Logoi Pistoi

Faithful Words | Volume 6

Engaging Theology & Culture

Logoi Pistoi

Faithful Words   Volume 6

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We are pleased to announce the publication of the sixth issue of Australian College of Christian Studies (ACCS) e-Journal, *Logoi Pistoi* (Faithful Words) which is freely available to download.

Logoi Pistoi e-Journal is an important platform which brings together various research papers carried out by the College lecturers and students. The Journal serves a dual role of showcasing research carried out within ACCS and generates critical thinking and debate on various papers presented.

As an institute of higher education, it is essential to encourage the publication of the scholarly works of ACCS community. This Journal provides an outlet for the sharing of good practice and the development of scholarship.

The Journal's editorial team consists of Dr Xavier Lakshmanan, Dr Paul Porta, Dr David Smith and Mrs Merilyn Smith. The team is coordinated by Dr Xavier Lakshmanan.

The Journal is published periodically. ACCS invites papers on original research in the areas of: theology, biblical studies, missions, ministry, counselling, pastoral care and other related areas of research.

Editorial

It gives me great pleasure to present the sixth edition of *Logoi Pistoi* (Faithful Words). The articles published illustrate a range of interests demonstrating great diversity within Australian College of Christian Studies, and our international associates. In 2021, we have commenced the internationlisation of our journal by inviting those connected with ACCS worldwide to contribute, including those participating in the Brethren Training Network.

ACCS exists to challenge and motivate students to further their knowledge, research and contribution for Christ-centered faith and practice in the contemporary cultural linguistic context of life.

ACCS is a Higher Education Provider that operates in a niche market, offering degrees in Counselling, Ministry, Theology, and Education to its multi-denominational client group. Courses are offered at Associate Degree, Bachelor and Masters Levels.

My hope is that the readers will enjoy and greatly benefit from the articles in this issue. I would also like to thank those who have contributed at various levels for this publication.

Dr Xavier Lakshmanan

Contents

Blind Theory and Blind Praxis

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Abstract: This paper highlights the division that exists between theory and praxis. Throughout history, theology, which was once united, has been allowed to fracture and indeed divide to the point that we are now faced with the problem where faith communities often operate out of blind theory and/or blind praxis. The first state, blind theory, places a focus on and gives priority of authority to theological theory; the second, blind praxis, to action, practice, experience and praxis. To address this situation, a reintegration of the theory and practice is needed. This paper is adapted from chapter one of my doctoral thesis "Practical Theological Ecclesiology."[1]

Introduction

Theologians and practitioners have over time shifted theology from its roots as an integrated pursuit, to a fractured science which perpetuates a theory and praxis divide. There has been a continual splintering of theology into separate theory and praxis disciplines and specialisations resulting in the creation of possible states of blind theory and blind praxis (see Figure 1). The first state, blind theory, places a focus on and gives priority of authority to theological theory, the second, blind praxis, to action, practice, experience and the praxis.

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[1] David A. Smith, *Practical Theological Ecclesiology: Grounding, Integrating, Aligning and Improving Ecclesial Theory and Praxis* (Perth: Snowgoose Media, 2018).
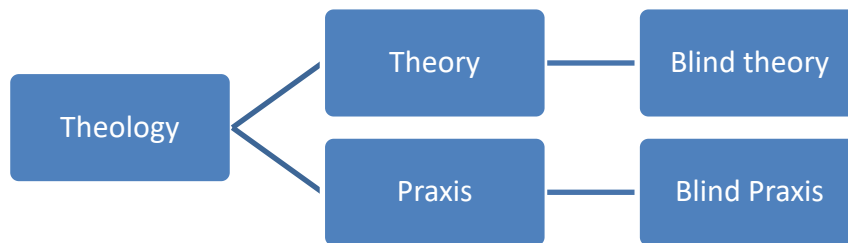
Figure 1   The Theory Praxis Problem

To highlight the problem, we will first trace the historical development of the concept of theology with a specific focus on how the divide between theory and praxis has developed and given rise to the problems of blind theory and blind praxis.

The Dis-Integration of Theology

The history of theology is the history of God shaped active reflection. It first finds expression in the Old Testament through the Hebrew for "Word", *dabhar*, and the unifying concept of Torah. Unlike English today, where words can be separated as a thought or an idea over against any necessary effect or action, *dahbar* is "an extension of a person into the outer world, one that has effects."[2] For God, word creates, it creates life. In the Old Testament, word does not sit separate from action, word lives. In the Jewish rabbinic tradition, God's word, the Torah "is always about the *way one should live.*"[3] The Torah is faith in action for God. The New Testament expresses this same thought through the marriage of faith and works. Theology, involving the intimate relationship of theory and praxis, is "the core of the entire philosophical enterprise; it involves the relations of consciousness to being, of subject to object, of idea to reality, of word to deed, of meaning to history."[4] But this all important relationship has been shattered.

