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Editorial

Conspectus 37 marks a year since the journal's formal accreditation by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training. The past year has been characterized by tremendous growth for the journal and its team. This volume launches with two articles on translation and orality, followed by one on historical theology, and ends with three that continue SATS's 2023 academic focus on ethics.

Conspectus 37 Articles

In his article, "The Use of Translational English in Theological Compositions for More Effective Communication: Some Basic Considerations," Ernst R. Wendland highlights the communicative difficulties that arise when theological literature is presented to non-first-language readers. The author offers translational English, an original or re-composed text more readily rendered in a non-Western language, as a strategic tool to address some of these difficulties.

The topic of orality is explored further by the article, "Oral Theology in the African Church: An Examination of the Divine Attributes in the Song *Yehowa* by Suzzy and Matt" by Isaac Boaheng. The author stresses the value of oral material in the theological shaping of churches in Africa by analyzing a significant song by the Ghanaian duo Suzzy and Matt. While acknowledging the beauty and utility of oral theologies, Boaheng argues that these should always be weighed against the Scriptures in order to faithfully serve their various contexts.

In his article, "The Rationale for Augustine's Development of the Doctrine of Predestination," Dumisani Member Ngobeni surveys the translated works of Saint Augustine to assess his influence on the theological development of the doctrine of predestination. Ngobeni especially considers Augustine's exegetical approach to Romans and the influence of the Pelagian controversy, arguing that these two factors significantly shaped his theological thought.

Next is the article, "Reconciliation in South Africa: Recent Contributions and the Part African Pentecostalism Can Play," written by Bambo Miti. The author stresses the need for the religious sector to play a leading role in the socio-political rebuilding of South Africa. Miti suggests that African Pentecostalism has much potential as a transformative agent in post-Apartheid South Africa.

In his article, "Maintaining an Evangelical Faith in the Face of a Decadent Culture of Democracy," Kelebogile Thomas Resane identifies the pressures of constitutionalism and the influence of secularism as significant driving forces in the creation of a decadent culture in which God has been unsettled from public spaces. In light of the challenges faced by evangelicals in this context, primarily in the areas of church governance and family, Resane proffers a re-emphasis on three key doctrines, namely, the doctrine of the Trinity, human depravity, and a high view of the Bible.

In the last article, "Which Way to *Shalom*? A Theological Exploration of the Yoruba and Western Foundations for Ethics and Development," Wole Adgebile employs a comparative technique to compare Yoruba and Western views on ethics and well-being. By using the biblical idea of *shalom* as a measure, Adegbile argues that the Yoruba idea of *àlàáfíà* (peace) aligns more closely with this concept than Western views of wellbeing.

Finally, the volume concludes with three book reviews. Lewis R. Polzin reviews Robert Falconer's book, *Embodied Afterlife: The Hope of an Immediate Resurrection,* Ali Mati reviews *The Holy Spirit in African Christianity*, edited by

David K. Ngaruiya and Rodney L. Reed, and Desmond Henry reviews Matthew Burden's *Who We Were Meant to Be: Rediscovering Our Identity as God's Royal Priesthood*.

New Editorial Board Member

On behalf of the Editorial Board chairperson, Dr. Desmond Henry, I am honored to welcome a new member to the board: Dr. Irene Banda is joining the *Conspectus* Editorial Board from April 2024. Dr. Banda holds a Ph.D. from the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies and Middlesex University, UK. She straddles the theological and financial worlds, working towards poverty reduction by serving in and alongside various institutions. She is also well-versed in the area of marketplace ministry. Welcome, Dr. Banda. We look forward to serving with you.

Celebrating Dan Lioy

Since 2020, Prof. Dan Lioy fulfilled both the role of Content Editor and Book Review Editor (alongside Dr. George Coon). Following his recent retirement from the South African Theological Seminary, Prof. Lioy's time on the Editorial Team has come to an end. To our esteemed colleague, thank you for years of faithful service; your theological and strategic sharpness has been a gift to us, and your high work ethic has left an indelible mark on the team and board. We are grateful for you and honored that you have committed to serve on the Editorial Board going forward.

New Content Editor

In light of the retirement of our colleague, Prof. Dan Lioy, *Conspectus* has appointed a new Content Editor in the person of Mr. Izaak J. L. Connoway. Mr. Connoway has been exceptional as the journal's Copy Editor over the last year and his dedication to excellence and theological purity has made him the stand-out candidate for the Content Editor position. Colleague, welcome to the role. We pray for you as you take on new responsibilities amid a busy Ph.D. journey.

In Memoriam: Batanayi Manyika

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Dr. Batanayi Manyika on Friday, 22 March. Dr. Manyika served as the *Conspectus* Editor from 2019 to 2021 and remained a dedicated Editorial Board member until his passing. Much of the journal's restructuring occurred under his leadership and he played a pivotal role in its accreditation. He steered the journal with vision, passion, and integrity and was a friend to many of our authors and board members. We grieve his untimely passing and thank God for his passion for the Bible, the gospel, and the church. Our deepest condolences to Bat's loved ones, especially his wife Vanesha and mother Rhoda.

I wish to conclude by thanking our contributors, the Editorial Board, the Review Board, the Editorial Team, and the Seminary for the successful publication of this issue. As we bid good friends farewell and welcome new ones to the table, may the work produced herein inspire, comfort, strengthen, and deepen us in the knowledge of our Lord and his gift of a living hope and eternal inheritance (1 Peter 1:3–4).

In Christ,
Dr. Cornelia van Deventer
Editor

The Use of Translational English in Theological Compositions for More Effective Communication: Some Basic Considerations

Ernst R. Wendland
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Abstract

This pedagogical study seeks to address the practical problem of communication in English when composing or providing theological literature for non-first-language readers. This includes materials on important biblical topics, current teaching resources, or Bible translations to be used as a source text. This article identifies some major problem areas that have been identified for composing theological works. It also proposes some strategies for using translational English to deal with them. A translational English text is an original or re-composed text that is not only more understandable in English but also more readily rendered in a non-Western language (e.g., Chichewa). At the end of the article, the reader has a chance to apply these principles and procedures. They are supplied with a short sample text from a recent popular missiological book, intended for translation in Malawi, to critique. The aim is to foster a frank discussion of these issues and to encourage concerted efforts either to develop new or to seek out existing literature that will communicate more effectively—that is, with greater ease and overall comprehension, whether orally or in writing.

https://www.sats.ac.za/conspectus/
This article: **https://www.sats.ac.za/conspectus/translational-english-theological**
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Keywords
Theological composition, communication, translation, Africa, English

About the Author
Ernst R. Wendland earned a B.A. in Biblical Languages from Northwestern College (USA), an M.A. in Linguistics and a Ph.D. in African Languages and Literature from the University of Wisconsin, and a Master of Sacred Theology from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Ernst lived in Zambia from 1962 until his retirement in 2022 from his teaching position at Lusaka Lutheran Seminary (since 1968). A former UBS Translation Consultant in Zambia, he still serves (since 1999) as Professor Extraordinary in the Department of Ancient Studies at Stellenbosch University and as Adjunct Professor (thesis supervisor-examiner) at South African Theological Seminary and three other graduate schools. Ernst is on the editorial/review board of several academic journals. His research and writing interests include various aspects of Bible translation as well as structural, stylistic, poetic, and rhetorical studies in biblical texts and the Bantu languages of South-Central Africa.

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1. Introduction

This study is the product of my thoughtful consideration of the theory and practice of translation along with its application to the communication setting and circumstances of South-Central Africa.[1] The aim is to compose a communicative text that will best serve the needs and capacities of a specific primary receptor (or consumer) group. Often, such a text will be a meaning-oriented, *functional* equivalence version in a local language (Nida and de Waard 1986). This means that our translation efforts will be directed toward reproducing in this receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message in terms of the semantic *content* and the pragmatic *aims* of the original text. These parameters would be determined by the situational context and applied by using the linguistic forms that are most natural, even idiomatic, in the vernacular language.

The activity of translation is one important type of communicative activity, but in this article, I want to take a step back in the overall message transmission process to consider the various *source texts* that are often employed in theology and related disciplines. There are two important questions to consider. First, how easily can they be understood by non-mother-tongue speakers? Second, how readily can they be expressed in a non-Western language? Thus, I will focus on the challenge of preparing translation-oriented adaptations of Christian literature (from Bible tracts to theological textbooks) in a source language, like English. (Similar problems ought to be found in, for example, Afrikaans, Portuguese, or Spanish.) This process of re-composition should be the first step taken in the process of producing any meaningful rendering in another language. Thus, if the original author does not take it upon himself to write in a simplified, straightforward manner, then it will be left to the teacher or translator first to convert the message into such a form before they can begin to translate meaningfully and produce a natural expression of the text in the receptor language.

It is a fundamental principle of composition literature that authors, no matter what type of literature they are producing, must continually keep their potential readers in mind as they progress. This is the only way to ensure the effective communication of the desired message. Thus, it is essential for those who are developing theological materials for use here in Africa to shape their message specifically to suit the specific needs of their primary readership. This is true, whether the message will be received in English or translated into one of the vernacular languages. Here I am not thinking so much of the *content* of the message, which centers on the timeless, unchangeable Good News of salvation through Christ Jesus. Rather, it is the *method* of bringing this living message in a way that is most relevant and understandable to people today that I have in mind. I believe that to convey this message most effectively in a non-Western setting, authors will need to significantly alter and adapt the style and manner of writing that they were accustomed to using in the West, when addressing those who share their own culture and theological background.

To fill this need, this article provides some steps for simplifying English so that African readers can comprehend it more easily, especially those leaders who may depend on such material to carry out their ministry. In the following pages, I will describe and illustrate some practical guidelines that will hopefully serve to aid in the composition or adaptation of texts

1. This article is an abridged and updated version of a textbook that I prepared for use in the publications department of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa and at Lusaka Lutheran Seminary (1974). Half a century of seminary teaching and Bible translating has revealed many various difficulties when communication via English as experienced by students, translators, and receptor groups. These were primarily adults living in Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. I thank the anonymous reviewers and the editors for their corrections and suggested improvements.

in the form of *translational*[2] English.[3] By this I mean a style that is not only restructured and simplified to increase the understanding of English readers but also, more importantly, a form of English that more readily lends itself to an accurate and meaningful translation into a local African language. The potential range of source materials is vast. These could include theological textbooks, sermons, Bible studies, tracts, topical journals, newsletters, popular Christian literature, transcripts of podcasts or radio shows, and even the Bible itself.

2. Analysis and Expansion

2.1 Analysis of the persons, events, qualifiers, and relations

To start with, there is a set of procedures one can follow when analyzing an English source text to render it more *translatable* into a receptor text (see Nida & Taber 1982, ch. 3):

First, transform as many as possible of the event nouns (E) of the source text into verbal constructions that can serve as the central core of simple (kernel) clauses one event per kernel clause; (e.g., salvation > save). Then make the relationships of all animate participants (P) and inanimate objects (O) to every Event explicit (visible) within each clause as subject/agents, objects, and adjunct nouns (e.g., *Christ* saved us). Next, make sure the relationship of all qualifiers (Q, e.g., adjectives and adverbs) to participants and/or the central Event Nouns of a kernel clause are clearly indicated. Finally, check to see that all the relations (R) are explicitly expressed to link the kernel clauses to each other within every paragraph of the source text. This will involve a careful analysis of all conjunctions (e.g., although, since, in order to) and prepositional phrases. Possessive pronouns (e.g., my, his, their) and genitive (i.e., of) constructions also need to be made explicit. (E.g., his death > he died, hardness of heart > he is stubborn).

The resultant transformed text will probably sound more "redundant" to first-language speakers since the implicit meaning has been stated more explicitly than is necessary for them. The process whereby such redundancy (overt content) is built into a text involves what are termed *expansions*. There are two basic types of expansion: *syntactical* (form) and *semantic* (lexical).

2.2 Syntactical expansions

Some of the more common *syntactical* expansions, which build upon the principles listed above, are as follows:

1) Recast *abstract* nouns that represent events as finite verbs. This necessitates making the personal participants (the actor, object, experiencer, or goal) explicit through the use of nouns and pronouns. (E.g., his goodness > God is good.)
2) Recast *passive* verbs as *active* ones. This usually requires that the implicit participants be made explicit. (E.g., we are justified > God justifies[4] us.)

2 In technical terms, *translational* English would be an example of *intra*linguistic translation, which refers to the transforming of a source text in one language into a different text in the same language. The result is often termed paraphrasing, or rewording. This is to be distinguished from an interlinguistic translation, which refers to the rendering of a source text from one language into a *different* language. This terminology derives from the seminal article by Roman Jakobson (1959, 233).

3 Some resources that inspired the development of translational English include Azar and Hagen (2021), Barnwell (2022a; 2022b), Björkman (2013), Chaplin (1966), de Jong (2020), Hibbs and Reilly (2018), Lachance (2023), Loewen (1981), Nida and Taber (1982), Nida and de Waard (1986), Pierson, Dickerson, and Scott (2010), Smith (2022), Wendland (1998, 2018), and Wonderly (1968).

4 The verb *justify* may need to be simplified (e.g., judges us as righteous).

3) Identify all participants unambiguously by substituting noun forms for pronouns in cases where the use of the latter leaves the antecedent ambiguous or not quickly identifiable, especially when writing direct or indirect speech. (E.g., he said that he already gave *him* the money > he said that he already gave *his father* the money.)
4) Clarify the objects and events that are associated with *abstract noun*s. (E.g., know the truth > know the true message.)
5) Indicate ambiguous genitive (of) relationships more specifically. (E.g., the gift of God> the blessing that God gives.)
6) Fill out any ellipses. (E.g., he didn't want to > … *go* with me to town.)

2.3 Semantic expansions

The most common *semantic* expansions may be carried out in three different ways. As illustrated below, these various semantic or lexical expansions are often employed when cultural and specialized or other technical information is present in the source text.

1) *Classifiers* can be used whenever an unfamiliar word needs some extra (redundant) meaning attached to it so that the reader can know the function of the word. (E.g., *town* Nazareth, linen *cloth*, *religious group* Pharisees, Jordan *river*.)
2) *Descriptive substitutes* involve the use of explanatory phrases or clauses to describe the function of the object or event in question. (E.g., synagogue > Jewish teaching house, crucify > put to death by nailing a person to a wooden cross, Temple > large worship house of the Jews.)
3) *Semantic restructuring* brings out the fuller meaning to prevent misunderstanding. (E.g., I am a *jealous* God > I am a God who demands that my people love nothing else more than me.)

The above is a brief survey of some of the more common techniques that are used to increase redundancy and prevent overloading a message. In the next section, a variety of lexical adjustments are described that aim to increase the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the communication process, whether oral or written. The goal is to produce meaningful texts of high quality that also communicate more successfully with those whose first language is not English.

3. Using a Translational Vocabulary

Different testing procedures have shown that vocabulary-related factors tend to produce relatively great difficulty for inexperienced readers, while factors related to sentence structure and grammar cause problems even for advanced readers. The vocabulary of persons with limited knowledge of English, unless they continue their learning by furthering their education or by extensive reading, remains restricted to the words they hear and use in their immediate sociocultural group. As a result, they cannot access the full lexical resources of the language, and indeed they often experience great difficulty in correctly understanding the oral or written speech of those outside their educational class or who are less restricted in their geographical movement. This being the case, it is useful for writers to keep in mind certain principles of vocabulary usage as they develop materials in translational English for such a reading constituency. Note that these guidelines and the examples used may need to be modified in keeping with the local receptor community for whom they are intended, whether in English or another vernacular language, like Chichewa (Malawi),[5] Chibemba (Zambia), or Chishona (Zimbabwe), the major languages of Sout-East Africa.

5 Chichewa has many second-language speakers in all three countries, making it a lingua franca of the area.

3.1 Potential problem points

First, one must learn to recognize and classify certain potential problem points as far as vocabulary is concerned. Then, one should try either to avoid these when writing if possible or to adapt them to constructions that are easier to process conceptually. The following is a listing of the more common types of potential problem points.

3.1.1 Theological terms

Many words and expressions have been retained in our religious literature because, for theologically educated readers at least, they are assumed to preserve specific biblical meanings that parallel those of the corresponding words in the original Hebrew and Greek. To the untrained reader, however, many of these theological terms have little or no meaning until they are carefully explained. (E.g., righteousness, justification, grace, propitiation, sanctification, inspiration, contrition.) Another problem is that, over time, some of these formerly religious words have changed in common use to mean something different from what they originally denoted. (E.g., justify, believe, charity, grace, cross.)

3.1.2 Words that have special meanings in religious contexts

Some words are well known, but their biblical or religious meaning differs from their ordinary meaning, which might confuse people. These words include calling God *jealous*, references to the *election* of God's people or *visiting* the iniquity, and using *ashes* to signify repentance, *saints* for ordinary believers, or *church* for a congregation in worship.

3.1.3 Culturally distinctive terms

These are words that name objects and events peculiar to the culture of biblical peoples but are known today only to persons who have been educated on the Ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman background of the Bible. (E.g., Pharisee, Passover, synagogue, cubit, talent, Baal, camel). Terms that are characteristic of a modern Western way of life may be just as difficult to understand for those who have never experienced or even heard of these. (E.g., freezer, motel/lodge, legislature, internet, insurance, basketball, sidewalk, gym, escalator, shopping mall, satellite.)

3.1.4 Words peculiar to a certain dialect

Certain words of a widely spoken language such as English may be peculiar to or used only by people from specific countries or areas. This can lead to difficulty in understanding or complete misunderstanding when the same words are used in a different area. (E.g., corn, truck, church service, can, flashlight, movie, gas, trunk, baseball.)

3.1.5 Obsolete and archaic words

Some English words that were once in common use (and made memorable in the King James Bible) have become archaic and now are seldom, if ever, utilized except in religious contexts. (E.g., transgression, fetters, prevent, alms, tribulation, iniquity, blaspheme, affliction, consummation.)

3.1.6 High-level words

High-level words are those that are not known or simply not used by speakers of limited English ability and with limited educational background. (E.g., cleanse, wrath, grant, beseech, purchase, distress, precepts.)[6]

6 Some of these may also be placed under §3.1.5.

3.1.7 Abstract terms

These are more difficult for readers of any language to understand. This could be because they are vaguer, indefinite, and hard to pin down, sometimes even in context (e.g., matter, thing, affair, means, like, hope). Another possible reason is that their meaning depends primarily on personal perception (e.g., beauty, truth, goodness, happiness, contentment) rather than physical attributes that are tangible, material, and concrete.

3.1.8 Figurative language

Broadly speaking, figurative speech is an elaboration or embellishment of language that involves taking individual words or longer expressions and using them with unconventional or non-literal meanings. Such figurative elaborations frequently serve to make communication more vivid and interesting. However, figurative language could easily fall flat, for example, when a foreigner naively tries to transfer a metaphor or any other figure of speech from their own cultural context to another.

Thus, all metaphors, similes, metonyms, and so forth are questionable in the sense that they may not be known to speakers who live in a different cultural setting. Furthermore, some words in English are used in a figurative, often biblical sense,[7] which is difficult for those with a limited command of a language to grasp. (E.g., fox for a clever person, pillars meaning leaders, fall asleep in place of die, seed in the sense of descendants.)

3.1.9 Technical terms

These are words that are characteristic of a certain craft, trade, science, profession, art, or branch of learning. Consequently, they are not known or understood by those with limited education and reading experience. (E.g., metaphor, chiasmus, inclusio, discourse, genealogy, incarnation, apocalypse, election, eschatology, dogmatics.)

3.1.10 Semantically complex terms

These words, on the surface at least, often appear to be rather straightforward, but upon further examination, they reveal a more complex structure of meaning. This complexity may be due to several factors. Other complex words have a wide area of meaning with many individual semantic components all included under one term. For the proficient reader, this is no problem since these different meanings are usually distinguishable by the context. (E.g., bank, level, part, park, lock, band, draw, drive, mean.) But for inexperienced readers, words like this present real problems. These readers will not know all the possible semantic senses and since they tend to read word-by-word they lose the benefit of context to help them figure out the desired meaning.

As noted earlier, an *event* noun causes problems in virtually every language. Such a word is semantically complex because it consists of a quality or a verbal action (or event) that has been recast into a nominal form. Consequently, the word's grammatical classification does not correspond to the real-life phenomenon to which it refers. This complicates comprehension for inexperienced readers. (E.g., deliverance, redemption, humility, holiness, satisfaction, trust.)

This particular class of words will be considered in greater detail below when I deal with grammatical problems because quite a bit of structural and even co-textual adjustment is usually necessary in order to express their meaning more clearly and naturally.

7 Those in §3.1.1 and §3.1.5 also apply here.

3.2 Several strategic solutions

Having pointed out the more common causes of difficulty regarding vocabulary usage, I now list some basic compositional procedures that can aid writers and adapters in solving these and similar vocabulary problems.

3.2.1 Use of commonly known words

Familiar terms when used in their normal contexts (depending on the specific English dialect) lead to increased readability and comprehension of a given passage. (E.g., bear > carry, remain > stay, precept > command, speak > say, beseech > ask, invoke > pray.) This does not mean that high-frequency words must always be used, because they could also be ambiguous. For example, headache and shoulder are not high-frequency words, but any user of English easily understands them because they are *concrete*. That is, they can easily be visualized or experienced. On the other hand, certain abstract expressions, like matter, business, and amazing, are used frequently but they are not always easy to understand because of their wide range of usage.

3.2.2 Familiar combinations (collocations)

Word familiarity and word frequency are not the only matters that complicate understanding. The combination of words and their context also plays a role. Well-known combinations of words that are semantically compatible and that are used in specific contexts are more easily understood than rare and unusual combinations. On the other hand, combinations of words that are not used in their usual sense (primary meaning) may set up a collocational clash, and sound strange and unnatural to inexperienced readers. For example, the expression he *fell* at his feet might be taken to mean that he tripped over his feet and fell down, which its primary sense suggests. This could be changed to He bent down to the ground at his feet. Consider also the following suggestions: God's word has *come* > he heard God's word, your *work* of faith > you put your faith into practice; he will *see* death > he will die,[8] *know* love > know what love means, *saw* their faith > recognized that they believed.

Thus, writers should continually ask themselves, Is this word, or group of words, one that envisioned readers will recognize as familiar and make sense of in this context? One must work toward the use of word combinations that will be recognized as natural and therefore easy to read and understand while avoiding lexical combinations that are novel for the sake of special effect (e.g., fortunate mistake, grateful experience, fat idea, unhappy plan) or that are unusual expressions found in traditional English religious literature patterned after the KJV. For example, in order to achieve a more direct and natural expression, it may be necessary to reverse a verb. This means to shift to another verb that has the opposite meaning, but one more appropriate to the context. (E.g., which you *heard* from me > that I *told* you about, what do you have that you have not *received* > hasn't God given you everything you own?)

3.2.3 Prefer words currently in use

This point is particularly relevant to theologically trained persons who have likely been exposed to this type of vocabulary from childhood or through contact with a more literal version of the Bible.[9] They may have even memorized large portions of it. No doubt a great deal of the theological literature that they had to read and study during their religious education was also characterized by this type of language, which may be clear enough to them but is often unknown even to educated speakers of

8 *Pass away* or another local euphemism could also be used.
9 Traditionally this was the KJV, but nowadays the same is true for the ESV.

English. (E.g., quick > living, let > hinder, conversation > behavior, suffer > allow, knowest > know.)

3.2.4 Prefer specific over generic terms

As long as they are within the domain of the general cultural interest or experience of your readers (e.g., maize, gardens, rain, cattle, football), specific terms are easier to understand than more generic ones. But if you are dealing with an unfamiliar, technical, or specialized field (e.g., internet, computers, medicine, astronomy, space travel—even systematic theology), more general terms are often easier to grasp than specific ones. On the other hand, many English *collective* nouns and other generic terms must often be made more specific by using either a qualifying word or a phrasal expansion to avoid any misunderstanding and to bring out the intended meaning. (E.g., God gave his *Law* > Ten Commandments to Moses, Jesus saves us from our *sin* > sins, *man* is > people are sinful.)

As one aims for maximum intelligibility when writing, a process that often involves some type of *simplification* or *clarification* in vocabulary, word usage, and grammar, it is important not to go to the other extreme and simplify too much. For example, in the case of vocabulary, one might think that the more generic and general a term is (e.g., thing, go, come, good, bad) the more easily it will be understood. As already noted, this is not always the case, and the overuse of such words can lead to colorless ambiguity and drab, lifeless writing with little exactness of meaning. For example, rather than using *good*, use generous for a person, well-constructed for a house, obedient for a dog, and productive for a farm. The aim is to maintain a proper *balance* between specific and generic terminology while keeping the general context, the subject matter, and the average ability of the readers in mind.

3.2.5 Central meaning of words

Avoid using a common word with a sense that is rare, unfamiliar, or figurative since this may lead to confusion and misunderstanding, especially for readers who are not accustomed to Western manners of expression. (E.g., *lord* it over someone, *table* the request, innocent *party*, *sweep* away the enemy, a *grave* situation, earn your *keep*.) Rather, one should try and stick to the central meaning of words. Use a word with the sense most widely known and familiar to those with a limited English vocabulary. Also consider the sociocultural setting in which they are living, which may differ from one region of Africa to the next and even from one part of a country to another.

3.2.6 Provision of contextual conditioning (lexical expansion)

To provide contextual conditioning means to modify the verbal setting through lexical-semantic expansions to state more explicitly the intended meaning of unfamiliar terms that are difficult to understand. This prevents *overloading* the message to such an extent that the reader has little chance of comprehending it correctly. There are two important ways of furnishing such contextual conditioning:

a) Descriptive phrases: When changing a text to be more understandable, it is often necessary to use synonymous expressions. Not pure synonyms in the sense of belonging to the same semantic class, but words whose overall *content* is synonymous even though they may belong to different parts of speech. This in turn usually involves recasting or semantically restructuring the entire phrase or sentence so that the high-level or unfamiliar word is *substituted* by an explanatory phrase on the more common level of usage. The goal is to provide a co-textual basis for comprehending the meaning and significance of the more difficult word or

concept. In other situations, the unfamiliar term may be retained, but an appositional descriptive phrase is used along with it on the first occurrence and thereafter at periodic intervals until the reader has acquired the meaning.

An unfamiliar word, especially if it is prominent in the discourse, needs this type of semantic redundancy (contextualized meaning) attached to it so that the untrained reader will be able to understand something about its form and/or function. *Form* has to do with (i) any feature or characteristic of a physical object (size, shape, quantity, color, taste, substance), or (ii) a description of any activity involving movement. *Function* then refers to the purpose or significance of an object or action. This is a particularly helpful solution in cases where theological, cultural, and other technical or foreign terms are involved. Ones that are likely to be unfamiliar to or misunderstood by the average reader. In these cases, explanatory terms that make sense in English to readers in a particular area, or that can be rendered easily into a local African language, are the ideal. (E.g., *repent* > turn away from your sins, *transgression* > disobeying God's laws, *blaspheme* > to speak wickedly against God, *unfaithful* > they do not keep (their) promises, *synagogue* > teaching house of the Jews, *island* > an area of land surround by water, *sickle* > a curved piece of iron for harvesting grain, *wine* > fermented drink made from grapes.)

b) Qualifiers: There is another, closely related method of dealing with proper names, culturally unfamiliar or technical terms, or words that are in common enough use to be understood, but which the reader might interpret in a sense different from the meaning intended. One can add a short qualifier or else modify the context to indicate the correct meaning or to exclude the incorrect one. This is a basic principle of all clear writing (and translation as well). No potential ambiguity should be left in the text. The use of such qualifiers, as in the case of descriptive phrases, does not add to the content of the message so long as it is limited to making information explicit that is already linguistically or contextually implicit in the original words (E.g., his passion > the suffering of Christ, weak *in their faith*, washed his hands to *demonstrate that he is innocent*, tore his mantle *to show his anger, large animals called* camels, *the river* Nile, the city of Damascus, the Mediterranean *large lake*). Note that in the case of a re-telling or an adaptation of some written source, it is legitimate to incorporate such additional material to *localize* or *contextualize* the message for a specified purpose or setting of communication.

3.2.7 Specify the relevant semantic component

Many words, especially philosophical and theological terms, are semantically complex. Instead of standing for comparatively simple ideas, they involve two or more main components of meaning. Even seemingly simple, concrete words (e.g., block, lock, ring, beat) may have numerous senses or semantic components that are defined by the textual context in which they appear. In such cases, usually, just one of these components is primarily intended. Thus, to avoid ambiguity, it is often best to choose a descriptive or explanatory phrase or even just a one-word equivalent that conveys only *one* of the semantic components of the original word, taking care to select the particular feature that is in focus in the given context.

Here are a few examples from NT Greek.[10] The noun σάρξ (flesh), could mean sinful desires or the human body. The verb εὐλογέω (bless), could mean (i) to praise, speak well of, give thanks, when God is the goal, or (ii) to be gracious to, provide with benefits, when God is the actor and man is the

10 These have been suggested by a reading of Nida and Taber (1982, 56-90).

goal. The noun δόξα (glory) has three main semantic components: splendor, greatness, and honor. The noun χάρις (grace) includes many different aspects of meaning that could refer to God's favor, kindness, undeserved love, mercy, privilege, generosity, blessing, but never all at once in a biblical context.

3.2.8 Words contextually appropriate to the constituency

Finally, to evaluate whether vocabulary is appropriate, one needs to consider the particular consumer group to which the literature is directed. This implies, of course, that you must try as much as possible to *get to know* the people for whom you are writing—their manners of expression, customs, lifestyle, social and religious values, worldview, needs, goals in life, and other important sociocultural factors. When communicating with an unknown and unseen reader group it will be nearly impossible to succeed in this communicative effort. But for many societies in Africa, until there is a theologically trained, indigenous ministry that can fully assume the production and assessment of Christian literature, we will have to depend on the creative contextual adaptation and translation of available materials deemed helpful and useable so that the Word of God, the Gospel message in particular, may be conveyed in a way that is accurate, understandable, relevant, and *translatable* in the local culture and society.

