conyugal, eclesial y cultural.

La OMS define la violencia como el uso deliberado de la fuerza física o el poder ya sea en grado de amenaza o efectivo, contra uno mismo, otra persona o un grupo o comunidad que cause —o tenga muchas probabilidades de causar— lesiones, muerte, daño psicológico, trastornos en el desarrollo o privaciones y que atenten contra el derecho a la salud y a la vida de la población. Ese uso intencional que subraya la OMS al definir la violencia se relaciona directamente con el concepto de responsabilidad del acto de la persona que ejerce violencia, más allá de la responsabilidad emocional, espiritual, social, el ejercicio de la violencia es considerado un delito, en el Código Penal argentino.

## **2. Marco teórico**

La *Missio Dei* y la Teología de la Misión Integral, como así también la Teología Feminista, fueron tomados aportes relevantes para esta investigación.

Estas perspectivas teóricas son fundamentales para capacitar a la pastoral en la ministración de mujeres, hijos, familias vulnerables. El

enfoque sistémico, holístico de esta investigación permite analizar las relaciones violentas y experiencias traumatogénicas que afectan a las mujeres y a sus hijos, por ende, a la familia.

El sistema cultural, cooptado por el patriarcado ha generado, históricamente, violencia hacia las mujeres. La violencia se manifiesta en conductas o situaciones que, de forma deliberada, aprendida o imitada, provocan daño o sometimiento grave, físico, sexual, psicológico, entre otros.

La teología de la misión desarrollada por Carlos Van Engen (2011), me ha permitido reflexionar, accionar, relacionar, integrar, interrelacionar diferentes disciplinas y conceptos, que desde el marco de la complejidad aportan al tema investigado.

Por demasiados siglos Israel y la iglesia han sustentado algunas posiciones hermenéuticas, elaboradas sobre los patrones y filosofías paganos, que manifiestan un claro menosprecio por el género femenino, a lo que se denomina misoginia (Guang Tapia 2011, 146).

La violencia de género no es un fenómeno nuevo, estuvo presente históricamente en los diversos entornos familiares, sociales, y/o eclesiásticos, por ello la relevancia de la teología feminista, contribuye a la denuncia profética de la violencia naturalizada hacia la mujer —y ejercida sistemáticamente en diversos entornos—.

La misiología nos convoca a no perder el foco de nuestro quehacer como cristianas, llevar a cabo la misión de Dios para extender su reino y su justicia, los valores del reino establecido por Jesucristo, son extendidos por varones y mujeres a través de Palabra y Acción. La consejería pastoral en la ministración de mujeres oprimidas me ha permitido profundizar la temática de la violencia hacia la mujer, y la culpa que se les genera en los diversos contextos. La culpa internalizada obtura el desarrollo pleno



del potencial de las mujeres en el ministerio. Debemos preservar la salud integral de las mujeres y de sus ministerios, esto es parte de la misión integral, del amparo que como iglesia tenemos que brindar.

La perspectiva feminista se revaloriza por ser un movimiento profético que examina el statu quo, pronuncia juicios contra las estructuras opresoras, demandando arrepentimiento y transformación de las estructuras de poder. Esta hermenéutica involucra una relectura de la Escrituras, descubriendo el sentido profundo del texto, analizando el contexto, enriqueciéndolo con el análisis sociocultural expresado en la narrativa.

El reconocer los procesos de opresión al servicio del poder, posibilita comprender el entramado de la violencia y sus impactos emocionales, espirituales, físicos sumados al entendimiento profundo que Dios da, sobre el obrar del Espíritu Santo en las vidas de las personas.

El “desamparo”, refiere en este trabajo con enfoque sistémico, holístico, al déficit protector de los entornos, es decir, el déficit del sistema familiar, social, en su función protectora respecto del sujeto. Claramente, cuando está este déficit en el sistema familiar, la más afectada es la mujer y sus hijos.

El desamparo, como resultado de la experiencia traumática, desestabiliza, desarticula, perturba los procesos psíquicos. Los entornos disruptivos posibilitan relaciones que desestabilizan a sus miembros (Benyakar 2003, 69). Cuando las personas en la niñez han crecido teniendo vínculos afectivos de sostén, por una madre u otros significativos, en un entorno familiar en el cual se sintieran protegidos, los niños crecen con las bases para desarrollar la capacidad de resiliencia, que les permitirá afrontar las adversidades que surjan en cada etapa evolutiva.

Analizar los impactos de la violencia en las mujeres y en sus hijos es fundamental porque ellos también son afectados en todos los órdenes,

ya que sufren los efectos de la exclusión, la marginación, la pobreza y el desamparo.

### **3. El Entorno Social**

Actualmente, por los divorcios, las separaciones, las relaciones de pareja sin compromiso, las familias se encuentran en crisis. Hay muchas familias monoparentales, en la mayoría de estos casos las responsabilidades recaen en las mujeres, son las que —ante la ausencia del varón, por abandono, separación, divorcio, y ante el incumplimiento del padre en el sostenimiento económico de los hijos—, tienen que compensar dichas faltas en todas las áreas, fundamentalmente con respecto a las necesidades básicas insatisfechas que tengan sus hijos.

Entonces, cabe hacernos la gran pregunta, ¿qué impactos produce la violencia en el desarrollo integral de la mujer, en sus hijos y por ende en su familia?

La violencia en el entorno familiar no es un fenómeno nuevo. Desde los primeros relatos de Génesis en la Biblia, tenemos referencias sobre el maltrato en distintas formas, incluso, hasta el asesinato dentro de la familia. Gen. 4:8; Gèn. 6:13; Salmos 55:9; Prov. 4:16,17; Is. 59:3,6.

Las historias de vida de la mayoría de las mujeres actuales muestran el daño que produjo el pecado, no solo el pecado personal, sino el familiar, el social, eclesial.

La realidad es que las mujeres han sido históricamente dañadas en su autoestima, desamparadas por las leyes y sus comunidades.

A lo anterior hay que añadir las crisis económicas de nuestros países, la incidencia de la corrupción de los gobiernos, que trastoca valores. Los desgastes estructurales, la corrupción de los gobiernos, generan desesperanza en los más vulnerables, esta condición deplorable ha llevado

en muchas ocasiones a las mujeres al consumo, a la comercialización de drogas, a la comisión de delitos, a la prostitución, entre otros.

La exclusión de los marginados del sistema genera violencia social, política, laboral y doméstica, acrecentándose día a día por la pobreza, se complejiza aún más con la existencia del narcotráfico y con la impunidad, sostenidos por las redes vinculadas al poder político y económico. Con las redes sociales rotas, la sociedad se encuentra en una situación de caos.

Asimismo, las redes de prostitución representan una industria que es comercializadora del sexo, resultado del sistema de producción social y cultural capitalista. Históricamente, la prostitución ha adquirido distintas formas que han dependido de la estructura sociocultural y modo de producción.

El capitalismo moderno neoliberal provoca la extrema pobreza donde el libre mercado empuja a una parte de la sociedad a realizar actividades de sobrevivencia como la prostitución que cosifica a la mujer.

De esta manera, el desamparo alcanza al sector femenino y a su familia. Este es el contexto social, político, económico, en el que llevamos a cabo la misión de Dios. El desamparo de la mujer y sus hijos, y las familias en general, tiene relación directa con la falta de cuidado del Estado y las instituciones sociales en general. El cuidado de las mujeres y niños, de manera integral, debe ser una prioridad en la agenda de las iglesias. Lo anterior es justificación suficiente para realizar la investigación del tema que se propone.

#### **4. Objetivos de esta Tesis**

- a. Objetivo general: caracterizar los entornos disruptivos, familiares, eclesiales, sociales, potencialmente traumatogénicos.
- b. Objetivos específicos: (1) caracterizar las experiencias de desamparo

de las mujeres, en los diversos entornos; (2) analizar la incidencia de la violencia en las experiencias de desamparo; (3) analizar la incidencia de los entornos familiares, sociales, eclesiales, en la revictimización de las mujeres; (4) Comprender las experiencias espirituales de las mujeres ante su estado de desamparo.

Este trabajo de investigación analiza el maltrato hacia las mujeres y los impactos que generaron tanto dolor en ellas. Las historias de vida de la mayoría de las mujeres actuales muestran el daño que produjo el pecado, no solo el pecado personal, sino el familiar, social y el eclesial.

Se analizan los relatos de sus historias de vida, se evalúan las experiencias referidas a lo traumático en los entornos que se presentan, y la restauración realizada por el poder de Dios. Sin duda que el haber pasado por esas pruebas con la cobertura de Dios como dan testimonios, las hizo resilientes, aumentando su fe para continuar en la presencia de Dios y activas en la misión de Dios. El Espíritu Santo sigue obrando actualmente como lo ha hecho en las mujeres de La Biblia. Historias como las de Agar, Rahab, la Mujer Samaritana, María de Magdala entre otras, se relacionan con las experiencias de vida de mujeres no creyentes y también mujeres de fe, líderes y pastoras que he tenido la posibilidad de ministrar. Todas parten de haber tenido un encuentro liberador con Jesús, que las rescató del sufrimiento experimentado por la violencia familiar.

Las víctimas de violencia que han tenido un encuentro con Jesús glorifican a Dios y siguen enfocándose en la misión a la cual fueron llamadas.

## **5. Metodología**

La presente es una investigación cualitativa y descriptiva, partiendo de una hermenéutica contextual. Este trabajo ha sido enriquecido con la

investigación teórica, inter-transdisciplinaria, desde la perspectiva de la complejidad.

Puesto que esta investigación está relacionada con la psicología, con la teología y socio antropología, el modelo de estudio por casos recibe el mayor énfasis, inclusive en la selección de casos en la información bíblica.

Dentro de este modelo se analizan determinados fenómenos muy particulares, tales como la soledad, la depresión, la violencia, entre otros, y no se detiene en el estudio de los problemas generales.

En primer lugar, se aportarán 12 historias de vida de mujeres, líderes en sus iglesias, cuya franja etaria oscilante entre 30 y 60 años. Estos casos han sido tomados de entre muchos, al azar.

Esos relatos reflejarán las representaciones que tengan en función de las experiencias traumatogénicas, la violencia padecida en los entornos familiares, sociales y eclesiales. Se analizarán las experiencias traumatogénicas padecidas en el entorno familiar, con las categorías en observación correspondientes

## **6. Análisis de resultados**

Análisis de las experiencias traumatogénicas predominantes en las mujeres de la muestra.

Se han analizado las experiencias traumatogénicas padecidas en el entorno familiar, las categorías en observación son: (1) violencia intrafamiliar psicológica, (2) violencia física (3) violencia sexual (4) violencia espiritual-eclesial (5) violencia intergeneracional (6) separaciones de sus padres, (7) separación del cónyuge, (8) abandono paterno, (9) abandono materno, (10) abandono del cónyuge (11) negación de identidad y renegación del vínculo de paternidad, (12) duelos, pérdidas, (13) estados depresivos, (14) experiencia de crianza delegada en otros: padrastros, abuelas, tíos, (15) pobreza.

Según las categorías observadas, las familias de origen de estas mujeres se caracterizan por la disfuncionalidad. La violencia psicológica experimentada es la categoría más significativa, 11.8% para las mujeres de la muestra, y se ha manifestado a través de malos tratos, rechazos, separaciones de los padres, abandonos paternos, los tratos abusivos de padrastros. Las experiencias que relatan tienen componentes del orden de lo traumático, generando en ellas sentimientos de desamparo.

Los abusos sexuales por sus padres o padrastros han producido daños emocionales que tuvieron alto impacto disruptivo en las damnificadas. La negación del reconocimiento de la identidad, o renegación del vínculo, arroja un nivel alto, como así también, a través de los padres biológicos o parejas de la madre, arroja el 7.8%. Se ha generado un empobrecimiento de la estima personal, lo mismo cuando la negación de la identidad se dio además por parte de familiares que ocultaron la identidad del padre biológico. Esto ha contribuido a los sentimientos de culpabilidad y de confusión que presentan algunas de las víctimas.

La violencia física arroja el 4,9%, fue ejercida por padres y padrastros, tíos, y hermanos, no surgen acciones de violencia física por parte de las madres, sí, de violencia psicológica.