Theology as Wisdom

In the early years of the church, the term theology was rarely used in Christian circles because of its common inclusive use in referring to pagan gods. Theology or *theologia* was first understood simply as the "knowledge of divine things."[5] While the usage of the term was limited, *theologia,* as a concept referring to the "knowledge of God" (Farley 1983:22; Schaff 1893:77), was "very much part of the Christian movement and Christian (patristic) literature. In other words, a salvifically originated knowledge of divine being was part of the

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[2] Terry A. Veling, *Practical Theology: On Earth as It Is in Heaven* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), xii.

[3] Veling, 14.

[4] Matthew Lamb, "The Theory-Praxis Relationship in Contemporary Christian Theologies," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 31 (12 January 2012): 149. http://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/ctsa/article/view/2857.

[5] Yves Congar, *A History of Theology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 29.

Christian community and tradition long before it was named theology."[6] To distinguish Christian theology from mystical or any other form of pagan theology Eusebius (260/265 – 339/340) entitled one of his last works *On Ecclesiastical Theology*.[7] He thereby set the frame of reference for *theologia* within the faith community of God.

So how did the early Christians understand theology? "Early Christian practice suggests ... at the most basic level [theology] was understood as a *habitus* of the Christian believer ... the implicit world view that guided the temperament and practice of believers lives."[8] That is, theology was a knowledge "habit of the human soul"[9] that attends faith. It was a faith "disposition of mind and heart from which action flows naturally ...."[10] There was considerable debate as to the nature of the knowledge habit of theology, and "if there is a dominant position it is that theology is a practical, not theoretical, habit having the primary character of wisdom."[11] Theology as wisdom was conceived not as an end in itself, but as formative in the life of faith, as the "discipline of study, instruction, and shepherding directed toward forming theology/*habitus* in believers."[12] Further, for Farley, theology is caught up in the purposes of God, as *habitus* it is directed toward "the sake of God ... for God's appointed salvific end of the human being."[13]

Putting these thoughts together we can say that the early understanding of theology as *habitus* was:

> The formation by wisdom knowledge of the life and practice of the faith community for God.

At its genesis then, theology pursued wisdom knowledge, with the goal of this wisdom knowledge being formational for, the individual life and practice of faith, and the life and practice of the community of faith, oriented toward the purposes of God for his people. "Theology in this sense cannot be anything but practical."[14]

While integrated under the overarching concept of theology as *habitus,* prior to the development of specialist fields, there existed an understanding of theory and practice distinct from each other. "Theory meant that aspect of the *habitus*, or wisdom, in which the divine object evokes acknowledgement or belief. Practice meant that aspect of the habitus, or wisdom, in which the divine object sets requirements of obedience and life. Both reside

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[6] Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2001), 33.

[7] Congar, *A History of Theology*, 30.

[8] Randy L. Maddox, "The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline," *Theological Studies* 51, no. 4 (D 1990): 651.

[9] Farley, *Theologia*, 31.

[10] Duncan B. Forrester, *Truthful Action: Explorations in Practical Theology* (London: Continuum, 2000), 5.

[11] Farley, *Theologia*, 35.

[12] Maddox, "The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline," 651.

[13] Edward Farley, "Theology and Practice Outside the Clerical Paradigm," in *Practical Theology*, ed. Don S. Browning (San Fransisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1983), 27.

[14] Farley, *Theologia,* 27.

within the single existential *habitus* called theology."[15] As such theology as a faith pursuit involved "the whole person rather than a simple act of intellectual assent. … Contemplation could not be separated from action, any more than faith could be separated from the Church, the community of faith."[16] Here theory and praxis while distinctly articulated are viewed as inseparable.

As it grew in usage, the term *theologia* took on two different senses. "First, theology is a term for an actual, individual cognition of God and things related to God, a cognition which in most treatments attends faith and has eternal happiness as its final goal. Second, theology is a term for a discipline, a self-conscious scholarly enterprise of understanding."[17] Originally held together as a discipline in service of life wisdom for the faith community, theology as a scholarly enterprise has over time gained priority over theology as wisdom for a life of faith.