4. Structural (Grammatical) Adjustments

I will proceed on two levels when dealing with the grammatical or structural adjustments that are necessary when writing in translational English. First, I will expand upon the previous study of lexical problems and concentrate on certain types of words and phrases that involve grammatical difficulties and ambiguities in compositions and offer suggestions for how these may be meaningfully restructured. Second, I will widen the scope somewhat and consider various factors involved in producing straightforward clauses and sentences.

4.1 Words and phrases

The adjustments highlighted below are given to suggest ways of guiding authors or text adapters toward writing (or translating) in a more straightforward style. Such a text will have the structure carefully organized to clarify the relationships between constituent elements, whether these be words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or even entire discourse units.

The so-called genitive case (*of* constructions) is perhaps the greatest source of grammatical ambiguity in English. Though the genitive construction (noun + of + noun) is generally thought to have a single meaning, it actually covers the widest range of meaningful relationships between words in English as well as in Hebrew and Greek. Thus, this syntactic formation can *mean* many different things depending on which nouns are involved and how they are semantically related to each other in a particular context. Therefore, when writing translational English (or when translating from an English text), one should try to avoid the genitive construction whenever the reader (or listeners) might misunderstand. In such instances, our efforts must be directed toward discovering, and then clearly stating exactly what the semantic relation is in each case. This should be done, rather than following the path of least resistance and simply writing or translating sentences literally or in the way that is typical for religious/theological literature, including that of the New Testament epistles. The procedure for carrying out this process may be summarized as follows:

After a careful study of the total context, analyze and note the constituent semantic parts of a genitive (X of Y) phrase. You need to

determine whether you are dealing with participants (P), objects (O), events (E), qualities (Q), relations (R), or various combinations of these.[11] After noting the specific semantic components involved, it is essential to determine the precise interrelationships of the various components in context, and finally to state them unambiguously by using a grammatical *transformation* (kernel-clause expression). This makes the intended meaning explicit and eliminates any other possible meanings. Here is an example to illustrate this procedure: With *the will of God* in Ephesians 1:1 the noun *will* refers to an event (E) and God is the participant (P). This can be transformed to God wills (O).[12]

The following tables illustrate many possible interpretations for the ambiguous genitive construction along with suggested ways of transforming it into a more precise and understandable expression. The classification indicates the meaningful relationships between components X and Y, which respectively precede and follow *of*. In the first column of the table below the *formula* that indicates the relationship is given. The second column gives a *literal example* which is characteristic of many traditional theological writings (i.e., two nouns joined by of). The third illustrates a possible *transformation* of the literal example which is more meaningful and portrays the formula given in the first column.

Formula	**Example**	**Transformation**
Y is associated with X	Day of wrath (Rom 2:5)	Day when God's anger will be revealed
X is associated with Y	Door of faith (Acts 14:27)	Opened the way for non-Jews to believe
Y qualifies X	Father of glory (Eph 1:17)	Glorious Father
X qualifies Y	Wisdom of words (1 Cor 1:17)	Wise way of speaking
Y is the goal of X	Knowledge of God (Col 1:10)	To know about God
X is the goal of Y	Object of his desire (Luke 10:6)	That which he desires
X is the causative agent of Y	God of peace (Phil 4:9)	God who gives peace
X is the causative goal of Y	The peace of God (Phil 4:7)	The peace (or reconciliation) that God brings (or gives)
X is the direct agent of Y	Children of disobedience (Eph 5:6)	People who disobey
Y is the direct agent of X	love of God (Titus 3:4)	God loves
Y is in apposition to X	Temple of His body (John 2:21)	Temple which is his body

11 See §2.1 above.
12 The object might be for something else (E) to happen.

X is related to Y	I am of Paul (1 Cor 1:12)	I follow Paul
X is from Y	Jesus of Nazareth	Jesus who comes from Nazareth
X is part of Y	City of Galilee	City in the province of Galilee
Y possesses X	The house of John	The house that John owns/where John lives
X contains Y	Basket of grain	Basket that contains grain

Table 1. Diverse semantic examples that illustrate the genitive construction.

A class of expressions closely related to the preceding genitive constructions is the *possessive* construction. This provides even more striking contrasts in the relationship between the syntactic elements of the construction, as the following examples illustrate. Note that the symbol Z specifies a personal participant that is implied but not explicitly named in the context.

Example	**Transformation**	**Formula**
his (P) sins (E)	He sins	X does Y
His (P) destruction (E)	Z destroys him	Z does Y to X
His (P) calling (E)	He (God) calls (him)	X does Y to Z
His (P) glory (Q)	He is glorious	X is Y
His (P) way (O)	He (travels on) the way	X goes on Y (travels)
His (P) burden (O)	He (lays) a burden (on) Z	X lays something on Z
His (P) burden (O)	Z (lays) a burden (on) him	Z lays something on him
His (P) God (O)	He (worships) God	X worships Y
His (P) arm (O)	He (has) an arm	Y is a part of X
His (P) house (O)	He (owns) a house	X owns/possesses Y

Table 2. Diverse semantic examples that illustrate the possessive construction.

In phrases like those illustrated in the two preceding tables, I note that there is little difficulty involved if an object or person (P) is related to an event (E) or a quality (Q) since these relationships are clearly indicated in the resulting kernel expression. More difficulty arises, however, in trying to determine the precise semantic relationships between and among syntactically linked sets of objects or participants. These may be connected by several different, often implicit events. Problems also arise when more

than one *of* construction is closely linked to another. In such cases, it is often left to the literary *co-text*, or even the extralinguistic *context*, to clarify or indicate more precisely what is meant and how the participants and qualities are associated semantically with each other. However, for the inexperienced reader, this background usually is not sufficient. Therefore, it is up to the writer (translator) to indicate the exact relationships explicitly in the text, as the above transformations exemplify.

The preceding discussion and examples show that even the simplest expressions in English often involve hidden relationships that are rather complex and difficult for untrained readers to determine or recognize. Thus, they simply scan over them, assuming that they have grasped their content because all the individual words seem to be familiar. But if questioned or tested on what the material explicitly means, they would either fail or have great difficulty in explaining correctly what they read. Therefore, it is up to the author as they write (or translate) into translational English to be aware of any potential problem points. Then, by employing grammatical transformations, one would try to eliminate them where the content is not explicit enough to prevent ambiguity.

4.2 Clauses and sentences

To this point, I have dealt mainly with syntactic difficulties encountered on the individual word or phrase level. I now wish to expand my treatment of this subject to include several common features of grammar or syntax that have a special bearing on entire clauses and sentences. Again, the underlying principle to be followed when writing or reconstructing sentences is to organize the structure to have the *most explicit* and *clearest possible* semantic relationships between the various constituent elements. This is necessary, in the first place, because the average person for whom we are writing lacks reading experience and facility in English, and secondly, they usually have limited knowledge of the subject matter.

To begin with, one must make the clauses *shorter* and *less structurally embedded* to improve readability. The reason for this is that an inexperienced reader can decipher a set of content units *packaged*, so to speak, into two clauses more easily than they can the identical set packaged into a single clause. What, then, can be done to improve a text's relative clarity? I offer five suggestions below.

4.2.1 Transform nominalizations

One of the most effective ways to shorten clauses, as has already been emphasized, is to transform *event nouns* (e.g., redemption, remission, payment, judgment, termination, forgiveness) into verbs. This automatically increases the number of verbs in the passage. Since the verb usually requires a subject, this process in turn increases the number of personal words (pronouns and names) within the clause. However, the verb form of a word tends to be shorter and more commonly used than its nominalized form.

4.2.2 Use active verbs

The use of active verbs instead of semantically complex nouns also leads to *simpler* clauses, but *more* of them. This can result in a greater number of shorter sentences, although it frequently leads to more clauses per sentence, but simpler ones. For example, the sentence, "In the event of his coming, our suffering will be ended" consists of only one clause. However, when it is transformed to "When Christ comes again, we shall not suffer anymore," there are two clauses, but the entire sentence is less complicated. In most cases, the net result of this process is a composition that is somewhat longer than the alternative, even though the individual clauses are shorter.

This means that *less* information is *packaged* into each clause on average. Consequently, it tends to be *more* accessible to the inexperienced reader, or someone who is unfamiliar with the theological or biblical content of the message.

4.2.3 Avoid front-heaviness

One must endeavor to avoid what is termed front-heaviness when writing. A front-heavy construction is a sentence composed of several dependent clauses or long nominal phrases that occur first. Thus, the *initial* part of such a sentence is often noticeably *longer* than its second part. The reason for the difficulty in comprehension is that such a construction requires a greater memory span. In other words, the reader is expected to retain the first part of such a complex sentence in their memory until they read the second part and discover the semantic relationship between the two. The process of interpretation generally requires less effort and is more likely to be successful if the first part is the shorter one. For example, "To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life" (Rom 2:7 NIV) could be transformed into, God will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking the glory, honor, and eternal life that he offers.

4.2.4 Avoid embedding multiple clauses

On a related note, it is important to avoid embedding *multiple* clauses within the sentence and so reduce structural complexity. Although subordinate clauses can and should be used to distinguish important semantic relationships, it is generally best not to have more than two of them in each sentence. Furthermore, it is not necessary to give preference to independent clauses linked together in coordinate relationships, rather than subordinate ones, for this may *hide* significant semantic connections. But when a subordinate clause precedes an independent clause, the former must not be too long. It should also contain a conjunction (predictor) that explicitly indicates that a main clause is to follow and clearly marks the meaningful connection between clauses. (E.g., All people are sinners, and God provided a Savior > Since[13] all people are sinners, God provided a Savior.)

4.2.5 Use punctuation with care

Do not use capitalization, spelling, or punctuation as a crutch to try and clear up otherwise ambiguous or misleading writing. Avoid using the semicolon, which usually makes sentences too long to conceptually process or articulate with a natural intonation. Thus, your intended meaning should be clearly and correctly understood as the words are being spoken or read aloud to the people, which is the best way to test the intelligibility of a written text. As mentioned, before publication, always test your written materials, even such details as your punctuation, by reading the text aloud to yourself—or better, to a member of the receptor community.

5. Application of the Principles

To further evaluate and practice some of the issues discussed in this article,[14] critically examine the sample theological text by Nehls (2022) below. It exemplifies the type of publication that might be considered nowadays for translation into another language. I have italicized a selection of potential

13 *Since* provides the reason which leads to a result.
14 Another helpful exercise would be for readers to add to the various illustrative English examples and potential problem points that have been identified in this article.

problem points specifically from the perspective of South-Central Africa and the Bantu languages. How would you simplify, modify, or re-express these examples in a non-Western language and cultural setting that you are familiar with? Make a descriptive listing of the main difficulties that you encounter along with some of the main translational English strategies that you would apply to deal with them in a contextually sensitive and meaning-oriented manner.

5.1 A basic Bible introduction:[15]

The Bible contains the *self-revelation of God*, or *simply put*, God wants to tell us who He is, and what He wants us to know *and be*. But there is a problem. Just try to *explain to a grasshopper* that you, a human, have cultivated a garden, and wish that it should not feed on, and *consequently strip a particular plant in it*.

Sadly, a grasshopper does not understand English, Chinese, or any other human language. Neither do *we* understand the *'heavenly'* language. So, when God attempts to communicate to us who He is, and what He wants us to know *about Him, ourselves, our enemy*, and the world in which we live, He uses *our* words, *our* thoughts, and *our* capacity to comprehend, to be understood by us. *That became our Bible*.

While we do understand the words, and perhaps also many concepts in the Bible, we understand only those that *relate to our 'earthly' context*, simply because those that are *'heavenly'*, are incomprehensible and *inaccessible* for us. Just try to comprehend *who God is*, and what Heaven, or *eternity*, or hell are. Perhaps we even fail to understand what *'agape', God's divine love*, really *and fully* is, *simply* because we will always apply the meaning of that word *in the way we experience it, perhaps like 'I love ice-cream'*.

We live in *the era of airplanes, television, and ice-cream*. Yet the Word of God needs to address, or convey, the *self-same* message equally to the nomadic shepherds and peasants wherever and whenever, as to *our high-tech world. Can we see the problem?* God *solved it in His own way*. First, He spoke to us through His earthly servants, the prophets, using prophecies, historic events and manifold parables, *metaphors, analogies, allegories*, and *just plain stories. But then happened the phenomenal..., but first things first*.

6. Conclusion

To be sure, it takes considerable practice to make the more familiar, commonly used words and structures of English say what you want to convey. But audience-focused, cross-cultural writers (translators) must learn to express their ideas and to attract attention and interest with their published resources if they truly intend to increase the intelligibility and impact of their message. As Joyce Chaplin (1966, 4) notes:

> Learn to use little words in a big way.
> It is hard to do, but they say what you mean.
> When you don't know what you mean, use big words;
> That often fools little people.

It is not easy to write in simplified and contextualized translational English, especially for those who have been involved for many years in communicating the Gospel message in a Western setting, or who have been

15 This sample text comes from a publication that is meant to be "an informative course on the Bible and its teaching prepared by Christians for Muslims who are eager to explore the Biblical faith" (Nehls 2022, 5).

depending primarily on standard published (sometimes very popular) theological resources. For simplicity's sake authors will oftentimes have to give up some of the favorite aspects of their normal manner of writing, like the stylistic and rhetorical features that they have grown used to over the years that seem most natural and quite effective to them. In the beginning, they may be forced to write all their materials twice or more. They may first write as they would have done for a Western audience and then rewrite it to adapt the form of their message for use in another world region.

Indeed, a great deal of time and effort is often required to communicate *with* people rather than at them. Is it worth it? Only significant audience/reader research and testing will tell. But faces that light up with understanding as people read the Good News of Salvation and related biblical topics in language that they can readily understand will convince us that going the extra mile in our message composition and text production pays off. That is true whether we are talking about English or any other language that we use as a tool to communicate the truths of sacred Scripture.

The need for proclaiming the saving truths of Scripture in a clear and meaningful manner, whether this be in speech or writing, is just as great and urgent today as it was in the days of the apostles. The reply of the Ethiopian eunuch to Philip's question, "Do you really understand what you're reading?" highlights the problem for millions in the world today: "Why, how can I without somebody to guide me?" (Acts 8:30, 31 Beck's American Translation). As one prepares (writes or translates) Christian literature to fulfill this vital calling here in Africa and elsewhere, it would also be good to keep in mind what the Apostle Paul has to say on the subject of instructing and encouraging others in the teachings of God's Word. In 1 Corinthians 14: 19 (Beck's American Translation) he says, "In the church I would rather say five words that can be understood, in order to teach others, than ten thousand words in a language [or style of writing] that nobody understands."

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Oral Theology in the African Church: An Examination of the Divine Attributes in the Song *Yehowa* by Suzzy and Matt

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Abstract

Orality is one of the key means of expressing ideas in most African traditional societies. For this reason, the development and promotion of oral theology are crucial for the promotion of the Christian faith in Africa. The use of oral theology is one of the key factors that make Christianity thrive in an oral community because it facilitates the contextualization of the Christian message and makes it relevant and meaningful to the receptor community. As a contribution to the development and promotion of this emerging field of theology, this study explores key divine attributes embedded in the song *Yehowa* which was composed by a Ghanaian duo, Suzzy and Matt. The article used a literature-based research approach to gather data on the subject. The methodology for the study comprises of a critical socio-cultural study of the lyrics based on the African worldview. In the process, a biblical-theological analysis was conducted to critique the insights gained from the socio-cultural analysis. In the end, the study offers theological-missiological reflections for Africa based on the exposition of the lyrics of the song. The article argues that though symbolic and oral theologies are legitimate theologies, they must always be scrutinized in the light of Scripture to avoid syncretism. The article contributes to African Christian theology by providing a framework within which oral theology may be espoused and promoted in Africa.

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

1. Introduction

The belief in the Supreme Being who created the universe is found in almost every African society. The Supreme Being is self-existent and, being the source of life, has existed since the eternal past. In the African worldview, the existence of God is self-evident even to a child. The pervasiveness of the concept of God among Africans is underlined by the Bono-Twi (Akan) saying *Bi nkyerɛ abɔfra Nyame* (No one points out God to the child). Africans had a concept of God long before the arrival of Christian missionaries on the continent for the (re)introduction of the Christian faith (Mbiti 1991, 45–47). Mbiti (1991, 46–47) attributes the possible ways by which Africans grew in their understanding of God to the following. Firstly, Africans believed in God through their personal reflections on the complexity of nature. Secondly, human limitations made Africans perceive a higher and greater Being who is free from limitations. Thirdly, Africans might have expressed belief in God through their observation of heavenly forces. African traditional ideas about God prepared the ground for early missionary activities.

Most Africans rely on oral tradition to transfer information from one generation to the other. Africans have no sacred texts in written form. African beliefs about God are preserved in proverbs, short statements, stories, religious rituals, prayers, songs, and myths. For this reason, the prospects of Christianity in Africa could be enhanced by the development and promotion of oral theology. Oral theology—that is, reflections about God using such oral means as songs, prayers, stories, and other oral forms—is crucial in the development of Christianity in Africa because of the oral nature of most African societies. It is an applied and context-based theology that addresses the most pertinent questions about life in the receptor culture through oral traditions (Naudé 1996, 23). This kind of theology is not documented but stored in memory and expressed through various oral means, unlike Western systematic theology which is stored in books and kept on the shelves of libraries.

According to Pobee (1989, 89), "It is often asserted that churches in Africa have no theology. When one probes what is meant by this remark the response is that they have not produced theological treatises and tomes, systematically worked out in volumes which stand on the shelves of libraries. But it is not exactly true." Pobee's assertion can be well appreciated when one considers how Western missionaries who visited Africa prior to the twentieth century thought about Africa and Africans. They considered Africans to be people of no religion; the African mind was considered as a *tabula rasa*, an empty space that had to be filled (Hastings 1967, 60). The absence of written texts about African primal religion at the time of the arrival of the missionaries was the main reason for the *tabula rasa* perspective on Africans. But another reason is that African indigenous preachers did not at first document their sermons, interpretations of Scripture, and thoughts about God. Pobee (1989, 89) continues by saying, "Sermons are being preached every Sunday, which are not subsequently printed. Such sermons are the articulations of the faith in response to particular hopes and fears of peoples of Africa." The fact that these sermons are not printed does not mean that they are not theological formulations. Pobee (1989, 89) insists, "They are legitimately called Theology, Oral Theology. This oral theology and oral history may be said to be the stream in which the vitality of the people of faith in Africa, illiterate and literate, is mediated. As such the material cannot be ignored."

Music is one of the many means of expressing theological ideas orally. For Saint Augustine, cited in Wells (2019, 143), "the one who sings prays twice." Augustine reasons this way because the lyrics of a Christian hymn/song are prayers, and when they are sung, they are given

an additional level of honor and adoration in the form of prayer. In fact, music can reach where words do not. Music becomes the soul's language when prosaic words are not sufficient for the task. It is, therefore, not surprising that Augustine, cited in Comstock and Metcalf (2008, 2), says, "He who sings, prays twice."

As a way of contextualizing Christianity in Africa, there is a need to explore what contributions oral theology can make to theological discourses in Africa. Yet, not many African songs have been explored from the theological perspective, though many of the lyrics have been documented and are used by churches in many African societies. There is, therefore, a lack of theological exposition on African Christian indigenous songs/hymns. This study fills the literature gap by exploring key divine attributes that are embedded in the song *Yehowa*, and reflects on these attributes from African and biblical perspectives and then offers a theological-missiological reflection on what was found.

With this brief introduction, the article proceeds to examine the lyrics of the song in question.

2. Lyrics of the Song

The song *Yehowa* was composed by a Ghanaian duo, Suzzy and Matt, who started composing songs at an early age. From their childhood, they lived with a Ghanaian pastor, Reverend Yaw Owusu Ansah (their godfather) in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. They composed many other beloved songs apart from *Yehowa*. What follows are the lyrics of the song under consideration. The Akan version is translated into English to make it accessible to non-Akan readers.

Tete Kwaframoa Nyankopɔn no, *ɔte ase ampa ara* *ahene mu Hene ei, Dɔmbarima* *Nyankopɔn ei* *Kantamanto, Agya ei, Agya ei* *Wone nea wone, na wote ampa ei ei* *Anyame mu nyinaa ara Nyame ne wo* *Okokroko, Ahuntahunu,Yuda mu gyata* *Wo na woka a ɛba mu oo* *Wohye nso a ɛgyina oo* *Ɔkasa prɛko, Nyame ne no,* *Ayɛbiafo, Opunpuni Nyame ei* *Tweduapɔn, Onyame a yɛtwere no a yɛmmpa nhwe da.* *Wo din ne Yehowa; Wo din ne Yehowa Rapha aa, Shakana, Tsidkenu, El Shaddai* *Tweduapɔn Nyame ne no.* *Jehovah Adonai, Ade nyinaa so Tumfoɔ ei;*	The Ancient living God truly lives King of Kings, Lord of hosts Father, the covenant keeper Indeed, you are who you are and you really live You are God of gods The greatest, all knowing, Lion of Judah Whatever you say comes to pass, and your commands are kept The God that speaks and no one challenges, The Creator, the wonderful God The reliable God, when we lean on you we will never fall Your name is Jehovah. You are *Jehovah Rapha, Shekinah, Tsidkenu, El Shaddai*; You are the Dependable God Jehovah Adonai. The one who has power over all things

Elohim, El Ola *Wo na Wote ase daa daa … ei.* *Yehowa ei, Wo mma yɛma wo so* *Yehowa ei, Awurade ei, Wo mma yɛma wo so* *Mese, Tete Kwaframoa Nyankopɔn,* *Nyankopɔn no, ɔte ase ampa ara Ahene mu Hene, Ɔkatakyie, Okokroko* *Onyame a ɔkasa ma ade nyinaa yɛ dinn wae* *Ɔno na ɔkasa ma ɛpo ne asorɔkye tae dinn* *Onyame bɛn nnie, Onyame bɛn nnie* *Yuda mu gyata no ei, ɔma Nipa so firi atekye mu na ɔde no asi ɔbotan so, na W'asiesie no wate* *Ɔma bonini wo nta wate, ɔma deɛ onni bie nya bie* *Na mese, Ne ho yɛhu oo* *Enti mo mma yɛnkoto no oo* *Ɛnti momma yɛn mpagyapagya no wae*	*Elohim El Olam* You are the one who lives forever and ever. Jehovah God, your children exalt you. Jehovah, Lord, your children exalt you. The Ancient Living God, The Ancient living God truly lives King of Kings, the Brave one, the Majestic. At your word there is peace/ silence He speaks and the storm on the sea becomes still. What kind of God is that? Lion of Judah, who lifts man from mud and places him on a rock, and makes him better. He makes the barren give birth to twins and he makes the poor wealthy He is wonderful. Let us bow down to him. Let us exalt him.

Ɛnti momma yɛnsɔre no oo *Mese ɔyɛ Onyame, mese N'akyi ne N'anim,* *Nyame biara nní hɔ wate* *Obiara nni hɔ a ɔne no sɛ wate* *Ɔyɛ kokroko, Ɔyɛ Ahenfo mu Hene* *Mese Ahenfo Yesu na ɔreba no oo* *Mese momma yɛmma no so oo* *Yɛkotokoto Wo oo, Na mese yɛkrɔn wo oo* *Awurade ei, me Nyankopɔn ei, bɛgye W'ayɛyie dwom wae, bɛgye wo nnase dwom wae.* *Womma, yɛredanedane Wo wae* *Mese yɛkotokoto wo oo, mese yɛma Wo so ara* *Yehowa ei, Wo mma yɛ ma wo so oo* *Yehowa ee, Awurade ee, Wo mma, yɛ ma wo so oo* *(Yehowa, Yehowa Yehowa, Wo din yɛ kɛse)*	Let us worship him. He is God. There is none before him and after him There is none like him. He is great, he is the King of Kings Jesus, the King of Kings is coming Let's exalt him. We bow down to you and extol you. My Lord, my God receive your praise and thanksgiving songs Your children honor you We bow down and exalt you Jehovah, your children exalt you. Jehovah God, your children exalt you (Jehovah, Jehovah, Jehovah, your name is great)

3. Key Theological Themes

3.1 The eternity of God

The song begins by referring to God as *Tetekwaframoa Nyankopɔn no*. The word *tete* means ancient, as in, eternal past, or before the universe began. The expression *kwaframoa* might have come from *nkwa* (life) and *farebae* (source), meaning source of life. Christaller, cited in Danquah (1968, 206), holds that it comes from *ntetekoraframoa* which means "does-not-tear, preserve, mix, helper," while Dankwa (1968, 206) believes it means "he endures forever." Asare's (1978, 15) view is that *Tetekwaframoa* means "he who is there now as from ancient times," which is the view adopted in this article. *Tetekwaframoa* is similar to *Tetentredee* (since ancient times).

The noun *Nyankopɔn* has been explained differently. One school of thought is that *Nyankopɔn* derives from the expression *nyanko a ɔpɔn*—*nyanko* being the Fante word for friend (or neighbor, or acquaintance) and *ɔpɔn* meaning the great one. From this perspective, *Nyankopɔn* means the Great Friend. This view emphasizes the relational character of God by considering him as the Great Friend.[1] If God is a friend, then he also has an influence on people because someone's character is usually informed by the kind of friend(s) the person associates with. This fact is underlined by the Bono-Twi assertion, *kyerɛ me wo w'adamfo (yɔnko) ne menkyerɛ wo wo subane*, meaning "show me your friend and let me show you your character." The Akan, keenly aware of peer influence, would usually regulate with whom their children may or may not associate. This forms a key part of the nurturing of children in Akan communities.

Another view derives *Nyankopɔn* from the expression, *nyame koro a ɔpɔn*, meaning, "the only Great God" or "the only Great one that when one gets, he/she is satisfied." The word *nyame* may be derived from *nyam* which means glory or brightness. In relation to God, *nyame* means glorious, majestic, or wonderful. This perspective on the meaning of the noun *nyankopɔn*, therefore, emphasizes the majesty of God which is taught in many biblical passages (e.g., 1 Chr 29:11, Ps 21:5, 45:4, 145:5, Mic 5:4, and Jude 1:25). A variant explanation divides *nyame* into *nya*, meaning to receive or to get, and *mee*, meaning be satisfied. Therefore, nyame is taken to mean to receive and be satisfied (Danquah 1968, xii). As an appellation, then, *Nyame* means he who gives satisfaction (Danquah 1968, xii). Danquah's view is that the letters NYNM (*Nyame*) are the Akan version of the Hebrew tetragrammaton, YHWH (Danquah 1968, xii). Casely-Hayford derives *nyame* from *nyi-oye-emi* (he who is I am) and considers *Nyame* as the Akan expression of the Hebrew I am (Danquah 1968, xii). These variant meanings of *nyame* give different nuances of the noun *Nyankopɔn*—including The Great One who gives satisfaction, The Great YHWH, and The Great One Who is I am.

A third view on the derivation of *Nyankopɔn (Onyankopɔn)* comes from Danso (2016), who considers *Onyankopɔn* as a derivative of the penta-syllabic word *Oiamekopɔn*. The first syllable *O* is the basic name of God, a powerful being capable of doing and achieving anything. The syllable *ia* (transformed into *nya*) signifies wisdom as in the word *nyansa*. The syllable *me* (me) stands for self-consciousness and satisfaction. The fourth syllable *ko* means life as in kosua (egg). The fifth syllable *pɔn* means greatness, dependability, or sovereignty (Danso 2016). *Onyankopɔn*, then, refers to a powerful, wise, great, dependable, relational, and sovereign Being who satisfies people who receive him.

1 This derivation is supported by Casely-Hayford, Beecham, and Cruickshank; see Danquah (1968, xii).

The use of the definite *no* (meaning he) in the phrase *Tetekwaframoa Nyankopɔn* underlines the singularity of God—there is no other God besides him. The description of God as ancient or the ancient of days means his existence predates time; he has no beginning. Another Akan appellation that alludes to the eternity of God is *Tetebotan* (meaning the Rock of Ages or Ancient Rock). The *Tetekwaframoa Nyankopɔn* transcends time and is thus free from the limitations of time. He exists from eternity to eternity and has no beginning or end. It is in this light that the Kono of Sierra Leone refers to God as *Meketa*, meaning the Everlasting One. The foregoing discourse confirms the general African belief that "the Supreme Deity is the Ever-living Reality Whose Being stretches to eternity" (Awolalu and Dopamu 1979, 52; Ps 90:2; 102:12; Jer 10:10).

The song continues, *ɔte ase ampa* (he lives indeed). The letter ɔ is the shortened form of the Akan third-person singular pronoun *ɔno* (he/she/it). Here, ɔ (*ɔno*) refers to *Tetekwaframoa Nyankopɔn* no who is now described as one who *te ase ampa* (lives indeed). The Akan *emphathic* particle *ampa* (indeed, really, or actually) is meant to underline the certainty of God's continual existence. The Yoruba (Nigeria) have a divine appellation *Alaaye*, from *ala*, meaning owner, and *aiye*, meaning life. Hence it has the meaning of the Owner of life or the Living One and expresses their belief in the immortality of God (Olowola 1993, 13). Since God is the owner of life, his existence is not controlled by anyone. He exists on his own and lives ceaselessly. The idea that God lives forever is expressed by the Nupe people of Nigeria in the proverb "God will outlive eternity." The idea is that if eternity indicated a certain point in time, God would definitely live beyond that time. However, since eternity transcends time, there is no time that God will cease to exist.

The continual existence of God resonates with the Akan traditional religious belief that God lives forever. To place this in context, it is important to consider the Akan view of humanity. The Akan believe that a person is made up of material and immaterial parts. The material part, *nipadua* (body), includes the flesh, bones, water, and blood while the immaterial components comprise of *ɔkra* (soul), *sunsum* (an individual spirit), *honhom* (spirit), and *ntorɔ* (semen, a symbol of fatherhood or character resemblance) (Owusu-Gyamfi 2020, 66–67). The material part comes from a person's mother and it is buried after death to decompose. The *ɔkra* (soul) comes from God and serves as God's presence in every person. It is immortal because its existence depends on God's existence. That is, as long as God lives, the *ɔkra* (soul) also continues to live. The *ɔkra* (soul) survives after death, unlike the *sunsum* which is believed to perish after death. As a spark from God, the concept of *ɔkra* (soul) is similar to the biblical doctrine of *imago Dei*, the theological assertion that God created humanity in his own image and likeness (Gen 1:26–27). Both the concepts of *imago Dei* and *ɔkra* underline that every person, regardless of the person's social status and background, carries God's image and likeness. The expression "*Nyame bewu ansa na mawu*" (God will die before I die) underscores that until God dies the *ɔkra* will not die and because God does not die the *ɔkra* will live forever. Physical death transitions the *ɔkra* into another world but does not kill it. The continual existence of *Nyankopɔn*, therefore, ensures the continual existence of the *ɔkra*. The Zulu of South Africa also express this belief when they say God "made us, and is, as it were, in us his work. We exist because he existed" (Lugira 2009, 40). Thus, from the African perspective, God's existence should not be in doubt at all.