La violencia intergeneracional ha arrojado el 10.8%, tiene una incidencia muy alta en los traumas psíquicos gestados en estas mujeres. La transmisión de la violencia intrafamiliar es transmitida de padres/madres, a hijos/hijas, abuelos/as a nietas/nietos.

La observación, imitación de comportamientos violentos en los entornos familiares, la identificación con los referentes con comportamientos violentos, o con las conductas de sumisión de las víctimas, posibilita la repetición de esos patrones de conducta. Lo “no dicho”, el secreto que rodea a la violencia, obstaculiza la representación de la situación traumática.

Desde una perspectiva sistémica, sabemos que para que exista abuso, debe darse una relación asimétrica entre las partes implicadas. Cuando observamos situaciones de violencia, siempre lo que está en juego es el poder, por ello el maltratador busca entre sus víctimas las más vulnerables e indefensas, niñas y mujeres inmaduras, estas características se encuentran también en los casos analizados. Primero, se dan las microviolencias que dejan a la víctima confusa, a las que poco a poco se va habituando; perplejas, sin poder contar lo sucedido, padecen sin identificar los motivos de su sufrimiento, y aquello que no se nombra permanece en la sombra. Estas mujeres que en su infancia sufrieron algún tipo de maltrato, se han encontrado inmersas en esa vulnerabilidad silenciada.

Las separaciones de los padres de las mujeres de la muestra arrojan un 5.9%, esas separaciones trajeron aparejados abandonos paternos (9.8%), como se observan en la mayoría de las historias registradas con respecto a su entorno familiar de origen. Hablamos de pérdidas relacionales (11.8%), cuando se pierde a una persona y/o el vínculo que se mantenía, separaciones, situaciones de abandono o privación del afecto en la infancia, o en los casos de abusos físicos y sexuales. La elaboración de las pérdidas, el proceso de adaptación y el duelo, es un camino sinuoso de transitar, cada persona lo transitará de acuerdo con sus recursos yicos, valores y fe.

Los entornos familiares de estas mujeres fueron violentos, incidiendo en los estados depresivos de las damnificadas. Pareciera que, como creyentes, habiendo crecido en entornos familiares disruptivos, traumatogénicos, han podido elegir parejas, elaborar experiencias, sostenerse desde la fe en Dios, y propiciar matrimonios más saludables de los que tuvieron sus progenitoras.

La mayoría de estas mujeres han experimentado pérdidas, han pasado por procesos de duelos, pero la resiliencia que demostraron ante las

adversidades, y su confianza en Dios, han permitido avances significativos en el proceso de restauración, y maduración emocional.

La influencia del rol de las abuelas ha incidido, por el cuidado delegado, en el amparo de las nietas frente a situaciones disruptivas del grupo familiar primario, mientras que los padres y padrastros violentaron los vínculos, dejando secuelas en las psiquis de las niñas, hoy mujeres. Se dio cuenta de la existencia de entornos familiares con padres que negaban la filiación de sus hijas, renegaban de sus nacimientos y rechazaban sus vidas, sin darles el apellido; en muchos casos las hijas no podían acreditar la identidad del padre biológico. Todas estas situaciones traían aparejados resentimientos, vergüenza, sentimientos de culpa e inhibiciones.

La violencia conyugal desembocaba en las separaciones de los padres de estas mujeres, y ante la vulnerabilidad familiar, y la conformación de nuevas parejas, ellas quedaban expuestas al abuso psicológico, físico y sexual. Las historias de vida muestran que las madres, en los casos de abusos hacia sus hijas, no se separaban de su pareja; el estado de indefensión, de vulnerabilidad que padecían, no les permitía oponerse.

Las separaciones de los padres implicaban un sentimiento de pérdida, un duelo, ya que, ante la separación, el padre desaparecía, abandonaba a los hijos, los dejaba sin sustento económico, y así repetía las mismas situaciones formando otras parejas y teniendo otros hijos.

Las madres pueden ser incapaces de responder empáticamente a sus hijos debido a los estados depresivos que se manifiestan por la violencia conyugal padecida, pero no se relatan sucesos de violencia física por parte de madre.



## 7. Conclusiones y Propuestas

El cambio en las conformaciones familiares, el crecimiento a nivel mundial de las maternidades y paternidades por adolescentes, la pérdida de valores, la indiferenciación de roles, la pérdida de figuras de autoridad, la falta de contención, de figuras de apego, han generado vulnerabilidad en las familias. La pérdida de autoridad de las instituciones y la falta de credibilidad en el Estado como organismo de autoridad, también ha generado límites difusos en las familias.

A través del análisis realizado, se observa que resulta fundamental abordar desde la pastoral, la prevención y la asistencia a familias disfuncionales desde la iglesia.

La iglesia debe profundizar y ejercer una pastoral de cuidado, que ministre, prevenga las situaciones de violencia conyugal y la violencia hacia niños y ancianos.

Las mujeres que conviven en entornos familiares violentos, con la pareja que ejerce violencia sobre ella o los hijos, requieren de la asistencia psicológica y pastoral, además de un marco legal y judicial que provea el Estado, para que controle y realice el seguimiento de esas familias con denuncias de violencia intrafamiliar. Estas familias requieren medidas efectivas de protección, como la exclusión del hogar, prohibición de acercamiento del hombre violento, y el control de cumplimiento de dichas medidas.

Ante el aumento desmedido de la criminalidad, denominada femicidio e infanticidio, en el seno de los hogares violentos, se requiere una acción pastoral requieren el sentido de que las iglesias deberían ofrecer refugios denominados casas de “Abrigo”, destinados a las madres con los hijos que se hayan visto forzados a dejar el hogar.

Los prejuicios y mitos llevan a la distorsión de la escena, y la mujer se adjudica la culpa por la reacción del varón violento. Ella necesita creer que lo que él le dice es cierto, que no la va a agredir más; teme que si lo denuncia se vengue; que si se separa no tendrá recursos económicos para alimentar a sus hijos; por ello se somete y continúa con la relación.

Los efectos económicos de la pandemia por coronavirus y el aislamiento, han contribuido al aumento de víctimas de la explotación sexual de mujeres y niñas; fue un marco propicio para que algunos hombres abusaran sexualmente de sus parejas e hijas. La pandemia fue generando escenarios impredecibles, requiriendo que las familias realicen esfuerzos adaptativos para sobrellevar situaciones de violencia familiar, laboral, social — las cuales reactualizan problemáticas no elaboradas—. En este contexto, los femicidios han aumentado, la cuarentena ha incidido para que las parejas tengan que convivir más tiempo juntos. Los enojos, la ira, las conductas violentas se potenciaron por la presión que implicaba estar encerrados bajo el mismo techo; los vínculos se volvieron más hostiles. El ciclo de la violencia se hizo más recurrente.

Se espera poder rescatar a las familias desde la orientación bíblica y la consejería familiar. En los entornos familiares violentos hay riesgos de vida, no debemos minimizar las situaciones o la confesión que realizan las víctimas en las iglesias (Lam. 3:49–51).

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# La missio dei y la pastoral integral en el cuidado del extranjero en un contexto de migración: estudio de caso en Los Mochis, Sinaloa, México

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## **Resumen**

En años recientes se ha incrementado por miles el número de cruce de migrantes centroamericanos a través de México provenientes principalmente de los países de El Salvador, Honduras y Guatemala, entre otros. Tal fenómeno migratorio ha estado presente por décadas, pero no era común ver personas de dichos países caminando y pidiendo ayuda particularmente en las calles de la ciudad de Los Mochis, México. Para estos migrantes, la comida o el dinero no hace diferencia, siempre y cuando sean ayudados.

Dicha inquietud es la razón para llevar a cabo la presente investigación. La migración es uno de los problemas sociales más difíciles de resolver, y la experiencia mexicana en esta materia no es diferente a la del resto del mundo. La dificultad para solucionar esta problemática estriba

en que puede ser una causal múltiple, entre las que se pueden encontrar la violencia, la pobreza, la falta de oportunidades entre otros.

La migración no es un asunto nuevo para nuestro país ya que a partir de la segunda guerra mundial México ha jugado un rol de país proveedor de mano de obra barata legal —pero sobre todo ilegal— para la industria manufacturera y agrícola para los Estados Unidos. Desde entonces, México se convirtió en un país dependiente de las remesas de los migrantes que envían dinero desde los Estados Unidos, llegando a tal punto de confiar gran parte de su propia economía como país en esa práctica. Al hacer esto, los que han logrado cruzar la frontera ilegalmente han creado una cultura donde se prepara —y envía— a la gente desde cualquier lugar de origen hacia el norteno país, causando con ello muchos problemas para los miembros de familia que se quedan. Esto afecta también a las comunidades y el propio país.

Dentro de la última década, por lo menos, México ha pasado de ser un país de “envío de migrantes” a un país de “paso de migrantes” centroamericanos. Esto sucede, en parte, a las características de la Constitución de México, cuyas leyes migratorias permiten el tránsito por el país sin mayores requisitos. El cruce de migrantes centroamericanos no fue considerado un problema, siempre y cuando se mantuviera fuera de la vista de todos, aunque dicho cruce siempre ha existido. De cierta forma, los migrantes han encontrado un “amigo” para su viaje, ese amigo es el tren conocido como “La Bestia”. Este tren se vuelve accesible desde el estado de Veracruz, que geográficamente se encuentra localizado muy cerca de la frontera sur México-Guatemala. “La bestia”, puede hacerse camino a través de todo el país a partir de aquí, teniendo su conexión principal en la Ciudad de México. Desde la Ciudad de México, los migrantes pueden escoger la ruta del Pacífico o la ruta del Centro. La ruta del Pacífico incluye

ciudades principales como Guadalajara, Mazatlán, Culiacán, Hermosillo, finalizando en varias ciudades fronterizas como Nogales, Mexicali y Tijuana.

En esta ruta del Pacífico es donde está localizada la ciudad de Los Mochis. Esta ruta no era atractiva para los migrantes ya que fácilmente podían ser perjudicados debido a la violencia causada por los “carteles” y la policía —en connivencia con ellos— En la actualidad este aspecto no parece tener importancia para los migrantes, mientras puedan lograr su meta de llegar a la frontera.

Es aquí donde el intento de miles de migrantes de llegar a la frontera causa graves problemas para las ciudades o regiones que quedan en su paso, especialmente cuando ellos mismos forman grupos que se pueden contar por miles. Por ejemplo, “La Gran Caravana”, en 2018 y 2019, implicó el desplazamiento de unas 4 mil personas en cada año, que venían desde El Salvador, irrumpiendo en México donde sobrepasaron la capacidad de contención del estado mexicano.

El fenómeno de la migración puede implicar lo que se conoce como “transmigración”, tomando su significado por aquéllos que migran cruzando otros países para llegar a un último país, como destino final. La necesidad de ayuda se vuelve una acción que debe ser tomada en cuenta. Es aquí donde esta investigación encuentra la motivación para abordar este fenómeno. Si la transmigración ha tomado lugar en el contexto de la ciudad de Los Mochis y en sus áreas alrededor, surge la pregunta: ¿cuáles son las acciones que se deben tomar para resolver este problema? Además, ¿cuál es la función y el rol de una pastoral de ayuda para apoyar a esos migrantes en su paso por esta región después de haber viajado en “La Bestia” por casi todo México? Finalmente, ¿cuáles son las ventajas que se presentan en este lugar, que puedan proveer ayuda a los migrantes?

El indicio teórico de este investigador es que hay un modelo de cinco elementos que pueden ser la base para encaminarnos a la mitigación y la solución del problema desde una pastoral de ayuda a migrantes en el contexto de Los Mochis.