Theology as Science

For many centuries theology, as *theologia*, also known as *sapentia*, united the theoretical and the practical,[18] "a divinely enabled sapential knowledge, [and] a practically oriented habit or disposition."[19] However, under the influence of Aristotelian scholasticism the question was asked "whether theology … was *scientia speculativa* or a *scientia practica.*"[20] This question forced theology to be viewed scientifically and from its ability to be verified. The answer henceforth divided the field. Ebeling asked obvious pertinent question, "Is theology ultimately oriented to the consideration of the truth for its own sake or to the good so that it initially verifies itself in behaviour?"[21] If theological verification is sought through truth deposits then speculative theology was the bank. If theological verification prizes faith life transformation then practical theology provides the road map. The former was chosen by most. By "the 12th century the cathedral universities in particular were … adopting an Aristotelian model of a theoretical science … aimed at assimilating rationally demonstrated and ordered knowledge *for its own sake.*"[22] Science became connected to the verifiable temporal world, and wisdom "with the eternal, with God as the highest good."[23] Theology by this time was losing the wider sense of wisdom for life, primarily referring to the pursuit of theological scholarship in the name of science. Theology as knowledge for life, moved to theology as knowledge about life.

Aquinas (1225-1274) affirmed this position proposing that "sacred doctrine is concerned principally with God. … [S]acred doctrine is more speculative than practical, since it is

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[15] Farley, 27.

[16] Forrester, *Truthful Action*, 34.

[17] Farley, *Theologia*, 31.

[18] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science* (London: Darton, Longman And Todd, 1976), 232.

[19] Farley, *Theologia*, 54.

[20] Gerhard Ebeling, *The Study of Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 114.

[21] Ebeling, 114.

[22] Maddox, "The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline," 652.

[23] G. Heitink, *Practical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 106.

concerned with divine things more fundamentally than with the actions of men."[24] The faith and reason stance of Aquinas was debated by such thinkers as Bonaventure. For Bonaventure (1221-1274) it was clear that "all divisions of knowledge are servants of theology" and that the goal of all knowledge and therefore all theology is that "faith may be strengthened, *God may be honoured*, character may be formed, and consolation may be derived from union of the Spouse with the beloved...."[25] The goal of theology for Bonaventure was practical faith formation for God's glory. In the same vein Duns Scotus (1266-1308) "acknowledged God as the 'doable knowable,' ... the object knowledge which may be reached by a doing which is true *praxis.*"[26] That is, God is only known though the active praxis of faith. Such divergence of approaches "resulted in a split between views of theology as a speculative discipline and as practical knowledge."[27] As speculative theology gained precedence, theology of a more moral, practical and formational nature was moved to being a genre rather than residing at the core of theological pursuits.

The Reformation largely reacted to the pure speculative theology of the medieval period. Luther himself stated, "True theology is practical.... Accordingly speculative theology belongs to the devil in hell."[28]. It is clear that by Luther's time there was a clear distinction between pure theology and a theology of practice. Following Luther's lead, "Practice now meant the actual carrying out of life as such, so that theology was designated as exclusively practical precisely for the sake of the primacy of the faith that defines and decides life."[29] Calvin also resisted the theology/science textbook approach and wrote his theology "largely for lay catechesis,"[30] having life formation and practical outcomes in mind. However, the influence of the Reformation was short lived as the influences of Orthodoxy and Pietism "served to separate again the discipline of doctrinal reflection and the guidance of Christian life."[31]

It was the categorisation for education and a change in the view of the nature of theology that formalised this division. Firstly, regarding categorisation, Gundling, in reflecting seventeenth century debates "on whether *theologia* is a prudence, wisdom, or science,... assigns disciplines of wisdom and prudence to the practical side and disciplines of instrumentality and principles to the theoretical side."[32] Among others, Gundling succeeded in dividing the field of theology into "sciences of theory and sciences of practice.... This language and this twofold division became standard for the rest of the eighteenth century."[33]

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[24] A. M Fairweather, *Nature and Grace: Selections from the Summa Theologica of Thomas Aquinas* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 39–40.

[25] St. Bonaventure, *St. Bonaventure's On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*, Works of Saint Bonaventure 1 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, St Bonaventure University, 2001), 61.

[26] Lamb, "The Theory-Praxis Relationship in Contemporary Christian Theologies," 155.

[27] Mary Fulkerson, "Systematic Theology," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 359.

[28] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works - Volume 54*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert, vol. 54 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1967), 22.