3.2 The superiority of God

Another theological theme in the song is God's omnipotence expressed in terms of his unique kingship, military might, and dependability (e.g.,

Exod 15:3). The expression *ahene mu Hene* (King of Kings) draws on the Akan/Africa concept of kingship and the biblical worldview (see discussion below). The Akan political structure is hierarchical. There is a paramount chief (*ɔmanhene*) with divisional chiefs working under him. The divisional chiefs also have their sub-chiefs. The description of *Nyankopɔn as ahene mu Hene* means God is superior to all kings, no matter how powerful they may be. In the Ancient Near East, it was common to find a group of kings forming a hierarchy within an empire ruled by an overlord which then becomes the king of kings (Handy 1994, 112). The overlord of the Babylonian and Persian empires may be considered a king of kings. This undermined the uniqueness of God as the King of Kings. Therefore, the expression מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים (the King of Kings of Kings) emerged in Judaism as a reference to God, who alone is the universal and incomparable King of the universe. Here, the use of the double superlative is meant to put the title one step above the royal title of the earthly kings referred to in the Bible. The superiority of God as King means that all earthly kings are ruling under the power of God who has delegated political power to them to take care of his people.

The supremacy of God is also echoed in the expression *anyame*[2] *mu nyinaa ara Nyame ne wo* (you are the God of all gods). This expression draws from both the traditional African religious beliefs and practices and the biblical worldview. Some African societies recognize the existence of a pantheon of divinities. From the African worldview, the Supreme Being is the Ultimate Ruler. For a successful administration of the universe, the Supreme Being created messengers or ministers who are intermediaries who are given powers to discharge duties on his behalf. These beings, who are also responsible for different aspects of life, such as fertility, hunting, and rain, are referred to as lower divinities or gods. They are often associated with natural phenomena and are believed to have the power to influence the course of events in the world. The belief that God administers the universe with lower divinities and other entities is not biblically sound. The songwriters acknowledge the existence of other divine beings but state emphatically that God is above all of them. God has no co-equal; he is in a class of his own. This position, in the view of the writer, serves to emphasize the need to worship God alone who is in a class of his own.

The supremacy of God is again emphasized by referring to him as *Okokroko* (the great one). In the African worldview, the *Okokroko* (greatness) nature of the Supreme Being is evident in his acts of creations, providence, healing, and power over all his creations (living and non-living, seen and unseen). This nature of God makes him worthy to receive worship and reverence. The African concept of God as *Okokroko* is a key reason why they do not approach God directly. The African traditional societal setup is hierarchical. The father serves as the head of the household, the family/clan head, and the *odikro*, the head of the village. The *odikro* works under a divisional chief who also comes under a paramount chief. One therefore does not approach the paramount chief with issues that can be resolved at the other levels of the societal structure. For example, one is not expected to send matters that can be dealt with at the family level to the paramount chief. Matters that are taken to the chief are sent to him through a linguist.[3] Even in the household, children do not approach their father directly; they pass

2 The author is aware of the scholarly debate surrounding the authenticity of the pluralization of *nyame* as *anyame*. The scope of the study does not include a consideration of this issue. The article therefore proceeds with the expression, *anyame*, given by the songwriters.

3 The term "linguist" (Bono-Twi: *kyeame*) is an Akan term used to designate the person who serves as the spokesperson of the chief.

through their mother who acts as a societal intermediary between the children and the father. With this societal structure, Africans traditionally hold that God cannot be approached directly. He is a Great King, the King of Kings who is so *high* that one cannot approach him directly. To approach God, one needs to pass through intermediaries such as ancestors, lower divinities, and traditional priests. The use of intermediaries in approaching God is rooted in his nature as *Okokroko*.

The songwriters continue to emphasize the supremacy of God by addressing him as *Ɔkasa prɛko* (the one who speaks and no one challenges). From an African perspective, the phrase "the God who speaks and no one challenges" can be seen as a description of a powerful and authoritative deity or king. In many African traditional religions, there is a belief that the gods and ancestors are active participants in the lives of people and can communicate with them through various means, such as dreams, visions, and divination. In this context, the idea of a God who speaks and no one challenges implies that this deity's words are final and unquestionable. It suggests a sense of divine sovereignty and a recognition of the supremacy of God's will over human desires and intentions. Overall, from an African perspective, the phrase "the God who speaks and no one challenges" highlights the power and authority of God as a central figure in the religious beliefs and practices of many African communities. All the above appellations are captured in the biblical description of God as the Most High God (*Ɔboroadenyinaaso Nyankopɔn*; see Gen 14:18, Ps 47:2). He transcends all things, not in the sense of living higher than everything but in the sense of being supreme in everything over all things. God's *Ɔboroadenyinaaso* nature is underlined in the Zulu's reference to him as *Unkulunkulu* (the Great-Great-One or the Greatest of the Great), a Being whose ways are incomprehensible and mysterious (Kuper, Hughes, and Velsen 1954, 103).

3.3 The omnipotence and military might of God

The omnipotence of God is developed using the name *El-Shaddai* (Gen 17:1, 28:3, 35:11). An understanding of the Hebrew nouns אֵל and אֱלֹהִים is required for a proper understanding of the compound name *El-Shaddai*. The name אֵל is the most common designation of God in the Old Testament. Appearing about 250 times in the Old Testament, אֵל comes from *ul* which means power, strength, or might (Berkhof 2000, 48). Therefore, אֵל carries the sense of being first or lord in strength, power, or might. In polytheistic communities, אֵל was used as the generic reference for anyone belonging to the divine species just as the term human applies to anyone belonging to the species sapiens (McKenzie 2011, 1285). For example, the Canaanites referred to the chief god of their pantheon of gods as אֵל, the father of Baal (Youngblood 1995, 504). But for the Jews, only Yahweh was אֵל. Therefore, אֵל may refer to the true God or false gods. It may appear as a compound name as in אֵל עוֹלָם, meaning everlasting God, or God of ancient of Days (Gen 21:33, Isa 40:28) or אֵל רֳאִי, the God of seeing or the God who sees (Gen 16:13). The plural אֱלֹהִים, which means supreme one or mighty one, may refer to the God of the Hebrews (e.g., Gen 1:1) and false gods (Exod 23:24, Josh 24:20, Dan 5:23).

When used for the God of the Hebrews, אֱלֹהִים is understood as a plural of intensive or of majesty, underscoring the fullness of God's power and pre-eminence, rather than plurality in personality (Berkhof 2000, 48). The root of the Hebrew name שַׁדַּי is the Akkadian word *shadad*, which means to be powerful or to devastate. The compound name אֵל שַׁדַּי underlines God's supremacy over all celestial powers (Berkhof 2000, 48). It depicts God as subjecting all powers in nature under his control. He is the one who makes mountains quake and rivers overflow their banks. The Akan express this attribute of God by referring to him as *tumi nyinaa Wura* (Owner of

all powers). Berkhof (2000, 49) concludes that "while portraying God as a great One, *Shaddai* does not represent Him as an object of fear and terror, but as a source of blessing and comfort." In line with this thought, Ankrah avers that *El-Shaddai*'s visitation leaves one fruitful, great, and prosperous (Ankrah 2013). That is to say, *El-Shaddai* always bestows blessings on those he visits. Ankrah also considers this name as alluding to YHWH's covenant faithfulness. And for Paul, God's righteousness is to be understood as his covenant faithfulness (Rom 3:3–5, 25; 15:8).

In the olden days, the power of a king in many African societies was demonstrated in the context of war. A powerful king was able to conquer other kings and put them under his control. People were proud to associate themselves with kings with war prowess. The African concept of kingship was, therefore, intertwined with militarism. Even though in Africa today a king's power may not be determined by military success, there is still the idea that a king should have military skills. Drawing on this background, the songwriters describe God as *Dɔmbarima* which derives from *dɔm* (multitude [of warriors]) and *barima* (a man). *Dɔmbarima* means the head/leader of warriors. Referring to God as *Dɔmbarima* means God is a warrior-king; he is both King and the head of his warriors. He is the head of the warriors, comparable to the President of Ghana who is also the commander-in-chief of the Ghanaian armed forces. God is the one who leads his people to war.

He is the warrior who delivers on his war promises; hence, he is also referred to as *Kantamanto*. This is derived from *ɔka ntam a ɔnto*, meaning he/she never fails on his/her promises made by oath. Being *kantamanto*, the king ensures that he gets the victory for his people. This appellation is similar to *Ɔseadeɛyɔ*, meaning when he says he does it, *Ɔkatakyie* which refers to a war hero who makes "a clean sweep of their enemies and return from battle victorious" (Laryea 2000, 80), and the Igbo title Ekwueme, meaning the One who says and does. As *Kantamanto*, God is not *nsa-akyi-nsa-yam* (yes and no at the same time), reminiscing the biblical text "God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind" (Num 23:19 NLT). Building on the concept of *Kantamanto*, the songwriters later say *wo na woka a ɛba mu, wohyɛ nso a ɛgyina*, (you are the one who says and it comes to pass, the one who commands and it stands), a statement that highlights God's ability to make his sovereign will come to pass. The reference to God as *Kantamanto*, therefore, underlines his faithfulness, unchangeableness, trustworthiness, and dependability (Ps 33:4, 89:33, Lam 3:22–23).

The power, strength, and military might of God are further underlined by the use of the Christological title *Yuda (abusuakuo) mu Gyata* (the Lion of [the tribe of] Judah). Metaphorical symbols play an important role in African traditional religion, cosmology, beliefs, and practices. These expressions intertwine fundamental human thought, social communication, and concrete linguistic embodiment through a rich semantic framework based on the physical, cognitive, and cultural experience of humans according to Dobrić, cited in Wessels (2014, 714). Lions were common in ancient Ghana, especially in the forested middle belt. In some African societies, kings are metaphorized as lions because of their power and bravery. In many African traditions, the lion is considered the king of the jungle, and its image is associated with bravery, leadership, and royalty. The lion is also revered for its ability to protect its pride and its territory, which is essential in many African societies. Therefore, from an African perspective, the phrase *Yuda mu Gyata* can be understood as a symbol of strength, power, and protection, which are highly valued in many African cultures.

A biblical study of the lion metaphor brings out several characteristics including strength (Judg 14:18), boldness (2 Sam 17:10), ferocity (Ps 7:2), and stealth (Ps 10:9, Lam 3:10). The fierce nature of lions is seen in King

Darius's surprise at the lions' refusal to kill Daniel (Dan 6:22). Though the lion is a dangerous animal, God has given his people power over all animals, including the lion (Ps 104:21). In Daniel 7:4–6, where Daniel saw four creatures come out of the sea, the lion was used as a symbol for an angelic being. The lion symbolizes God's wrath and punishment of wrongdoers (Rev 4:7) as well as the power of evil (1 Pet 5:8).

The expression *Yuda mu Gyata* (Lion of Judah) was a national and cultural symbol for ancient Israel, more especially the tribe of Judah. Judah was one of the twelve sons of Jacob. The connection between the tribe of Judah and the lion can first be found in the blessing given by Jacob to his fourth son, Judah, in the Book of Genesis. Here, Judah receives the first blessing of all of Jacob's sons (Gen 49:8–12). Judah's blessing, which is perhaps the greatest blessing, included the reception of the praise of his brothers (who will bow down to him) and victory over his foes and kingship among the nation. The phrase the Lion of the tribe of Judah is a biblical metaphor that refers to Jesus Christ as the Messiah and the Savior of the world (Rev 5:5). The genealogy of Christ connects him to the tribe of Judah through David and Solomon and eventually, Joseph, his earthly father (Matt 1:6, 7, 16). The reference to Jesus as the Lion of the tribe of Judah underscores his conquering and victorious kingship in fulfillment of Jacob's prophecy about a powerful king to descend from Judah's lineage (Gen 49:8–12). To sum up, metaphorizing God (and/or Christ) as a lion highlights his divine power, sovereignty, and his ability to protect and defend his people.

3.4 The self-existence and sovereignty of God

The songwriters express the self-existence and sovereignty of God by using the expression *Wone nea wone, na wo te ase ampa ara* (You are who you are, and you are alive indeed). The expression *Wone nea wone* (You are who you are) is reminiscent of the answer God gave Moses when he asked his name, אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה, which has been translated variously as "I am; that is who I am" (NEB), "I am who am" (NAB), or "I am he who is" (NJB) (Exod 3:14).

The singers continue to mention other names of God. The singers use various (compound) names of God saying *Wo din ne Yehowa. Wo din ne Yehowa Rapha, Shekinah, Tsidkenu* (Your name is YHWH, you are *YHWH Rapha, Shekinah, Tsidkenu*). In Africa and ancient Israel, names are very important because they represent the attributes of the bearer. Sam Korankye Ankrah (2013) outlines three key requirements for God to reveal himself in any of his names to someone. These requirements are loving him unconditionally, living faithfully to him, and living a holy, righteous, and blameless life.

The name *Yehowa* (YHWH) is the most sacred and the most distinctive name that God does not share with anyone (Berkhof 2000, 49). While it is difficult to trace its etymology, YHWH is often connected with the Hebrew verb היה, which means to be (Exod 3:13–14). It is the first-person singular of the verb to be. The name YHWH, used in God's reply in 3:15, is "an early form of this same verb in the third person singular" (Osborn and Hatton 1999). YHWH is interpreted as I am that I am, or I shall be what I shall be. It means God has existed from eternity past, he still exists and will continue to exist forever. It is an expression of the sovereignty, self-existence, and supremacy of God. God's existence is not caused by any being. He was not created by any being and hence cannot be sustained by anyone. He is self-sustaining. Being self-existent implies being sovereign. YHWH is the personal name for the Supreme Being while Elohim is a generic title for what is divine.

The name YHWH is about divine providence, the doctrine that everything is under God's sovereign guidance and control (Gowens 2011, 87). The Akan share this view about God with some other African societies. For example, the Nandi of Kenya express this belief when they consider

God as "the far-off driving force [power] behind everything, the balance of nature" (Lugira 2009, 40). This means that the universe depends on God's sovereign control and sustenance. Therefore, as the Bambuti of Congo say, "If God should die, the world would also collapse" (Lugira 2009, 40). The Bambuti people are not challenging the immortality of God. Rather, they are making the point that God is the one who determines whether the universe should continue to exist or cease to exist. In other words, God is the ultimate decider of what happens in the universe. This view points to the sovereignty of God. For the Yoruba, God is *Ojojo Oni*, meaning the One who owns and controls today, and *Eleda*, meaning the Creator, the self-existing One, and the Source of all things (Olowola 1993, 13). Nothing can happen outside God's control. Everything that happens is under God's control. The decision whether to allow any specific event to happen is his own prerogative. No one determines that for him; neither does he consult anyone before acting. As one appreciates the sovereignty of God, one is encouraged to hold fast to his faith because there is no other power than God's power.

3.5 The omniscience and omnipresence of God

The invisibility and omniscience of God (see 1 Sam 2:3, Job 12:13, Ps 147:4, Isa 29:15, 40:27–28, 1 Tim 6:16, Heb 11:27) is highlighted by the appellation *Ahuntahunu* (the one who is invisible but sees all things), meaning, nothing is hidden from God. It also alludes to God's omnipresence, the idea that God is simultaneously present everywhere. The Akan say, "If you want to say something to God, tell the wind"[4] to allude to God's universal presence. Here, the wind is used to teach the concept of God's invisibility, something that may be comparable to Jesus's use of wind to illustrate the nature and operations of the Holy Spirit (John 3:8). The Akan refers to God as *Brekyirihunadeɛ*, meaning the One who sees all, even from behind. It is assumed that just as wind is virtually everywhere so God is everywhere. It is related to the concept of ubiquity, the ability to be in many places at once.

Ahuntahunu relates to *Nyansaboakwa* (infinite wisdom) which the Zulu and the Banyarwanda people of Rwanda acknowledge when they say, "God is the wise One" (Mbiti 1990, 31). The Akan anthropomorphic description of God as hidden but observing all things underlines that God has universal knowledge. God is absolutely omniscient. Thus, the Yoruba people say that "Only God is wise" and "he is the Discerner of hearts" who "sees both the inside and outside of man" (Danquah 1968, 55; Aye-Addo 2013, 14). Among the Barundi, God "is the Watcher of everything" and the Ila community says God's "ears are long" (Islam and Islam 2015, 4). Mbiti (1990, 31) sums it up by saying God "knows everything, observes everything, and hears everything, without limitation or exception." *Ahuntahunu* also underscores the Akan conception of God as Spirit (John 4:24). The invisible-but-all-knowing nature of God makes him the ultimate judge of all things. He calls everyone to moral accountability. African cultures often emphasize the importance of living a virtuous life and upholding moral values. The belief that God sees and knows all things means that individuals are held accountable for their actions and that they will ultimately be judged by God based on their moral conduct.

3.6 The dependability of God

The appellation *Tweduampɔn*, which derives from *Twere* (lean), *dua* (tree), *mpɔn* (fall not), means "Supreme Being, upon whom men lean and do not

4 It must be said that the comparison between God and wind is not a perfect comparison, though it helps in conceptualizing the omnipresence of God.

fall." In the forest, there are many trees, young and mature, soft and hard. The mature, strong, and firmly grounded trees are not usually affected by storms. During heavy storms, the weak and soft trees are easily uprooted, fall down, and dry up. On its way to falling down, the weak tree may lean on a strong and firmly rooted tree close to it so that it does not fall and die. The appellation *Tweduampɔn* metaphorizes God as that strong and firmly rooted tree on which other trees (i.e., people) can lean and not fall. Another picture can be taken of the walking stick that old people use as support when walking. In old age, one becomes weak and may not be able to walk or stand without a walking stick. The old man or woman leans on a walking stick and so does not fall. To humanity in general, God is that support which does not fail. The appellation *Ɔbotantim*, is derived from *Ɔbotan*, meaning rock, and tim, meaning firm and immovable, and is used for an immovable rock. It also underscores the *Tweduampɔn* nature of God. The Yoruba describe God, saying, "the Mighty Immovable Rock that never dies" (Islam and Islam 2015, 6). As *Ɔbotantim Nyame* (Dependable God), nothing can make God change his position apart from his own sovereign will. The Akan consider God as a Saturday-born child, and so usually add Kwame to Tweduampɔn to have *Tweduampɔn Kwame*, because *Kwame* is the Akan name for a male child born on Saturday.

3.7 God's immanence and care

The God who really lives is an immanent and actively involved being (Mbiti 1982, 11; see Deut 4:7 and Acts 17:27). In many African cultures, God is perceived as actively involved in the world, working to bring about good and maintain balance and harmony. When one says "God is indeed alive" (*ɔte ase ampa ara*) the person is affirming this belief in the living, active presence of the divine. The person is acknowledging that God is not distant or disconnected from human lives, but rather intimately involved in every aspect of our existence. It underscores that God really cares for humanity (Isa 41:10, 13; Matt 6:25–34). He is *Totrobonsu*, the giver of abundant rainfall, *Amosu*, the giver of rain, *Amoamee*, the giver of sufficiency, and *Nyaamanekɔseɛ*, the one in whom one can confide in times of trouble. The Giver of rain and sunshine, who also addresses the economic, social, psychological, spiritual, and health concerns of his people. "The Vugusu consider that material prosperity comes from God; the Nandi invoke God daily to grant fertility to the women, cattle and fields; and the Langi believe that rich harvests come only from God" (Islam and Islam 2015, 6). As "the Great Friend," *Nyankopɔn* is a friend in need and so will not overlook the plight of his friends. The song gives the worshipper the hope that no matter how hard the situation is, God will calm the situation down.

The believer's reference to God as *Father* (Matt 6:9, Rom 8:15–16) metaphorizes God as a Parent. In the song, the parenthood of God is underlined by the title *agya* (father). *Agya* is a generic term for anybody who can be the father of another person. There is another Akan word for father (*se*), which refers to one's biological father. The word *agya* comes from the word *gya*, meaning to leave something behind (usually a property). Another word for father is papa which was introduced through colonialism. The term *agya* is used for anyone older than the person. It points to God as the universal father of all humanity. The parenthood of God is underscored by the Ga reference to God as *Ataa-Naa Nyɔŋmɔ*, meaning Father-Mother God, noting both masculine and feminine attributes of God. As *Ataa* (father), *Nyɔŋmɔ* (God) provides continual defense and protection for his people. God's motherhood is evident in the sympathetic, accommodating, caring, and loving attributes of God. The expression *Ataa-Naa Nyɔŋmɔ* signifies the relational nature of God from a Ga perspective.

As Father, he is compassionate and so the Akan call him *Ahummoborɔ Agya* (Compassionate Father). God loves and cares for his children. There is no way God will abandon his people. He is always faithful and requires his children to be faithful to him. He is not just present with his people, but he also provides for their needs. God's goodness (Ps 145:8–10) is expressed by the Akan idea that God has endowed every creature with a special gift to adapt to their lives. *Sɛ Nyame amma akyenfena biribi ara mpo a, ɔmaa no ahodannanee*, means "If [one thinks] God did not give the swallow any gift at all, the person should consider the gift of swiftness of movement that the swallow has." He is a Judge (*Temufoɔ*) and so people look to him for judgment, saying *mede m'asɛm ama Nyame* (I have handed my case to God). He is all-knowing and sees the secret deeds of the members of the community. Since nothing is hidden from him, his judgment is fair.

The singers use the compound name *YHWH-Rapha* (YHWH who heals), emphasizing God's ability to heal physical, emotional, and spiritual ailments. Besides its basic meaning of to heal, רפא could also mean to restore or to mend. So, *YHWH-Rapha* can mean the Lord who restores or the Lord who fixes broken things. The first usage of this name comes in the context of God promising to heal and restore his people if they would be faithful to him (Exod 15:26). After crossing the Red Sea, the Israelites walked three days without finding water. They found water later, but it was bitter so they complained to Moses (v. 24). Moses turned to God who told him to throw the branch of a particular tree into the river. Moses did so, and the waters became fresh and sweet. That is when God told the people to follow him so that he might heal them.

YHWH-Tsidkenu is also used in the song. This appellation is derived from the noun צֶדֶק, which means to be stiff, straight, or righteous. Thus, the Hebrew word צִדְקֵנוּ means our righteousness, and when combined into YHWH-Tsidkenu it means YHWH our righteousness (Rembert 2009, 115). It appears twice in the entire Bible, both in the book of Jeremiah (Jer 23: 6, 33:16). This name relates to the atonement because Jesus is the root of David. God became our righteousness when he bore our sins on the cross. The name, therefore, invites everyone to receive God's gift of righteousness (that comes by faith apart from works). At the same time, this name depicts God as the sovereign Judge of the world.

The appellation *YHWH-Shekinah*, which is used in the song, derives from the Hebrew word שׁכן, meaning dwelling, residing, or settling, and denotes the presence of God in a place. God promised to dwell among his people (Exod 25:8). God accompanied Israel in the form of a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire as they passed through the wilderness (Exod 13:21, Num 9:15–23). The fire and the cloud symbolized divine leadership and protection. The cloud also symbolized God's presence and showed God's glory to the people (Exod 40:34). God's glory appeared above the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place in the sanctuary (Lev 16:2), and later in Solomon's temple. Therefore when the ark was captured by the Philistines, Phinehas's wife, just before dying, called their son (1 אִי־כָבוֹד) Sam 4:21, meaning there is no glory. This was because the symbol of God's glory was no more with God's people. This name shows God's immanence, his presence with his people. It is similar in meaning to Immanuel (God with us) (Matt 1:23; see also Isa 7:14).

4. Theological-Missiological Reflections

4.1 Anthropomorphism

One of the key theological issues that needs to be mentioned at the outset of this section is the anthropomorphic nature of the song under consideration. Anthropomorphism means giving human characteristics such as emotions, thoughts, or behaviors to a deity (Beegle 2001, 67). Anthropomorphic features are used in everyday speech to make

the nature of God comprehensible to humanity's limited minds. Such language is not peculiar to the Akan/African people. It is used in almost all societies. The description of God as, for example, a friend, father, or *Ɔkatakyie* (a war hero) are examples of human attributes given to God in the song. It is important to note that the anthropomorphic expressions used to describe God are not to be interpreted literally. For example, one should not think that God is a Father in the literal sense of the word. The theological fact expressed by this anthropomorphic description is that God performs functions similar to those of human fathers. Since God is perfect, he perfectly performs these roles. As an infinite person, God's roles cannot be limited to those of a human father. In fact, God cannot be comprehended completely by the human mind, so one needs to watch out that these anthropomorphisms do not create the idea that God is limited.

4.2 God and pandemics

The different divine attributes outlined in the major section above are encapsulated in the divine personal name *Yehowa* (YHWH). *Yehowa* is, *inter alia*, eternal, sovereign, good, all-powerful, all-knowing, immanent, King of Kings, and dependable. Writing in the context where many people are still in recovery from the shocks that COVID-19 brought upon them, it is relevant to reflect on the theological/philosophical question of how the belief in the existence of *Yehowa* and the reality of evil and suffering in a world created by *Yehowa* and operated under the sovereignty of *Yehowa* can be compatible. If *Yehowa* is good and sovereign, then why does he allow pandemics/pain/suffering/evil to hit the world?

While this study cannot adequately explain God's reasons for allowing the pandemic to occur, some theological facts can be outlined. First, God did not create humankind to suffer on earth. God's declaration that all that he created was very good (Gen 1:31) suggests that evil and suffering were not part of God's original creation. Sin and suffering in human society are traceable to the misuse of human free will as depicted in the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3.

Secondly, sin may attract divine punishment that will make people suffer. Even though suffering, pain, and death are the result of the broken and fallen world, there are some cases where sickness results from sin. For example, Jesus warned the healed invalid, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you" (John 5:14 NIV; cf. 1 Cor 11:30). The examples of sin-prompted sickness are meant to provoke repentance, so the fatherly discipline can be lifted. However, one has to be sure that a particular suffering is the result of divine punishment before considering it as such. Here, it must be noted that though all sins merit God's punishment, not all sins will be punished immediately. God may decide to give people abundant time to repent and may even not punish them on earth if they fail to repent. All these depend on God's plan and purpose for the person's life. He is sovereign and free to do what he will.

Thirdly, suffering may be allowed to make the glory of God manifest or to draw people closer to God. In his response to the question as to whether the blind person in John 9 had become blind because of his own sin or his parents' sin, Jesus said that it was meant to make the glory of God manifest to the world. Given that Jesus's miraculous healing of this man drew people to him to receive the gospel, it can be argued that suffering may be allowed for evangelistic reasons. For example, many people might have accepted Christ because they realized in the heat of the pandemic that human beings have no power to protect themselves against death. In light of this, they may have considered accepting God who is the source of life. The increase in the usage of Christian hymns in the United States and other parts of the world (Meyer 2020) attests to the fact that the pandemic drew people closer to God in some sense. It is difficult to explain why God would make people

suffer for his glory to manifest or why he may allow some of his creatures to suffer to draw others closer to himself. However, Paul teaches that God's sovereignty makes this possible (Rom 9). Here, God is metaphorized as the potter who makes different objects into different vessels using the same piece of clay (vv. 19–24).

4.3 Pastoral care

Furthermore, God's care for his people has implications for pastors. Since God cares for his people, and since pastors are God's representatives on earth, they must show concern for God's people. As shepherds of God's flock, pastors are to replicate God's care for his people (Acts 20:28–29, 1 Pet 5:2). They must stand in solidarity with the poor, speak for the voiceless, and release the captive. God's shepherds must feed the flock with nutritious meals (the unadulterated word) that will help them to grow spirituality. Pastors must be concerned with the qualitative growth of the church, not just the quantitative growth. This requires effective discipleship where church members are equipped to directly access God's blessings rather than using pastors as intermediaries. Church members must be equipped to study the Bible on their own and apply their findings effectively, and to pray to God to access his blessings directly. To this end, the concept of the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet 2:4–5) must be developed and promoted. Finally, pastoral care must include social actions such as making donations to needy church members. The church must not concentrate on building edifices when its members live in abject poverty. God's interest lies in humans, not infrastructure.

4.4 Oral theology and missiology in Africa

The foregoing discourse—comprising a socio-cultural and a biblical-theological analysis of the lyrics of the song *Yehowa*—points to the need to explore oral theologies in Africa. Documented theologies should not be considered as the only valid form of theology. In a highly educated community, the documentation of theology is an effective way of communicating to the church. However, since not all communities are highly educated, it is wrong to consider documented theology as the universal standard for theological discourses. Therefore, pastors who work in a highly oral context like Africa must give room for the oral expression of people's experiences with God. Missionaries/pastors may learn from the indigenous people as they express their own theologies about God. This will allow for grassroot participation in African Christian theological formulations. For example, people get the opportunity to share their testimonies with others and so build up the church. Though the interpretation of these testimonies may be subjective, they certainly contribute to the spiritual growth of the faith community. The testimonies also reveal to the church what theological deductions the people make out of their experiences with God; these testimonies help shape people's theology.

Again, since oral theologies are usually expressed in indigenous languages, there is a need to develop the various African indigenous languages. The early missionaries who came to Africa realized that their missionary activities could not be successful without developing the African indigenous languages. Most of them pioneered this course by learning and reducing various indigenous languages into writing. The mother-tongue Bibles and Christian literature that resulted from their efforts played a key role in the development of the Christian faith in most African societies. The use of oral theology is one of the key reasons why many African Initiated Churches thrive. These churches have their liturgies and sermons in the indigenous languages, making them accessible to most of their members. The African church needs to develop mother-tongue commentaries and Bible

study materials, where oral theological formulations can be incorporated to make them widely accessible. Funds for such projects could be raised from the church and other Christian organizations, both at home and abroad.