## **1. Introducción**

Este investigador, por provisión divina, se encontró con un migrante hondureño camino a una localidad del municipio de El Fuerte, Sinaloa. Dicho migrante pidió ayuda, sin importar que fuera algo para comer o en efectivo. En ese momento se le compró una orden de quesadillas en uno de los puestos de comida de esos que se encuentran a la orilla del camino. Esto sucedió en las inmediaciones donde se encuentra el tren de carga ampliamente conocido como “La Bestia”. El migrante estaba acompañado de dos personas más, y se les preguntó de dónde venían y los tres dijeron que eran de Honduras. Al ver la actitud interesada del investigador, aquel joven migrante que inicialmente se había aproximado preguntó, ¿por qué no ayuda a los que están debajo del puente? El investigador, extrañado por el comentario, porque desconocía que había personas allí, sin más contestó que volvería. Y a partir de ese momento —febrero de 2018— se hizo un compromiso pastoral y eclesial para ayudar a los transmigrantes provenientes mayormente de Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, aunque se pueden incluir personas de Belice, Haití, etc. En ese primer año se auxilió con comida, vestimenta y calzado a más de 16 mil migrantes. Hasta la fecha, se sigue apoyando a esas personas que están de paso. Esto llamó la atención del investigador a tal punto que comenzó a cuestionarse ¿qué hace la iglesia ante un fenómeno de migración? ¿qué elementos pastorales podrían ser aplicados de forma integral en pro del apoyo a migrantes? Con



la experiencia anterior por parte del pastor e investigador se dio inicio a la presente investigación.

Al revisar de forma retrospectiva las noticias en los medios de comunicación, ya sea por medios electrónicos o índole local relacionadas con migrantes centroamericanos que transitan por el estado de Sinaloa, en los últimos cinco años, resultará que el número de personas migrantes va en aumento, existe una preocupación real por el fenómeno migratorio que se está suscitando y también por los posibles actos de xenofobia. Estos flujos masivos de personas ponen en relieve la problemática sociopolítica de sus países de origen como pueden ser Honduras, Guatemala y El Salvador, principalmente; pero, al mismo tiempo develan la vulnerabilidad del Estado Mexicano y la insensibilidad de las autoridades locales por atender este tema.

De manera puntual se recuerda que en el año 2018 se hizo muy evidente el flujo de transmigrantes centroamericanos quienes utilizando el ferrocarril llamado “la Bestia” como medio de transporte, conmovió al mundo entero y puso en perspectiva esta problemática, ya que, de forma programada y coordinada, un grupo migrante de más de 4000 personas entre niños, mujeres y hombres recorrieron todo México desde la frontera sur a la frontera norte. Esa “caravana migrante” le dio rostro a la clandestinidad de este fenómeno migratorio, que ocurre ya desde hace décadas, en especial por la conocida “ruta del pacífico” pasando por el estado de Sinaloa, donde se localiza la ciudad de Los Mochis.

### *1.1. Planteamiento del problema*

Esta investigación estuvo centrada en la ciudad de Los Mochis, que se ubica al noroeste de México en el estado de Sinaloa; es una ciudad moderna y

una de las regiones agrícolas y pesqueras más importante de México. Los Mochis tiene más de 251,000 habitantes y cuenta con servicio de ferrocarril de carga, el cual llega prácticamente hasta la frontera sur con el país de Guatemala y al norte hasta las ciudades de Nogales y Mexicali frontera con Estados Unidos; dicha ruta se conoce como la “ruta del pacífico”.

Debido a la crisis humanitaria, social, política y de luchas entre pandillas en los países centroamericanos de Honduras, El Salvador y Guatemala, se ha provocado un flujo migratorio de personas con destino preferencial a Estados Unidos, tomando el ferrocarril “la bestia” como principal medio de transporte para cruzar la República Mexicana.

En este contexto, el cuidado integral al extranjero migrante en su paso por Los Mochis es imprescindible. Por parte de Organizaciones no gubernamentales o del Gobierno, no existen albergues o casa para migrantes; en cuanto a las 83 iglesias evangélicas registradas en la alianza ministerial de la ciudad de Los Mochis sólo 3 iglesias muestran interés por el cuidado del extranjero al proveer alimento, comida y estancia temporal, así como ayuda de tipo espiritual y emocional. Según el Instituto Nacional de Migración, delegación Los Mochis, la atención a migrantes en tránsito no es prioridad, ya que el fenómeno migratorio rebasó su capacidad de acción. En un contexto como este es imperioso elaborar un modelo de cuidado pastoral integral en favor del migrante.

### *1.2. La justificación*

Para 2016 la Comisión de Derechos Humanos registró, sólo en ese año, que en México transitaron más de medio millón de personas, volviéndose un referente de individuos migrando a nivel mundial. Aunque los flujos migratorios siempre han existido, este es un fenómeno que en tiempos recientes se ha agudizado, por lo que se requieren nuevos estudios que

permitan a la iglesia, en su práctica de misión, ser pertinentes y relevantes de acuerdo con la necesidad del contexto.

La razón principal para emprender esta investigación es que a partir del 2018 el investigador inició un trabajo pastoral en la asistencia y ayuda a migrantes centroamericanos brindando apoyo a más de 16,000 personas tan solo en el primer año en la zona de Los Mochis y sus alrededores. En base a lo anterior, existe un interés por saber cómo llevar a cabo un trabajo misional con cuidado integral en un contexto de migración.

Esta investigación no se enfocó en encontrar un objetivo único y general, sino que se espera que de ella se deriven objetivos específicos en los distintos campos de acción. Por ejemplo, en el campo de la teología bíblica, es relevante esta investigación porque desde su narrativa escrituraria se observa el trato con el extranjero y su vigencia para nuestro contexto (Éxodo 22:21), por lo que podría brindar parámetros para un modelo de cuidado.

Desde la perspectiva de la teología contextual, se busca conocer los elementos socioculturales que puedan contribuir en el contenido de nuestro mensaje y en la práctica de la misión a favor del del extranjero en Sinaloa. Principalmente, por ser un estado de tránsito, los protocolos de cuidado son casi inexistentes.

Desde la teología pastoral se vuelve significativo el estudio de personas migrando para encontrar principios que ayuden a levantar la dignidad humana y el valor existencial como individuos. Por ello, se deben usar todos los recursos que permitan a esas personas experimentar los cuidados provistos por Dios, ya que pueden estar expuestas a la clandestinidad, la vulnerabilidad ante vándalos, la mafia organizada, la corrupción, la trata de personas, las heridas físicas y otros peligros inherentes al fenómeno migratorio.

Para la misionología esta investigación es importante como disciplina teológica y su interacción con las ciencias sociales, porque

existen pocos trabajos académicos que aborden este tema. De igual forma, se busca que el resultado de esa interacción proporcione respuestas que contribuyan para que la iglesia sea capaz y pertinente en su práctica misional en el cuidado integral a migrantes en el contexto de la ciudad de Los Mochis.

### *1.3. Propósito*

El propósito de esta investigación es construir un perfil de una pastoral integral que desarrolle un modelo de cuidado pertinente al contexto de migración. Este es un modelo que contribuirá en el cuidado, acompañamiento y ayuda al migrante centroamericano en la localidad de Los Mochis y sus alrededores.

### *1.4. La gran pregunta*

¿Cuáles son las características de una pastoral integral en el contexto de migración en Los Mochis, Sinaloa, México?

### *1.5. Objetivos específicos*

- a. Conocer cómo Dios en su misión de alcanzar al hombre se presenta a sí mismo como un modelo pastoral en el cuidado del extranjero con la finalidad de desarrollar un modelo de cuidado pastoral integral en el contexto de la ciudad de Los Mochis, Sinaloa, México.
- b. Descubrir los factores, oportunidades o situaciones históricas y geográficas de Los Mochis, Sinaloa, que incidan en el diseño de una pastoral integral.
- c. Establecer las bases teóricas para los fundamentos bíblicos de la *Missio Dei* en un contexto de migración.

- d. Conocer los trasfondos y factores que influyen en la vida de las personas que los llevan a migrar, para elaborar una práctica pastoral integral de ayuda.

#### *1.6. Las preguntas de investigación*

- a. ¿Cuáles son los fundamentos de la *Missio Dei* descritos en la Biblia para diseñar un modelo de pastoral integral en un contexto de migración?
- b. ¿Cómo influye el contexto de Los Mochis, Sinaloa, para la configuración de una pastoral integral con migrantes?
- c. ¿Qué experiencias de vida, o factores, han llevado a las personas a migrar, para comprender cómo pastorearlos integralmente?

#### *1.7. Las definiciones*

Las definiciones y conceptos clave en esta investigación serán: a transmigración, teología, misiología, eclesiástico, praxis y *Missio Dei*.

#### *1.8. Las delimitaciones*

Se considerará culminada esta investigación y la escritura de esta disertación una vez que:

- a. Se haya estudiado cuáles son los elementos para una pastoral de cuidado, acompañamiento y ayuda en un contexto de migración.
- b. Se hayan identificado cuáles son las características del contexto histórico, geográfico y cómo se gestó la problemática de la migración en Los Mochis, Sinaloa.
- c. En un lapso de tres meses se hayan aplicado bitácoras o diarios de campo en el sitio donde se localizan los grupos de migrantes; y

después de haber entrevistado a 10 transmigrantes centroamericanos que en su paso por esta región hayan tenido algún tipo de contacto con el investigador; a 6 líderes eclesiásticos clave de la ciudad, y 6 actores sociales que tengan alguna implicación en el trato y atención a migrantes.

- d. Se hayan analizado y sintetizado los resultados del acercamiento teórico, en contraposición con la investigación de campo.

### *1.9. El contexto de la transmigración y la pastoral de cuidado*

Las autoridades mexicanas se apegan a decretos y procedimientos de orden internacional ratificado y comprobado en las reformas más recientes a la Constitución que apelan a salvaguardar los derechos humanos más que los económicos, por lo que, en esta investigación se presentarán y analizarán contextos internacionales específicos que brinden elementos para la conformación de parámetros de asistencia integral al migrante aplicables a nuestro contexto nacional y local. En un nivel internacional, la Organización Internacional para las Migraciones reportó en 2005 un estimado de 175 millones de migrantes globalmente, para el 2019 reportó la cifra de “272 millones de migrantes internacionales equivalente al 3,5% de la población mundial” (Organización Internacional para las Migraciones 2019, 3). La dinámica de transmigración en los 190 estados soberanos del mundo ahora son puntos de origen, tránsito y destino para los migrantes. En el caso de México, la ACNUR (Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Refugiados) en conjunto con la COMAR (Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados) reportan que, desde el 1 de enero hasta el 30 de abril del 2020, había 18,192 solicitudes de refugio en México. En el caso estatal, Sinaloa es considerado como estado migrante tanto por sus emigrantes como por sus inmigrantes.

## 2. Repaso de la literatura y el marco teórico

Para esta investigación la teología será tomada como el elemento epistémico fundante en correlación con las ciencias sociales y la misionología. A partir de las Escrituras Sagradas, previamente aceptadas como revelación divina, las cuales pueden ser sometidas a un escrutinio donde convergen lo divino con lo humano, Dios y el hombre, la teología y la antropología; o sea que, estudiar a Dios es también estudiar al hombre, “Las Escrituras constituyen el texto de la teología, porque el tema de esta ciencia no es Dios en absoluto sino Dios en su revelación”, (Roldán 2011, 30).

### *2.1. Las ciencias sociales, la misionología y la teología como aliadas en el estudio de la migración*

La migración como campo tiene todo el derecho de ser estudiado desde la teología, en particular de la pastoral (Baggio 2005). Por consiguiente, se debe considerar que “la Teología analiza la realidad social en una forma crítica a través del referente primario de la Revelación Divina, con el objetivo de dar testimonio de nuestra fe” (Ares 2018, 6; traducción del autor). Dios mismo se identifica con esta condición y realidad de su pueblo (Dt. 26:5).

El puente que se establecerá para conectar a la teología con las ciencias sociales para emprender una acción puntual en el mundo será la misionología, a la cual se le puede denominar como “ciencias de misión o Teología intercultural”, dicha nomenclatura se rescata de una cosmovisión de las facultades teológicas alemanas (Paas 2016).

### *2.2. Repaso de la literatura*

El presente repaso de literatura se hace con la finalidad de lograr un acercamiento apropiado al tema de la transmigración a partir de una

pastoral holística del cuidado. Al ser un tema que no ha sido suficientemente explorado bajo la premisa principal de la actual investigación, se procederá a la revisión de trabajos académicos y libros especializados relacionados a este proyecto. Se investigan los temas de la pastoral de migración, migración contextual y teología práctica.