[29] Ebeling, *The Study of Theology*, 115.

[30] Maddox, "The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline," 654.

[31] Maddox, 655.

[32] Farley, *Theologia*, 95.

[33] Farley *Theologia*, 76.

It therefore became "common in both Protestant and Catholic schools to designate texts which dealt with Christian *actions* "practical theology" as distinguished from "theoretical theology" which dealt with Christian *beliefs*. Such a distinction was apparently modelled on Aristotle's (384 BC – 322 BC) differentiation between *theoria* and *praxis*."[34] It was this theory and practice organisational separation that precipitated a formal change in viewing theology. This dualistic organisation of theology ensured that theology became "viewed not as itself a habit, a knowing, a wisdom, but as an object, a set of truths,"[35] applied to the practice. Theology, as a science, was placed alongside medicine and law being concerned with "theory as directed towards the goal of practice."[36] This development of a more theoretical critical focus also shifted the focus of practical theology. "It changed the moral category concerned with life, rule, and duties, to a clergy category.... Practical theology has thus become a term for ministry or clergy disciplines."[37] As a result, theology as wisdom for life formation had been transformed and separated into pure theoretical theology and practical theory for the clergy. The divide was set: the university chose theological scholarship and theory, and the seminary – clerical preparation for the praxis.

Theological Disciplines

The emergence of science and the modern university, with its "emancipation of thought and inquiry,"[38] created an environment of objective theological scholarship over against the subjective faith based praxis. This was an environment where, "Theory represents the orientation of the subject-towards-objectivity ... [and] [p]raxis represents the orientation of the subject-towards-subjectivity."[39] This new landscape "privileged reason based sciences over what were perceived to be authoritarian-based religious convictions...."[40] This objective approach also served to "entrench in the interpretation of religion - the critical principle. And with that, theology the *habitus* and theology the one science were replaced by theological sciences,"[41] further transforming the situation.

Within academic institutions this critical shift precipitated the development of the theological encyclopaedia with its various divisions and arrangements.[42] Over time these specialist theological sciences or fields "have come to be called the 'fourfold,' that is, Bible, church history, theology/ethics, and the practical/ministerial field."[43] This move eventually lead to dogmatic or systematic theology becoming known as "theology proper," precipitating the view that all other disciplines were secondary to the work of systematic theology. Bible

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[34] Maddox, "The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline," 657.
[35] Farley, *Theologia*, 78.
[36] Forrester, *Truthful Action*, 35.
[37] Farley, *Theologia*, 78.
[38] Farley, *Theologia,* 41.
[39] Lamb, "The Theory-Praxis Relationship in Contemporary Christian Theologies," 150.
[40] Fulkerson, "Systematic Theology," 360.
[41] Farley, "Theology and Practice Outside the Clerical Paradigm," 24.
[42] Philip Schaff, *Theological Propaedeutic: A General Introduction to the Study of Theology, Exegetical, Historical, Systematic, and Practical, Including Encyclopaedia, Methodology, and Bibliography; a Manual for Students* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), 10–11.
[43] Fulkerson, "Systematic Theology," 361.

and church history became data to be constructed into a true theological product, with practical studies being the product applied into a situation. With the moving of the practical aspects of theology from formation to application the prioritisation of pure theology was complete and the clericalisation of the practical had begun. With this "pluralisation into sciences, theology as a disposition of the soul toward God simply drops out of 'the study of theology.'"[44] Here, theology is no longer a unifying discipline but a "generic term for a cluster of disciplines,"[45] "an aggregate of disciplines whose unity is their pertinence to the tasks of ministry,"[46] rather than formation of the faith community. Theology as *habitus,* God wisdom shaping the life of faith, transitioned into theology as science, knowledge separate from life, and has now become theology as "strategic, technical knowledge,"[47] serving the ministry actions of the church.

Theological Faculties

Thus the "boundary between theoretical and applied knowledge in theology was established with the study of Scripture, doctrine, and church history in one category and the practical disciplines on ministry in the other,"[48] with life or community formation sidelined. This gave rise to the development of separate theological faculties with scholarly specialists to head up theological research and clerical education. The division of theology and the disciplines continued with practical theology being further divided into the major functions of church ministry: "homiletics, catechetics, liturgics, church jurisprudence and polity, and pastoral care.[49] Here the focus shifted further, from the applicational teaching of theology for clerical ministry, to the teaching of techniques or tasks required to fulfil the necessary functions of ministry. The result is that the teaching of practical theology had become largely divorced from the teaching of systematic theology. With the institutionalisation of both theoretical theology and practical theology and their orientation primarily toward clerical education, the relating of theory to the praxis for community transformation was overlooked. According to Farley "if theology is related to practice simply by way of clerical leadership, it does not have an essential praxis element related to [the] world as such. 'Theology' in other words does not refer to the self-understanding of the community of faith as it exists in relation to the *world.*"[50] Through the uptake of the functional clerical approach, all theological connection to the faith life of the community is lost from view.