5. Overcoming Theological Pitfalls in Oral Theology

As indicated earlier, oral theology involves tailoring a personalized understanding of God's revelation to a particular context. While such personalization of the Scripture makes God's revelation relevant and meaningful for the community, it may lead to theological pitfalls if not checked. For example, there is the tendency of people to rely so much on their personal experiences with God and not reading the Bible for further insights. In other words, over-reliance on oral theology based on individual religious experiences may water down the value of the Scriptures in the life of the church. Another problem is when people take biblical texts out of context and arrive at conclusions applicable to their local contexts. The above possible pitfalls are not meant to negate the validity of oral theology in the African church. After all, no theological framework is perfect or free from potential abuses. These potential pitfalls are outlined to help the church identify and guide its members to avoid such pitfalls and deal adequately with them when they arise.

A key principle for dealing with possible pitfalls in oral theology is that the Bible must be the final authority in all theological and ethical formulation. The authority of the Bible means all theological formulations must be scrutinized by God's revelation through the Scriptures. One's experience should not be used to judge the Bible. Rather, the Bible must be used to scrutinize every kind of theology, whether oral, symbolic, or written. The present study applied this principle by authenticating every aspect of the oral theology in *Yehowa* by Suzzy and Matt with a theological and/or biblical reference. Thus, while appreciating the socio-cultural aspect of oral theology, one must avoid syncretism. One must note the continuities and discontinuities between the African traditional worldview and biblical concepts about God to be able to sense the non-theological aspects of a theology under consideration. The aspects of oral theology that agree with biblical theology must be promoted and used to facilitate the contextual expression and relevance of the gospel. The aspects that contradict the gospel must be revised or discarded.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to reflect on the appellations given for God in the song *Yehowa* from a theological-missiological perspective. It has shown that in an oral community like Africa, the development and promotion of oral theology have the potential to enhance discipleship and make Christianity more relevant and meaningful to the *ordinary* person. While arguing for the legitimacy of oral theology, the article has argued that the final authority of theological formulations (whether oral, symbolic, or written) is the Bible. Therefore, African oral theology must be scrutinized in the light of Scripture. This means dealing with any syncretic tendency that may arise in the process of theologizing. The article calls on African theologians to join in the exploration of oral and symbolic theology embedded in African traditional songs and cultural symbols as the church in Africa continues to strive for a contextualized Christianity.

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The Rationale for Augustine's Development of the Doctrine of Predestination

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Abstract

Many Christians have misconceptions about predestination. It is a complex issue that is characterized by great theological disagreement. However, it cannot be disregarded given that someone's belief on the matter has great consequences. The African theologian Saint Augustine (AD 354–430) spoke extensively on predestination. Although the setting of the modern church is different from Augustine's day, this article argues that the issues that Augustine confronted were not unique to his day. A comparative analysis of the literature is conducted to discover and evaluate some historical ideas. As a result, the translated work of Augustine and recent scholarly publications on this topic were consulted. This was done to identify historical opinions to assess Augustine's influence on the theological development of the doctrine of predestination. The present article endeavors to demonstrate the influence of Augustine's exegetical approach to the Epistle of Romans on his dogmatic pronouncements. Furthermore, it seeks to establish the polemical influence of the Pelagius controversy on Augustine's theological views. Through a critical analysis of Augustine's writings, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these two factors shaped Augustine's theological thought.

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1. Introduction

The doctrine of predestination has always been the subject of intense debate in the history of the church. This doctrine always sparks much debate in Christian circles; both among Evangelicals and Roman Catholics. This is not surprising since it focuses on the doctrine of theology proper. According to the doctrine of predestination, God alone determines a person's salvation. This has been the understanding of this doctrine throughout the history of the church, especially for Saint Augustine. Although the situation of the modern church is different from that of Augustine's day, it is argued that the questions that Augustine confronted are still relevant to the modern church (Hyde 2010, 237).

The Reformed movement is experiencing a renaissance all around the English-speaking world. In Australia, North America, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Zambia, and other nations it has made a comeback. The Reformed soteriological presupposition is discussed not only in the old Reformed denominations but also in the Baptist congregations. A new generation is now deeply ingrained with the idea of salvation by grace alone (Duncan 2009, 227). A close and sympathetic reading of Augustine is required to arrive at this contemporary interpretation. The current discourse surrounding Augustine's original historical material comprises an intellectual historical perspective, along with historical hypotheses that consider the specific books under consideration. The intellectual and historical perspectives provide a comprehensive approach to the analysis of Augustine's original historical content. Additionally, the historical hypotheses offer valuable insights into the context in which the specific books were produced. The amalgamation of these approaches provides a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Augustine's original historical material (Olson 2011, 9). The main aim of this paper is to provide a historical analysis of the doctrine as it was formally established in its original form to provide some context for the debate of this doctrine in the modern church.

As such, the article concentrates on Augustine's rationale for the doctrine of predestination noting its early conceptualization and development. This requires the selection of some recent work in the study of historical and systematic theology. It is therefore fundamental to examine his notion of hamartiology to comprehend the contours of his theology. This article examines when the doctrine of predestination was formally established in Augustine's writings during the Pelagian controversy. This provides a clear understanding of both the doctrine's original shape and the motivations for its development.

This paper builds its argument according to the following structure: First Pelagius, a major opponent of Augustine, is discussed. This section outlines Pelagius's contribution to this debate by stating his view on grace and sin. Next, article looks at Saint Augustine's view of grace and sin because of the major role they played. After this, the article outlines the major development of the doctrine and its influence. Lastly, a concluding analysis is presented.

2. Pelagius's View of Sin and Grace

Upon his arrival in Rome in the early 380s, the British monk Pelagius (354–418), who possessed exceptional intellectual rectitude, cultural refinement, and high moral characteristics, swiftly established himself as a spiritual authority among both clergy and laity. His religious beliefs became a matter of public debate due to his teaching and writing (Hannah 2001, 211). In his responses to Augustine or Jerome, he attempted to

undermine their doctrines to such an extent that they were enemies. Arianism[1] and Manichaeism[2] were the two main targets of his apologetic writings. He was hostile towards those whose views differed from his. This enthusiasm for fighting heresy can be seen in both modern appraisals of his writing and writers of his day (Robert 2011, 63). Ferguson (2005, 280) argues that Pelagius had a solid foundation in the classics and the Early Church Fathers, but he was particularly well-versed in the Bible. Therefore, he discovered concepts like free will, moral behavior, carrying out the Father's plan, performing good deeds, modeling oneself after Jesus Christ, and a system of rewards and punishment.

According to Berkhof (1996, 233–234), Pelagius held to the dogma of individualism and isolation from Adam. Thus, according to Pelagius, Adam's fall did not harm anyone other than himself. As such, his fall did not permanently alter the nature of other humans. In this view, he did not accept the idea that humans inherit corruption from Adam's sin and that the first man's transgression condemned his descendants to the same misery. Pelagius's perspective on human nature begins with a particular viewpoint. His central thesis is that since God commands something, it must be possible for humans to accomplish it. This implies that humans have absolute free will, the ability to do good or harm. It also implies that humans have a moral character. According to Pelagius, the idea that God would ascribe Adam's guilt and corruption to his offspring is blasphemous. As an individual, not a representative of all of humanity, Adam's transgression only damaged him; it only served as a negative example for those who came after him. Humanity is still created in the same state that Adam was before the fall. They are not only guilt-free but also pollution-free. They lack the wicked tendencies and desires that inevitably lead to wrongdoing. They differ from Adam in that they have a bad example set before them (Culver 2005, 379).

Pelagius asserted that God's predestination of someone for redemption is in consideration of their anticipated final faith. He thus rejected the idea that people are unable to do good and please God. The implication is that only when someone chooses to join of their own free will would efficacious grace be infallibly effective. This perspective, therefore, points out that Pelagius was a moralist who rose to prominence as a moral reformer and spiritual guide. He rose to prominence while he was in Rome studying law, even though he was not a theologian or a mystic (Voak 2009, 136).

Pelagius (1991, 7) argued quite specifically that God's grace is extended to everyone equally and not just to a select few chosen individuals. He agrees with the generally held Christian beliefs that God has bestowed upon us the gift of free will and the ability to perform virtuous acts. The divine law has been revealed to us through the Old Testament, while Jesus's teachings are documented in the New Testament. The death and resurrection of Jesus are the integral components of Christianity, and through the sacrament of baptism, we attain forgiveness for our sins. Pelagius differentiated between ability, will, and action. He argued that only ability, which is God's creation,

335–336 served as the main foundation for Arianism. Because God is one, the fundamental tenet of Arius's philosophy was that Jesus Christ could not have been the true God. To address the scriptural evidence for Christ's high status, Jesus was envisioned by Arius and his adherents as God's highest created being. Christ was therefore not entirely God, yet being fully human (Hannah 2001, 366).

2 Manichaeism was established in the third century by the Iranian philosopher Mani, who considered himself to be the greatest and final prophet sent to perfect the Persian, Christian, and Buddhist faiths. Manichaeism is a type of dualistic Gnosticism that promotes knowledge as the means to redemption. Claiming to be defective, Manichee's asceticism entailed strict self-denial, including abstaining from physical pleasure. Augustine spent nine years as a Manichee before his conversion to Christianity (Letham 2019, 943).

is given by grace. Will and action can both be controlled by people. Therefore, he found grace in things outside of human beings; in the Law, in the teachings of Jesus Christ, in forgiveness, and in the life of Christ (Ferguson 2005, 280).

In conclusion, since God's help is not inevitably necessary or prevenient, Pelagius's soteriological presupposition is synergistic and it allows for a gradual slip into libertarianism since God's assistance is not inherently required or prevenient. After all, humans can exercise actions of righteousness that earn eternal life and so are able to save themselves. According to Pelagianism,[3] God's foreknowledge of individuals who would merit redemption, even without gracious assistance, serves as the foundation for God's election.

3. Augustine's View of Sin and Grace

Any examination of Augustine, the most prominent Church Father,[4] must cover two aspects of his soteriology. First is human depravity, and second is God's grace. According to his perspective, humanity's depravity weakened their capacity to rise to heaven on their own. No one could be redeemed for all eternity apart from God's grace. In soteriological discussions, total depravity and human potential were seen as opposite, yet grace is seen as the solution to depravity. The necessity of grace was highlighted by depravity. The only way for humankind to be saved was by God's grace (Anderson 2002, 31).

Paul was not a new character to Augustine's inquiry for the truth when he studied the Epistle to the Romans in the middle of the fourth century. He had the chance to carefully read Paul on multiple occasions throughout the previous ten years, both as a Manichaean and later, in Italy, as a Catholic catechumen and developing Neoplatonist (Olson 1999, 257). But after he returned to Africa, Augustine was forced to publicly debate a well-organized Manichaean sect whose dualistic teaching heavily drew on the New Testament, particularly Paul, in front of his church. He also had to debate their schismatic competitor, the Donatists. Arguments against Manichaean determinism primarily based on the philosophical justification of human goodness and free will would be of little use to such a listener and foe. Augustine had to exegetically present his case to defend Paul (Ticciati 2011, 422).

He directly refuted his prior claim that election is based on God's understanding of man's faith by referring to Romans 9. Previously, Augustine believed that man had the freedom to reject God's mercy and continue to sin or to respond to God's call with faith and thus repent. However, later he believed that such autonomy compromises God's omnipotence (Berkhof 1996, 109). Augustine had previously argued that the goodwill of man precedes God's call to faith, but later he believed that it is God who chooses man's goodwill. Faith is not something that man can earn, instead, it is a gift given by God. Similarly, God's righteousness

3 Pelagianism is the teaching that claims salvation may be obtained via human effort alone and does not require divine intervention. The saying "God helps those who help themselves" expresses this belief in modern times (Hannah 2001, 372).

4 Augustine (354–430) was born in Thagaste, North Africa, in AD 354, to a Christian mother named Monica and a pagan father named Patricius. His mother, a devout woman, tried her best to instill in her son a strong Christian faith (Needham 2008, 40). However, as he grew older, he indulged his passions by having an illicit relationship with a concubine, following the example of many other students of the time. In AD 372, his son Adeodatus was born of this relationship (Cairns 1996, 139). Augustine's parents sent him to Carthage to finish his education and pursue his dream of teaching rhetoric. He started studying philosophy when he was in Carthage in his quest for the truth. His contact with the literature of Cicero, a famous Latin rhetorician and philosopher, caused him to reject his mother's beliefs, igniting his search for the truth (Cloud 2010, 25). In his *Confessions* (2004b, 41), Augustine mentions reading a philosophical work by Cicero that enraged him. He was encouraged by Cicero's exhortation, or at least sufficiently so that he was enlivened and stirred to love, seek, get, hold, and embrace philosophical wisdom. According to Muller (2017, 103), Cicero supported free will, contending that the independence of individuals made it impossible to divine the future because events that were known in advance would inevitably take place.

was once considered unrivaled by human justice due to his immense mercy and grace, but it is now beyond our understanding because he has chosen to forgive a select few of the debt of damnation that all humans supposedly owe. From this point forward, Augustine developed a Christian anthropology against the Manichees that turned more and more to the Bible, notably Pauline epistles, and less and less to philosophy (Armstrong 2003, 202).

Humanity is not composed of a great number of relatively independent individuals acting separately. Rather, it is composed of a huge number of individuals that are organic components of the general human nature that existed in Adam. The sin of human nature then, was the sin of inherent individualism (Berkhof 1953, 134). However, he was subject to God's due punishment because he decided to disobey God. As a result, he was doomed with all his offspring because they shared his sin while still fully contained in him. A significant number of his descendants who are freed by God's grace are likewise freed from the damnation (Augustine 2010, 209).

Augustinianism's[5] anthropological presupposition asserts that sin was introduced into humans through a self-initiated, culpable deed, and every human is rightfully held accountable for it equally and similarly. But for this to happen, Adam and Eve's descendants need to somehow benefit from it. The basis of meritorious imputation, but not for gratuitous or unjustified imputation, is participation. The next generation was unable to partake in the original sin as an individual; therefore, they were forced to do so as a race. This presupposes that the race form existed before the individual form, that humans first existed as a race or species, and that they committed a single, common sin in this way of life. The unique and separate individuals are a component of a large whole (Shedd 2003, 444). Therefore, the whole group is punished, and if the just punishment of condemnation were meted out to everyone, it would unquestionably be meted out strictly. Therefore, those who are saved from it by grace are not referred to as "vessels of their own merits," but rather as "vessels of mercy" (Rom 9:23 ESV) (Augustine 2004b, 123).

The belief in biblical anthropology emphasizes the unity of Adam, who committed the first sin and fell from God, and his descendants. This unity is crucial for upholding God's justice in the face of inherited sin. It is believed that no individual can have moral standards that differ from those of their species (Barret 2013, 6). Humans are believed to be inherently sinful and unable to achieve holiness. This perspective maintains that one's actions are limited by their species, and it is impossible to surpass this constraint. Therefore, individuals are responsible for the original sin of their race and must identify with their collective identity to make amends. The story of Adam and his original sin serves as a foundation for this concept, representing the shared human nature expressed through our individual existence, character, and actions. This viewpoint, which began with Paul and was followed by Augustine, highlights the significance of recognizing our common origins and their impact on our individual lives (Curley 2015, 13).

Powers (2017, 330) and Anderson (2002:31) have argued quite specifically that Augustine's biblical anthropology and hamartiology demand a soteriology that is entirely based on divine grace, which differs in a major way from the hamartiological and soteriological presupposition of Pelagianism. Thus, Augustine's formulation of the notion of grace was influenced by his theology of the fall of man and its lasting ramifications. He based his theological assumption on the notion of predestination, which focuses on his anthropological and soteriological discoveries. Therefore,

5 Augustinianism is the teaching that says God kindly predestines individuals who are powerless over sin to turn to him and repent.

biblical hamartiology emphasizes that original sin is a comprehensive degradation of human essence. However, Augustine states that his perspective on man's depravity weakened humanity's capacity to climb to the heavens by themselves. It would not be possible for anyone to be rescued for all time without God's grace. In soteriological discussions, total depravity and human capacity are directly opposed to one another, while grace is the inverse of depravity. Therefore, it should not be surprising to learn that Augustine's view of grace is greatly influenced by his view of the idea of original sin and that his view of grace offers a remedy to the issue that original sin caused (Pereira 2013, 100).

In the study of Systematic Theology, the notion of original sin is one of the weightiest and most challenging topics. It is astounding, however, that the mystery that has never been fully understood is the transmission of sin, the one thing that is necessary for us to understand ourselves. Adam's disobedience is the original sin; this is what the Bible explicitly teaches (Brotherton 2016, 603). According to Augustine, children do not have a spiritual descent but rather a carnal descent. Humans are born with guilt because they are descended from a contaminated seed (Augustine 2016, 373).

Therefore, Augustine goes on to claim that to understand the central theme of Romans, one must keep in mind the recipients' actions. This instantly creates the framework for his critique of Manichaeism, as Augustine (like Paul before him) must fight hard to defend the Old Law's positive standing and the need for moral autonomy against those who (like the Manichees) interpret Paul's comments as condemning both. To achieve this, Paul introduces the four stages of the history of salvation: before the Law, under the Law, under grace, and in peace (Augustine 1982, 35).

Augustine is adamant that God gives grace to sinful humans, not because they believe, but so that they may believe because faith is a gift from God. In the course of the work of divine grace, he makes many distinctions that he refers to as *prevenient* grace, *operative* grace, and *cooperative* grace. In the first, the Holy Spirit makes use of the law to instill a sense of guilt and sin. In the second, he applies the gospel to the development of the kind of faith in Christ and his atoning acts that result in justification and peace with God. In the third, the renewed man works with him in the ongoing process of sanctification (Culver 2005, 662). Augustine (2004b, 123) writes, "however, without this grace from Christ, neither children nor adults can be saved. It is given freely for no reason, which is why it is also known as grace. 'Freely being justified through his blood,' the apostle claims in Romans 3:24."

Augustine's theology of the predestination of believers was derived from his portrayal of God's grace as the effective cause of redemption. God intended to carry out his eternal plan when it came to the gracious rebirth of the sinner in due time (Venema 2015, 7). Initially, Augustine showed a propensity to believe that God predestined some individuals to be saved by predicting who would accept Christ and who would not. However, he soon realized that consistency and a fair interpretation of the pertinent biblical passages required him to consider a person's will to do good and his faith in Christ as being the result of divine favor. He therefore changed his view of predestination. Then he emphasized that God's gracious choice is what determines how God predestines the elects to faith, holiness, and eternal glory rather than only God's foreknowledge. God chooses some to receive grace by grace while allowing the rest to sin and this redemptive transformation of human activity is rooted in God (Brink 2011, 239).

But this favor of Christ without which neither children nor adults can be saved is not paid for by any merits, which is why it is called grace. It is instead given without charge. According to Augustine, a human

will not participate in the appropriation of grace unless they have been regenerated. Despite several scriptural commands urging people to turn from their sins and accept Christ as their personal savior, he contends that even the foundation of the faith by which we are Christians is a gift from God (Knapp 2000, 66–67).

According to Augustine, if faith came from a person, they would be worthy. Instead, only those who have been predestined receive faith as a gift of grace (Ticciati 2011, 419). Only God's good pleasure is the source of this unqualified election. Instead of selecting a specific human trait or deed from a conceivable list as a requirement for redemption, God adopts individuals from the general group of sinners to be his property apart from their merit (Venema 2015, 7).

Therefore, according to Augustine's original sin concept, humans lost their innate ability to make moral decisions after the fall, resulting in every person bearing guilt for their personal sins and being condemned for the original sin. Given the incapability of human beings to make righteous choices, God must extend mercy and take initiative. Augustine refutes the notion that God could have chosen to save individuals based on their presumed response since humankind cannot fully comprehend the depth of God's grace (De Bruyn 2016, 25). While Augustine acknowledges that God's will is the ultimate cause, the Christian belief posits that God knows everything beforehand, and human beings act freely based on their knowledge and what they deem best for themselves.

4. The Rationale for Augustine's Development of the Doctrine of Predestination

When analyzing Augustine's reasons for holding certain views, it can be challenging to distinguish the ones he would have arrived at apart from his opponents and the views he arrived at in response to his opponents. A large portion of his theology of grace was articulated in response to the views of others (Couenhoven 2018, 25).

After successfully disproving the Manichean view of evil, Augustine turned his attention to God's grace, the subject covered in Romans 9. While many think that Augustine acquired his ideas of grace and predestination while debating Pelagian theologians, his interpretation of Roman 9 goes back to before Pelagius's day. Romans 9 provided Augustine with an exegetical foundation for his insistence on the generosity of grace (Augustine 2010, 156).

When Augustine initially began to believe in the grace of God, he was not motivated by Pelagianism. *Confessions*, which Augustine published ten years before the disagreement (around 400), reflects on what Paul says in Romans 9 and exposes the depravity and complete incapacity of man's free will while exalting the sovereign favor of God. The experiences of Augustine's conversion in the Milan Garden served as inspiration for his proclamation of sovereign grace (Barrett 2013, 5). Augustine (2004b, 137) writes:

> So, I eagerly focused on the esteemed writings of the Spirit, especially those of the apostle Paul. My previous assumptions that Paul occasionally contradicted himself and that the content of his teaching did not line up with the testimony of the Law and the Prophets have all been dispelled. And when I realized that there was only one face to those pure words, I discovered how to delight while trembling.

First, Paul's soteriological presupposition, particularly as it is outlined in the Epistle to the Romans, inspired Augustine to a deeper and more determined engagement. The Augustinian soteriological presupposition began to take on a new perspective on humankind and salvation. Therefore, this was a significant shift in contrast with his

initial soteriological epistemological presupposition of libertarianism, since he later came to believe that such autonomy compromises God's omnipotence. Humankind's goodwill, which Augustine had previously believed came before God's call to commence the merit of faith, is now itself chosen by God; man's faith itself is not man's effort but rather God's gift and the righteousness of God (Berkhof 1996, 109). Romans 9:11–12 (ESV) supports this idea: "Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad so that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls, she was told, 'The older will serve the younger.'"

This passage led Augustine to the conclusion that all human worth had to be disregarded as a basis for God's decision. He further argues that Paul in other places writes: "Not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace" (2 Tim 1:9). As a result, it should be understood that the statement that those who are predestined are those who are called according to his purpose (Rom 8:28–30) means that they were called in line with his purpose. The apostle stated at the beginning of that paragraph that "God works all things together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28 ESV). He continued: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8:29 ESV). To avoid the misconception that some of them were called but not elected, the apostle wants readers to understand that *those* refer to those whom God "called by his plan." This is in keeping with the Lord's proclamation that "many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt 20:16 ESV) (Augustine 2010, 197).

Augustine read Romans 9 again, and he concluded somewhat to his surprise that Paul could not be referring to an election based on foreknowledge of faith; that would be too close to the notion that divine favor is bestowed based on what some people do more skillfully than others. Jacob would be more dependable in this situation than his brother (Muller 2022, 14). Therefore, Paul's rejection of a work-based election had previously persuaded Augustine, but he had not yet considered how broadly the term *work* could be construed. According to his altered interpretation of Paul, he decides that election and the means of imparting it must be completely gracious. If God chooses to favor Jacob as a brother deserving of preference it is for reasons that are only known to God. If someone is so blessed by God that he chooses to save them they will respond with devotion; God never needs to wait for human faith to emerge on its own (Stump and Kretzmann 2001, 54).

However, Augustine's views were also shaped, in part, by his disagreement with the British monk Pelagius. Augustine was better able to understand the character of God's grace. During the Pelagian debate, he emphasized that man is naturally corrupt and only God's grace can make humankind whole (De Vries 2011, 84). Pelagius's writings *On Nature* and *In Defense of the Free Will* publicly incensed Augustine because they contained little discussion on divine grace and too much discussion on human free choice. Therefore, the consequences of salvation have been effectively taught to Christians through this dialogue. Augustine's soteriological formulation established a robust concept of grace during the Pelagian debate, whereby Augustine argued quite specifically that man can do nothing apart from effectual grace (Frame 2015, 114).

All kinds of original sin were refuted by Pelagius. He stated that even if Adam had not sinned, he would have perished because he was made mortal. People choose to sin by copying others. Grace may be of assistance to those who have already sinned, yet it is constantly resisted. Fundamentally, moral submission to God's command is what saves humankind. He understood grace as a method of illumination about what

people think and do. Christ is primarily the one to imitate (Daniel 2019, 36). Pelagius argued further that baptism does not regenerate individuals but rather merely aids them. He emphasized that human beings have free will beyond all else. They have the same ability to sin and not to sin. They can do good. Ability is required for responsibility. Furthermore, God is just and never overrides human free choice or issues impossibly difficult orders. Contrary to Augustine, he commands obedience, and it is up to humans to comply. God predetermined who would exercise free choice, believe, and obey, hence God predetermined their salvation. However, if humans do not continue to use free will, they may eventually lose all their good deeds, faith, salvation, and grace (Bird 2021, 74).

Augustine responded to Pelagius and his followers in several treatises, sermons, and letters. First, he strengthened the original sin concept much more than previous theologians had. Some of his opinions were based on Romans 5:12: "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and death spread to all men because all have sinned" (ESV). Since Adam served as the foundation of humanity, all people are born with a wicked nature that permeates every aspect of their being. Because of their sin, humans are incapable of obeying God. Augustine claimed that humans are spiritually dead, not alive and well, as Pelagius claimed (Daniel 2019, 36). The notion of operative grace was one of his teaching's most important components. Some sinners' fallen wills are efficaciously moved by God, causing them to always respond with faith, which is a heavenly gift. The credit belongs to God since he exalts his gifts rather than meritoriousness (Guelzo 2019, 258). He taught justification through infused righteousness rather than imputation, in line with popular theology of the day. Although he appeared to have seldom taught that redemption was only available to the elect, he said very little concerning the atonement. It would be correspondingly fundamental in the theological research that this was a significant development considering his position in theological history (Ticciati 2011, 419).

Therefore, according to Augustine grace is both particular and effective, in salvation. In contrast to Pelagius who argued for synergism, Augustine affirms that God works irresistibly on his elect giving the sinner a new heart and a renewed will so that the sinner will respond in faith and repentance. God does not bestow his special saving grace upon all humankind and wait to see if an individual will cooperate with it. Therefore, rather than humanity's will causing and effecting God's grace, God's grace causes and effects man's will to react in faith (Barrett 2013, 7). Grace from an almighty Savior naturally is irresistible. The will of an omnipotent God cannot be overthrown. God had omnipotent control over human hearts and may direct them in any direction. Nevertheless, irresistible grace means that when God decides to act on his elect, he overpowers all humankind's resistance, not that humans do not fight God (Olson 1999, 274).

Kame (2013, 96) demonstrates that more recent work on predestination has drawn a rather different picture. Some scholars have argued for the centralization of faith by promoting a modern interpretation of predestination. Despite God's sovereign decision to elect people apart from their own will, human beings must place their faith for grace to be applied to their salvation (Kirkpatrick 2019, 51). The presumption would be based on the biblical idea of faith, the philosophical idea of the covenant in Christ alone, and the anthropological idea of sinfulness and universal salvation. It is asserted that salvation is a particular and unique reaction to trusting in Christ. It is *viewed* as a way into God's holy, and loving, eternal purpose that is available to everyone who will acknowledge their extreme sinfulness and ability to be saved by

none other than Christ. This pathway is provided by the person and works of Christ alone (Hankins 2011, 99).

However, Augustinianism has also been paying attention to the nature of saving faith. Augustine believed that the free grace of God produced both the instrumental cause (faith) and the effectual cause (grace) of justification. He frequently references Ephesians 2:8–10 to support the idea that the foundation of saving faith is a divine gift that is not subject to human volition or control. Augustine's understanding of soteriology was essentially shaped by these verses (Anderson 2002, 33). Augustine (2004a, 504) affirms this in his exposition of this passage:

> The apostle makes a distinction between work and faith but does not suggest that work is not a part of faith. Since Judah is Israel itself, the apostle makes a distinction between faith and works in the same way that Israel and Judah are separated in the two kingdoms of the Hebrews. And he asserts that a person is justified by faith and not by good deeds because faith is the foundation from which other things can be attained that is specifically characterised as good deeds and enable a person to live a virtuous life. Because he states, "By grace, you have been saved through faith and this is not of yourselves, but it is the gift of God."

Augustine refers to grace in soteriological terms. Using soteriological terms to refer to grace is also valuable from the epistemological perspective. Not only are humans sinful, but their created nature and the constraints of time prevent them from seeing and knowing God. As a result, revelation is required for the understanding of God, and grace's primary impact on reason is revelation (Ferguson 2005, 279).

In conclusion, the incredible theological riches of Augustine's anti-Pelagian treatises can be used to understand his continued relevance to the modern church. Those who are confessional, Lutheran, or Reformed, would find in these writings the first clear, coherent expression of the biblical anthropology and soteriology that are dear to their theological persuasions: the total spiritual inability of unregenerate human nature to respond to God and be saved, the unconditional divine election of those who are saved, the manifestation of this grace in the mission of Christ the Savior, and the sovereign efficacy of the Holy Spirit in giving faith and repentance to people (Needham 2008, 46).

Augustine is well recognized for adopting a strong predestination doctrine that holds that God has predetermined whom he would freely save (those known as the elect). From the perspective of grace, it does not matter when God bestows the benefits; it is an unmet need that God is free to fulfill whenever he sees fit.

5. Conclusion

This study of the concept of predestination, particularly as presented in Augustine's works during the Pelagian conflict, has yielded several important findings. These discoveries have arisen from an examination of the theological development of this teaching by Augustine and Pelagius. It is important to first understand the foundational aspects of the predestination of believers. Pelagius, a notable theologian, held a unique perspective on the notion of original sin. He rejected the idea that a sinful nature is inherited through generations and therefore believed that salvation is achievable through human effort alone, without requiring God's assistance. His ideas have had a profound influence on how we understand the fundamental assumptions of human nature and sin.