### 2.3. *Marco teórico*

En este capítulo se establecen las bases teóricas de esta investigación; para ello, se proponen los siguientes ejes de estudio y las aportaciones de los diferentes teóricos: (1) la *Missio Dei* y la pastoral de migración según Carlos Van Engen, (2) la praxis misionológica en la migración según Gioacchino Campese y Julio Zabatiero; por último, (3) la transmigración y los elementos para una pastoral del cuidado de acuerdo a los postulados de Rubén Paredes.

## **3. Conceptos claves de migración en la narrativa bíblica: “Dios como pastor en la migración”**

Si las migraciones pueden considerarse como parte de la existencia humana, entonces puede fundamentarse que el relato bíblico a partir del Génesis —y todo el resto de la Escritura Sagrada— tiene mucho que proveer como historia de migración, y a su vez, se puede articular una intervención divina intencionada. Puede recrearse un mapa mental a través de la figura de “Dios como Pastor” que brinde la posibilidad de saber cómo se gesta una pastoral de cuidado hacia el extranjero por lo que a partir del texto bíblico se hará una relectura con intención de encontrar todo lo referente a los conceptos clave relacionados a la migración. Esto puede incluir adjetivos como: extranjeros, advenedizos, errantes, desplazados, exiliados,



expatriados, etc. Los temas de estudios serán: “Dios como pastor de Caín, el primer desplazado” (Gén 4:1-16), “Dios como pastor de Abraham, primer agente de misión” (Gén 12:1-4) y “Jesús, el Buen Pastor” (Juan 10:1-21).

#### **4. Metodología**

En la complejidad interdisciplinaria, la actual investigación se enmarca en dos grandes esferas de estudio: las ciencias sociales y las ciencias religiosas. De las ciencias sociales se ha considerado la aplicación de los principios de la antropología cultural desde la perspectiva del Paredes (2000), quien propone un compromiso sociológico de parte del investigador, una contextualización crítica (Hiebert 2009) y una comprensión del fenómeno migratorio tomando como unidad de análisis al individuo migrando (Morán 1998). El aporte de las ciencias sociales quedará más claro una vez que se hayan aplicado las técnicas e instrumentos metodológicos como el estudio de caso, bitácoras o diarios de campo, entrevista semiestructurada y la observación participante por parte del investigador para el abordaje de la realidad de este fenómeno social.

De las ciencias religiosas, la teología será otra opción metodológica, misma que será estudiada a partir del método teológico-hermenéutico y análisis bibliográfico. Desde la perspectiva de Baggio (2005) y Campese (2017) se puede postular una teología migrante. Groody (2011) promueve una etnografía teológica,(69) ambos postulados requieren un tipo de integración y será a partir de la disciplina de la misiología desde la perspectiva de van Engen, quien ve la misión de Dios (siendo Dios mismo) quien trae una transformación del individuo, primeramente, en una relación con la divinidad, consigo mismo, con los demás y con la creación desde una óptica que toma en cuenta a la Biblia como una sola narrativa y propone que sea interdisciplinaria (van Engen 2017).

Se requiere conocer los elementos que forman parte de la investigación cualitativa con el fin de “desarrollar una imagen completa del problema o situación bajo estudio” tal como lo sugiere Creswell (2009, 176). Este mismo autor identifica aspectos como el arreglo natural en el que el investigador recolecta la información, el investigador mismo como instrumento clave quien reúne la información, las múltiples fuentes de información tales como las entrevistas, observaciones y documentos en vez de una sola fuente, análisis inductivo de información donde los propios investigadores construyen sus patrones, categorías y temas por completo.

Para conocer el impacto que puede causar el cumplimiento de la misión de Dios y el trato justo en las personas migrando, la investigación se delineó metodológicamente según el método etnográfico para observar las vivencias y experiencias de personas migrando (Hernández, Fernández, & Baptista 1991), esto es, en las calles de la ciudad y lugares circunvecinos a la ciudad de Los Mochis, como el caso de la zona de Macoyahui donde llega el tren de carga. También se escogió el método teológico-hermenéutico para conocer más a fondo la narrativa bíblica respecto del tema de migración en la formulación de una pastoral del cuidado.

En cuanto a las técnicas, el investigador optó por la observación participante, método biográfico o historias de vida y el análisis de documentos bibliográficos. Es indispensable decir que el actual trabajo toma como base la observación participante de la metodología cualitativa tal como lo proponen Taylor & Bogdan (1987) quienes la emplean para “designar la interacción social entre el investigador y los informantes en el milieu de los últimos, durante la cual recogen datos de modo sistemático y no intrusivo” (31). Se hace necesario considerar que el método de la observación participante en su diseño, a diferencia de los demás métodos, permanece flexible. Lo anterior es obvio en virtud de que los intereses y

rasgos investigativos, ya sean generales o específicos, “evolucionan a medida que operan” (32). Como instrumentos que permiten recoger información profunda, veraz y pertinente, se utilizó la entrevista semi estructurada con los tres distintos grupos fuente como son los líderes religiosos, líderes sociales y los propios migrantes; se utilizó el análisis bibliográfico en un sentido amplio, así mismo la bitácora o diario de campo considerado fundamental en la investigación, ya que permitió obtener información directa in situ, que posteriormente fue anexada como apéndice para futuros análisis.

En el momento inicial de la investigación, se propuso una muestra de 22 entrevistas, categorizadas por 10 migrantes centroamericanos, 6 líderes sociales y 6 líderes religiosos.

Posteriormente, el investigador indagó las posibilidades de la aplicación de dichas entrevistas a personas que tuvieran una representación institucional en el caso de los líderes sociales y religiosos, con el fin de percibir la cosmovisión de los grupos que representan y políticas de acción social para profundizar en sus participaciones y respuestas. El investigador entabló vía telefónica y por emails los primeros contactos en miras a concretar dichas entrevistas que, de primera mano, todos los actores sociales y religiosos aceptaron participar.

## **5. Narrativas de las experiencias de vida a partir de las bitácoras y entrevistas**

En esta sección se comparten las historias tipo experiencias en forma narrativa de los migrantes, expresadas a partir de sus propias experiencias derivadas del contacto y acercamiento de apoyo pastoral. Esas experiencias fueron narradas durante las entrevistas, diarios de campo o por medio de la observación participante y se plasmarán en palabras, frases o emociones

emitidas por los mismos migrantes. Aunque no hubo una indicación para que el investigador proteja la identidad de los entrevistados, sólo se hará mención del primer nombre con la finalidad de resguardar a los informantes.

El investigador recolectó la información después de escuchar o ver a la persona entrevistada de manera presencial o fueron registradas después de una entrevista a distancia vía telefónica. Las notas de campo tomadas por medio de bitácoras diarias y la observación participante, son esenciales para las narrativas, las palabras y frases serán descritas tal cual fueron expresadas por los entrevistados y aparecerán en cursivas. En esta sección no hay análisis ni comentarios valorativos de parte del investigador.

## **6. Análisis e interpretación de los resultados**

Para este trabajo de análisis se proponen tres ejes temáticos en forma de macro categorías como lo son: la *Missio Dei* (Misión de Dios), el contexto geográfico de Los Mochis, factores o experiencias de vida de los migrantes. la investigación de campo, conformada por los ejes de investigación, también tiene micro categorías que se pueden analizar, derivadas de las veintidós entrevistas aplicadas, las que corresponden a 6 actores sociales, 6 líderes religiosos y 10 migrantes centroamericanos. Las categorías para el análisis son: categoría de la experiencia de vida, categoría praxiológica, categoría contextual, categoría bíblica/social.

## **7. Conclusiones y recomendaciones**

En el planteamiento inicial que se propuso como línea de investigación, y a partir del estudio de campo y de las experiencias de vida de los migrantes centroamericanos, en un contexto de Los Mochis, Sinaloa, se pretendió

observar y conocer el fenómeno *in situ* y posteriormente, con los resultados obtenidos, establecer aquellos elementos fundacionales para una pastoral holística del cuidado. Dentro de la investigación también se pudo integrar las experiencias de actores sociales y religiosos, lo que permitió observar más ampliamente el fenómeno desde varios sesgos, lo que brindó solidez en los datos recolectados desde tres fuentes distintas, lo que permitió concluir que hay cinco elementos que componen este modelo de pastoral.

### *7.1. Elemento bíblico-misiológico para trabajar con migrantes*

Contexto bíblico de migración y desplazamiento. No se puede comprender ni hacer una relectura de la Biblia sin dejar de considerar que la mayoría, y los más importantes pasajes del texto sagrado, se dan en un contexto de migración o desplazamiento, por lo que la pastoral del cuidado se debe fundamentar en que fue Dios mismo quien permitió el desplazamiento y acompañó a su pueblo en su peregrinar; es Dios quien estipula dichas leyes de protección para el forastero, extranjero y migrante, las cuales se redactan como parte de una legislación moral-social-espiritual de tal forma que se cumplan teniendo un efecto tal; una de las figuras de la iglesia a partir del Nuevo Testamento es la de una “iglesia peregrina y forastera”.

### *7.2. Elemento antropológico*

Se debe ver la migración como un acto humano. El acto de migrar puede tener múltiples causales, sin embargo, no se puede concebir al ser humano haciendo algo propiamente “malo” por el hecho de migrar. El ser humano, desde sus orígenes, ha tenido que migrar para sobrevivir. La pastoral del cuidado concibe esa necesidad de movilidad y búsqueda de bienestar. Se recomienda que al brindar ayuda se haga apartándose de todo juicio

político o migratorio con la finalidad de brindar un apoyo cálido y amoroso antes que ser prejuiciosos.

### *7.3. Elemento contextual*

Si la problemática migratoria ha llegado a un nivel de ciudad o región, el esfuerzo que se debe hacer es en el mismo ímpetu, en la confección de una ayuda más completa, que debe incluir a todos los actores sociales.

### *7.4. Elemento eclesiástico*

Se requiere que la Iglesia sea “más humana” en su acercamiento al migrante. La iglesia debe operar bajo un alto criterio moral donde se dignifique al ser humano “no importando su condición ni situación”. La iglesia, o la pastoral del cuidado, debe buscar —precisamente— desligarse de toda preconcepción para no predisponerse, ya que son personas que requieren de amor y cuidado, de una proximidad cálida y humana.

### *7.5. Elemento praxiológico*

Se deben hacer cambios en la concepción de la ayuda en un contexto de migración. Se debe hacer notar que una de las hipótesis planteadas por el investigador fue que la ayuda que se impartía podía ser tomada a simple vista como “mero asistencialismo”, donde se satisfacen necesidades básicas que no llevan a nada que pudiera trascender en las personas migrantes beneficiadas; sin embargo, a partir de la investigación y de los resultados obtenidos, se hace una corrección de esa impresión ya que se califica como errónea. Se pudo observar que tales acciones por más simples o sencillas que parezcan a los demás, han demostrado ser tan trascendentes, que han marcado la vida de los migrantes entrevistados, y ellos mismos son quienes

reconocen que la ayuda provista les privó a ellos de contraer mayores problemas por no tener un refugio cuando necesitaban recuperarse de una infección, de una cirugía, etc.

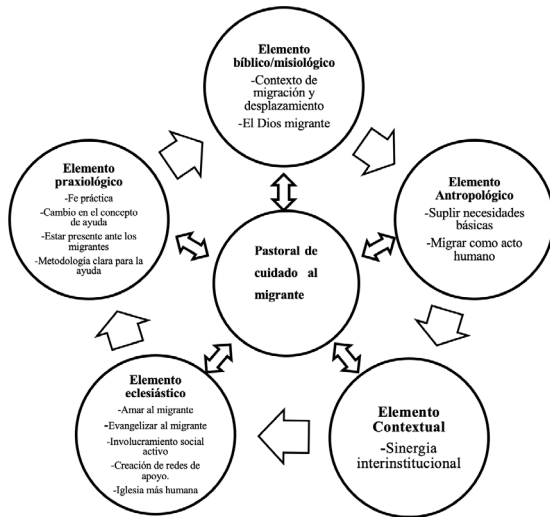


Diagrama 1. Elementos esenciales para una pastoral de cuidado en la migración.