Today the academy serves as the primary producer of theology. But the question must be asked of the producer of theology – "To what end?" Current theological faculties are largely busy producing to increase critical theological knowledge and to educate current and future

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[44] Farley, *Theologia*, 43.
[45] Farley, *Theologia,* 81.
[46] Farley, *Theologia,* 43.
[47] Farley, *Theologia,* 44.
[48] Graham in John E. Paver, *Theological Reflection And Education for Ministry: The Search for Integration in Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006), 11.
[49] Edward Farley, "Interpreting Situations: An Inquiry into the Nature of Practical Theology," in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, ed. Lewis Seymour Mudge and James N. Poling (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1987), 3–4.
[50] Farley, "Theology and Practice Outside the Clerical Paradigm," 27.

academics. The practical or ministry focussed faculties, of which practical theology forms part, are directed toward the education of the clergy and the technical improvement of their associated functions and actions. According to Lindbeck, theology is now divided into two dominant approaches: "the cognitive-propositional and the experiential-expressive."[51] We are now in a situation where academic theology produces cognitive theological theories with pure research as the goal, and separately, practical theology serves to produce technical advice to inform and improve the actions and expressions of clerical ministry. With such an apparent division we can generalise and say that theology has become increasingly blind and disconnected from the praxis, and the praxis increasingly blind and ungrounded in theology.

The historical movements within theology have served to separate theological theory from the praxis, leading to: possibilities of blind theory and blind praxis, the setting of theological theory primarily as the master of truth and praxis as master of activity, has shifted the focus from life wisdom and community transformation, to that of educating academics and informing the practical tasks of ministry. It seems that, theology as truth, and praxis as the context of grace, has been divorced. The progressive divorce of theology and praxis over time is shown in the following chart (see Figure 2).
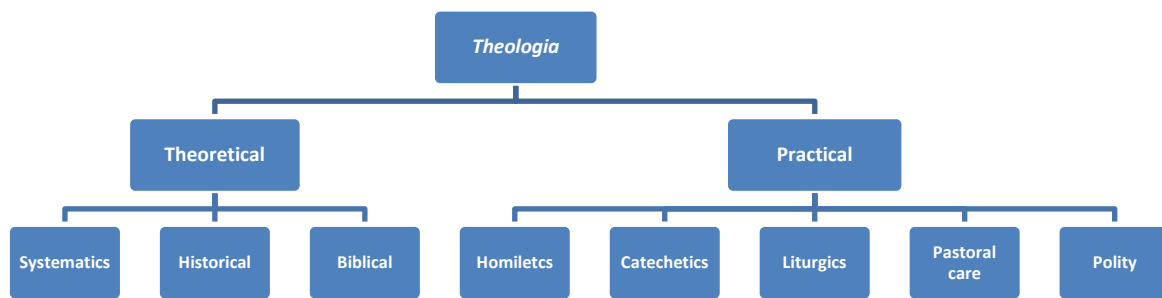

Figure 2   Historical Development of Theology

Blind Theory and Blind Praxis

The theory praxis divide now presents a blind theory and blind praxis problem. When we say blind theory and blind practice we don't have in mind that total blindness from any theory or praxis can exist. So what do we mean by blind theory and blind praxis?

Practices are theory laden,[52] or bearers of theology.[53] "Practice is its own proper 'articulation' of theological conviction and insight."[54] Similarly, for Swinton and Mowat, "all

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[51] George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984), 16. 'The Hermeneutical and Epistemological Significance of Our Students', *International Journal of Practical Theology* 16, no. 1 (2012): 59.

[52] Don S. Browning, *Practical Theology* (San Fransisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 6.

[53] Helen Cameron et al., *Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2010), 51.

[54] Cameron et al., *Thinking about God in Practice,* 51.

human practices are historically grounded and inherently value-laden."[55] Browning actually uses the phrase "theory laden" seeking to rule out

> the widely held assumption that theory is distinct from practice. All our practices, even our religious practices, have theories behind and within them. We may not notice the theories in our practices. We are so embedded in our practices, take them so much for granted, and view them as natural and self-evident that we never take time to abstract the theory from the practice and look at it as something in itself.[56]

Whether known and considered or not, every action is an expression of an implied or underlying theory. Likewise, every theory is constructed within or is influenced by an actual or implied context. No theory is developed in a void.