It is extremely important that the church's stance on predestination, given the resurgence of the Reformed movement throughout the English-

speaking world, is grounded in the historical intellectual perspective established within Augustinianism. To arrive at a contemporary interpretation, it is essential to read Augustine's work closely and sympathetically. By doing so, we can analyze Augustine's original historical content from both an intellectual and historical perspective. Augustine's belief in predestination was shaped by his religious experiences and his study of the Epistle to the Romans. Initially, he believed that predestination depended on supernatural knowledge, but later modified his doctrine to consider the effects of divine grace on an individual's decision to do good and have faith in Christ.

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Reconciliation in South Africa: Recent Contributions and the Part African Pentecostalism Can Play

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Abstract

The current socio-political approaches to reconciliation in South Africa are fragile which is evidenced by the high levels of poverty, corruption, and inequalities which cancel the strides taken in the right direction of democratizing and unifying the country. These inadequacies evidence a need to come up with new ideas, particularly from the religious sector, that can play a leading role in enhancing the capacity of these socio-political systems to build reconciled and peaceful communities. Pentecostalism has the potential to be used as an instrument of peace and reconciliation in our community, therefore this article explores African Pentecostalism as a way of assessing how this tradition can contribute to the transformation of communities, leading to co-existence, reconciliation, and love for the other. To achieve this objective, this study will make use of a systematic review methodology which will involve analyzing selected works written by various scholars on the topic of reconciliation and African Pentecostalism.

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

1. Introduction

The purpose of this research is to learn more about African Pentecostalism as part of the broader Christian tradition by discussing recent developments on reconciliation in this tradition and determining whether the reconciliation ideas in these systems can inform socio-political systems. This article adds its voice to the cause of reconciliation, unity, and justice in modern communities by exploring African Pentecostalism in search of new ideas.

This article responds to the research question, what are the recent scholarly contributions on reconciliation in South Africa and what part can African Pentecostalism play? This research question will be answered with the following steps:

First, the article explores reconciliation to determine how the term is understood from both the secular and religious perspectives. After that, the reasons reconciliation is needed in South Africa and the world at large are explored. The next section looks at the theological, societal, and ecclesiastical relevance of reconciliation. Then the article delves into the characteristics of African Pentecostalism by looking at its worldview. Last of all the article will analyze some recent African Pentecostal scholarship in relation to research on reconciliation and also determine how Pentecostalism can enhance its capability to promote reconciliation and peace.

It is also important to acknowledge that the post-apartheid era saw a sudden surge in research about Pentecostalism with scholars such as Allan Anderson and Maria Frahm-Arp and many others writing extensively on this topic because of the great impact of these churches both locally and internationally. The attention given to these churches was because of their exponential growth and considerable influence on the socio-political spheres in the Global South. This rapid growth in influence coupled with the strategic contextualisation of these African Pentecostal churches necessitates the need to explore their potential to contribute to the cause of reconciliation, unity, and peace in the volatile communities in which they flourish, particularly in the South African context.

2. Defining Reconciliation

Reconciliation refers to the process of bringing together opposing groups of people or individuals with different ideas, beliefs, and situations so that they become friends again. However, this paper will base its argument on the understanding that reconciliation "is a change of personal relations between human beings or between God and man" which is depicted in biblical passages such as Mathew 5:24, Romans 5:1–11, and Ephesians 2:16 (Robinson 1959). These biblical passages show that humans became alienated from each other and God because of sin, hence Christ came to mend this relationship through the shedding of his blood on the cross. This means that the reconciliation being referred to in these passages is not only relevant to the mending of individual relationships. It also champions the restoration of relationships within communities, countries, natural habitats, and cosmic entities, because all creation was alienated from God through the entry of sin into the world.

Concerning the role of the church as an agent of reconciliation within itself and the community at large, reconciliation is regarded as the calling of the church to spearhead processes of establishing relationships between people with differences, and also to strive for unity within the church at large (van Wyngaard 2020,144). For us to have an idea of what reconciliation is from the Pentecostal perspective—a perspective that is also aligned with the broader Christian view of reconciliation—it is vital to look at how one church defines this term. One congregation of the Salvation Army in Australia in their celebration of the Pentecost

event describes reconciliation as the "coming together of a diverse and divided people" as seen during the day of Pentecost (Whitecross 2020). This means that the Holy Spirit came upon disciples during the Pentecost event (Acts 1:8) to transform them into Christ's likeness in terms of their lifestyle and character (Whitecross 2020). Christ's lifestyle and character are distinguished by his love for all creation to the extent that he had to sacrifice himself to reconcile humans and all creation to each other and God (Col 1:18–22). Critical elements that are visible within the Pentecost event and form part of the Pentecostal theology of reconciliation are Holy Spirit empowerment, transformation, love, and unity in diversity.

To consolidate the Christian understanding of the term *reconciliation*, we should look at the origin of this term. The term is derived from a Greek family of words that emerge from the verb ἀλλάσσω, which means a change in the relationship between individuals or between God and humans. This means that there was some form of tension or enmity between the parties involved in this process hence the need for them to be reconciled to each other (Porter 2006, 132–133). As indicated earlier, the broader understanding of reconciliation indicates that it does not only involve restoring or mending relationships between individuals or between God and humans but also between communities and nations. It is also vital to acknowledge that genuine reconciliation does not simply involve forgiveness, unity, and restitution, but also initiates equality and economic justice. According to John de Gruchy (2002, v–vi), reconciliation for Christians "is the center and perennial test of their faith" because it goes beyond ecclesial harmony and personal piety to encompass the environment, politics, and group relations, making it critical for the restoration of peace and justice.

3. Reconciliation in South Africa and the World

3.1 The need for reconciliation

The initial elation that characterized the end of the apartheid era in South Africa has been short-lived especially with the racial and ethnic disparities in opportunities and income still existing despite all the government efforts to open up businesses and the education sector to non-whites (Magistad 2017). The political leadership succession has also not matched the initial expectation which was a vision for a better South Africa where there is prosperity, equality, and freedom for all. This is mainly due to the reality that "Mandela's leadership and focus haven't been matched by his successors" (Magistad 2017). The recent developments in the country of xenophobia and its associated problems of violence, poverty, and unemployment have created a need to go back to the initial mandate which is enhancing relationships and promoting reconciliation.

Reconciliation is critical because it ensures that past wrongs are redressed and consequently "promotes the idea of a common connected future" (Lederach 1997, 31). However, the need for reconciliation is not only relevant to South Africa but also to the modern global society where there is an increase in wars, conflicts, competition for resources, and divisions. The current war between Russia and Ukraine, the series of military coups in Niger, Mali, Gabon, and other West African countries, and the persistent violence and conflict in the Sahel region bring into perspective the need for reconciliation in the world.

This need for reconciliation in the global society is also echoed by Karen Brouneus (2007, 6) who states that reconciliation has developed into a very important term in recent times due to the increase in conflicts and the critical need for peacebuilding in our communities.

According to Brouneus (2009, 6–7), reconciliation has developed into a critical component "of postconflict peace building rhetoric and practice" because all conflicts are either intrastate or initiated by perpetrators and former enemies. However, after any form of conflict, former enemies or individuals involved in the conflict must be able to live together, hence there is a need for reconciliation. Therefore, it is not surprising that the post-apartheid era in South Africa saw the initiation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) whose central focus was on human rights and the reconciling of warring parties. However, the introduction of human rights as the central focus of the commission without considering critical aspects such as legal justice and economic justice for all has had its side effects.

Richard Wilson (2000, 75–76) describes the disparities between the notions of justice and the rights discourses propagated by TRC and justice articulated in the townships. There is an agreement between different stakeholders, which includes the religious sector and the socio-political spheres, that the rights discourses emphasized by the TRC were based on shared institutional structures and value orientations contrary to justice systems in the townships which have focused on retribution and punishment (Wilson 2000, 75–76). Gail Super (2015, 31) also alludes to this phenomenon in Khayelitsha, a prominent township in Cape Town, where the administration of a formal justice system based on democratic values and human rights enjoys minimal legitimacy. My experience in Johannesburg where I live also shows an increased tendency in recent years for residents to take the law into their own hands when airing their grievances over lack of service delivery or in dealing with cases of crime.

This growing tendency in the local communities indicates some shortcomings of the legal and judicial system because of its emphasis on human rights rather than legal and economic justice. This unbalanced approach where the voices of those on the margins are not adequately adhered to, is a legacy of the TRC. The shortcomings within the legal and judicial system have given birth to a divergent system in the townships which is contrary to the nominal notion inculcated by the TRC and the acquired democratic values in South Africa. This somehow explains the rise in violence and xenophobic attacks in the townships where residents take matters into their own hands to deal with the problems of crime, unemployment, poverty, and economic injustice prevalent in the country. This also depicts the lack of confidence in the socio-political approaches to unity, reconciliation, and justice, which do not pay heed to the voices of those who live on the margins.

This retributive criminal justice system which is prevalent in the local townships can be attributed to the unresolved anger against the government's reluctance to solve the lingering problems of the influx of immigrants, who are accused of taking away jobs from locals, and economic injustice and poverty because of high inflation rates. However, it is also regarded as a legacy of the Roman-Dutch law which was at work during the apartheid era (Velthuizen 2016). This law resulted in the division of people into different racial, ethnic, and tribal groups, and belonging to a particular group determined what a person could have access to in terms of place of residence, education, recreation, and health facilities. In short, this old Roman-Dutch law facilitated what is referred to as a *divide-and-rule* strategy, hence preventing the manifestation of unity in diversity in these communities.

According to Velthuizen (2016), the solution to dealing with the invisible law of retribution at work in the communities is accommodating "indigenous African legal practices" within the socio-political discourses, which are more reconciliatory and participatory. The reconciliatory and participatory nature of African indigenous justice systems is vested in

the understanding that "African culture is built on the values and virtues of interdependence and communality of the community members" (Mekonnen 2010, 101).

According to Mekonnen (2010, 101), African traditional legal systems include critical aspects for bringing reconciliation in communities such as truth-telling, healing, accountability, and "mechanisms for acknowledgement." Reconciliation, as spearheaded by TRC, has in recent years been linked to some form of injustice because of the way Caucasian privileged groups have used it to maintain their status quo. However, its potential to engage different sides of the conflict "promote open expression of the painful past, build lasting relationships and enhance interdependence" (Lederach 1997, 26, 30) meaning that its values are critically needed in our modern society (Gibson 2002, 541). Indigenous African legal systems can be incorporated into the socio-political ideologies as spearheaded by the TRC. Then it can play a leading role in the cause for unity and reconciliation and help heal fragile communities awash with violence, xenophobia, and divisions.

Furthermore, the great need for the healing of communities due to rising conflicts and divisions and the complexity of the problems that our modern society is facing also entails reflecting more on the understanding of reconciliation to realize its full meaning and effectiveness. This means that restorative justice, despite its effectiveness in healing political or personal relationships through critical elements such as amnesty and forgiveness, cannot be compared to the richness that can be attributed to the term reconciliation itself. Genuine reconciliation goes beyond restorative justice because it entails listening to the voice of those on the margins, allowing equal participation for all, and infusing critical aspects such as equality, unity in diversity, and legal and economic justice. According to Ilwad Elman (UN Security Council 2019), an official at the Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre in Somalia, reconciliation's effectiveness in modern societies can be enhanced by making sure reconciliation processes are inclusive (involving all sectors), "locally owned and based on social and economic reforms."

3.2 The current status of reconciliation in South African

In the current South African context reconciliation is understood in various ways, with some merely thinking of it as *forgiveness*, while others hold that *transformation* has to form part of it. These varying views on reconciliation have presented huge challenges for researchers because there have been some misunderstandings and it is not clear how to measure progress with reconciliation (Harrison 2022). Van Wyngaard (2020, 146) also notes some ambiguity with the "language of reconciliation" used by the respondents in his 2019 survey among young Dutch Reformed ministers. A number of the clergy who participated in the survey name reconciliation as one of the current ecclesial priorities and something the church has to work towards (van Wyngaard 2020, 145–146).

Indeed, some mention reconciliation as a priority of the church in a church that is still regarded as racially divided and have been engaging confidently in activities that they regard as part of the reconciliation process. However, that these activities are mere social activities means that there is a challenge in the way reconciliation is understood. Many churches within South Africa, even among Pentecostal churches, are still homogenous. There is also still a lack of concerted effort from its members to deal with the racial divisions within the church itself and the community. These facts serve as a sign that there is a serious problem in the way most of the people in South Africa understand reconciliation. However, some naming reconciliation as a priority of the church in the

survey conducted by the Dutch Reformed Church in 2019 indicates an awareness of this problem. Nevertheless, just recognizing the challenge without understanding what the term reconciliation means adds to the problem because it opens the possibility of some people reading their own meaning into the term. This lack of understanding of what reconciliation means is a challenge because it poses a threat to the building of reconciled and peaceful communities.

By constructing a biblical perspective on reconciliation, we can iron out this problem of different people reading their own meaning into the term *reconciliation*. We can also focus on a common cause to deal with the challenges of divisions, violence, and xenophobia ravaging our local communities. Elements such as corruption, racism, inequality, economic injustice, looting of government resources, and xenophobia are depicted in the Bible as sins, and these are responsible for broken relationships in our communities. This realization is key in dealing with the challenges South Africa is currently facing. Therefore, if these sinful elements within our societies are dealt with it can go a long way in restoring broken relationships between people and between God and people. Christ's work on the cross dealt with sin (Col 2:14) and he invites us to imitate his character and lifestyle through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. This is critical in helping us build a reconciled and peaceful society.

A survey done by the South African Reconciliation Barometer in 2019 clearly indicates that South Africa is still a divided society with 77% stating that reconciliation still needs to happen (Harrison 2022). In this survey two-thirds of the respondents did not express satisfaction with the TRC, with many considering its work as simply the starting point (Harrison 2022). This survey indicates the critical need for reconciliation in the country and the church must not be left out in this project of building a peaceful nation.

4. Theological and Ecclesiastical Relevance of Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a term that has its roots in the religious sphere. This understanding is also echoed by Vorster (2018, 1) who states that reconciliation has its origin in the Christian tradition, and it is immensely inculcated in its theology. Reconciliation has a broader theological relevance despite some religious scholars restricting it for many years to systematic theology and the spiritual, mystical, and pious experiences of Christians. As indicated earlier, the biblical foundations of reconciliation are depicted by biblical passages on the alienation of all creation from God through sin and how God sought to reconcile humans and all creation to himself through Jesus Christ, as indicated in Ephesians 2:14–22. In this biblical text, Christ is referred to as our peace because he was able to break down the walls of hostility by breaking down the barrier that existed between Jews and Gentiles, thus creating one new man in himself. Christ represented us before God hence reconciling all creation to God. The Pauline corpus makes this biblical foundation of reconciliation more clear, particularly in Colossians 1:15–23, Ephesians 2:13–16, Romans 5:8–11, and 2 Corinthians 5:17–21. There the eschatological, spiritual, and social dimensions of reconciliation are captured (du Plessis 2017, iv). Understanding the theological meaning and implications of reconciliation as a concept that deals intrinsically with mending broken relationships and enhancing social cohesion makes it possible to situate its relevance within the socio-political spheres.

However, translating the theological meaning of reconciliation into a socio-political context is not a simple endeavor because it involves captivating "the social relevance of divine reconciliation" by incorporating both justice and liberation (Vorster 2018, 1–2). This entails understanding

what the concept of reconciliation means and how it can be applied effectively in socio-political contexts. The common argument for the social relevance of reconciliation as a theological concept is that it reflects on the core value of religion which is the reconciliation of God to humans and human beings one to another. However, reflecting on the theological implication of reconciliation entails going beyond simply recognizing it as a core component of religion by acknowledging and implementing its pedagogical dimensions such as cultural, economic, and political liberation for all people.

In articulating the liberating dimension of reconciliation, Emmanuel Katongole (2017, 10) states that reconciliation is not a one-time event but rather a journey "which is experienced as liberating, but also agonizing, and quite often frustrating." Katongole uses transformative pedagogy not only to illustrate the primacy of reconciliation in biblical texts but also to argue for the understanding that reconciliation is a gift that must be embraced and also shared, thus Christians are encouraged to participate in such a unique epistemology. This means that Christians are invited to be ambassadors of peace and reconciliation in a world torn by conflict, violence, and war. A transformative pedagogical approach is critical, otherwise the endeavor of promoting reconciliation risks being socially relevant but having nothing tangible or unique to offer to the socio-political spheres (Solomons 2020, 1).

A transformative pedagogical approach is particularly relevant in the South African context where the problem of reconciliation is quite complex because of the many tiers of social divisions that need to be subdued. This pedagogical approach also involves using research from different disciplines and experiences in order to make informed decisions on how to deal with the problems of divisions affecting the local communities. This is the reason why scholars speak of true or real reconciliation as an alternative to shallow or cheap reconciliation that simply seeks to maintain a status quo because it attends to the different dimensions and dynamics of reconciliation (Solomons 2020, 2).

Despite the roots of reconciliation being ultimately embedded in Christian theology, the church needs to come up with practical strategies to engage with society (van der Merwe 2003, 269). This means that the church has much to do to convert its potential as a reconciliation agent into reality. The need for the church to reflect critically on reconciliation is great given the wars, violence, divisions, and economic injustice engulfing our modern society. What makes the church in South Africa a powerful force and an instrument of reconciliation is "its ability to reach a large portion of the population" coupled "with its moral influence" in the society (van der Merwe 2003, 272). However, there is a need for the churches to be more organized, coherent, and coordinated in their reconciliatory work within themselves and outside to enhance their role as critical players in the reconciliation process in our communities.

Johannes Knoetze (2022, 1) speaks of concepts such as "'transformative leadership' and 'radical transformation' at all levels and in all spheres" within the church as a critical remedy that can position it to contribute to the transformation of Africa into a global superpower in the future. Some of the resources endowed within the church's discourses include New Testament themes such as justice and reconciliation, which "present a potentially transformative approach towards developing Africa" (Knoetze 2022, 1). This transformative force is necessary given the inequalities, disruptions, and pain caused by the apartheid era which remains unhealed despite the country ushering in the new democratic government thirty years ago.

According to Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice (2010, 18), secular methods of peacemaking or reconciliation are inadequate. The church has

also not fulfilled its role as an active stakeholder or agent in the global reconciliation process, so there is a need for the church to wake up and play its part. Archbishop Desmond Tutu in describing the role of religion in the reconciling process stated that religion plays a vital role in the reconciliation process hence "we need to reach the deep spiritual wells of our different religious traditions" to draw grace and strength to deal with the challenges of nation building and healing (Meiring 2015, 14). Despite these words being echoed 25 years ago, their fulfillment is yet to be realized because the spiritual wells of religion have not been adequately explored. Traditions such as African Pentecostalism are being undermined or overlooked, so they are not used as a source of ideas and perspectives. The increasing violence, riots, racism, and xenophobia in South Africa in recent years clearly indicate the need to explore new avenues and for new reflections on what reconciliation means.

5. African Pentecostalism

According to Nimi Wariboko (2017, 1), African Pentecostalism refers to how Africa bears "witness to itself" and expresses itself in Pentecostalism "in an African context." Wariboko (2017, 1) takes note that much of the research about African Pentecostalism has been focused on defining African Pentecostalism. This was done without paying much attention to its spirituality or religiosity as shaped by certain external agencies such as political developments, African indigenous practices, economic exigencies, other Christian traditions, and the gospels (2017, 1). In line with Wariboko's views, it must be indicated that understanding African Pentecostalism in totality involves understanding the dynamics of African indigenous spirituality, way of life, and values that have been neatly infused into the discourses of these churches.

Marius Nel (2019, 1) adds to this dimension of African Pentecostalism as propagated by Wariboko by discussing the narrative of African Pentecostalism. This narrative is concerned with offering solutions to the societal and personal problems that its adherents face which are assumed to be caused by spiritual and cosmological forces fighting against human progress. Such a spiritualized worldview is exuberated by an African indigenous perspective of "rulers, authorities, evil powers, cosmic powers, and spiritual forces in the heavenly realm" which interferes with the physical world either to enhance progress or cause harm (Nel 2019, 1). Despite African Pentecostal churches manifesting a concoction of indigenous customs, values, and theologies as expressed in African-lived Christianity, it still shares a similar identity with other Pentecostal churches in other parts of the world that can be distinguished from other church traditions by placing emphasis on Holy Spirit baptism, endorsing glossolalia, practicing spiritual gifts as depicted in 1 Corinthians 12:1–13, and adopting a born again perspective of salvation from John 3:3. The emphasis of African Pentecostal churches on the power of the Spirit is intertwined with the Pentecostal approach to reconciliation which is signified by the Pentecost event in which different people (ethnicity, gender, status, tribes) came together to worship God and were endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are different types of African Pentecostal churches depending on whether they are more inclined to classical Western Pentecostal ideas or African traditional religion and how they respond to different problems that ravage the continent. Examples of African Pentecostal churches include neo-Pentecostal churches, classical Pentecostal churches, Prophetic churches, and Pentecostal type African Initiated Churches.Other Pentecostal scholars such as Anderson (1992, 95)

have assigned different names to these three categories or types of Pentecostal churches: Classical Pentecostal Churches are regarded as Pentecostal mission churches, Neo-Pentecostal churches are regarded as Independent Pentecostal Churches, while Pentecostal type African Initiated Churches and New Prophetic Pentecostal Churches are regarded as "indigenous Pentecostal type churches." According to J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (2016, xxxi), the typology neo-Pentecostalism or Charismatic churches has three sub-categories which are "the new urban centred Charismatic prosperity-oriented churches, transdenominational fellowships and renewal movements within historic mission denominations."

6. African Pentecostalism and Reconciliation

6.1 The contribution of African Pentecostal scholars

In this section of the article, I would like to analyze the recent contributions of some Pentecostal scholars on the issue of reconciliation. On the relation between African Pentecostalism and reconciliation, some important issues need to be considered. They are the necessary prerequisites for a successful reconciliation process and the role of the Holy Spirit in maintaining and restoring relationships within faith communities as well as between groups of people from different religious traditions, faiths, and backgrounds. This focus on the role of the Holy Spirit in reconciliation is relevant because of the Pentecostal emphasis on spiritual experiences and the baptism of the Spirit, which serves as its identity (Macchia 2010, 44–45). According to Tony Richie (2009), a member of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, a biblical narrative that depicts Pentecostal perspectives on interfaith and interreligious forgiveness and reconciliation is Luke 9:55. In this verse Jesus Christ forbade his disciples from calling down fire from heaven to destroy their competitors when faced with tension, sectarian strife, and racial and religious prejudice. According to Richie (2009), Jesus's response in this situation "wills forgiveness and reconciliation among rival religions" and people of different backgrounds and indicates that "the Spirit he has given to his disciples" also ought to unquestionably "guide us in the same direction."

Despite this explicit forbidding of revenge and the call for reconciliation in the biblical narrative, Pentecostals were only open to this racial and ecumenical unity for the first few years before discarding the idea "in a grave act of disobedience to the Spirit's leading" (Richie 2009). This explains why there has been a call within Pentecostalism in recent years for the recovery of its inclusive and ecumenical theologies that characterized its modern foundations in the early twentieth century. According to Paul Alexander, this exploration of history, as led by the Holy Spirit, also extends to the recovery and restoration of a myriad of practices that characterized early Pentecostalism such as peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and confronting the injustices of economic disparity, sexism, and racism, prophetically (Mittelstadt and Sutton 2010, ix–x).

This quest to recover practices that characterized early Pentecostalism which included elements of confronting injustices and peacebuilding is not surprising given the wider scope of reconciliation. In African theologies, the recent quest for reconciliation has taken different forms depending on the context in which it has been used. Some African theologians have taken reconciliation to mean liberation and solidarity because of the oppressive circumstances in which their theology developed and owing to their understanding that God shows solidarity with his people in their problems or struggles. Others have linked reconciliation to healing and ecology because of the way they see

Jesus as the healer, and the relationship "with and healing of nature" as a critical part of reconciliation (Meiring 2005, 75, 80). Concerning liberation, there are different levels of liberation which include spiritual liberation, economic liberation, and political liberation. During the apartheid era, the focus of reconciliation endeavors in the South African context was mainly political liberation and solidarity, hence the theological discourses at that particular time delved into global campaigns aimed at sensitizing and publicizing "the situation in South Africa and supporting the movement for freedom" (Reddy 2004). It also included strategies on how the country could be released from the oppressive regime so that it could embrace the values of unity, co-existence, love, and reconciliation.

However, the post-apartheid era has seen a shift from an emphasis on political liberation to economic liberation. Pentecostalism has not been spared from this drastic shift in the understanding of reconciliation with many of the sectors in this tradition emphasizing economic justice for the poor in society and spiritual liberation which takes the form of healing and economic prosperity of its adherents. Recent years have also seen the growth in theological activism for ecological stewardship within Pentecostalism. For example, Ben-Willie Kwaku Golo (2014, 197) implores Christians "to respond to the complex environmental challenges [of] Africa" by exploring "the attitude and responses of Ghana's Charismatic churches, as a case study of neo-Pentecostal responses to Ghana's environmental challenges." To have a detailed understanding of how the understanding of reconciliation has taken a twist to refer to different ways of restoring cordial relationships between humans (horizontal), between humans and the rest of creation, and between humans and God, there is a need to explore how some Pentecostals have defined reconciliation in recent years.

In her study on the role of the Pentecostal movement in reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda Josephine Sundqvist (2011, 171) states that this movement defines "reconciliation efforts as a process" rather than a standalone or isolated activity. This means that the Pentecostal movement regards reconciliation as a roadmap to the healing of divisions and restoration of relationships in situations where there has been strife, hatred, abuse, segregation, racism, and xenophobia. Reconciliation in this case does not simply mean overlooking or ignoring the wrongs that were done but allowing elements of forgiveness, repentance, transitional justice, and reparation to form part of the whole process. Volf (2001, 36) regards the type of reconciliation where the crimes committed are overlooked or undermined as "cheap reconciliation."

According to Langley (2014), Volf emphasizes the vitality of memory in dealing with diverse kinds of conflict. This means that remembering truthfully, hopefully, responsibly, and "in reconciling ways" makes it possible for us not to become what we suffered and not to allow the wrong done to us to dominate us (Volf 2006, 1–2). This approach enables us to consider what effects our remembering will have on other people and to acknowledge that Christ died for us all because we are all sinners (Langley 2014). This practically means that the realization that Christ died for all humankind and forgave us all our sins so that we can become a single loving community should prompt us to imitate Christ by channeling that forgiveness to those who have wronged us as well (Woods 2014).

Volf alludes to an overemphasis on forgiveness and reconciliation without considering particular factors that can enhance these processes. Sundqvist (2011, 167) also notes some of the shortcomings in the strategy used by the Pentecostal movement in the reconciliation process in post-genocide Rwanda. These include "strong emphasis on perpetrators to be forgiven, and less focus" on the "survivors' ability to forgive crimes against their own families." These shortcomings can also be attributed to the

TRC in South Africa which is thought to have focused more on granting amnesty without considering reparations (Tuazon 2019). According to Tuazon (2019), the ultimate success of TRC was hampered by its failure to get involved in the process of economic and social transformation, which is supposed to be a critical component for the reconciliation process to succeed. Spiritual transformation is also vital in the reconciliation process because forgiveness and reconciliation are divine attributes. This can only be made possible when God transforms people through his Spirit in the process of repentance and salvation so that they can depict his divine values of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation (Kärkkäinen 2013, 368).

Agrippa Khathide, referenced in Meiring (2005, 71), a pastor of the Apostolic Faith Mission, a Pentecostal church in South Africa, provides a helpful description of this. He describes reconciliation as the deliverance of people from evil, an aspect that is depicted by Christ's victory on the cross when he "defeated the devil once and for all." He adds that there is a need for Christian teachings and theology to reflect on this defeat of evil by Christ and highlight "the reality of the dangers of the spirit world" (Meiring 2005, 71–72). In African Pentecostalism, evil spirits are invisible enemies of human beings that are responsible for the misfortunes that many African societies face in the modern world such as poverty, financial struggles, ill-health, and conflicts. Therefore, reconciliation is regarded as deliverance from these ills caused by evil spirits. Khathide's definition of reconciliation aligns with the African traditional religious views which depict an over-consciousness of the spirit world and emphasize the danger that this other world poses to humanity.

Although there is an intersection between Khathide's views on reconciliation and the African traditional religious views concerning the consciousness of the spirit world, the idea of what sin is and what constitutes evil spirits differs between these two religious traditions. African traditional religion regards sin as simply the disturbance of the rhythmic cycle of life which is different from the biblical notion of sin (Meiring 2005, 71). African Traditional Religions also consider ancestral spirits as useful to the well-being of mankind hence they are supposed to be appeased. However, the broader part of Pentecostalism considers them as evil and a threat to the survival of humankind. The need for reconciliation in African Traditional Religion is necessitated by the persistence of these prevailing disturbances which affect the smooth cycle of life.

6.2 How can African Pentecostalism aid peace and reconciliation?

Religion has always been known to have certain standards of moral behavior, values, and customs hence fostering peace, love, and reconciliation comes naturally as one of its priorities. Even in the Old Testament biblical narratives where wars and violence were the order of the day, we notice "how God worked to preserve his non-violence ideal as much as possible" by consistently "reminding his people not to place any trust in the sword, but rather place" their trust in him (Boyd 2017).

Pentecostalism, like any religious movement, has the potential to positively impact social issues, including peace and reconciliation, as we have already noticed in the past sections. This means that Pentecostal theology emphasizes the importance of justice, mercy, and forgiveness, which can promote reconciliation and peace-building efforts. However, it is also important to be aware that certain forms of Pentecostalism may also promote exclusivism and intolerance, particularly towards those who do not conform to their beliefs, which can potentially lead to violence and division. One way to ensure that Pentecostalism can enhance its capability to be used as an instrument of peace and reconciliation is to emphasize the

positive aspects of the faith and to actively work towards building bridges between different communities. This can be achieved through dialogue, community service, and humanitarian aid efforts. I believe these elements are still lacking in this tradition.

Furthermore, it is essential to encourage critical thinking and engagement with theological ideas among Pentecostals to promote a nuanced understanding of their faith, reduce the potential for extremist behavior, and guard against diverting from its original values. This can safeguard against rigid dogmatism that has characterized many traditional churches.