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# A Soberania mediada: a missão humana no mundo criado por Deus

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## **Resumo**

A soberania mediada é a executora da missão de Deus na história humana. Para observar esta tarefa delegada, que a humanidade recebeu do Criador, esta pesquisa trabalhará na perspectiva de analisar o pensamento teológico atual sobre as responsabilidades do ser humano em relação a criação e em diálogo a estas propostas apresentar o conceito da mediação humana na execução de sua tarefa delegada.

Uma análise Bíblica/Teológica da perspectiva de como a humanidade entende a criação, a revelação e em intimidade ou não com o Criador administra o que está sob sua responsabilidade. A pesquisa desenvolve-se no pontuar o progresso da revelação divina ao ser humano e por meio da perspectiva da soberania mediada aponta a relação fé e obediência na administração da criação. Na missão de Deus a responsabilidade de conduzir toda criação para uma maturidade gloriosa recai sobre os representantes humanos na terra.

## 1. Introdução

Compreender a missão humana designada por Deus para com sua criação é algo essencial na história da fé, seja esta expressa de forma individual ou de forma coletiva, pois só quando é percebido que a tarefa desempenhada no mundo é de Deus e não da humanidade, torna-se possível executá-la com plena eficiência. Nas palavras de Timóteo Carriker é possível compreender um pouco mais da importância deste conhecimento:

Portanto, “missão” é uma categoria que pertence a Deus. A missão, antes de ter uma conotação humana que fala da tarefa da igreja, antes de ser da igreja, é de Deus. Esta perspectiva nos guarda contra toda atitude de autossuficiência e independência na tarefa missionária. Se a missão é de Deus, então é dEle que a igreja deve depender na sua participação na tarefa (Carriker 2000, 3).

A história de Deus para este mundo passa pelo processo de criação, queda e redenção. Um projeto que o Senhor começou a executar no tempo e no espaço desde o momento em que trouxe tudo a existência. O mundo que visualizamos hoje e que é conjeturado por toda a história é fruto da sabedoria de Deus, que incluiu em seu plano a humanidade como parte ativa e integral nesta missão gloriosa, por isso, é possível perceber erros e acertos, alegrias e sofrimentos, altos e baixos, pois a intenção de Deus era e é de que o ser humano em sua liberdade administrasse debaixo da soberania divina tudo aquilo que fora criado (Gên. 4:26–31; Dan. 4:32).

A humanidade foi estabelecida na criação como aquela que de forma representativa administraria tudo aquilo que havia sido estabelecido por Yahweh, mas para isso recebeu do Criador a bênção e o domínio (Gên. 1:28), atributo que nenhum outro ser que se conheça havia recebido até

então. A proposta deste trabalho é observar esta responsabilidade dada ao ser humano, a qual passaremos a chamar a partir de agora de Soberania Mediada, e suas implicações espirituais e físicas por todo o plano de criação, queda e redenção.

O termo soberania é adjetivado por mediada,<sup>1</sup> pois o cuidar do Éden era em última instância do homem, mas em primeira instância continuava nas mãos do Criador; assim, é possível perceber que a missão dada para as criaturas nunca é de forma isolada ou absoluta, mas sempre regida pelo próprio articulador e executor supremos desta tarefa.

A narrativa contada pelos autores bíblicos revela como Deus executa sua missão em sua criação: abençoando, punido, perdoando, ensinando e restaurando seus agentes mediatórios em cada situação pontual na história. Por diversas vezes Deus aponta ao homem como deve agir como mordomo da criação e que por causa de sua desobediência e incredulidade acabou provocando morte e desespero em tudo e em todos, que estavam debaixo de sua gerência. Estes fatos relatados nas Escrituras revelam a incapacidade humana por si só de cuidar daquilo que Deus elaborou ao mesmo tempo em que aponta para o Mediador perfeito (Heb. 2:8–10).

A soberania mediada trabalha com a contraposição do primeiro e do segundo Adão, ambos com as mesmas tarefas estabelecidas, em situações diferentes, mas que com suas responsabilidades cumpridas ou não trouxeram para todos aqueles que se encontram sob sua gerência vida ou morte. Assim como o apóstolo Paulo nos revela em sua carta aos Romanos no capítulo cinco, Adão foi um administrador desobediente que não quis ser apenas um administrador, mas o dono do jardim, já Jesus em meio a um mundo desesperado e deserto foi obediente até a morte e

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<sup>1</sup> Terminologia criada por Carlos Osvaldo Pinto e apresentada de forma sucinta em seu livro *Foco e Desenvolvimento* (PINTO, Carlos Osvaldo. *Foco e Desenvolvimento no Antigo Testamento*. São Paulo: Hagnos. 2006).

possibilitou a restauração de todo cosmo criado. O primeiro no paraíso foi desobediente e o segundo no deserto seu contraponto.

Quando Adão e Eva desobedeceram e violaram seu relacionamento de vida e amor, Yahweh proclamou imediatamente que a semente da mulher deveria ser o administrador do pacto da redenção também. Assim como Noé serviu como um mediador do pacto e, dessa forma, como um precursor e tipo de Cristo, assim também por meio da era do Antigo Testamento, outros serviram, incluindo Abraão, José, Moises, Josué, os juízes, e os profetas, sacerdotes e reis. Em um sentido real, todos os descendentes de Noé e Abraão foram chamados para serem mediadores, em particular a nação de Israel. Todos estes precursores e tipos humanos falharam (Groningen 2002, 193–194).

A história humana na perspectiva do teólogo Van Groningen é desenvolvida em um Reino criado e estabelecido por Deus, neste o Senhor Soberano estabeleceu um ser à sua imagem como mediador para administrá-lo, governá-lo e representá-lo. Este Reino foi desafiado e contraposto pelo reino das trevas quando o mediador decidiu não honrar ao Criador, por isso, os súditos deste reino por toda a história tem sofrido por causa de seus maus administradores (Rom. 8:22), que por vezes continuam como exploradores. Desta mesma forma há uma manipulação e cegueira espiritual exercida sobre o mundo pelas forças demoníacas, que por aqui se instalaram desde o erro de Adão, estas operam sobre o mundo como agentes poluidores usando a humanidade como seus administradores corrompidos (Efés. 2:1–3; 2 Tim. 2:24–26).

O erro de Adão maculou sua soberania mediada e de certa forma a deixou escorregar para as mãos do inimigo. A Serpente, mesmo debaixo da maldição divina, conquista poder de influência sobre a criação, pois

o mediador lhe perde direitos sobre o mundo estabelecido, assim há um novo agente por sobre a terra. O ser humano com sua soberania mediada manchada e até certo ponto usurpada depende agora de uma promessa restauradora de um novo mediador, que o contraponha em desobediência e infidelidade.

Pensando um pouco além da proposta de Groningen pode-se dizer que a Bíblia conta a história da soberania mediada. Desde Adão o ser humano é descrito como aquele que deveria ser um agente transformador e mantenedor do universo, mas este deu lugar ao pecado e ao Diabo para exercer domínio secundário sobre a criação, esta história de irresponsabilidade, infidelidade e orgulho humano é percebida em cada linha das Escrituras, mas sempre com um tom esperança dado pelo Criador apontando para aquele que um dia resolveria toda esta problemática da raça, que até então estava escravizada por Satanás. Desta maneira é possível olhar para os relatos bíblicos como o dilúvio, babel, a monarquia, o cativo, a igreja e a nova terra e identificar um Deus que vem trabalhando por meio de sua aliança através do mediador. É possível também enxergar as responsabilidades humanas como seus erros e acertos sempre como um arquetípico do humano perfeito, o segundo Adão, aquele que restauraria plenamente a soberania mediada.

A soberania mediada pode servir como uma chave hermenêutica para entendermos e interpretarmos a missão humana impulsionada por Deus por meio da criação, queda e redenção. A partir dela é possível notar privilégios e responsabilidades do seu povo hoje, a igreja, na administração e na manutenção de toda a criação, que é parte do reino cósmico do Senhor e que hoje está sob o cuidado e responsabilidade do reino inaugurado e administrado sumariamente por Jesus, cujos súditos são aqueles que por ele foram ungidos para esta urgente e necessária tarefa (Mat .28:16–20).



A proposta desta monografia é observar de forma introdutória aspectos desta tarefa delegada ao homem de cuidar, gerenciar e desenvolver a criação por meio da soberania mediada. A humanidade por si só, independente de Deus, tentou por diversas vezes ao longo da história administrar sua morada, mas em todas as circunstâncias trouxe morte, desespero e desolação. A soberania mediada humana desde Adão apontou e ensinou que uma verdadeira e próspera administração terrena só seria possível por meio daquele que foi chamado de a “Justiça de Yahweh”, ou seja, o segundo Adão na pessoa de Jesus, que restauraria e restaurou a plena soberania mediada e a exerceria e a exerce de forma singular.

Para um melhor entendimento da soberania mediada e sua integralidade social esta introdução será dividida em duas partes. Na primeira será apresentado o contraponto entre o primeiro Adão e seu falho exercício da soberania mediada e o segundo Adão como o que por sua obediência plena restaurou a possibilidade de um cuidado produtivo da criação, que de maneira inicial é realizado por seus súditos: a igreja (2 Cor. 5:18–20).

Na segunda parte a proposta é apontar como a missão de Deus está intimamente ligada com a soberania mediada e a atuação dos cristãos como parte importante no reconciliar o mundo com Deus por meio de suas ciências sociais, que são desenvolvidas através do chamado vocacional de cada membro do corpo de Cristo (1 Cor. 15:58). Em seguida, observar alguns autores, que falam a respeito desta missão humana dada por Deus e os trazer de forma introdutória para o debate aqui proposto.

## **2. Reino e o Mediador**

O teólogo Gerard Van Groningen em seu livro “Criação e Consumação” apresenta a criação final de Deus como um reino, sua proposta é que

ao fim do processo criativo de Yahweh ele estabeleceu seu reino físico dotado de leis e em completa sintonia e harmonia, pois era fruto de sua sabedoria e bondade. Este reino de Éden (prazer) foi dado nas mãos de um administrador humano, que para exercer sua função gerencial foi criado à imagem e semelhança de Deus e abençoado para esta tarefa. Glorificando ao seu criador o homem produziria frutos de amor e vida. Esta soberania mediada estabelecida por Deus com Adão tinha responsabilidades e privilégios: sua obediência e dependência produziriam vida e amor eternamente, em oposto, sua independência e desobediência resultariam em maldição e morte.

Toda a criação e por conseqüente todas as nações que existiriam por sobre a terra seriam abençoadas por Deus por meio da soberania mediada. O mediador desta responsabilidade carregava uma aliança estabelecida por Deus na qual lhe garantiria vida ou morte dependendo de suas ações como ser mediador e representante, ou seja, a humanidade aparece como responsável em cuidar da criação, sendo a convergente de bênção ou maldição divina para tudo e todos dependendo de sua administração. Por meio da soberania mediada bem exercida a humanidade seria feliz em harmonia com tudo que havia sido criado.

O texto inicial para perceber-se este mandato de Deus ao homem, seu mediador, está em Gênesis 1:28, “E tomou o SENHOR Deus o homem, e o pôs no jardim do Éden para o cultivar e o cuidar” (Gên. 2:15). Estas duas palavras revelam as responsabilidades específicas dentro de todos os aspectos que acompanham a soberania mediada sobre a criação, que também está revelada neste verso com ato de Deus tomar a humanidade e a coloca-la no jardim do Éden.

Cultivar, cuja raiz é de עָבַד *avab* carrega a ideia básica de “trabalhar”, ou “servir”, indica o agir da humanidade em serviço ao solo, ou seja, foram chamados para desenvolvê-lo através do seu trabalho de cultivo

(Laird & Gleason 2008, 1065). O que o texto bíblico quer revelar é a ação de responsabilidade humana em trabalhar em favor da terra em benefício da criação. A partir deste vocábulo e de seu contexto dentro da construção do verso é possível desenvolver a proposta teológica de que a ação parte do mediador em direção aos que foram colocados debaixo de sua autoridade para servir, portanto, o homem deve estar atento em produzir, cultivar e desenvolver de uma maneira santa e fiel a terra para que esta seja fonte de amor e vida para todos.