Therefore, by blind theory we mean that the theory has not formally recognised or considered the underlying praxis, and by blind praxis we mean that the praxis has not formally acknowledged or recognised the underlying theory, either espoused or operant.[57]

The historical drifting apart of theory and praxis and the resultant pre-eminence placed on either theory or praxis is at the heart of the blind theory and blind praxis problem before us. Mudge and Poling summarise the landscape, "On the one hand, the academic theological world seems preoccupied with its own problems of methodological coherence and reality reference. On the other, faith communities whether oriented to the centre, the left or the right – function with scant attention to theology of the scholarly, critical kind."[58] Ogletree in affirming the problem states that the "separation of academic and practical studies … is an unsatisfactory state of affairs. When we allow these two interests to undergo separate development, we impoverish and distort them both."[59] This separation, producing situations of blind theory and blind praxis (see Figure 3), results in issues of abstraction and irrelevance to life on the one hand and of grounding in true life on the other.

Blind Theory	Blind Praxis
Disconnected	Ungrounded
Unreflected	Unreflected

Figure 3   Blind Theory and Blind Praxis

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[55] John Swinton and Harriet Mowatt, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM, 2006), 19.

[56] Browning, *Practical Theology*, 6.

[57] Cameron et al., *Talking about God in Practice*, 54.

[58] Lewis Seymour Mudge and James N. Poling, eds., *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987), xiii.

[59] Thomas Ogletree, "Dimensions of Practical Theology: Meaning, Action, Self," in *Practical Theology*, ed. Don S. Browning (San Fransisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 83.

Blind theory is disconnected theory; a theory that is not connected to a clear vision of and for the praxis. It is a theory which does not seek a clear connection with the life of faith, failing to account well for individual, communal, or global activities and purposes of faith.

Academia, in this space, carves out its own path, developing and dispensing a theology and hence an ecclesiology in abstraction from the ecclesia or the ecclesial context. Swinton and Mowat suggest that here, "the interpretive activity of the Christian community is subsumed to the distanciated presumptions of academic questioning."[60] Such theology, developed through the suppression of the praxis and the distancing of the reflection, is unrelated theory. "It suffers from a tendency to discuss practice in highly abstract ways. Practice gets turned into a 'theory' that functions in theology like a philosophy."[61] This problem is compounded when unrelated theory also becomes unreflected theory; a theory constructed without specific reality points, standing free from challenge by praxis. Such unreflected theory tends to become static and ineffective when there is a change in the context.[62] Further a static unreflected theory is also in danger of drifting toward an unquestioned ideology.

Along with being unrelated and unreflected, according to Swinton and Mowat, this separation of theory from practice has also taken the soul out of theology, leaving it "trapped in an internal conversation which ultimately makes a difference only to a select group, without necessary relevance for the Christian community or the continuing mission of God in history."[63] As a result academia becomes self-serving rather than "engaging the pressing questions of human existence. We lose a sense of connection between critical thought and vital life concerns."[64] Barth describes this position as "being no more than an idle intellectual frivolity … being aloof from life and of doubtful value…."[65] The result can be the construction of a beautiful theoretical body of knowledge without the life of the Spirit whose works rests within the reality of the faith community.

Such theory, abstract and unrelated, constructed without due consideration of the praxis, unreflected, applied dispassionately without regard for the specifics of the praxis, and soulless, disconnected from the life of the Spirit community, is a blind theory, an ecclesial theory blind to the ecclesia.

On the other hand, blind praxis is ungrounded praxis; a praxis that drifts on the current of its own concerns, not grounded in a clear understanding and vision of its own history, its life of faith, and its eschatological future. It is a praxis wandering without a clear goal, having no distinguishable *telos*, unable to bring cohesive wisdom, discernment, and light to individual, communal, or global activities of faith.

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[60] Swinton and Mowatt, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 14.

[61] Ward, "The Hermeneutical and Epistemological Significance of Our Students," 59–60.

[62] H.J.C. Pieterse, *Contextual Theology for Ministry* (Perth: Perth Bible College, 2011), 50.

[63] Swinton and Mowatt, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 18.

[64] Ogletree, "Dimensions of Practical Theology: Meaning, Action, Self," 83.