In conclusion, Pentecostalism has the potential to be used as an instrument of peace and reconciliation in our community. However, this potentiality can be enhanced through its willingness to go back to its original values which involve promoting positive values, practicing dialogue across dividing lines, and encouraging critical thinking among its followers.

7. Way Forward and Conclusions

This paper brings into perspective how the Christian tradition in general and African Pentecostalism specifically have understood reconciliation, which brings into focus some shortcomings and a comprehensive understanding of the term. Understanding the comprehensive perspective of reconciliation unveils its true meaning and impact which takes into consideration its social, economic, legal, and restorative justice dimensions. What is of particular importance is also how the paper articulates the theological and social relevance of reconciliation by tracing the Christian roots of the term and how understanding this relevance is critical in grasping the role of religion in building peaceful communities in the South African context.

The African Pentecostal identity, African Pentecostalist scholarship on reconciliation, and African Pentecostalism's potential to be an instrument of reconciliation and peace were explored in the last three sections. This was critical since it is a Christian tradition that has long been considered apolitical, futuristic, and otherworldly (Mochechane 2014, 1–2). This exploration is vital in understanding how the tradition is experiencing a drastic shift in its theological stance in such aspects in recent years. This reflection indicated the need for a turn towards its foundation values of unity, inclusivity, tolerance, and love for the other depicted in the Pentecost event at Azusa Street (The Faith Project 2003, 9). This turn by the African Pentecostal tradition towards its original values, if enhanced further and sustained, can be vital in building a reconciled and unified society.

This theoretical exploration of the different views that the Pentecostal tradition holds on what reconciliation is and the role that the Pentecostal movement has played in the process of reconciliation in several contexts opens doors for further research in this aspect. Various empirical research works have been done in recent years to determine the role of religion in dealing with violence and conflict in our modern society. However, little attention has been given to African Pentecostalism as a critical player in this credible venture which paves the way for more empirical work to be done on how African Pentecostalism can contribute to this cause.

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Maintaining an Evangelical Faith in the Face of a Decadent Culture of Democracy

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Abstract

Evangelicals living in a democracy are faced with the pressures of constitutionalism and the influence of secularism. These two forces unsettle God from the public spaces and enhance decadent culture. This article addresses the current challenges Evangelicals face in the decadent culture of democracy in South Africa. The essence of the proposal is how South African Evangelicals should maintain their confession, while surrounded by unethical practices of corruption and greed. An interdisciplinary approach is followed, so literature from the disciplines of Church History, Systematic Theology, Ethics, Cultural Anthropology, Sociology, and Political Studies are reviewed to address the problem. The history of the Evangelical faith and the rationale behind Evangelical awakenings open the discussion into the presentation. The Evangelical dogma is highlighted, followed by the definition of democracy with its entrenched decadent culture. Church, government, and the family are identified as places of contestation, where Evangelicals sense the threat to their doctrinal tenets. The challenge faced by Evangelicals can be addressed by remaining evangelically rooted and by holding unswervingly to three major doctrinal tenets, which are the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of human depravity, and in the belief that the Bible is the measure of faith and conduct.

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1. Introduction

The article starts with the identification and history of the Evangelical faith and then proceeds to give the rationale behind Evangelical awakenings. The Evangelical dogma is highlighted, followed by the definition of democracy with its entrenched decadent[1] culture. This article is an interdisciplinary approach to the subject of how to maintain the Evangelical faith in a decadent culture of democracy. Through a literature review in the disciplines of Church History, Systematic Theology, Ethics, Cultural Anthropology, Sociology, and Political Studies, an analysis is undertaken to elaborate on the history, identity, and beliefs of Evangelicals. The objective of this review is to garner an understanding of Evangelicalism and the challenges it faces in South Africa. The focus is on South Africa, though reference is made to some international events to validate the findings about the South African situation. The historical sketch and overview of what Evangelicals believe, and how they should behave is the focus of the article. Evangelicals in South Africa live in a democratic, post-apartheid dispensation with the pressure of constitutionalism and the influence of secularism. The article points out that these two forces unsettle God from the public spaces and enhance decadence in the culture. The church, the government, and the family are identified as places of contestation for Evangelicals. To maintain their faith, the article concludes by recommending that to remain evangelically rooted they should hold unswervingly to the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of human depravity, and the Bible as the measure of faith and conduct.

1 In this article, the word *decadent* is used to refer to the process of a decay of morals. This encapsulates corruption, degeneration, and self-seeking ambitions where ethics is disregarded in social interactions.

2. History and Identity of Evangelicals

Internationally, Evangelicals emerged out of the Evangelical Awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The awakenings evolved out of the three movements in different regions. In Germany it came out of Pietism, in the British Isles it came out of the revivalist Methodists, and in the American colonies it came out of the Great Awakening Movement. "All church historians trace the origins of the Evangelical Movement to 1783. It sprang out of different roots or foundations; hence no charismatic founder can be pointed out or identified" (Resane 2022a, 46). In some church historical studies, one discovers the roots of Evangelicalism from groups such as the Pietists, Puritans, Quakers, Moravians, and Presbyterians.

The emergence of Evangelicalism in South Africa is connected with the arrival of colonialists and missionaries. Although the Congregationalists, Methodists, and Presbyterians came to Africa with Evangelical zeal, this was dampened by the comradeship between the colonialists and missionaries. The arrival of the Huguenot settlers in 1820, of which the majority were the Baptists, injected Evangelical fervor into South African Christianity of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The movement was enhanced by the Pentecostal revivals of the early twentieth century. Since the arrival of Christianity in South Africa Evangelicals lived and operated within a decadent culture of colonialism and apartheid. Corruption and decadence trickled down the socio-political landscape through oppressive systems such as slavery, racism, land occupation injustices, to name a few. The sad situation is when the demon of white supremacy and racism took root on South African soil, many Evangelicals opted for docility and silence. Their prophetic role retreated into the dark corner of silence and invisibility. Socio-cultural evils increased over many years until the apartheid regime ended, but then South Africa ended up with a democratic dispensation that sidelines God through secularism. Currently, Evangelicals in South Africa

are the citizens of a country filled with corruption and various other evils. This decadent culture of corruption in South Africa can be described as follows:

> Throughout history, there have been varying forms of corruption, including bribery, extortion, cronyism, nepotism, parochialism, patronage, influence peddling, graft, and embezzlement. Corruption may facilitate criminal activities, such as drug trafficking, money laundering, and human trafficking. (Resane 2020, 253)

This was clearly revealed by the testimonies given before the state capture commission led by Chief Justice Zondo. The commission lifted the lid and brought the deep and wide extent of corruption in South Africa to the attention of the public.

For the past century, one question raging within Protestant circles is what the definition of Evangelicalism is. It is a well-known fact that one's identity determines what one says or does. Dogma and ethics (or behavior) are linked. The strain of pinning down an Evangelical identity was shared by some Evangelical scholars. Carl F. H. Henry's monograph, *Evangelicals in Search of Identity* (1976) is one such example. J. I. Packer (2000, 183) notes that "evangelicalism is an identifiable form of Protestant Christianity." He emphasizes that Evangelicalism is "the true mainstream Christianity." John Stott (1999, 15) further identifies Evangelical Christianity as the original, apostolic New Testament Christianity. It is not a deviation from orthodoxy and cannot be equated with fundamentalism either. In a nutshell, "evangelicalism is that facet of Christianity which underscores the gospel of Jesus Christ, … heralded as an invitation to whoever believes and receives it into a personal encounter with God through Christ that leads to the transformation and renewal of the lives of its recipients" (Balcomb 2016, 118). This citation befits South Africa's understanding of Evangelical identity, which is as complex as it is in any part of the world. Their historical roots are different both denominationally and geographically, therefore exerting different epistemological understandings in the different mission fields, resulting in different understandings of what it means to be Evangelical. Nkansah-Obrempong (2016, 425) asserts that "these evangelical churches are linked with missionary activities of western mission agencies which came to Africa from the seventeenth century onward to evangelize Africa." Resane (2017, 154–157) gives a panoramic view of how Evangelicalism evolved in South Africa. Generally, South African Evangelicals are those of Baptist communions, Classical Pentecostals (Assemblies of God, Full Gospel, Apostolic Faith Mission), Holiness Movement (Church of the Nazarene, Wesleyans, Salvation Army, Free Methodists), some charismatic groupings, and small church formations springing out of parachurch missionary agencies such as churches planted by the Africa Evangelical Fellowship. These churches include the likes of Africa Evangelical Church, Evangelical Bible Church, Evangelical Church of South Africa, Mahon Mission, Alliance Church, and Holiness Union. There are Evangelicals from what is always referred to as mainline churches such as Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed, and Lutherans. Although Evangelicals harbor some reservations about mainline Christianity due to its liberal tendencies, some of them are found as members of the South African Council of Churches (SACC). The umbrella body for Evangelicals is The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA). Some Evangelical groupings such as the Apostolic Faith Mission and some charismatic groups maintain dual membership within these two ecumenical formations.

Evangelicals in South Africa have a long and diverse history that cannot be discussed in greater detail in this article. However, from the identity

discussed above, I propose how to remain evangelically rooted in the decadent culture, since Christ's high priestly prayer asked that Christians are not taken out of the world but that they be protected from the evil one (John 17:15).

3. Reasons for Evangelical Awakening

The Enlightenment era was characterized by a lack of religious fervor, thus creating a need for revival. Religion was shoved from the center of life to the periphery. "The order of the day was moderation in all things" (Shelley 1982, 351). It was a careless living that "gave way to personal piety, to faith in Christ and to philanthropic and social activity" (Cairns 1978, 431). The ritualism and liberalism of the nineteenth century created a thirst for revivalism accompanied by desired social transformation. Shelley (1982, 351–352) captures it well:

> An English sermon … was a "solid but sometimes dry dissertation which a man reads to the people without gesture and without particular exaltation of the voice." Ministers blandly ignored the traditional Christian doctrine of man's sinfulness. Instead, men approached God with gentle awe and cheerfulness.

Social ills were rampant, but during and through the awakenings, God was doing something new. Changes, both ecclesiastically and socially, were inevitable. Two streams of thought surfaced when these cultural shifts ensued, especially in America. One stream regarded the changes as divine blessings. In other words, they went public with their faith, hence, Martin Marty (1970, 179) called them Public Protestants. These were associated with terms such as Social Christianity, Social Gospel, or Social Service. They were distressed by human miseries and were of strong conviction that the Bible, especially the prophets and Jesus himself would be emotionally moved by human distress and do something about it. The incarnational love of Christ as demonstrated in the Good Samaritan narrative was regarded as a biblical blueprint of the gospel. For them, eschatological hope and its attainment should be preceded with and realized now in the "transformation of the world in this life" (Shelley 1982, 413).

The other stream was resistant to these changes, regarding them as a threat to the purity of the biblical message. This was later called Private Protestants. These also called themselves Evangelicals and they stressed the need for individual salvation. Evangelistic crusades focusing on revivals and individual conversions were the direction and center of their energy. They were insistent that "if a man's heart was right with God, then economic and social problems would take care of themselves" (Shelley 1982, 413). These evolved into various streams, the most significant one being the fundamentalists, who became the militant right-wing movement that vehemently opposed contemporary culture. With fundamentalists, Pentecostalists emerged Pentecostalists out of the famous Azusa Street revival of 1906. Through a *born-again* experience these claimed to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, with *glossolalia* as the evidence of Spirit baptism (Acts 2:4). Though new within Evangelicalism, they also embraced promises of happiness in life to come. The mark of all the Evangelical-Pentecostal believers was asceticism, meaning disassociation from worldly practices such as dancing, cinema, consumption of alcohol, and smoking.

4. What do Evangelicals Believe?

Like any movement in the world, Evangelicalism is diverse in doctrine, confessions, and praxis. This leaves South African Evangelicals in some flux of identity and dogmatic crisis. Christian and Soal (2022, 1) note that

"the South African Protestant evangelical church finds itself in the midst of an identity crisis. Many Christians seem to have blurred the line between being in the world but not of the world." However, from their evolving history Evangelicals hold staunchly to the "authority of the Bible and the orthodox Christian doctrines" (Shelley 1982, 451). They have an unwavering belief in the need to make a conscious decision to follow Christ and stay personally committed to him. This is broadly known as a *born-again* experience. Because of their Puritan background, they hold to the belief in the sinfulness of humanity, the atoning death of Christ, the unmerited grace of God, and the salvation of the true believer (Shelley 1982, 351; Erickson 1993, 13). Nkansah-Obrempong (2016, 425–426) also states that Evangelicals are pursuant to personal conversion that leads to freedom from sin, and this simply by faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16, 36; Eph 2:8–9; Rom 10:8–17). They uphold the authority of Scripture as God's revelation to humanity and see Scripture as the primary authority for faith and practice (Rom 1:16). The Bible is God's inspired Word, and it is infallible and inerrant (2 Tim 3:16–17). For Evangelicals, God is Triune and exists eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each member of the Trinity is distinctively divine and is involved in human redemption and creation (1 Cor 8:6, 2 Cor 1:21–22, 3:17, 13:14, 1 Pet 1:1–2, 1 John 5:7–8). Some of these salient beliefs are being scrutinized and challenged. This article is an attempt to inform Evangelicals of their roots and to encourage them to remain steadfast in their faith.

Structure, dogmatism, and hierarchy were not a high priority for Evangelicals at the start. According to Cairns (1978, 432) "The Evangelicals were not so much interested in polity and doctrine as in the practical piety that gained its inspiration from Bible study and prayer." In his *A Practical View of Christianity* (1797) William Wilberforce lays out the interests of Evangelicals as, the atonement as the only regenerating force, justification by faith, Bible reading under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and practical piety that would result in real service to society.

Historically, Evangelicals are known for being anti-politics, as they consider friendship with the world to be enmity with God (Jas 4:4), even though in their early years they were instrumental in fighting injustices such as the slave trade. The champion of that fight was William Wilberforce (1759–1833). Another example is that of the protection of the indigenous inhabitants of South Africa called the Hottentots of the Cape Colony, led by a Congregationalist, John Philip. He played a major role in the passing of Ordinance Fifty of 1828, which granted the Hottentots and other indigenous people legal equality (Roy 2017, 42; Hofmeyr and Pillay 1994, 55). Lord Shaftesbury (1801–1885) is also a noteworthy Evangelical. He dedicated himself to the service of the poor and oppressed as a teenager. He asked the House of Commons for reforms regarding social issues. Examples included barring the practice of allowing boys to do the tedious work of sweeping the chimneys, facilitating the law that barred women and boys under the age of ten from working in the mines, and facilitating the law to bar the public from watching the mentally deranged people in asylums as an entertainment paid for. He refused offers for higher political offices as he wanted to serve the poor (Cairns 1978, 432). Another Evangelical influence in the political landscape of the time was John Howard, a Methodist, who devoted his life and fortune to prison reforms. Through his influence, "prison sentences were emphasized as a corrective rather than as a punishment for crimes against society" (Cairns 1978, 433). There are many more examples of Evangelicals' passion for the transformation of the heart through cultural changes and spiritual revival. Not to forget their strong support for the missionary movement of the eighteenth century. "They united the

messages of personal regeneration and societal reformation" (Erickson 1993, 19). This approach gradually changed as mentioned above and the movement split into two streams.

Politics were considered dirty and evil, but as the movement progressed over decades, political awareness and involvement also grew within it. "Consequently, evangelicals seldom engaged in political activity other than voting … many others have become involved in the political process" (Erickson 1993, 28–29). Today, their political involvement has made them a powerful force in democratic societies around the world.

The indisputable reality is that Evangelicals "have found it particularly difficult to navigate the tempestuous political waters of the sub-continent" (Balcomb 2016, 127). However, there are unquestionable historical strides made as they were and continue to be part of Christendom with a legacy that includes

> organizations, legal and judicial principles, voluntary agencies, charitable activities, cultural expressions, social and political developments and much else that can be celebrated as Christian contributions to human flourishing. None of these should be undervalued. (Murray 2008, 240)

One can see that Evangelicals promoted social reforms driven by the fact that humans are spiritual beings who are either the potential or the actual children of God. On top of that, Evangelicals today are Bible-driven and are zealous for missionary endeavors as they are convinced that it is primarily through the gospel that societies can be transformed. There is no doubt that the "evangelical movement has already had a profound impact on the history of Christianity and its self-understanding" (Beaton 2003, 222). In our democratic world Evangelicalism is at a crossroads. Despite the docile and silent approach during the difficult times of colonialism and apartheid, Evangelical churches remain a voice to be reckoned with. Nkansah-Obrempong (2016, 426) emphasizes that:

> Evangelical churches provide a prophetic voice and challenge the status quo: they are relevant and speak to the issues and challenges facing them and are strongly committed to evangelism and social action by addressing the socio-political and economic life of people in their countries.

This commitment cannot be carried out if dogma and ethics are compromised or exist under socio-political and cultural oppression where the constitution is designed and allowed to undermine these metanarratives. Constitutionalism, which supports secularism, poses a threat to the Evangelical faith, pushing it to compromise its beliefs.

5. Evangelicals in Democracy

Democracy is a familiar term worldwide and is known as the most representative government of the people by the people. South African democracy encompasses liberal democratic values such as rationality, equality, freedom, tolerance, and respect, where "representatives are chosen by majority vote according to the formal procedures for free and fair elections" (Smit and Oosthuizen 2011, 17). The electorate is guaranteed freedom of expression and choices that are compatible with nation-building. In this article, I argue that Evangelicals living in a democracy face two forces that are aggressively and vigorously operational. These forces are secularism and constitutionalism. The two shape and influence democracy in such a way that they determine the type and direction that democracy should take. One should note that especially during the French Revolution,

"evangelicals believed in neither democracy nor in trade unions" (Hennell 1977, 512).

South Africa is justifiably proud of its three decades of constitutional democracy, safeguarded by the Bill of Rights. In an ideal democracy,

> there must be an independent judiciary, a free press, some system of equality before the law (usually with an enshrined constitution and disciplined police force), structures to ensure that the military is under civilian control, and a system of changing who is in charge without bloodshed. (Carson 2008, 125)

South Africa's democracy is defined by parliamentary representation in a democratic republic that is headed by the elected President. It is a multi-party system made up of three branches, which are the executive (cabinet), the legislature (parliament), and the judiciary (courts). The citizens are entitled to influence important decisions affecting their lives. The law-making processes bring together the views and interests of all people so that the future of the country can be decided based on all these views. This leads to the majority rule where laws that build the culture take precedence over the minority rule in the parliamentary processes. Many laws that affect South Africa and influence the culture are based on secular ideas dominant in the majority party in parliament.

Democratic politics, "with its grassroots representative structure and its majority rule, provides freedom and allows room for the dissenter to compete with alternative views" (Halteman 1995, 151). It is in the same vein that Moltmann (2019, 74) states that "the basis of democracy is the sovereignty of the people, which is the foundation of the modern constitutional state." As a democratic state with a proportional representative parliament, democratic South Africa does not possess the capacity to deal with crime, salient racism, social injustices, manipulative populism, and embarrassing economic mistakes perpetuated through state capture and corruption in the higher echelons of society. It is a democracy rooted in reasonable fairness with the majority of supporters of the liberation movement turned into a political party. Its democratic ideals of equality, non-racism, and non-sexism are plagued by inconsistencies in all three tiers of government. The mechanism for removing democratically elected leaders through motions of no confidence does not work. These motions of no confidence are not used to remove those who do not deliver services to the electorate, and so greedy politicians who do not deliver on promises are not removed from their positions. Democracy and constitutionalism work in synergy. Constitutionalism is based on a constitution,

> [which] is the supreme law of the state, stating the character, conception, and principles to shape the nationhood and the statehood of the country. It is the foundational set of rules, built or established embodying the rights of people in the state. (Resane 2022b, 4)

When constitutionalism is in force, citizens are assured of protection by the state and freedom of expression, whether on religion or politics. Democratic South Africa enshrined its democracy by adopting the new constitution in 1996. This constitution was written with the intent to recognize the tragic past of repression, oligarchy, inequality, and secrecy. Annulling the white supremacy which involved racial discrimination, oppression, and segregation was a leading motivation in the formulation of this new constitution. It was built on the foundation of a peaceful transition from oligarchy to democracy (Paul 2009, 155). The democratic

project as enshrined in the constitution protects people's religions, cultures, and languages.

There was a pendulum swing in 1994 when the apartheid Christian state had to become a secular state with constitutional rights guaranteeing freedom of religion, and gender equity, among others. Christian citizens felt disempowered as religion was removed from public spheres, especially in the centers of learning where Christian religious education was previously used as a tool for the moral formation of learners. Political centers were not left unscathed. Parliaments, mayoral chambers, and political events were devoid of any religious ceremonies such as opening devotions or benedictions. All the national symbols were de-religionized, except the national anthem which remains a prayerful plea to the Lord to protect the nation. School curricula removed all religious or biblical education. All of this was done due to the new secular constitution. South African constitutionalism unsettled the moral fabric of society by dislodging God from civil affairs. This created a huge challenge, especially for Evangelical Christians, who subscribe to both private and public religion. Don Carson (2008, 116) highlights this challenge: "To preserve Christian faith even in one's private life is viewed by many as a mark of weakness. If 'God has any place at all, it is not outside human consciousness.'"

Secularism is embedded within a democracy and has often caused trouble for the Evangelical faith. Its mystery lies in the fact that it can guarantee freedom of religious expression, while at the same time, hampering the practice of Evangelical freedom. Carson (2008, 116) speaks of it as "usually understood to be the social reality that fosters nonreligious or even anti-religious consciousness." It is noted for squeezing religion into the periphery of life. Enhanced by constitutionalism, it unsettles God from the public space and ushers in a godless culture where decadence reigns supreme. Whenever religion raises its voice regarding policies in public spaces, it is considered to be intolerant and a threat to human rights.

When the national constitution ushers in and enhances secularism, people's culture is affected—negatively or positively. Although there is a plethora of definitions of culture in anthropology, sociology, philosophy, and religion, I agree with Geertz's (1973, 89) definition of culture:

> It denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.

Geertz here emphasizes the fact that culture is portrayed as a structure of giving meanings through symbols. Humans use these symbols to interpret their experiences. Culture is a web of significance, which is a spiritual frame on which the meaning of life is built. These frames are the metanarratives not to be tempered with, they cannot be shifted or re-designed, as this may create some chaotic episodes in cultural practices. This leads one to the conclusion that indeed culture is acquired, not innate, as Moltmann (2009, 5) also points out, by noting that "man is a biologically defective creature and, at the same time, a culture-making creature." Human culture is habitual rather than instinctive. It depends on the human capacity to form habits that are influenced by the human's social environment (Lee 1992, 17). The fact of the matter is that culture, regardless of the innate spiritual frame, is porous and pliable to be twisted, can be re-shaped, or in some extreme situations, re-engineered. Cultural shifts are inevitable, as culture is dynamic and to some degree unpredictable. That is why there are fads and fashions in cultural practices and expressions limited to a certain period.

What was known as the moral pillars of the nation were shaken as secularism started to question the validity of the metanarratives. The creeds are exposed to scrutiny and theological epistemologies are critiqued. The Evangelical dogma of holiness, purity and sanctity of life, and family values including sexuality and sanctity of marriage, are viewed negatively and in many ways laid aside as they are regarded as intolerant and rob people of their freedom of choice. As can be expected, this goes against the universal principles of Natural Law whereby, according to Moltmann (2009, 73), the laws of the state should derive their justness from the fact that they correspond to the law of the world and the law of human nature. In other words, the moral order should correspond to the divine order of being. When secularistic culture dominates, ethics decline and religious fervency wanes, and the church suffers. In a secular state, "non-attendance at church is the first stage in the process of secularization and religious indifferentism" (Shorter and Onyancha 1997, 29).

6. Evangelicals in a Decadent Culture

Evangelical faith was rocked to the core when the constitution started to enshrine ethical menaces such as abortion, same-sex romantic relationships, civil union marriages, polygamy, and children's rights independent from parental authority. Faith continues to grapple with the biblical instructions on these issues because constitutionalism challenges Evangelical rootedness. This continues to open wide doors to cultural decadence. The notion that democracy is secure as long as individual rights are guaranteed is a fallacy, because as one Evangelical teacher, Carl F. H. Henry (1986, 31) asserts, "without shared values, democracy is on the move to anarchy." A decadent culture is a cultural environment where human tendencies are preferred over shared values. Moltmann (2009, 24) states that "man's environment has often been understood as a mere stage on which the practical, moral and religious drama of man has been played out." This human-made environment has created a problematic culture built on egoistic ideals. Individualism at the expense of others' liberty becomes a norm. Relativism is the order of the day, the god of ego, Me, Myself, and I, is the divinity at the center of life. "What is bad for you may be good for me, so don't judge me for my preferences and proclivities, whether morally or in practice" some might say. This happens when the voice of the church (theology) is dislodged from its place as a guide to moral conduct. There is no doubt that "Theology shapes both the content and function of the church's proclamation and societal ministry" (Delotavo 2012, 10).

6.1 Decadent culture in the church

In the past century, the Evangelical faith has been rocked to the foundations. In our time as well, news headlines regularly report on moral corruption in churches such as marital infidelities, sexual abuses, financial mismanagements, and church constitutional distortions. Within the Evangelical circles, the New Prophetic Churches, aligned with the Pentecostal Movement, occupy some media columns. Not for the right reasons, though, but for sex scandals, commercialization of the gospel, and celebrity cultism. The Evangelical house is not a clean house to be a haven for victims of cultural assaults. In some communities, the Evangelical church has ceased to be an academy of justice and is no longer a place of education and renewal of convictions about harmonious relationships (Schweiker 2000, 27).

6.2 Decadent culture in government

Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, South Africa has become a corrupt state. The leaders became the embodiment of Setswana proverbs that *Bana ba tadi ba bonwa ka mereto* (The followers' behavior resemble those of their predecessors or leaders). In our modern language, it is said that politicians became members of the same WhatsApp group. They used their liberation credentials as tickets to access the national treasury. Politicians took advantage of porous systems of civil accountability structures to enrich themselves. The climax of corruption was epitomized by the so-called *nine wasted years* during Jacob Zuma's presidency (2009–2018) when South Africa was politically marketed as "up for sale," especially to the Gupta family that captured the state and had an influence over executive government decisions behind the scenes. The *brown envelope* syndrome robbed the country's economic viability as *go ja ka lesika* (nepotism) became the gateway into the government treasury. Those in charge opened the till and looted as much as possible and the spoils were shared amongst the *di ya thoteng di bapile* (comrades in arms). Any attempt to expose corruption was met with the attitude, *di sa itsaneng di a welana* (Those who fail or refuse to cooperate will pay the blood price), meaning I will deal with you accordingly. In other words, "you don't know me, should you dare to expose me I will deal with you accordingly." This is not just a threat, it is always followed by a hit, when someone's life is eliminated, or by marginalizing someone politically through shame.

6.3 Decadent culture in the family

The family is regarded as a basic unit of society. It is the inner circle where culture is formed. All social scientists agree that the family is the most profound of all influences on who we are and what we do. It is in the family home where children are expected to hear, "the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut 6:4). As a social institution, according to Charles M. Sell (1995, 15), it serves various social functions such as reproduction, sexual expression, socialization, status, economic cooperation, emotional satisfaction, and social control.

Evangelicals feel that the constitution of the republic invades parents' rights to raise their children in biblical ways, especially in the area of discipline and the sanctity of life. Children's rights are entrenched in Section 28 of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of South Africa. These rights are in the best interest of all children under the age of 18 years old. The grafters of our constitution have made children's rights a priority over their parents' authority and responsibilities. When it comes to any matter affecting a child's well-being, the constitution states that the best interests of a child are of paramount importance.

The constitutionalists, like children's rights advocates, see "children as vulnerable to social exclusion through class, race, and gender, but also due to their age" (Wells, Quash, and Eklund 2017, 194). Laws and bills promoting various sexual orientations and same-sex marriages are deemed encroaching on the prerogative of Christians to determine their own culture, thus endangering the wellness and function of the family. Evangelicals hold that a variety of abuses (e.g., sexual, children) stem from a dysfunctional family, where the biblical structure of authority is ignored. If it was a well-functioning institution, these abuses would not be the ethical menaces observed in the public domain today. Samuel Wells (2017, 89) captures the positive contribution of a family as follows:

> When it works well, the nuclear family can indeed be a refuge from a challenging, frightening, and sometimes damaging world. It can

> indeed be a place of learning and growth in manners and morals, in creativity and wonder, in faith and courage. It can indeed be the solid emotional ground where the priceless qualities of trust, confidence, self-acceptance, tolerance, and forgiveness can develop and deepen.

Evangelicals hold on to the family principles of the Judeo-Christian worldview, as stipulated in the Bible. Any legislature that goes against this is deemed as a corrupt culture that has moved from the fundamentals of the faith. This creates an environment that is conducive to a decadent culture that threatens the sanctity of human life and the purity of God-intended institutions such as the church, civil government, and the family. Since these constitutional dictates are entrenched in the culture, Evangelicals seek a way of remaining Evangelically rooted despite these threatening forces.

7. Remaining Evangelically Rooted

The interest of this paper is addressing the moral conundrum that Evangelicals face as they strive to live with integrity amid a decadent culture that has been promoted by democracy through its constitutional dictates and secular approaches that squeeze God to the peripheries of life. This is the creation of a new culture that is godless and makes no room for religion in public spaces. As Rodney Clapp (1996, 69) says: "The life of faith is then primarily an individual, private concern." This leaves Evangelicals with the need to cry and denounce cultures that are anti-religious. "Only the Christian can cry out fully in indignation against injustice because the Christian has seen the full revelation of human dignity" (Rutler 2020, 96). The situation mandates Evangelical churches to "equip believers to find the answers to their identity in the narrative of Scripture rather than the surrounding society" (Bethancourt 2012, 46). Scripture clearly indicates that "with God as the head of our spiritual family, we find our identity as his children by new birth and adoption" (Anthony 2019, 396).

For Evangelicals to remain focused on their faith, the following proposals are brought in to address this concern. I acknowledge that all orthodox doctrines are epistemological narratives and that Evangelicals do not entertain any idea of tampering with them. With forever broadening scholarship through the centuries some of these fundamental dogmas were and are scrutinized, critiqued, re-analyzed, and reinterpreted. I suggest the following must remain intact for someone to be Evangelically rooted.