Cuidar, cuja raiz é de שָׁמַר revela um sentido de “realizar com diligência”, “conservar”, “proteger” entre outros termos em torno de “guardar” (Laird & Gleason 2008, 1587–1588). O que se pode entender deste termo é que o mediador estava responsável pela preservação e o cuidado por sobre a criação, assim, a soberania mediada era expressa por meio de um representante que assumiria o peso de proteger a vida e a harmonia de tudo aquilo que fora criado por Deus.

Além disso, os verbos cultivar e guardar no v. 15 são subordinados ao verbo principal da oração cujo sentido é “depositar”, “estabelecer”, “colocar”. Como verbos dependentes, cultivar e guardar estão no infinitivo construto precedidos pela preposição l. Essa construção sintática denota finalidade, propósito (Pinto 1998, 82 e 126). Desse modo, o homem foi colocado no jardim com o propósito de o cultivar e guardar. Há, portanto, uma finalidade de Deus em criar e colocar o homem no jardim.

Portanto, o homem que havia sido escolhido por Deus para assumir a soberania mediada estava no jardim do Éden, capacitado pelo próprio Yahweh, pronto para administrar e gerenciar toda a criação promovendo por sua obediência ao criador vida e amor.

Como vices-gerentes, eles [humanidade] representavam seu Rei Soberano no reino cósmico. Seu status, prerrogativas,

responsabilidades e bênçãos eram tais que eles, de fato, ocupavam a mais alta posição e recebiam privilégios reais como nenhum outro ente criado. Eles receberam responsabilidades sobre cada faceta da vida. Eles deveriam governar com Yahweh sobre tudo o que tinha sido criado. De fato, eles estavam na mais alta posição possível no reino cósmico de Yahweh. (Groningen 2002, 119).

Nesta citação Groningen apresenta a humanidade como vices-gerentes, este conceito desdobra o conceito restrito da soberania mediada, pois além de um mediador para executar as obras do Criador na terra, a humanidade parece carregar um aspecto de realeza em sua tarefa mediatória. Ao primeiro Adão recai a responsabilidade de honrar ao Senhor por meio da obediência para cuidar e cultivar daquilo que havia sido criado, para que com isso, houvesse liberdade e prazer para sempre. Esta função mediatória de Adão pode ser identificada como um governante real sobre a criação. M.W. Jacobes diz que, “a raça humana teria o domínio sobre a terra e sobre cada ramo da criação animal [...] Seria monarca sobre a terra, possui-la-ia e usá-la-ia para o próprio benefício e para a glória de Deus.” (Jacobes 1866, 78).

Este conceito de realeza é interessante dentro da visão da soberania mediada, pois o representante de Deus na criação, aquele que era portador de sua imagem e domínio, deveria agir como um verdadeiro rei, em um sentido pleno e justo deste ofício. A função real nos mostra o peso que o mediador carregava, pois, um rei obediente abençoaria e faria com que tudo e todos prosperassem, mas a desobediência traria morte e escravidão aos seus semelhantes e a todo o cosmos.

Portanto a soberania mediada abarca tanto o conceito de que a humanidade exerce sua função como um executor das leis estabelecidas

pelo soberano Deus e também aparece como um primeiro ministro na governabilidade da criação. Representante e vice gerente são atributos complementares na visão mediatória da humanidade sobre a terra.

O texto de Gênesis que nos mostra as responsabilidades de Adão também nos aponta a intensidade agravante de uma possível escolha errada: “E o SENHOR Deus lhe deu esta ordem: De toda árvore do jardim comerás livremente, mas da árvore do conhecimento do bem e do mal não comerás; porque, no dia em que dela comeres, certamente morrerás” (Gên. 2:16–17). Uma das marcas destes versículos é justamente o contraste proposto pelo autor entre morte e vida. O mediador era livre para comer, mas não um autônomo moral, ou seja, sua decisão era moralmente subjugada pela lei estabelecida pelo Criador. Ao demonstrar honra através da obediência a humanidade faria com que toda a criação experimentasse eternamente desta liberdade baseada na vida e no amor, mas a desonra e a desobediência causariam a morte, que dominaria sobre toda criatura deste mundo de Deus.

O primeiro Adão fez com que a maldição divina sobre tudo fosse instaurado, a morte passou a reinar e um reino parasita liderado por Satanás começou a expandir sua atuação por sobre a criação de Deus. Houve um macular da soberania mediada, o rei humano, o mediador entre Deus e o cosmos: Adão, havia pecado! Com isso, o vínculo de amor e vida passa a ser de morte e escravidão, mas graças ao Soberano criador este vínculo não é quebrado, pois é revelado ao homem que um mediador perfeito restabeleceria a soberania mediada e administraria o cosmos com grande justiça e paz. O vínculo de amor vida é mantido pela promessa daquele que reinaria sobre o cosmos de uma maneira que o primeiro Adão não havia conseguido reinar: o protoevangelho é revelado ao ser humano (Gên. 3:15).

A missão de Deus utilizando seu mediador como meio de graça ao mundo todo é apontada por toda a história bíblica por meio de seus

personagens, que sempre prefiguraram o messias esperado. O reinar de Deus sobre sua criação através da humanidade é visto sempre nos mediadores falhos, que herdaram o erro do primeiro Adão, mas que eram sombras do mediador perfeito que viria: o segundo Adão.

Deus nunca quebrou seu desejo de abençoar sua criação, mesmo após o pecado, por isso, se utilizou de homens pecadores ungidos por ele para que a terra sentisse um pouco do amor que havia perdido e que só o Rei futuro poderia oferecer novamente. A soberania mediada na administração do reino celestial continuou após o pecado de forma limitada, contrapondo o reino parasita das trevas. Com a chegada do reino de Cristo, que foi inaugurado a partir do início de sua obra redentora (obediência, morte e ressurreição) a soberania mediada foi restaurada de forma proléptica e hoje é executada pela igreja sob o seu comando espiritual e moral, até o dia que completará esta obra ao voltar do céu para reinar pessoalmente em um novo céu e uma nova terra.

O apóstolo Paulo fala sobre este tema em sua carta aos Romanos no capítulo cinco, quando compara a atitude e decisão do primeiro com o segundo Adão. “Entretanto, reinou a morte desde Adão até Moisés, mesmo sobre aqueles que não pecaram à semelhança da transgressão de Adão, o qual prefigurava aquele que havia de vir” (Rom. 5:14). A morte passou a reinar por sobre a criação divina, o administrador que deveria promover vida e amor com seu serviço infelizmente trouxe o reino da escuridão, que escravizou os seres criados. “Todavia, não é assim o dom gratuito como a ofensa; porque, se, pela ofensa de um só, morreram muitos, muito mais a graça de Deus e o dom pela graça de um só homem, Jesus Cristo, foram abundantes sobre muitos” (Rom. 5:15).

Neste trecho da carta aos Romanos (Rom 5:12–21) o apóstolo Paulo faz um jogo de opostos entre o primeiro e o segundo Adão. Algumas palavras são colocadas como comparações entre aquele que trouxe a morte

e o que despertou a vida novamente. O vocábulo “reinar” (βασιλεύω) e seus derivados aparecem como uma chave no entendimento do que a criação experimentou e tem experimentado a partir do contraste entre Adão e Cristo.

É de suma importância este verbete utilizado pelo apóstolo, pois a ideia teológica que reinar carrega nos escritos bíblicos é repleta de autoridade e de supremacia, por isso, esta palavra está constantemente associada com a soberania de Deus sobre sua criação e também com a soberania mediada da humanidade.

Uma das primeiras implicações deste reinar que o texto nos revela é que por causa do primeiro Adão a morte passou a exercer a autoridade sobre todo ser criado, pois todos passaram a morrer, ou seja, o reinar mortal foi estabelecido no reino de Deus. “Entretanto reinou a morte desde Adão até Moises, mesmo sobre aqueles que não pecaram à semelhança da transgressão de Adão, o qual prefigurava aquele que havia de vir” (Rom. 5:14).

A soberania mediada fixada em uma aliança de amor e vida foi trincada pela desobediência do primeiro Adão, por isso, a morte assumiu a autoridade de reinar por sobre a terra. O contraste com este “reinar” é apresentado no versículo dezessete do mesmo capítulo, no qual Paulo fala do “dom da justiça”, que por meio da graça é imputada ao homem pelos méritos da obediência do segundo Adão, e com isso, o reinar vivificante volta a ser possível em toda a criação.

O reino da morte é condenado no Messias, que traz consigo o reino da vida, este é delegado para que seja aplicado no cuidado administrativo sobre toda criação por aqueles que pela fé se renderam a Cristo. Uma citação de Cranfield pode nos ajudar a compreender esta nova esfera da realidade:

A eficácia e a generosidade inexprimíveis da graça divina são tais que isso não há de causar simplesmente a substituição do reino da morte pelo reino da vida, mas há de fazer realmente com que aqueles que recebem a sua riqueza, se tornem eles mesmos reis, ou seja, vivam a vida verdadeiramente régia projetada por Deus para o homem (Cranfield 2009, 121).

A proposta bíblica entendida por Cranfield é que a humanidade pode produzir vida e amor novamente por sobre a terra, por meio de sua soberania mediada reestabelecida de forma consistente, graças ao ato justificador de Cristo que venceu a morte e restaurou o direito da vida reinar novamente.

Morte e vida, ofensa e justiça, desobediência e obediência são palavras que nos mostram a importância do plano de Deus com toda sua criação. A humanidade responsável em administrar a soberania mediada por sobre a terra foi capaz de através de Adão trazer sofrimento e morte, mas por meio de Cristo justiça e vida. Hoje os dois reinos ainda convivem juntamente por sobre a criação, como destaca o teólogo Santo Agostinho, as duas cidades se contrapõe reinando ou com a morte ou com a vida.

A missão de Deus para com a humanidade é que está cada vez mais propague o reinar da vida em um culminar do próprio Cristo vivificando todas as coisas em um lugar onde não existirá mais a morte. A missão de Deus na história sempre foi abençoar todas as nações por meio da soberania mediada, ou seja, pelas atitudes humanas no administrar da criação.

Atualmente a igreja é chamada a levar este reinar vivificador por onde passar, por meio do comando de Cristo, sem se omitir em cada contexto em que o Senhor a colocar. É dever do povo de Deus lutar contra toda desolação produzida pelo reinar da morte, assim, o cristão hoje se posiciona radicalmente contra a opressão, a escravidão, a pobreza, a exploração, a desonestidade, a malícia, a corrupção, o desmatamento,



a matança desenfreada de animais e muitas outras formas de morte por meio de sua atitude diferenciada produzida pelo Espírito Santo. A igreja é a voz profética no mundo atual anunciando e vivenciando um reino de vida, justiça e paz, que em breve será absoluto na força do Messias que retornará.

### **3. A Igreja e o Reino de Deus**

Ainda existe muita confusão e também fortes divergências a respeito do que é o Reino de Deus, qual a missão da igreja dentro deste Reino e qual é o papel individual do cristão no mundo de hoje. Esta pergunta pode parecer de cunho unicamente teórico, mas se a desconsiderarmos acabaremos caminhando por sobre a terra completamente perdidos, pois a resposta que damos a ela, conscientemente ou inconscientemente, reflete diretamente na maneira que vivemos e atuamos em nosso contexto local. Por isso, respondê-la de forma simplista ou errada impulsionará o ser humano para um estilo de vida simplista e corrompido.

Uma perspectiva que geralmente encontramos dentro do campo teológico é uma tendência ao escapismo por parte do indivíduo cristão, e por consequência de uma comunidade toda, por um entendimento equivocadamente “espiritualizado” e ou extremamente futurista do Reino de Deus e da missão da igreja. Comumente é possível encontrar o pensamento dicotomista: o mundo é mau e o crente não se envolve com ele, pois aguarda e anseia desesperadamente pelo céu futuro. Este tipo de mentalidade pode até parecer espiritual, mas acarreta em sérios problemas de omissão por parte da igreja em sua verdadeira tarefa delegada por Deus.