[65] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God - Volume I, Part 2*, vol. 1/2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 787.

The isolation of theory from practice together with the development of an academia blind to the praxis has resulted in the formation of historical and current reactionary movements. Historical critics of blind theology include, "monastic, Reformation-Protestant, pietist, puritan, activist – [movements who] contend that theology effects a distanciation from the experientiality and activity of faith. These complaints have contemporary expressions: existentialist, liberationist, deconstructionist, ecclesiastical, clergy-oriented, political."[66] These reactionary movements, seeking mostly practical rather than theoretical outcomes, have often resulted in praxis approaches that operate without significant reflection on or grounding in a substantive underlying theological theory. This creates the possibility of a place where "theological understandings are displaced by unexamined assumptions and premises."[67] In such a case we agree with Bloesch, "Devotion without doctrine is blind."[68] "The problem with this attitude is blind practice,"[69] and in such a blind practice situation, where practices are both ungrounded and unreflected, one will often find ineffective practices due to problems that the practitioners are not aware of; problems that hinder the advancement of the gospel. Such problems are difficult to address without a clear reflection and reference process that finds its grounding outside the walls of the praxis.

Further, where practical thinking takes leave of theology, the "authenticity of any particular practice is determined not by anything inherent within the practice itself, but rather by the *effect* that it has."[70] In such cases, we tend to shift our focus from questions of essence, calling and purpose, becoming "preoccupied with technique …,"[71] effectiveness, and results which "leads to an understanding of practice which is individualistic, technological, ahistorical and abstract."[72] Practical concerns increasingly become isolated, disconnected, narrow, and blind to theological substance and therefore devoid of holistic purpose and life.

When theory and praxis are separated academia loses its connection with the reality of the faith community, and the practical life of the faith community is cast from its theological moorings. We then find ourselves in the unfortunate place where we can truly say, that may be good in theory, but it doesn't work in practice. Thus both disconnected and unreflected theory and ungrounded unreflected praxis situations must be avoided, lest we find ourselves in places of academic idolatry and ideology or the wholesale worship of tradition or pragmatism. Ogletree underlines the danger of blind theory or blind praxis situations concluding that "both the abstraction of academic undertakings from life realities and the reduction of practical knowledge to technique conspire to confirm and reinforce dominant patterns of an existing world, transforming theological substance into ideology."[73]

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[66] Farley, "Interpreting Situations: An Inquiry into the Nature of Practical Theology," 8.
[67] Ogletree, "Dimensions of Practical Theology: Meaning, Action, Self," 83.
[68] Donald G. Bloesch, *The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 18.
[69] Pieterse, *Contextual Theology for Ministry*, 50.
[70] Swinton and Mowatt, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 18.
[71] Ogletree, "Dimensions of Practical Theology: Meaning, Action, Self," 83.
[72] Swinton and Mowatt, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 18.
[73] Ogletree, "Dimensions of Practical Theology: Meaning, Action, Self," 83.

Schleiermacher, in attempting to avoid such blind theory and blind praxis approaches, states that "without a theory, progress comes about more or less at random."[74] He goes on to say that,

> Unexamined opinions are dangerous to the church. Only searching inquiry, the interplay of historical and philosophical theology, can lead to an understanding of the church which is worthy of a truly reflective theory of practice. An understanding of this sort will be one that can identify if and when 'church life' is actually in keeping with the nature and purpose of the church, indeed, with the very essence of Christianity itself.[75]

Re-Integration

What we with Schleiermacher are searching for, is where a connected and reflective theory exists together with a corresponding grounded and reflective praxis (see Figure 4).

Figure 4   Reflected Theory and Praxis

Using Schleiermacher's words above, this creates a situation where the "church life" (praxis) is in keeping with the "nature and purpose of the church" (theory). That is a place where the expression of the faith community reflects the very essence and goal of the church. A place where theory and praxis reside in unity, where the continuing revelation of Christ lives in his body, the church, by the gracious Spirit of true life. This is our goal. For the outworking of a solution please refer to my doctoral work "Practical Theological Theology"[76] or to my recently published work "The Model Church."[77]

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[74] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christian Caring: Selections from Practical Theology*, Fortress Texts in Modern Theology (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988), 119.

[75] Schleiermacher, *Christian Caring,* 27–28.

[76] David A. Smith, *Practical Theological Ecclesiology: Grounding, Integrating, Aligning and Improving Ecclesial Theory and Praxis* (Perth: Snowgoose Media, 2018).