7.1 The triunity of God

The trinitarian nature of God has been debated since the Apostolic Fathers and the Church Fathers concluded it as a cornerstone of Christian confession. Many modern scholars (e.g., O'Murchu 2021, 158; Johnson 2007, 202–225; Tan and Tran 2016, 161–181; Bracken 2014, 138) redefine our understanding of the Trinity more in relational than ontological terms. The Trinity serves as a central spoke of theological epistemology. It is a biblical doctrine that sets the Christian faith apart from other monotheistic or polytheistic religions. John Webster (2012, 145) agrees that "no other doctrinal locus can eclipse the doctrine of the Trinity in its role of shaping theology as a whole." This doctrine of the Triune God "shapes the entire outlook of theology and serves as the matrix for the placement and treatment of all other doctrinal loci" (Sanders 2014, 37). Evangelicals should remain rooted in this trinitarian epistemology in order not to tamper with the Father's nature as a Creator. It also keeps the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ intact, and so believers can hope in him, as the mediator, that they can live lives of repentance. Humans' relationship with Christ reveals humans "as the being accepted and loved by God in the manner of Jesus, and God is revealed through him as this human God" (Moltmann 2009, 19).

Through the gift of the Holy Spirit believers can live above the decadence of the culture that surrounds them. The communitarian nature of the trinitarian God ascertains believers that God is directly and intimately involved in their life experiences. Jim Wallis (2006, 3) captures this well: "Central to the Christian faith is the idea that God is not a remote, uncaring, impersonal God, but rather is fully engaged and interactive with creation." Holding on to the doctrine of the Trinity holds together one's faith in other doctrines such as creation, as Dembski (2009, 108) confirms that the whole act of creation is the involvement of the entire Trinity: "God the Father forms an intention, God the Son articulates it, and God the Holy Spirit empowers it." Gabriel Mendy (2013, 32) alludes to this: "Each of the divine persons is, consequently, involved in creation in the sense that if the Father creates through the Son and perfects through the Spirit."

7.2 The lostness of humanity without God

Moltmann (2009, 5) notes that "man is a biologically defective creature and, at the same time, a culture-making creature." Humans create cultures that may be detrimental to their well-being, making them believe life is all about themselves. Lee (1992, 17) also attests that "the most productive way to think of human spirituality is in terms of his unique ability to create culture." Moltmann (2009, 15) continues to point out that "man seeks to find himself, but his life does not succeed in achieving a collected expression in this time of death." Taking away the fact that humanity can survive without God, especially his soteriological functions, is to empower humanity with a resultant meaningless life. Life achievements cannot satisfy the soul. The true meaning of life is found in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 6:23), for in Christ we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). However, one needs to acknowledge the fact as stated by Charles Colson (1993, 31): "The law does have a role in moral instruction. But the roots of our moral life go deeper than laws and bills. Government programs can feed the body; they cannot touch the soul. They can punish behavior; they cannot transform hearts."

Human character and behavior, though shaped by culture, cannot be morally transformed by any civil structure that is devoid of some *godly* element. This is expressed by Maritain (2011, 21): "No doctrine or opinion of merely human origin, no matter how true it may be, but only things revealed by God force themselves upon the faith of the Christian soul." The sinfulness of humanity (Ps 51:3–5; Rom 1:18–32, 3:23) though redeemable, is a reality that cannot be altered except by the changing power of God.

7.3 The Bible is the measure of faith and conduct

Evangelicals have always remained unwavering that the Bible is the only infallible rule for faith and practice (2 Tim 3:15–17). George Hunsberger (2003, 128) states that "biblical authority is essential to being Evangelical, even if there is no clear consensus about how to define the nature of that authority." They broadly believe in the literal interpretation of the text and regard the text as a direct communication from God to the reader. Since the category of *Evangelicals* includes progressively a broader spectrum, some are wary of the dangers of literalism, while some seek discernible, deducible principles from the text. For Evangelicals, the Bible reveals the actions, character, and purposes of God and, therefore has the potential to redirect life and the affairs of societies. Within the decadent culture where Evangelicals feel trapped, the centrality of the Bible should be retained to maintain some form of Evangelical sanity.

8. Conclusion

Evangelicals are not antithetical to democracy. They are the champions of African solidarity (Kato 1975, 165). They always intercede for political leaders and they pledge loyalty. However, they expect to be allowed to remain prophetic. They are bound by the Scriptures to obey the government, yet to continue to be the salt and the light in the world. While striving for democracy and Evangelicalism politicians and prophets should work in solidarity for the good of the people. "Democracy should become one of the principal routes along which the Church travels together with the people" (Browne 1996, 79).

Indeed, democracy is not a solution to human problems of social and natural injustices. Through their constitution democratic states empower secularism which dislodges God from public spaces, making religion a private matter rather than a public affair. This creates a culture full of corruption and abuses, and the faith community finds itself inevitably trapped in that decadent culture. Evangelicals are encouraged to "maintain their Christ-centeredness, celebrate the variety of the Spirit's ministry, and emphasize personal conversion while being a genuine community of the Word" (Husbands and Treier 2005, 18). This quote clearly shows that Evangelicals should maintain their Christology, pneumatology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and bibliology. To be Evangelically rooted, Evangelicals are encouraged to hold on to the doctrines of the Trinity, human depravity, and the centrality of the Bible in public and private affairs.

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Which Way to *Shalom*? A Theological Exploration of the Yoruba and Western Foundations for Ethics and Development

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Abstract

The biblical concept of *shalom* is a state worthy of pursuit. This article is a theological exploration of the Yoruba and the Western (humanist) ethical foundations for development. The research uses a comparative technique to examine the parallels and differences between the biblical idea of *shalom* and the Yoruba and Western views on ethics and well-being. Yoruba proverbs and popular sayings are used as crucial components to elicit traditional ideas on morality and well-being. To identify the Western view on ethics and well-being, the study investigates the initiatives and objectives of transnational organizations. The study finds that the Yoruba idea of *àlàáfíà* (peace), which is also a pursuit of morality and well-being, is more closely aligned with the biblical concept of *shalom* than the Western view.

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1. Introduction

The development of a society is always tied to people's commitment to what is right and good. Schweiker (2004, 199) puts it succinctly when he writes: "Despite the radical differences among moral systems and communities, human well-being was always in some way intrinsic to a concept of the higher good and the ideas about moral obligation." Therefore, ethics and well-being always go together.

This study explores the connection between the African traditional pursuit of ethics and development and the biblical pursuit of the same. The aim is to propose a biblically-rooted view of ethics and well-being for Africa that can serve as a contextual theology for African Christians to live authentic Christian lives culturally true to the Scriptures in matters related to morality and development. The question that guides the study is, what are the Western and African bases for ensuring ethics as they each seek to attain development?

This research employs a comparative methodology to explore the African and Western views of ethics and well-being from a theological perspective. As a representation of Africa, it focuses on the Yoruba people of Nigeria. It explores relevant, popular Yoruba proverbs and sayings to extract traditional beliefs about ethics and well-being. It examines the activities and goals of transnational organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to infer the Western perspective of ethics and well-being. These organizations are taken as a representation of the Western world.

The article concluded that, whereas humanism is at the root of the Western view of ethics in the pursuit of development, Yoruba ethics in the pursuit of development is founded on a biblically related concept of peace (*shalom*). In this study, development is construed as synonymous with well-being, so the two terms are used interchangeably.

2. The Biblical Pursuit of Ethics and Well-Being

God promised to bless the nation of Israel. This blessing implied remarkable productivity for the nation and a good life for its people (Deut 28:1–14). The blessing God promised to the Israelites is tied to *shalom*, the principal end of God's blessings for the nation of Israel (Cafferky 2014). For instance, the priestly blessing among the Israelites is a pronouncement of *shalom* (Num 6:24–26), which implies that, to the people of Israel, *shalom* is the highest form of blessing, the total sum of human desire and need. Therefore, *shalom* is the biblical definition of development, a life full of well-being.

Although *shalom* is usually translated as "peace" in English, the Hebrew concept indicates that it is "multidimensional, complete well-being, physical, psychological, social, and spiritual; it flows from all of one's relationships being put right—with God, with(in) oneself, and with others" (Kitur and Murumba 2022, 22). Taking the definition of *shalom* as well-being, the concept entails a holistic well-being cutting across both material and immaterial aspects of human life.

Biblical *shalom* is tied to an ethical life. God's covenant with the Israelites regulates "a social order that is to be maintained through a right relation to God.... The vertical axis of God/people covenant facilitates a horizontal axis in which the people bind themselves legally and morally to one another" (Hoelzl and Ward 2006, 7). One remarkable way by which God intends the Israelites to attain *shalom*, peace-blessing, is obedience to his Law.

The blessing of God, when received by humans as they obey his commandment, usually results in *shalom*, the peace of God that passes human understanding, which is the biblical term for well-being. The connection between God's covenant, blessing, and *shalom* is well expressed in Cafferky (2014, 1):

> The principles contained in the Decalogue have a direct relationship to the realization of promised blessings of *Shalom* as experienced in the community as a whole. The Commandments are not merely a random, arbitrary list of ethical "dos and don'ts" for individuals. They form the prescription for how the community as a whole can experience *Shalom* through individual and collective behaviors.

Writing on the nature of the Hebrew *shalom*, Cafferky (2014) notes that it is precipitated by obedience to God's commandment. When Israelites failed in any way to obey God's Law, they lived a life that was void of *shalom*. Apart from *shalom* being regarded as a biblical definition for development, it also entails "personal integrity and involves doing what is right, living honestly and ethically (Ps 34:11–14, 37: 37)" (Oluikpe and Callender-Carter 2016, 99). The idea of ensuring *shalom* was so important in the Israelite's context that its retention was the king's responsibility since he was appointed by God, the ultimate King. The Israelites's king was a co-regent, while God was primarily their king. The human king as God's co-regent was to rule according to God's Law and be a model of righteousness (Deut 17:18–20). He had to seek justice and righteousness (Isa 32:2, Jer 23:5) and thereby ensured *shalom* in the society.

Still in the New Testament, the idea of *shalom* continues with its Greek version *eirene*. Like *shalom* in the Old Testament, *eirene* is about "'wholeness'—a 'wholeness' in all dimensions of life…. Such a kind of peace is in direct relationship with the work of God in a man's life and in his world" (Siqueira 2001, 15). In the New Testament Jesus is God's Prince of Peace who brokers peace between God and humans (Rom 5:1). In his teaching to his disciples, he made a promise of peace (John 14:27), part of which entails life in abundance (John 10:10). As such, the New Testament concept of *shalom* relates to well-being.

Just like in the Old Testament, in the New Testament *shalom*, as well-being, is premised on a good moral life. When Jesus came on the scene, he made an important declaration that indicated his stance on the Law: He did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it (Matt 5:17). His message of repentance and a call for a new lifestyle dominated his teaching (Mark 1:14–15). His sermon on the mountain demands radical lifestyles from people contrary to what they initially held, like going the extra mile, turning the other cheek, controlling anger, and saying the truth without having to swear (Matt 5–7). All of these imply a demand for ethical living, with Jesus showing how people should submit themselves to the rule of God in matters pertaining "to work, status, friendship, marriage, time, food, clothing, healing, money, anxiety, and rest" (Storkey 2005, 112). Meanwhile, Matthew 6:33 forms his notable teaching that connects material blessings to ethical life: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (NIV).

Therefore, it is on this premise that this article argues that the pursuit of *shalom* is the foundation for biblical ethics in the pursuit of well-being. On the one hand, it entails well-being, and on the other hand, it entails a good moral life; well-being in the material life, and well-being in the immaterial, moral life.

The radical addition to the pursuit of *shalom* that is found in the New Testament is the idea that because of Christ's death, we are enabled to live an ethical life. This is contrary to what was widely held—that human beings can make good ethical decisions and actions through their willpower. Paul stressed the weakness of human willpower in Romans 7:14–24 when he noted his personal failure to overcome sin through willpower. He also noted God's provision for moral deliverance through Christ (Crisler 2021, 139). This implies that as the *shalom* of well-being is from God, so is the *shalom* of a good moral life. It is therefore impossible

to talk about *shalom* without talking about God the source of *shalom* (Siqueira 2001, 16).

3. The Western View of Development and Pursuit of Ethics

In the Western view, a country is considered developed when it does well with its gross domestic product (GDP), which means that it can produce a reasonable number of final goods and services within a given period. Likewise, a country is doing well when it has high per capita income, which implies that when the GDP is divided by the nation's population, the resulting figure is high enough to make a decent living for individuals in the nations (Grudem and Asmus 2013, 47). In short, the global standard view of development is largely based on the material things that the country produces and the material things that its citizens can afford.

Secondly, as we consider the Western view of development, it is important to examine the sustainable development goals (SDGs), which are being pursued by the global community (United Nations Development Programme 2023).

1. No poverty.
2. Zero hunger.
3. Good health and well-being.
4. Quality education.
5. Gender equality.
6. Clean water and sanitation.
7. Affordable and clean energy.
8. Decent work and economic growth.
9. Industry, innovation, and infrastructure.
10. Reduced inequalities.
11. Sustainable cities and communities.
12. Responsible consumption and production.
13. Climate action.
14. Life below water.
15. Life on land.
16. Peace, justice, and strong institutions.
17. Partnership for the goals.

Judging the Western view of development by these goals, one can infer that development entails human well-being (as seen in goals 1–3, 6–7), which needs to be enhanced by essential factors such as physical, social, political, and economic factors (as seen in the rest of the goals). Development at an individual level entails that each person has at least their basic needs met. To summarise the Western view of development, we can say that development is considered as a higher GDP and per capita income for a nation, and having the essential natural needs met for the individual occupants of the nation.

One important phenomenon that helps us understand the Western view of development is globalization since globalization itself is fundamentally a quest for development. For instance, Thomas L. Friedman's 2005 *The World is Flat* is a narrative of how the integration of the world's regions brought about improved life made possible by cyberspace. As we talk about globalization in the modern sense, it is hard to talk about it without the mention of "multinational enterprises, commercial partnerships, foreign joint venture and embryonic forms of mass production" (Moore and Lewis 2009, 1). All these are geared towards the search for an increase in national GDP, per capita income, and improved lives for individuals.

More importantly, as we talk about the Western view of development from a globalization standpoint, we cannot do so without talking about the United Nations and its specialized agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Health Organisation (WHO), and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The United Nations has five aims: 1) to maintain international peace and security, 2) to protect human rights, 3) to deliver humanitarian aid, 4) to support sustainable development and climate action, and 5) to uphold international law (United Nations n.d.).

From all the indicated UN aims, the UN itself exists for the pursuit of development, since all the five aims stated have direct relationships with the national well-being of the member countries and the individual well-being of the citizens of the countries. Meanwhile, for the global community, as represented in the study by the UN and its agencies, development entails certain achievements such as industrialization, high life expectancy, and income (Sartorius 2022, 101).

Development and ethics are inseparable. Development practitioners of all orientations agree that "what is morally good and right is bound to [produce] the flourishing of human persons and human communities" (Schweiker 2003, 539). Thus, in the pursuit of development, how does the UN in its operation ensure what is morally good and right for its member countries? This study argues that the Western pursuit of ethics in relation to development is founded on humanism. The root of humanism as the global pursuit of ethics and development is exemplified in the two instances below.

The UN's embrace of humanism as the foundation of its ethical pursuit is reflected in the display of Norman Rockwell's painting in the UN's headquarters in New York. Rockwell's painting is a mosaic work that bears the images of people from all cultures and religions. Upon these images is the inscription: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The painting was presented in 1985 by Nancy Reagan, the former U.S. first lady. Upon the repair of its crack, it was rededicated in 2014. This painting is known to have been "a favourite attraction on tours of the United Nations in New York" for a long time (United Nations 2014)

Meanwhile, according to Jan Eliasson's speech on the day of rededication, the painting is so valued because the "ethic" of its content "is common to numerous traditions." It appeals to various people because "it reflects humanity" (United Nations 2014). Rockwell's painting and Eliasson's comment clearly indicate that the idea of humanism is at the core of the UN's pursuit of ethics.

In his discussion on humanism, Hans d'Orville (2015, 96) notes that humanism is a call to "sharpen [human] conscience with regard to the potential of a world based on peace, democracy, justice, mutual respect, and human rights." As he spells out the peculiarities of humanism, d'Orville (2015, 96) notes that "although the exact definition of humanism has historically fluctuated in accordance with successive and diverse strands of intellectual thought, the underlying concept rests on the universal ideas of human emancipation, independence, and social justice." It can be inferred from d'Orville that humanism has to do with people's pursuit of what is good and right: respect, peace, independence, and social justice. Also, learning from Muhammad Arif Khan (2019, 31), it is realized that at the heart of humanism is the idea of valuing the inherent worth and dignity of every individual. On this note, this study infers that humanism is a quest for morality.

Throughout human history, humanism has been a search for morality. In Bokova's (2011, 5) words, "Humanism is an age-old promise, as well as an idea that is always new, endlessly reinventing itself. The humanist project

has been part of our history since antiquity, yet it shines like new in every epoch." However, it has ties to both the Renaissance and Enlightenment, two historical events that opened the world to secularism and placed humans (rather than God) at the center of everything. Therefore, Christians today should be skeptical of it (Seth 2011, 6). This article makes the case that humanistic principles form the foundation of the Western pursuit of development, a development that is measured in terms of physical indices.

4. Yoruba Pursuit of Ethics and Development

The African community has its unique definition of development, or what is commonly referred to as well-being, in the same way that the rest of the world does. The popular representation of the African definition and pursuit of development is rooted in the concept of *Ubuntu* (Sartorius 2022, 4). Specifically for Yoruba, the actual notion of development is *àlàáfíà* (translated as peace in English). All things are based on a person's ability to breathe and be at *àlàáfíà*. The Yoruba idea of well-being is reflected in the popular saying *Àlàáfíà l'ójù* (Peace is supreme).

For the Yoruba people, *àlàáfíà* "is the sum total of all that is good that man may desire—an undisturbed harmonious life" (Awolalu 1970, 21). In the ancient Yoruba worldview, the concept of *àlàáfíà* as well-being does not mean that there is no desire for financial wealth at all. The Yoruba view of wealth and poverty, however, is so fundamental that it is said *Bí ebi bá kúrò nínú ìṣẹ́, ìṣẹ́ bùse*, which can idiomatically be translated as "if hunger is (taken) out of your poverty experience, you are no longer poor."[1]

With the saying, *Àlàáfíà l'ójù* (Peace is supreme), the Yoruba see *àlàáfíà* as the ultimate proof of holistic well-being. To achieve this, they believe in living in ways that ensure cordial relationships with others, gods, and the environment. Moral norms and codes are established to protect these relationships, and failure to follow these guidelines is considered a sin. The Yoruba community believes that living in accordance with these codes is crucial for achieving material well-being and ensuring good relationships with others, gods, and the environment. Violation of any form of relationship in the Yorubaland is considered a sin (*ẹ̀ṣẹ̀*). The essence of good relationships is good moral life. It therefore implies that material well-being and immaterial, moral life go hand in hand.

In contrast to *ẹ̀ṣẹ̀*, Yoruba people celebrate and praise *ìwà rere* (good character) which qualifies an individual to be called a virtuous human being, or *ọmọlúàbí*. To them, rather than giving oneself to sin, one should always maintain ìwà rere. The idea of *ìwà rere* always goes hand in hand with the concept of *ọmọlúàbí* because an *ọmọlúàbí* is considered to be the epitome of *ìwà rere* (Olanipekun 2017, 219).

It is said that *ìwà rere lẹ̀ṣọ́ ọmọ ènìyàn* (a good character is the ornament of human beings). Therefore, everybody in society is encouraged to guard their behavior so that they do not sin. Because if there is a sin, *àlàáfíà* is disrupted. The wicked or immoral acts perpetuated against fellow human beings or the community by breaking taboos, and the practice of witchcraft and sorceries are some critical reasons for the disruption of *àlàáfíà*. Any of this can provoke the wrath of the gods.

In their pursuit of material well-being, a good moral life is so important among Yoruba, that a social accountability system is built within the community. This system provides a public eye for community members, encouraging moral behavior and providing information for community leaders, such as chiefs or kings, on how members are conducting themselves. This system serves as a chain of information, promoting a moral life and fostering a sense of community.

1 The Yoruba are not enamored with wealth, though they are not against it. *Àlàáfíà* is most important, so if one has that and your basic needs are met you are no longer considered poor.

In this social accountability system, everybody holds the right to confront any member of the community who is observed to be violating these laws. This is why Yoruba people would say *Bí ará ilé eni bá ń jẹ aáyán, kí a kìlọ́ fún un* ("If you find your neighbor eating cockroaches, do not hesitate to warn him/her" [because when the repercussion comes, you will suffer sleepless night with him/her]). Also, it is required that people should corporately condemn an evildoer. This is why it is said that *Ẹ jẹ́ ká pa ẹnu pọ̀ ká bá olè wí* (Let us put mouths together to rebuke a thief). This does not apply only to theft but to any form of unacceptable behavior.

Through communal accountability, every member of the community serves as police to one another, sending hints to the king in case of gross misconduct. It, therefore, becomes his responsibility to call a reported sinner to order or bring him/her to book, when necessary, so that the peace and well-being of the community can be preserved.

Through the communal accountability system, the head of the community (king or chief) can know how everybody behaves in society. This is portrayed in the saying, *Ojú ọba n'ílé, ojú ọba l'óko, èèyàn ní ń jẹ́bẹ́ẹ̀* (The king's eyes are able to see what happens both in the city and in the village because people are feeding him with information). In fact, it is the paramount responsibility of a community head to ensure that people are well-behaved in society so that there is peace. This is because his success is measured by the amount of peace that the community enjoys during his reign. The prominence of kingship in the well-being of a society is revealed in the proverb, *Ọba tó jẹ tí ìlú r'ójú, a kò ní gbàgbé rẹ̀* (The king whose reign is characterized by order will not be forgotten).

As noted earlier, *ìwà rere* among Yoruba is guided by moral codes. Oladosu (2012, 144) claims that *Ifa* divination, proverbs, taboos (*èèwò*), rituals, myths, folktales, and the cultural traditions of the people are the sources of Yorubaland's moral code. In addition to all of this, individuals are required to act morally by listening to their conscience, or *ẹ̀rí ọkàn* (Fayemi and Azeez 2021, 83). Similarly, a moral code is likewise formed by someone in a position of power. Since they sprang from the spiritual cosmos, all Yoruba sources of morality are spiritual. For example, *Ifa* is a divine entity which is why people have to engage in divination to consult him. Proverbs are said to originate from the ancestors and are therefore known to be *òwe àwọn baba wa* (the sayings of our fathers; i.e., ancestors). Therefore, the Yoruba quest for well-being and morality is rooted in spirituality, a reference to the world of the Supreme Being.

As noted above, taboos (*èèwò*) are an important aspect of Yoruba moral codes (Adeleye 2020, 43). Most of the taboos in Yorubaland are instituted to safeguard relationships. For example, it is considered *èèwọ̀* to fell a tree in a sacred forest. This is to safeguard the relationships with the environment and the gods. When a man visits your friend, it is *èèwọ̀to* stay in his house when he finds his friend's wife alone at home. This is to safeguard him from sexual temptation with his wife's friend. The aim of all these is so that there is *àlàáfíà* (peace) in the community.

When the Yoruba pursue development, the goal is all-round well-being, which is made possible by good moral life. As Owoseni (2016, 59) asserted, the Yoruba pursuit of morality ultimately aims at well-being. It is on this premise that this article argues that the Yoruba basis for the pursuit of development is similar to *shalom*—a holistic concept that encapsulates ethics and well-being with no sense of dichotomy.

5. Humanistic versus *Shalom* Ethic

The biblical, Western, and Yoruba ethical pursuit of development can be summarized as follows:

Biblical	**Western**	**Yoruba**
The immaterial is the ultimate necessity for the material (i.e., life is not contained in the abundance of possessions).	Material is the ultimate end.	The immaterial is the ultimate necessity for the material (*àlàáfíà l'ójù*; peace is supreme).
God works in you to desire and to do good things (Phil 2:13).	Human beings should exert their willpower to ensure a good ethical life.	*Ọwọ́ ẹni lààfí tún ìwà ẹni ṣe* (We nurture our behavior with our own hands).
Let us prioritize our relationship with God to enable cordial relationships in other areas of life.	Let us be good so that we can please one another.	Let us give respect to social, spiritual, and moral codes (of the gods/ancestors) so that *àlàáfíà* (peace) is not disrupted.
Cares for the human soul by a relationship with God.	Neglects care for the human soul.	Attempts to care for the human soul; seeks relationship with God but through intermediaries.
Shalom ethics.	Humanistic ethics.	Quasi-*shalom* ethics.

Table 1. A comparison between biblical, Western, and Yoroba views on development.

5.1 Shalom ethics as the ethical basis for the biblical pursuit of development

The biblical pursuit of development holds that there is more to life than material things. People should devote themselves to seeking immaterial ends as much as they seek material possessions. This value was well communicated to the Israelites through Moses when he said, "man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (Deut 8:3 NIV). This taught the Israelites the need for human beings to crave more than the material to sustain their lives. More importantly, their life is sustained by the immaterial.

Jesus also implied this in his response to the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18–30) and the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13–21), when he taught: "life does not consist in the abundance of possession" (12:15 NIV). *Shalom*, which is the ethical basis for the biblical pursuit of development, calls people to prioritize immaterial possessions that are associated with a relationship with God (marked by obedience to him). By doing this material possessions will follow (Deut 28:1–14, Matt 6:33).

Shalom ethics also entails cordiality in all relationships, whether with fellow humans, with the environment, with oneself, or with God. The Law of Moses places a moral demand on people, for example, not to mistreat one's neighbors, (e.g., Exod 20:16), how to handle the environment (e.g., Deut 20:19), and what to do for personal well-being (e.g., Deut 5:13–14). Meanwhile, what makes it possible for people to sustain cordial relationships in all other areas of life is when they have a relationship with God—commandments pertaining to humanity's relationship with God are at the top of the Ten Commandments.

In *shalom* ethics, the effort to do good is not ultimately in the human ability but in God who works in humans to desire and to do good things (Phil 2:13). Therefore, *shalom* ethics is not about willpower that often fails but the grace of God that appears to all humans and teaches them to say no to all unrighteousness (Titus 2:11–12). Paul stressed the weakness of human willpower in Romans 7:14–24 when he noted his personal failure to overcome sin through willpower. Therefore, a God-required lifestyle is impossible without a relationship with him. The inability to live out the lifestyle that God requires us to live is the reason for sin in society. The strength of *shalom* ethics lies in the fact that there is a provision that empowers humans with the ability to do what is right.

5.2 Humanistic ethics as the ethical basis for the Western pursuit of development

Judging by the Western definition of development, which is measured in terms of GDP and per capita income, the ultimate end of development is material, which is opposed to the biblical pursuit of development which holds that life does not consist in the abundance of possessions. Just like biblical ethics, the Western view also holds that a good ethical life is a critical prerequisite for development. Nevertheless, humanism, which is the basis for the Western pursuit of ethics and development, is anthropocentric rather than theocentric.

Quoting Edward Saïd, Sanjay Seth (2011, 6) correctly notes that

> the 'core' of humanism is the secular notion that the historical world is made by men and women, and not by God, and it can be understood rationally. At the core of humanism, then, is a philosophical anthropology, which in according centrality to man diminishes (though it does not necessarily eliminate) the role accorded to god(s).

Because of the attempt to leave God out of the scene in the ethical pursuit of development, humanism holds that willpower is the answer when it comes to the human ability to do what is right and wrong. Also, the essence of doing the right thing is not to please any divine being but so that we do not hurt one another (i.e., fellow humans). Because humanistic ethics, as the basis of the global pursuit of ethics, leaves God out of the equation, there is a lack of care for the human soul, the essential human component that seeks fellowship with the divine being. This is the most significant undoing of humanism as the basis of the global pursuit of development.

Global development falls short of being holistic due to its materialistic end. There is an essential aspect of human life that it has left out, an aspect of life which is regarded, according to Daniel Groody (2007, 11), as the "inner space"—the human heart. In the words of Groody (2007, 11): "The current disorders of the society begin with the disorders of the human heart, from which flow destructive choices that unravel relationships." Meanwhile, to leave God out of the equation in our pursuit of ethics and development is to neglect the need to cater to the human heart. This is the source of the world disorder leading to inequality and breakdown in all levels of relationships.

5.3 Quasi-shalom ethics as the ethical basis for the Yoruba pursuit of development

As we consider the mode of Yoruba's ethical pursuit of development, one will wonder which category it belongs to—humanistic or *shalom* ethics. This article contends that it is more like *shalom* ethics. Yoruba's concept of *àlàáfíà* (peace), as it takes into consideration the material and immaterial well-being, keeps it in consonance with the biblical view of ethics and development: "life does not consist in the abundance of possesses" (Luke 12:15 NIV). Therefore, Awolalu (1970, 21) is right when he argues that "*Àlàáfíà* as it is being conceived, is very similar to the Hebrew concept of *shalom*."

The Yoruba pursuit of ethics, *ìwà rere* (good character), and *ọmọlúàbí* (virtuous person), is directly connected to divinity. Concerning moral life, a Yoruba person believes: "If I misbehave, the ancestors, deities, and *Olódùmarè* [the Almighty] will punish me." More so, as already mentioned, all Yoruba moral codes have divine implications. With this, we draw a line of correlation between the Yoruba and biblical pursuits of ethics and development, which are both divine and spiritual in nature. The fact that the Yoruba make room for human relationships with divinity is an indication of its attempt to care for the human soul, like the biblical pursuit of ethics and development. However, as much as the Yoruba concept of *àlàáfíà* (peace) is similar to the concept of *shalom*, some beliefs and practices conflict with *shalom* ethics.