O conceito de igreja como uma entidade “separada” do mundo se presta a toda sorte de falsas interpretações. Num extremo está a posição em que a separação não passa de uma simples distinção epistemológica: a igreja sabe que foi reconciliada

com Deus, e o mundo não sabe; e isto é tudo. No outro extremo está a posição segundo a qual a separação é um abismo intransponível entre duas cidades que somente se comunicam entre si em termos de uma cruzada por parte de uma para conquistar a outra (Padilla 1992, 47).

Na América Latina como um todo, o cristianismo de maneira geral tem se despertado mais recentemente quanto às responsabilidades atuais do povo de Deus, dentro do reino celestial e de uma forma não mais escapista, ao contrário, com um desejo de atuar em mazelas políticas, sociais e intelectuais. Teólogos têm se levantado e questionado a importância de uma igreja atuante em um contexto de pobreza, escravidão, preconceito e manipulações. Seus discursos passam por uma definição mais profunda do que seja o Reino de Deus, a missão da igreja e as responsabilidades individuais.

O propósito primeiro das *missiones ecclesiae* não pode, por consequência, ser simplesmente a implantação de igrejas e a salvação de almas; pelo contrário, ele deverá ser o serviço à *missio Dei*, representar a Deus no e diante do mundo (...) Em sua missão, a igreja é testemunha da plenitude da promessa do reino de Deus e é partícipe da batalha contínua entre esse reinado e os poderes das trevas e do mal (Bosch 2002, 220).

Ao entender que em Cristo a soberania mediada é plenamente restaurada, ou seja, a responsabilidade e a capacitação de administrar e cuidar da criação de uma forma correta e abençoadora é retomada pela obra redentora de Jesus, a igreja torna-se participante ativa desta administração, já que é súdita do Rei que hoje reina do céu por sobre toda a terra e se utiliza de seu povo para agir (João 14:12).

A igreja tem como missão integral uma responsabilidade de exercer a servidão de Cristo como aquele que levou libertação, cura e restauração ao povo enquanto presente aqui. Uma atuação em esferas sociais, culturais e políticas ganham uma dimensão importante para o povo de Jesus, já que este esteve ativamente atuando neste mundo e chamou seus discípulos para que também atuassem.

A missão histórica de Jesus somente pode ser entendida em conexão com o Reino de Deus. Sua missão aqui e agora é a manifestação do Reino como uma realidade presente em sua própria pessoa e ação, em sua pregação do evangelho e em suas obras de justiça e misericórdia (Padilla 2005, 56).

O Reino estabelecido por Deus em sua criação, firmado por uma aliança de amor e vida com seu mediador administrativo, Adão, e que por causa de um mau cuidado e uma decisão errada acabou trazendo morte e um reino parasita de trevas por sobre a terra, hoje pode e deve ser administrado de uma forma boa novamente. O reino de Cristo, sua esfera de domínio por sobre o reino cósmico, estabelecido na restauração da soberania mediada, agora é expandido quando os cristãos, de forma a praticar a justiça e a paz, atuam em suas áreas para qual foram chamados. Nesta sua atuação, os súditos do reino, integrantes da igreja de Deus, levam a realidade deste reino por sobre a terra, e assim, acuam o reino das trevas e quebram suas amarras de destruição. “Também eu te digo que tu és Pedro, e sobre esta pedra edificarei a minha igreja, e as portas do inferno não prevalecerão contra ela” (Mat 16:18).

O reino de Cristo é entendido de uma forma atual e escatológica, assim seus integrantes já hoje exercem sua missão enquanto apontam para uma realidade plena e futura. Quando a igreja cumpre seu papel dentro deste reino de justiça e paz o mundo todo acaba sentindo esses efeitos, que

trazem libertação física e espiritual, ao mesmo tempo em que almeja uma plenitude dessas libertações anunciadas e prometidas pelo Rei e mediador, que afirmou que um dia retornaria fisicamente para um estabelecer completo de seu reino sobre a terra.

A igreja, por isso, tem uma missão extremamente urgente e atual em cada contexto em que está inserida dentro do Reino de Deus em sua luta por uma contenção cada vez maior do reino das trevas. A responsabilidade de cuidar do cosmos hoje está delegada aos súditos do Rei que do céu comanda sua igreja. O Reino carrega seus ideais de justiça e combate tudo quanto seja oposto a ele. Aonde a igreja chega a libertação plena do homem deve chegar, conseqüentemente o Reino de Cristo é estabelecido através desta nova dimensão espiritual e física, que com isto começa a florescer. Esta libertação carrega em si uma esperança futura de uma total realidade de liberdade sem morte ou pobreza, seja ela de qualquer estirpe, a igreja hoje atua como forma de amenizar os efeitos da maldição que ainda se encontra por sobre a terra.

Desta maneira nenhum cristão pode fugir de sua responsabilidade de atuar hoje na luta contra as forças das trevas. Sua responsabilidade é de combater a injustiça em todas as esferas contrapondo-a com os ideais do Reino de Cristo. A igreja é um agente de transformação social, político, intelectual e espiritual, que atua com o papel de tirar de sua escravidão do corpo e da alma todo aquele que necessita. Quando o cristão de maneira individual trabalha, está cumprindo sua responsabilidade, a igreja se faz presente e o reino é chegado! A soberania mediada é a missão de Deus para o homem individualmente e coletivamente (igreja) para administrar a terra de uma forma justa e pacificada. Cristo reconquistou o direito de exercê-la e hoje a faz através dos súditos.

Afirmamos que Deus é tanto o Criador como o Juiz de todos os homens. Portanto, devemos partilhar da sua preocupação com a justiça e a reconciliação em toda a sociedade humana e com a libertação dos homens de todo tipo de opressão. Porque a humanidade foi feita à imagem de Deus, toda pessoa, não importa qual seja a sua raça, religião, cor, cultura, classe, sexo ou idade, tem uma dignidade intrínseca em razão da qual deve ser respeitada e servida, e não explorada. Também aqui manifestamos o nosso arrependimento, tanto pela nossa negligência quanto por às vezes termos considerado a evangelização e a preocupação social como mutuamente exclusivas. Embora a reconciliação com o ser humano não seja o mesmo que a reconciliação com Deus, nem a ação social seja evangelismo, nem a libertação política seja salvação, todavia afirmamos que tanto a evangelização como o envolvimento sócio-político são parte do nosso dever cristão (Stott 1975, 25).

Em nosso continente o clamor por transformação é latente, todos os dias nos deparamos com pessoas desesperadas em busca de uma solução para sua vida muitas vezes sem sentido ou sem esperança. A igreja na América Latina ainda está omissa com sua responsabilidade social e precisa de um despertar para cumprir a missão designada desde o início pelo Criador. A teologia latina ainda não amadureceu tanto quanto ainda pode e com certeza irá amadurecer, mas pelo menos está havendo uma consciência de que a teologia deve ser contextualizada e atingir as necessidades de cada localidade.

A igreja precisa responder as perguntas contextuais locais e enxergar uma diferença entre doutrina (absoluta e universal) e teologia (o desenvolvimento e a aplicação da doutrina) em sua esfera imediata de atuação. A proposta da soberania mediada é que cada indivíduo, que faz

parte do Reino de Deus e que foi chamado por Cristo para exercer um cuidado sobre a criação, deve responder a sua tarefa de uma maneira eficaz produzindo salvação integral do ser humano e da sua cultura.

Samuel Escobar notando a essência de um despertar na missão latina escreve:

Uma espiritualidade sem discipulado nos aspectos diários da vida (sociais, econômicos e políticos), é religiosidade e não cristianismo. De uma vez por todas, devemos rejeitar a falsa noção de que a preocupação com as implicações sociais do evangelho e as dimensões sociais do testemunho cristão resultam de uma falsa doutrina ou de uma ausência de convicção evangélica. Ao contrário, é o interesse pela integridade do Evangelho que nos motiva a acentuarmos a sua dimensão social (Bassham 1979, 237).

Sem dúvida Escobar tem algo importante a comunicar às igrejas na América Latina e no Brasil, que constantemente correm o risco de tornarem-se irrelevantes na sociedade caso não despertem para algumas realidades locais. À medida que a igreja cumpre sua missão, ela deve expressar o interesse de Deus por toda a vida do ser humano: “Eu vim para que tenham vida, e a tenham em abundância.”

Uma vida abundante só é possível através do Reino de Deus e de sua expansão até os mais extremos lugares da terra. A missão de Deus para o homem é que ele inserido na igreja leve esperança e transformação onde quer ela se manifeste por meio de sua administração correta de todas as esferas da criação: o agente de transformação tem como missão cuidar daquilo que lhe foi designado através da soberania mediada, ou seja, cuidar para que a justiça e a paz sejam estabelecidas.

## 4. Considerações finais

Só haverá um reavivamento na igreja concernente a sua responsabilidade social em aspectos gerais quando o plano de Deus para o seu povo for entendido de uma maneira consistente pelo indivíduo dentro de seu contexto local. É preciso um esclarecimento de qual é a responsabilidade do ser humano no atual momento histórico, para que ele possa de forma piedosa e ativa expandir o reino de Deus por meio de sua igreja local.

O ser humano só exercerá por ordem de Cristo a soberania mediada caso esta responsabilidade chegue ao seu coração e a sua mente, pois um entendimento errado de qual é o desejo de Jesus para seu povo atual produz uma comunidade mórbida e inoperante. Para que possa cuidar e administrar bem toda criação através do combate da corrupção, da opressão e de qualquer tipo de exploração seja de seres humanos ou não, o cristão precisa se desvincular de um ideal escapista da igreja e a compreendê-la como agente convocada e estabelecida para cuidar da criação de maneira justa e íntegra.

Na América Latina é latente o gemido de toda a criação como menciona o apóstolo Paulo em sua carta aos Romanos no capítulo oito. Somos um continente ainda alvo de muita exploração e residência de um povo humilde, que ainda hoje é usado como massa de manobra política nas mãos de poderosos de diversas vertentes políticas, econômicas, sociais e eclesiásticas.

A verdadeira igreja de Cristo foi chamada por Deus para que seu reino combata ferozmente todas estas marcas do reino parasita de Satanás. Cada ser humano resgatado por Jesus precisa entender que é sua responsabilidade administrar bem a criação e propor de forma plena a justiça em todos os campos em que atue, sejam espirituais ou físicos. A missão de Deus em nossa história é uma transformação total da criação,

que culminará em seu retorno trazendo consigo um novo céu e uma nova terra, mas que hoje já acontece de forma libertadora por meio de homens e mulheres, que entendem a soberania mediada e cumprindo a ordem de Cristo, capacitados pelo Espírito Santo chegam com a soberania do Reino onde Deus os leva!

Quando a igreja cumpre seu chamado para exercer a soberania mediada a terra se alegra e a corrupção é contida em todos os sentidos. O desafio é despertar o povo de Deus para servi-lo de forma viva e eficaz produzindo a libertação das criaturas oprimidas. Assim como Cristo libertou, seus filhos atualmente com o mesmo poder do Espírito devem realizar essa missão profética de libertação e transformação em seu contexto local! “Jesus, aproximando-se, falou-lhes, dizendo: Toda a autoridade me foi dada no céu e na terra. Ide, portanto, fazei discípulos de todas as nações, batizando-os em nome do Pai, e do Filho, e do Espírito Santo; ensinando-os a guardar todas as coisas que vos tenho ordenado. E eis que estou convosco todos os dias até à consumação do século.” (Mat 28:18–20).

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# Práctica De La Medicina Tradicional En La Comunidad Shipibo-Konibo De Cantagallo En El Contexto Del Covid-19: Un Acercamiento Desde La Perspectiva De La Misión Integral

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El presente trabajo de investigación titulado: “Práctica de la Medicina Tradicional en la comunidad Shipibo-konibo de Cantagallo en el contexto del Covid-19: Un acercamiento desde la perspectiva de la Misión Integral”, pretende acercarse al tema desde una lectura bíblica-misiológica, con la finalidad de evaluar la cosmovisión indígena y la evangélica en sus encuentros y desencuentros, y asimismo aportar lineamientos teológicos contextuales para los creyentes.