The Yoruba means of attaining a good ethical life—*ìwà rere* (good character) and *ọmọlúàbí* (virtuous person)—is found in the human personal effort: *Ọwọ́ ẹni lààfí tún ìwà ẹni ṣe* (We nurture our behavior with our own hands). Human beings can indeed attempt on their own to become an *ọmọlúàbí*, a morally ideal human, as some biblical texts such as Romans 6:12 and Philippians 2:12 suggest. However, the aspect of it that is left out by Yoruba traditional belief is the aspect of God's willingness to help our willpower through the power of the Holy Spirit that comes upon people the day they receive salvation (Rom 8:1–5). The true height of *ọmọlúàbí* (virtuous person) can be fully attained only in Christ. Beyond what Yoruba people believe as the way to possess and maintain good character, Scripture further teaches, "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil 2:13 NIV).

Therefore, it is not enough for an individual to guard their behavior through personal effort, it is also important that they tap into God's provision to help them do his will. The Bible holds that no one can attain the height of *ọmọlúàbí* (virtuous person) by personal effort alone. The only way to attain it before God is through the righteousness of Christ that is imputed in us (2 Cor 5:21). Other than that, the demonstration of *ìwà rere* (good behavior) that comes through personal effort is at its best still like a filthy rag before God (Isa 64:6, Rom 3:10).

Although not totally in agreement with the biblical teaching, the basis for the Yoruba's appeal for good character is not as far away from the Scripture as the Western view. While the Western view also acknowledges the place of *ọmọlúàbí* (virtuous person) in ensuring the well-being of humanity, their appeal for morality is based on humanistic ethics that are void of spirituality. The Yoruba's appeal for good character is not just based on *humanism* but also divinity. In biblical terms, divinity only entails the Trinitarian God—*Olódùmarè* (the Almighty) minus ancestors and deities. This is another area where Yoruba religious thought misses the point. It places traditional deities and ancestors in the same realm as God. In its perception of ethics and development, the Western view misses the point by leaving God out completely. As such, while humanistic ethics serves as the basis for the Western pursuit of development, quasi-*shalom* ethics is the basis for the Yoruba pursuit of development.

6. Conclusion

This study has discussed the interrelationship between ethics and development. Through a comparative study, it explored the Yoruba and Western foundations for ethics and well-being from a theological perspective. It argued that the Yoruba and biblical pursuit of development and ethics, founded on the respective concepts of *àlàáfíà* (peace) and *shalom*, emphasize the importance of ethical living, communal harmony, and overall well-being in a holistic, undichotomized framework. Therefore, the Yoruba concept of *àlàáfíà* (peace) and biblical *shalom* are said to share a striking similarity, except that the Yoruba view allows for other deities and self-attained righteousness. On the other hand, the Western view of ethics and well-being, founded on humanism, exhibits a narrower focus on human-centered values, thereby deviating from the deeper spiritual and theological dimensions found in the Yoruba and biblical perspectives.

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Book Review: *Embodied Afterlife: The Hope of an Immediate Resurrection*

Falconer, Robert. 2023. *Embodied Afterlife: The Hope of an Immediate Resurrection*. St. Francis Bay: Stockbridge Books. 229 pp. ISBN 978-0-6397-9183-8. Approx. 207.59 ZAR (10.98 USD). Paperback.

1. Introduction

While much of Christianity in the West seems to think of the hope we have in Jesus Christ as dying and going to *heaven*, the biblical reality is much more embodied and physical. Rev. Dr. Robert Falconer seeks to correct this error by presenting a view that is more familiar to reality, more hopeful, and more biblical than what is found pop-theology. Born and raised in South Africa, Falconer holds degrees in architecture and theology. He is husband to Catherine and father to two sons, ordained in the Holy Orders of the Anglican Church, and the Head of Student Research at the South African Theological Seminary. Falconer began his professional work in architecture in Scotland and South Africa, has served as a missionary in Kenya with his wife, and continues as a theologian with interests in Neo-Calvinism, African Philosophical-Theology, Architecture and Theology, Soteriology, and the Resurrection.

2. Overview of Embodied Afterlife

The Christian faith is not gnostic but looks to find its *telos* in the bodily resurrection and everlasting life in Christ. The three Ecumenical Creeds, as guides to the faith, speak to the resurrection but merely say it is coming, not how one would experience it. If one speculates on how the resurrection will take place, it can be an *adiaphoron*[1] so long as it avoids heresy. While it seems that many Christians, if not most, believe there is an intermediate state between death in this world and life in the world to come, Falconer (p. 9) posits an intriguing theory: an immediate bodily resurrection after death. This immediate resurrection is not soul sleep. Rather, it is a transformative experience where one does not experience a time of waiting or incompleteness, but Christ raises them from the dead on the Last Day immediately after they experience a temporal death (pp. 153, 156).

Falconer explores this theory of the immediate resurrection in an ordered and understandable eight-chapter journey. First, he investigates the historical truth about Christ's resurrection. The subject of James Turner's *On the Resurrection of the Dead: A New Metaphysics of Afterlife for Christian Thought* (2019) composes the second chapter. Third, Falconer explores select scriptural passages to understand what happens following death. The fourth chapter investigates whether the theory of the immediate resurrection conforms to the biblical understanding of the embodied afterlife. An interesting, if not controversial, fifth chapter examines near-death experiences. The sixth chapter considers theories on the nature and relation of the body and the soul. Following this is the seventh chapter, a study on time. Finally, Falconer finishes by applying the hope of the resurrection to life. Throughout Falconer's book, there is a humility whereby he shows potential pitfalls with his theory and, perhaps more importantly, a palpable sense of his desire to provide comfort and

1 *Adiaphoron* is a theological term describing a biblical matter or custom that is not essential to justification as it is neither spoken for or against in the Scriptures.

hope to those whom death affects and hurts in this life. This book is ultimately pastoral, even while engaging in theological speculation.

Falconer guides his book from a familiar *sola Scriptura* background, working to ground his theory in the words of Scripture while trying to understand whether the Scriptures point to an immediate resurrection or an intermediate state (p. 119). Often, theological speculation is not grounded in the text of Scripture; Falconer's work takes the opposite approach. If Scripture is our normative source for doctrine, Falconer works diligently to speak where Scripture speaks and to hesitate to speak where it does not. After all, "the Bible is far more interested in the resurrection and the new creation than it is [concerned] about heaven" (p. 67). Scripture does not supply a detailed description of heaven—what it is, what it looks like, our experiences of it, and where or when it is. There are references to heaven, some allegorical, some apocalyptic, and none particularly clear. The dearth of knowledge about heaven is not a problem for Christians as our hope is not to wander the heavens as ethereal beings but that we will be resurrected and experience eternal life. This leaves room for speculation, though not contradiction (p. 42). However, what is clear is that every time the Scriptures speak of the resurrection and eternal life, they teach that those who will attain it are beings composed of body and soul, the physical and the spiritual.

Falconer's discussion of the resurrection is rooted in the historical resurrection of Christ (p. 17). Appropriately, to make a case for it he presents arguments for the resurrection and handily disputes any argument against the bodily resurrection of Jesus. In the OT, the firstfruits sacrifice (Lev 23:9–14, Deut 26:1–11) was one in which the first yield of the harvest was offered to thank God for the rest of the harvest. If Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrection, then his resurrection is a first *gleaning* of the harvest of those who will be raised after him. In this full harvest, God delights in his people and blesses the whole resurrection. Understood this way, it is the same harvest—the same resurrection. The only difference between Christ's and the believer's resurrection is the distance in time, as we experience it, though we wait with eager anticipation for the advent of the King.

Falconer summarizes James Turner's *On the Resurrection of the Dead*, rightly asserting, "Turner's excellent work is in analytical theology and is inaccessible to most readers" (p. 12). Turner's work is not the source of Falconer's theory but a validation for exploring it. Turner does not treat the subject of the resurrection from a scriptural basis but through an exercise in philosophy and analytical theology, with theorems and qualitative theological proofs supplying the substance of his argument. This is not to say his work has no value; it is just the opposite. It is fascinating but challenging, and Falconer supplies a good companion to Turner's work.

Falconer robustly deals with personhood and its meaning (p. 161). The resurrection reveals what personhood is. Christ cares about the individual believer and promises them life after death (pp. 54, 149–150). The resurrection includes both our souls and bodies, but what of death and the interim? Falconer posits that "it would be unnatural to exist without some sort of physical [body] … if we are a unified whole" (p. 162). To answer the question, Falconer argues that there is no separation of the soul and body but an immediate resurrection. While this seems to contradict time in this world, to go from death to whenever the resurrection may come while the rest of the world continues through time, God does not experience time in the same way as the world. So, from the eternal perspective, the person is taken from the closing of their eyes in this life immediately to the next: a theory Falconer calls "truncated time," and yet maintaining their whole person (p. 167).

This idea of time is understood through the lens of the soul/body division. Falconer explores four views on the body/soul division in-depth:

dichotomous, trichotomous, holistically dualistic, or physicalistic. The question of the body/soul division affects personhood in three significant ways in the book: 1) If we are dualistic and there is some intermediate state, it would help better explain near-death experiences. 2) If we are indeed a product of physicalism, then there is no true soul that we would have to wonder about, and thus we would seem to experience an immediate resurrection. 3) If we are genuinely holistic, then the soul and the body cannot be separated, and therefore an immediate resurrection is more preferable and likely than an intermediate state (pp. 146–152).

3. Strengths

Embodied Afterlife is thoroughly Christ-centered. One cannot walk away from the book knowing less about Christ. Falconer has striven to ensure that Jesus is front and center in every discussion, constantly pointing to the promises of faith in Christ and the purpose of his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, which is to give believers the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting (pp. 10, 17, 115, 153, 183, 201, 218). Falconer offers hope and comfort through a pastoral approach as he points the reader to the cross. The ease of its readability is accessible to the layperson, but it also is written to make the theologian think deeply. His theory is based on Scripture and, as such, deserves to be considered, even if it is a somewhat novel approach. Falconer chose to put forward something that works to overcome the commonly held, generally agreed upon, preconceived notion of the intermediate state. That is a difficult task to accomplish, but Falconer pushes back on this idea and makes one consider whether an immediate resurrection could be true. Whether one agrees with the immediate resurrection or not, Falconer's application chapter offers comfort with the knowledge that a resurrection is coming, which makes a difference in this life.

Falconer scripturally addresses his argument for an immediate resurrection best in his discussion on 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (esp. 14b), where Paul speaks of God sending those who had fallen asleep with Christ (pp. 111–114). While an intermediate state could address this through the commonly known picture of the warriors returning with their king and the city streaming out to meet him in victory, it is also a difficult passage to understand. Thus, Falconer posits his theory, and, with his treatment, one must admit it could be true. It is no wonder the Thessalonians themselves had difficulty understanding the end times.

4. Weaknesses

While arguing for the immediate resurrection of the believer, Falconer often deals humbly with the Scriptures, but without exploring all the potential meanings of a passage. Admitting bias, I hold to the belief of an intermediate state, and I found that, as Falconer stated his conclusions, I wanted more of his arguments. One senses James Turner's influence throughout Falconer's exploration, to the point where Turner's analytical argument of the immediate resurrection becomes a governing presumption as Falconer presents his argument. So then, having the immediate resurrection presumed from Turner's analysis almost distracts from the conversation and leads one to desire more of the argument. This desire is especially true in the chapter on near-death experiences, where one could envision multiple conclusions regarding the presented data. To that end, despite admitting where it may fall short, the primary theory presented and assumed was that of the immediate resurrection to the detriment of presenting the fullness of other arguments. While investigating each argument that might contradict Falconer's idea would be welcomed, it would likely be out of the scope of his book.

There is another hypothesis upon which Falconer relies to prove his own. Falconer holds that a person is not complete if the body and

soul are separated. Thus, if there were an intermediate state, the soul of a person would feel that this was an imperfect state to be in, thus negating the holiness and perfection that Scripture ascribes to the person of faith, especially following their earthly death (p. 106). Related to this, Falconer wonders why there should be a physical paradise with an embodied resurrection if it is satisfying that a disembodied existence in heaven awaits believers after the resurrection (p. 53). The theory Falconer presents is complicated as Scripture does not explicitly say this separation is an issue nor that waiting for the resurrection is satisfying in the way contemporary Christianity envisions it.

This *incomplete* idea of Falconer's theory could be rebutted in at least two ways. One is by considering the martyrs under the altar in Revelation 6:9. John sees only their souls and, while they cry out for vengeance, there is nothing about missing their bodies or that it serves as an impediment to participating in the divine throne room activity around God. Another point is that incompleteness does not negate personhood or imply grief (p. 153). Could it not be just as likely that one has the anticipation of being reunited, like a husband, alone at home, happily anticipating his wife's momentary return? His thought is not that he is incomplete but that he is excited to see her again. Sympathizing with the idea that Falconer sees this incompleteness as imperfection and knowing the result of sin is death that leads to grief in this life, one must wonder how that separation will appear on the other side if it is true that there is an intermediate state.

5. Conclusion

Falconer's *Embodied Afterlife* is an intriguing journey through an unfamiliar concept with familiar components. I offer a strange commendation in praise of it: Falconer presents the idea of an immediate resurrection, contradicting a widely held belief, without delving into the realm of heresy. He keeps his speculation solely in the realm of an *adiaphoron*, and that is because he is Christ-centered, scriptural, and pastoral—his main goal is to convey hope. He approaches his theory humbly, admitting he could be wrong even while respectfully hoping that others are wrong. Yet he is comforted by his own conviction. For those who want an introduction to the theory of an immediate resurrection without being bogged down in Turner's analytical approach, this book allows them to explore that approach. While Falconer's book will make theological academicians consider the theory, they may find some of the argumentation and assumptions in the book lacking. Despite this, they will find a thoughtful conversation encouraging them to consider how to explain their own beliefs. In this book, Falconer proves that one can posit an idea that stands against a deeply held belief, such as an intermediate state, and still walk away with the reader knowing the comfort of the resurrection and having their grasp of Christ strengthened.

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Book Review: *The Holy Spirit in African Christianity*

Ngaruiya, David K., and Rodney L. Reed, eds. 2022. *The Holy Spirit in African Christianity*. African Society of Evangelical Theology Series. UK: Langham. xxi, 151 pp. ISBN: 978139736469. Approx. 429.78 ZAR (22.99 USD). Paperback

1. Introduction

David K. Ngaruiya is an Associate Professor at International Leadership University in Kenya, and he holds a Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in the USA. He has published various journal articles and book chapters and was chair of the Africa Society of Evangelical Theology from 2015 to 2016. Rodney L. Reed is a missionary educator who has been working at Africa Nazarene University in Kenya since 2001. He has a Ph.D. in Theological Ethics from Drew University in the USA.

The authors argue that there is a unique shade to the understanding of and practices related to the Holy Spirit in Africa (p. xi). Nevertheless, the differences in understanding and experience have not affected the Africans' confession regarding the person and works of the Holy Spirit (p. xi). The features of the Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit in Africa are treated along the broad categories of the charismatic works of the Holy Spirit, the emphasis on the person of the Holy Spirit, and the African Independent/Initiated Churches (AICs) and their application of the theology of the Holy Spirit in their church practices. The book is a comparative study of the understanding and practices related to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit among African Christians from varied backgrounds and perspectives. The authors developed the content of the book by first discussing the continuity and discontinuity between Montanist, Pentecostal-Charismatic, and Augustinian views of the Holy Spirit. Second, the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Church's mission in postmodern African Christianity is addressed. Third, deliverance in the work of the Holy Spirit in AICs and Pentecostal-Charismatic churches is contemplated (p. xxi).

The authors' contribution to the African Society of Evangelical Theology (ASET) project has been significant. This project endeavors to conduct Evangelical scholarship faithful to the biblical text while drawing implications for the Christian faith in Africa and beyond. The authors' work has helped to further this mission by engaging with the biblical text and exploring its relevance to the African context. Their work is a testament to the importance of rigorous scholarship in promoting a thoughtful and nuanced understanding of the Holy Spirit.

2. Overview

The authors aim to comprehend the implications of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 within Christianity in Africa. They demonstrate that unity and equality are present within the church. This is helpful because it invites Christians to a mutual relationship in the church. It is crucial because men, women, children, and people with disabilities all bear the divine image of God (Gen 1:26–27). The authors express their disappointment with the limited attention given to the study of pneumatology in missionary associated churches (p. 94).

Second, the authors have identified several contextual concerns related to pneumatology. They believe that addressing the implications of pneumatology could help alleviate these concerns. For instance, they

suggest examining how pneumatology intersects with social, political, and gender identity issues. By doing so, they hope to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of pneumatology in these contexts (p. 94). Added to this is a significant concern regarding the lack of understanding of the person of the Holy Spirit among some Christians in Africa. Some believe that the Holy Spirit is either an angel or a spirit of good deeds, but these beliefs are clearly incorrect and have no biblical foundation. Moreover, it diminishes the importance of the Holy Spirit as a member of the Trinity (p. 110).

Third, the authors highlight the significance of pneumatology in shaping the practical aspects of the Christian faith. Their interactions with Asamoah-Gyadu serve as a powerful illustration of this impact. By examining the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian life, they provide a compelling argument for the relevance of theological inquiry. They demonstrate that a deep understanding of pneumatology can enrich one's spiritual experience and provide a solid foundation for Christian living. Ultimately, their work underscores the importance of theology in shaping both the faith of individuals and the beliefs of the broader Christian community (pp. 131–138).

Fourth, Augustinian pneumatology implies that the Holy Spirit, an essential member of the Trinity, has been actively involved in the world's creation and sustenance. The Holy Spirit's actions are not limited to the physical realm but extend beyond it. The Holy Spirit is the one that brings about divine change and transformation in the life of Christians. Augustinian pneumatology thus emphasizes the essential role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian faith. Overall, this doctrine underscores the idea that the Holy Spirit is not limited by time or space and continues to work in mysterious ways to bring about God's purposes in the world (pp. 45–47).

Fifth, by exploring the biblical and theological dimensions of the Holy Spirit's ontology, we can better understand how the Spirit works in the world and our lives. Ultimately, this can help us better appreciate the Holy Spirit's significance for our faith and practice. John Michael Kiboi contends that "an explication of pneumatology from a Trinitarian point will illuminate the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and this will clear the misconceptions and resolve the postmodern epistemological doubt on the work of the Holy Spirit" (p. 50).

Lastly, in the context of African and new-age religions, it is essential to clearly understand the Holy Spirit's name. This understanding can help to avoid confusion and promote accurate communication among believers. Therefore, studying and comprehending the Holy Spirit's name is crucial to engage meaningfully in these religious contexts (p. 86).

3. Assessment

The book provides a relevant overview of theological, contextual, biblical, historical, and methodological concerns regarding pneumatology in contemporary Christianity in Africa. However, the reader may be left wondering if the Holy Spirit is the book's actual subject due to the emphasis on women's liberation and their roles in ministry that pervades it. For instance, the first essay argues for gender equality by taking an all-inclusive approach to reading Acts 2. The interpretation of Acts 2 as a basis for discussing authority, hierarchy, and ordination is confusing. The structure of the text does not provide sufficient evidence to support such claims. The lack of clear definitions of partnership, hierarchy, and an agenda-driven hermeneutical approach makes it difficult to conclude whether chapters 1, 2, and 6 deal with the Holy Spirit or women's roles in ministry.

The chapters "The Holy Spirit in Trinitarian Theology as a Panacea" (pp. 49–67) and "Augustine's Articulation of the Holy Spirit" (pp.

33–47) provide a helpful biblical-theological framework for engaging pneumatology. However, the reader may become confused by the editors' location of these chapters in the book. These chapters are great resources for providing a strong biblical-theological foundation for the remaining chapters. If these chapters were placed at the beginning of the book, it would help the reader to see how the other chapters address the implications of the Holy Spirit in the context of Christianity in Africa. Readers need to have a clear understanding of the theological foundation to fully appreciate the implications discussed in the remaining chapters. This suggested arrangement would also help to provide structure and context to the book, making it easier for readers to follow.

While the book provides valuable insight into the African understanding and practices related to the Holy Spirit, the book could benefit from a deeper theological and biblical analysis. The authors' consideration of the continuity and discontinuity between Montanist, Pentecostal-Charismatic, and Augustinian views of the Holy Spirit is a good starting point. However, a more in-depth examination of certain theological issues could have greatly enhanced the book's overall impact on the understanding of the Holy Spirit and its implication for Christian practice in contemporary Africa. Some issues that deserve attention include the Holy Spirit and the Trinity, the Holy Spirit and the Scripture, the Holy Spirit and angelic beings, and the Holy Spirit and theology of religions. A more thorough engagement with these areas would provide readers with a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit's nature and work, and its relevance to the African context. Additionally, a more comprehensive analysis of these issues would equip African Christians with a solid foundation for their faith and enable them to engage more effectively with the broader Christian community.

4. Conclusion

Contemporary pneumatology in African Christianity is a complex and fascinating topic. Understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of African Christians requires a deep understanding of their culture, traditions, and beliefs. This involves a careful examination of how African Christians understand and experience the Holy Spirit, and how these experiences are shaped by their unique cultural contexts. By exploring these issues, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the diversity and richness of Christian spirituality in Africa, and how it continues to evolve and develop in the contemporary world. This book is a great resource for the understanding of the Holy Spirit and its implication for Christian practice in contemporary Africa. I recommend it for pastors, teachers, leaders, and students who desire to understand the conversation about the Holy Spirit in contemporary Africa.

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1 Mr. Ali Mati is a Nigerian-born Christian theologian with over 15 years' experience in teaching, missions, church planting, and pastoring. He holds a diploma in computer applications, a bachelor's in missiology, and a master's degree in theological studies. Currently is pursuing a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. His research interest is exploring St. Augustine's perspective on human embodiment and flourishing for Christian interaction with diverse cultures and religions. Ali is an adjunct faculty member at ECWA Theological Seminary, Jos, and a volunteer teaching pastor with ECWA USA. He is passionate about theological education, church history, human flourishing, and Christian apologetics to Islam and Christianity in culture. Ali has had a significant impact on the lives of many individuals while serving with the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA).

Book Review: *Who We Were Meant to Be: Rediscovering Our Identity as God's Royal Priesthood*

Burden, Matthew. 2022. *Who We Were Meant to Be: Rediscovering Our Identity as God's Royal Priesthood*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock. x, 334 pp. ISBN: 978-1-6667-0874-5. Approx. 490 ZAR (26.55 USD). Paperback.

Matthew Burden is a son of missionaries. He has a service background in South America, along with personal ministry experience in Africa. He is currently serving as a pastor at a Historic Baptist Church affiliated with the American Baptists. He has authored this significant contribution on the rediscovery of our identity as God's royal priests. Matthew holds a Ph.D. from the South African Theological Seminary (SATS), with a specialization in missiological themes in early English hymnody. His writing outputs span both creative and theological genres.

1. Introduction

This book seeks to illuminate the original intent behind God's creation before humanity's fall and it also highlights the redemptive narrative culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is divided into two distinct sections: section one (chapters 2–7) details the biblical and theological basis for seven core points of his corpus, while section two (chapters 8–16) discusses their practical implications within the context of the church and in the lives of Christians. The narrative starts with Genesis, highlighting humanity's ordained role as creation's royal priests which is disrupted by sin. It showcases Jesus in the Gospels as initiating the new creation, fulfilling the original priestly role, and proclaiming the kingdom of God—tied to the restoration of God's reign. Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation affirm this new creation, restoring our original priesthood and anticipating the final unification of heaven and earth, where God will dwell with his people, and reign forever. This underscores our active participation in God's redemptive plan, inviting us into the ongoing divine symphony, to use the author's musical analogy found throughout the book. This critical review will assess Burden's arguments, examining his use of scriptural and patristic sources, the coherence of his theological framework, and the implications of his thesis for contemporary Christian ecclesiology and practice. Through this examination, the review will aim to discern the contribution of *Who We Were Meant* to Be to ongoing theological discourse and its relevance to the challenges facing modern Christianity.

2. Reductionistic Soteriology and the Symphony of God's Kingdom

When it comes to soteriology, some tend toward relativism, others toward reductionism. The pervasiveness of minimalistic (or reductionistic) soteriology within Evangelicalism is a common theme globally. While we must embrace the simple message of the gospel and the clear, beautiful melody of the plan of salvation, we must be guarded against reducing the Christian message to a formula without greater appreciation for its grand nuances. Burden embarks on a patristic and theological journey, inviting readers into the rich tapestry of Christian identity through the lens of Scripture and early church teachings. This is a detailed and fascinating

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piece that is written for those who have a desire to improve current church praxis by inspecting early church traditions that may challenge it. A central feature of his writing is that all of creation was designed to be a divine temple, with humanity positioned as its royal priests and ambassadors. Yet, through sin, this intended unity was fractured, necessitating a savior to restore the brokenness. By exploring the biblical narrative from Genesis to Revelation, Burden reconstructs a vision of the world as God's temple, humanity's role within it, and the cosmic scope of Jesus's redemptive work. This vision not only includes the salvation of individuals but extends to the communal and cosmic, heralding a new creation where heaven and earth are reunited.

Burden showcases that the plan of salvation—central to our faith—at times detracts from the bigger picture of the *missio Dei*. Although Burden does not couch the *missio Dei* in missiological terms, the final chapter is clear that mission is central to the purpose of God and His creation. He argues that his approach does not detract from the beauty and necessity of the individual salvation story but rather seeks to place it within a grand narrative. In this argument, Burden draws deeply from the wells of patristic theology, arguing that the Early Church Fathers, through their closeness to the apostolic age and cultural milieu of the Bible, provide invaluable insights into understanding these foundational truths. Burden challenges believers to engage with the entirety of God's work, recognizing their role not just as recipients of salvation but as active participants in the reconciliation of all things to God through Christ (2 Cor 5).

3. Temple Theology in Biblical Perspective

Although some features of Burden's approach are unique—like his integration of a temple theology and views on theosis cosmology—overall this is not a completely new approach as it flows in the vein of authors like C. S. Lewis (2001) and John Stott (2006). Others like Dallas Willard (1998), Jürgen Moltman (1993), Alister McGrath (2011), and N. T. Wright (2018)—to name a few—are key proponents of the overall viewpoint Burden promulgates.[1] It is a pity Burden did not engage on a theological level with these authors as their views and arguments would augment and further shape his viewpoint.

Although Burden notes that the inclusion of the temple theme in the Genesis narrative was imposed on the text by early church traditions and writings (p. 26), he does not provide details of such discourses. This would have enhanced his argument and helped to substantiate its overall inclusion. The articulation of his arguments is always well-informed and helps to clarify the overall point, but they do not aid the veracity of his overall arguments that a temple view should supplant a kingdom/people view which is more commonly held among evangelicals. Although this is not explicitly stated throughout the book, the extrabiblical evidence presented is given substantial weight when Burden forms his arguments—at times even more than the biblical text. An example of such is the inclusion of 1 Enoch (p. 98). To a non-theological reader, it is hard to discern if the tail is wagging the dog, so to speak.

Burden did a tremendous job of engaging in his stated research topic and included excellent patristic sources, well-thought-out stories and illustrations, as well as meaningful pastoral and theological reflections

1 Jürgen Moltmann, Alister McGrath, N. T. Wright, and Dallas Willard enrich evangelical theology by emphasizing Jesus's cosmic redemption. Their contribution is of great importance to the development of the concept theologically in the present age. Moltmann explores hope, McGrath integrates science and theology, Wright redefines Jesus's mission, and Willard applies gospel teachings to life. Collectively they present salvation as encompassing both individuals and creation.

around the biblical text. It felt, at times, that this research was done in isolation from the modern developments of the concepts he was expounding since these developments were not adequately acknowledged. A broader sweep of the topics covered may have enhanced Burden's argument. The book makes some strong points but lacks some scholarly credibility due to a lack of engagement with such sources (p. 26).[2]

4. The Metanarrative of God's Kingdom Rule

Using the metaphor of a symphony, Burden creatively brings together the melodies of the salvation of individuals with the harmonies of God's grand narrative for creation, temple, and kingdom, urging us to see our role as royal priests in God's divine and victorious symphony. Through his exploration of Scripture, early church teachings, and historical and extrabiblical reflection, Burden encourages readers to tune their ears to the full score of God's redemptive plan, which is both personal and cosmic in scope. The thread Burden uses to make the point in the concluding chapter has been the focus of many paradigmatic works like that of South African Missiologist, David Bosch. In *Transforming Mission* he (2004, 377–378) states, "The church's missionary involvement suggests more than calling individuals into the church as a waiting room for the hereafter. Those to be evangelized are, with other human beings, subject to social, economic, and political conditions in this world…." Referring to Geffré (1982, 491), Bosch (2004, 388) reminds us that there is a convergence between liberating individuals and peoples in history and the final culminating of God's reign. In a real sense, the church is "the people of God in world-occurrence" (see also Barth 1962, 681–762).

The scope of the book deals with niche areas of church history and biblical theology that are underscored by several recent missional works that deal with the personal and cosmic nature of the Christian faith. However, the conclusion of Burden's work is perhaps where the book could have started. We are not mere spectators in this divine drama but are invited to take our place on stage, contributing our unique voices to the grand narrative of redemption and restoration. Missiologically speaking, Christopher J. H. Wright, in his magnum opus, *The Mission of God*, argues that the entirety of the Bible is crafted around and centers upon God's overarching mission. To grasp the depths of the Bible (God and our mission), a missional hermeneutic is essential—an interpretative lens that aligns with this overarching missional narrative permeating the Scriptures. While the personal dimensions of God's grace are central, it is crucial to comprehend the big picture of God's mission so that we may be faithful in our role and posture within this world.

5. Conclusion

Burden's work challenges us to move beyond a simplistic understanding of salvation to embrace the rich, multifaceted vision that Scripture offers—a vision where Christ's followers are empowered as agents of reconciliation, tasked with bringing all creation into alignment with God's reign. This vision, deeply rooted in the wisdom of the early church, calls us to live out our identity as royal priests, actively participating in the reconciliation of heaven and earth. The book concludes with a powerful reminder that the symphony of God's plan is still unfolding. We live in the tension of the *already but not yet*, where the kingdom of God is both present and awaiting its full consummation. As royal priests, we have a

2 "The argument that follows—for interpreting Genesis 1 as a temple text—is one that has been made by a number of Bible scholars recently." Burden does not elaborate on the actual scholars in the text or in the form of a footnote. Such examples are commonplace. I have no doubt Burden would be able to detail this; therefore his failure to do so is problematic.

critical role to play in this era of salvation history, embodying the values of the coming age and working towards the realization of God's kingdom on earth.

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