La práctica de la Medicina Tradicional (MT) presenta desafíos, porque muchos la relacionan con las prácticas chamánicas. No existe una línea clara que limite qué es aceptable o qué no lo es. Por otro lado, la MT les brinda a los indígenas “bienestar”, es decir, el “Jakon Jati”: el “Buen Vivir”. Por lo tanto, es necesario descubrir los puntos de encuentro y los de desencuentro analizando la cosmovisión cristiana y la cosmovisión Shipibo Konibo al usar la MT.

El tema de la MT presenta oportunidades para la iglesia evangélica, porque la MT indígena se ha juzgado generalmente como pagana o diabólica, sin hacer una evaluación responsable e informada de la etnomedicina indígena.

El trabajo de investigación se ha dividido en las siguientes secciones: Capítulo I. Práctica de la MT en la comunidad shipibo-konibo de Cantagallo: Está referido a la Etnografía de la étnia, describe aspectos de la organización social, económica, política, educativa, religiosa y sanitaria de la cultura. Asimismo, se enfoca en el proceso migratorio de los indígenas a la ciudad de Lima y la formación de la comunidad de Cantagallo.

Capítulo II. Dilemas Éticos de los Evangélicos de Cantagallo al usar la MT. Se analizará la cosmovisión Shipibo-Konibo y se hará una lectura de la cosmovisión bíblica sobre la salud y la enfermedad. Por otro lado, se reflexionará acerca de los encuentros y desencuentros del uso de la Medicina Tradicional con la ética cristiana, para discernir cuando podrían transigir los principios bíblicos, dado que hay una gran confusión.

Capítulo III. Medicina Tradicional: Un Acercamiento Bíblico Misiológico desde la perspectiva de la Misión Integral. Se reflexionará sobre: La Teología de la Misión Integral (TMI); el rol del Espíritu Santo en la MI; la MI de Jesús, quien se interesó por las necesidades físicas y espirituales del ser humano; asimismo se abordará el tema de la contextualización y

Misión Integral, finalmente se mostrarán los desafíos y oportunidades que presenta la MT a la Misión Integral.

La iglesia evangélica debe tomar ventaja de estos conocimientos, estableciendo lineamientos entre la compatibilidad que puede o no haber con las prácticas de la medicina tradicional; sin satanizar, pero tampoco aceptar todo acríticamente. El investigador del tema es un indígena shipibo-konibo, conocedor personal de la problemática de la salud y de la cosmovisión de su pueblo. La comunidad de Cantagallo no cuenta con un centro médico del Estado para atención primaria de los pobladores. Dada la emergencia por la pandemia del Covid-19, el uso de la medicina tradicional tomó fuerza y fue usada con éxito como un recurso alternativo.

En las iglesias evangélicas shipibas no se habla de la Práctica Médica Tradicional con relación al chamanismo. Los pastores nativos no tienen conocimiento de cómo orientar a su iglesia en lo relacionado a su cultura, ya que la enseñanza bíblica que recibieron fue conceptual. Los creyentes evangélicos han vivido entre la cosmovisión animista y la cristiana, lo cual ha generado un sincretismo religioso, y algunos vuelven a las prácticas chamánicas ancestrales.

Se asevera los beneficios que tiene la medicina tradicional para los shipibos como parte de la Misión Integral de la Iglesia en el contexto de la pandemia global del Covid-19, bajo los parámetros bíblico-teológicos evangélicos.

Uno de los problemas más álgidos de los indígenas es la baja calidad de atención médica y por ende la mala salud, lo que va relacionado a la economía, la exclusión de los derechos de pertenecer a un Estado y la pandemia del Covid-19, que podría devastar a los grupos étnicos de la amazonia por el olvido en que viven.

La iglesia evangélica nacional como institución religiosa no ofrece una alternativa a este problema de salud, por otro lado, se ha enseñado



que las prácticas médicas tradicionales son demoniacas, además existe un concepto de dualidad entre las necesidades físicas y espirituales, considerando la segunda la más importantes, no han tenido un interés por los problemas sociales de las comunidades.

Además, los recursos médicos se concentran en las ciudades, las iglesias evangélicas con mayores posibilidades de trabajar en conjunto con las iglesias nativas, generalmente no lo hacen, siendo indiferentes, además de condenar con desconocimiento cualquier práctica médica tradicional. Cotidianamente los creyentes se enfrentan a problemas de conciencia, pues no existen parámetros sobre cuáles prácticas son lícitas para los evangélicos y cuáles no lo son.

Se aplicó el método de Observación Participativa, se hizo uso de las Ciencias Sociales con un acercamiento teológico de las implicancias del “Evangelio Integral” en su esencia y los presupuestos misiológicos demostrados por el teólogo René Padilla y otros pensadores de la Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana (FTL).

La religión de los shipibos-konibos es “animista”, es decir creen que toda cosa animada o inanimada posee espíritus y que estos originan y gobiernan la mayor parte de los fenómenos naturales (lluvias, rayos, truenos, relámpagos etc.). Por otro lado, la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS) acota lo siguiente:

La cosmovisión supone un conjunto de elementos que determinan la forma que las diferentes culturas tienen de concebir el mundo y su lugar en él. Incluye su patrón de creencias, pensamientos, valores, prácticas, comunicaciones y comportamientos, las relaciones del individuo con los otros individuos, del individuo con la sociedad, con la naturaleza y con los seres espirituales (Ministerio de Salud 2002, 73).

El sistema de salud tiene que ver con su cosmovisión, con ideas, conceptos, creencias, mitos y procedimientos relativos a las enfermedades físicas, mentales o espirituales. Este conjunto de conocimientos explica las causas de las enfermedades y los procedimientos de diagnóstico, pronóstico, curación y prevención de las enfermedades. La antropóloga Clara Cárdenas, estudiosa de la cultura shipibo menciona lo siguiente sobre la MT:

Tratando de acercarnos a una identificación de la medicina tradicional shipibo-konibo a lo que preferimos llamar sistema médico shipibo-konibo, diremos que es el conjunto de conocimientos, prácticas y recursos, heredados por el grupo étnico de generación en generación para manejar la situación de salud y enfermedad; los que presentan la característica de estar enmarcados dentro de su cosmovisión y en relación con su ecosistema y antroposistema (Cardenas 1998, 171).

Es muy interesante saber cómo los pueblos indígenas a pesar de ser una cultura oral han podido conservar sus conocimientos colectivos de la medicina tradicional de forma agrupada a través del tiempo y de generación en generación.

Con la llegada del cristianismo a las comunidades nativas, la cosmovisión animista tuvo encuentros y desencuentros con la cosmovisión cristiana. Porque en la cosmovisión shipibo-konibo creen que existe un Dios “IBO”, “Dueño” de todas las cosas visibles e invisibles, pero que además existen otros pequeños “dioses o espíritus” de las plantas y animales, adoran o veneran al sol, la luna, las estrellas, los astros y constelaciones. El Dr. Tito Paredes en su libro: *El Evangelio: Un Tesoro en Vasijas de Barro*, dice lo siguiente respecto a la cosmovisión animista de los pueblos nativos:

La espiritualidad bíblica tiene una visión bien clara de la diferencia cualitativa entre el Dios creador y la criatura-

creación. Para la visión bíblica los cielos, la tierra y el mar, y todo lo que en ellos hay incluidos los seres humanos, son parte de la creación (Paredes 2000, 166).

Con la llegada de las misiones protestantes a este universo mágico-religioso-animista, el impacto del contacto con otra religión desconocida y foránea produjo que muchos de los evangélicos shipibos vivan una religiosidad sincrética entre el animismo y el cristianismo.

En el caso de la comunidad urbano-amazónica de Cantagallo, la influencia de la iglesia evangélica es mínima, ya que son solo el 5% de creyentes. Las prácticas chamánicas en dicha comunidad se han constituido como un fuente de ingreso económico para sobrevivir, por el interés que muestran los mestizos y extranjeros por las prácticas ancestrales en la capital. El Dr. Tito Paredes continua mencionando al respecto:

Un acercamiento a la evangelización debe tomar en cuenta no solo la situación socio estructural, sino también la cosmovisión de los pueblos autóctonos, es decir, su manera de ver el universo, su mundo, su vida, incluso su comunidad, familia y persona. El poblador autóctono no hace una separación entre lo espiritual y lo material, sino que, por el contrario, los percibe como algo integral, unido y continuo, de tal manera que a menudo su cosmovisión ha sido caracterizada como esencialmente religiosa. Todo lo que sucede en la naturaleza y en el cosmos está ligado a lo sobrenatural, al mundo de los espíritus. Por esta razón, la cosmovisión autóctona ha sido también caracterizada como animista (Paredes 2000, 142).

Por estas razones, desde la perspectiva de la Misión Integral, debemos proponer parámetros para discernir la compatibilidad o incompatibilidad con los principios bíblicos. Esto ayudará a evitar mayores confusiones entre

la cosmovisión cristiana y la shipibo-konibo. El mencionado antropólogo estaba lanzando el reto de no ir contra la unidad del ser humano al hacer una separación entre lo material y espiritual

No existe una línea clara que limite o diga qué es aceptable y qué no lo es, en relación con el uso de la Medicina Tradicional desde la óptica cristiana. No se ha establecido lineamientos entre lo que puede o no puede ser una práctica médica saludable, sin demonizar o aceptar todo acríticamente. El apóstol Pablo nos advierte lo siguiente: “Examinadlo todo; retened lo bueno.” (1 Tes. 5:21).

El uso de la Medicina Tradicional contribuye al logro de los Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio (ODM) como: Disminuir las brechas sanitarias, muerte materna (MM), muerte infantil (MI), VIH, desnutrición (DN), agua segura. Institucionalizar la Identidad Cultural (IC) como derecho. Asimismo, conocer y hacer respetar el convenio 169 de la OIT en relación a la Medicina Tradicional a través de talleres organizados por la Iglesia cristiana, invitando a expositores que conocen esta temática.

Hemos llegado a las siguientes conclusiones:

- a. El tema de la Práctica de la Medicina Tradicional es un tema controversial, porque algunos creyentes están de acuerdo con ellas, y otros por el contrario las ven como diabólicas, dado que, en su cosmovisión animista, tanto la enfermedad como la cura están estrechamente relacionadas a esferas espirituales-demoniacas.
- b. La iglesia evangélica de indígenas migrantes de la comunidad de Cantagallo debe tomar ventaja de los conocimientos de la Medicina Tradicional, estableciendo una teología bíblica indígena, sin satanizar, ni aceptar todo acríticamente.
- c. Algunos creyentes están confundidos respecto al uso de la Medicina Tradicional, volviendo a las prácticas chamánicas que es opuesta

- al cristianismo, otros, la usan sin problemas de conciencia porque pueden discernir que es buena y necesaria.
- d. Es importante hallar los puntos de “encuentros y desencuentros” en el uso de la Medicina Tradicional, analizando desde la mirada de la cosmovisión cristiana y la animista de la cultura shipibo-konibo.
  - e. Se ha encontrado que muchos evangélicos shipibos viven un “sincretismo religioso” entre el cristianismo y animismo, debido a la falta de conocimiento bíblico sobre la Teología de la Creación desde el pensamiento indígena.
  - f. El uso de la Medicina Tradicional en la comunidad de Cantagallo fue determinante durante la pandemia del Covid-19, para que la mayoría de los pobladores se salvaran de morir; de unos dos mil habitantes, solo fallecieron tres personas.
  - g. Durante la cuarentena de la comunidad de Cantagallo por el Covid-19, muchas iglesias cristianas, el Comando Matico y diversas instituciones civiles, brindaron ayuda solidaria a los pobladores, lo cual fue vital para que subsistieran durante la inmovilización impuesta por el gobierno.
  - h. Se hace necesario presentar el Evangelio Integral al hombre y a la mujer de la cultura shipibo, tomando en cuenta su visión holística de la vida, para que puedan tener un encuentro auténtico con Jesucristo que cambie la cosmovisión animista y los libre del temor a los espíritus.
  - i. Los migrantes shipibo-konibo de la comunidad de Cantagallo, conservan su cultura ancestral y su cosmovisión animista en la ciudad de Lima, esto se observa en sus diversas manifestaciones artísticas y culturales.

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