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Trauma and Healing

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Abstract: Trauma imposes a situation of intense stress that overwhelms a person's and/or a community's resources. Traumatic events create lasting wounds – physical, spiritual and psychological. Working with survivors of trauma is a complex endeavour. Often survivors are stuck in a danger response of hyperarousal, not feeling safe within their mind or body or environment; or hypoarousal, disconnected or dissociated from themselves and their surroundings. Cultural beliefs may exacerbate or ameliorate these symptoms. Some Christian multicultural beliefs may promote stigma and silence around the struggle to heal, focusing on "what's wrong?" rather than "what happened?" Therapists can establish a healing relationship and approach the survivor in a non-pathologising way, facilitating survivors to achieve safety, draw on their resources, and be guided by them as to whether they desire to remember the traumatic event(s) in detail or not. Holding a framework that differentiates between single event PTSD and complex PTSD as well as the client's individual, cultural and systemic context will enable the therapist to match the therapeutic model to the client's needs.

Introduction

Traumatic events leave many wounds – physical, spiritual and psychological. When these wounds do not heal, there seems to be no safe harbour for a person either within their mind and body or without. Trauma may create a situation of intense stress where a person's internal danger response that van der Kolk (2014) calls the "smoke detector," is almost always on or is unpredictably switched on and can be switched off only with great difficulty. The smoke detector that is stuck on results in various intrusive and painful symptoms. This paper will present recent research on trauma's effects, assessment and treatment strategies in counselling, and some specific challenges to healing trauma for a Christian missionary worker.

Defining Trauma and Its Consequences

Trauma is defined as "exposure to actual or threatened death or serious injury or sexual violence" (APA, 2013) with exposure occurring either directly, being a witness to a traumatic event, hearing about a traumatic event that happens to someone close to the person, or repeatedly being around traumatic events as in the case of first responders (APA, 2013). Traumatic experiences may be single events like a car accident or repeated over many years, such as childhood abuse or events occurring in war zones. Another kind of trauma that is common in Christian mission or humanitarian aid workers that does not neatly fit the DSM-5 definition is "vicarious," or "secondary," trauma. Pearlman (2020) describes vicarious trauma as the cost of caring for and caring about those who have been traumatised. This is not direct exposure, but rather empathically feeling the effects of trauma in others and a sense of responsibility and commitment to help. Hearing stories from survivors of sexual assault, stories of violence and war, or the grief of loss due to poverty and its related illnesses has a cumulative effect of traumatising the hearer.

The symptoms resulting from exposure to trauma that indicate a person's smoke detector is stuck on are these: repeated flashbacks or memories of the traumatic event, nightmares, negative assumptions about oneself or the world, difficulty connecting with positive emotions, isolation or detachment from others, dissociation, heightened anxiety or other expressions of distress, sleep problems, irritability and physical reactivity (nausea, sweating). Typically people experiencing these symptoms have a pattern of avoidance of thoughts, feelings or reminders related to the trauma and often find they cannot continue to function as normal leading to a psychological disorder. Many people speak of losing something essential of themselves (Herman, 2015).

Not everyone exposed to trauma experiences all of these symptoms nor do they all develop either Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Symptoms within the ASD diagnosis are often congruent with a normal reaction to an extremely stressful event and the wounds of trauma heal within one month with little or no professional intervention (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017). PTSD is present when greater difficulty with daily functioning occurs over a longer period of time. The prevalence of PTSD over one's lifetime is approximately 5-10%, although higher rates often ensue in those who are exposed to deliberate violence or repeated traumatic events (Phoenix Australia, 2013). Research has shown the severity and duration of trauma often predicts the degree of impact on a person (Herman, 2015; Hoffman & Kruczek, 2011). The trauma of interpersonal violence, whether physical, sexual or psychological, has a similar impact on a person as does the violence of war (Herman, 2015; Van der Kolk, 2014).

Historically there have been appeals for an expansion of the categories of PTSD due to the wide variety of aetiology and responses to trauma. Instead of seeing and treating PTSD as one disorder; rather practitioners could approach it as a "spectrum of conditions" (Herman, 2015, p. 119). Some trauma specialists have proposed labels such as Complex PTSD (Herman, 2015) or Developmental Trauma Disorder (Van der Kolk & Pynoos, 2009) to allow

for the much deeper and personality-altering effects of ongoing trauma such as that experienced by children or women trapped in domestic violence. These appeals have been heard, however current diagnostic tools available, the DSM-5 and the proposed ICD-11, categorise PTSD in different ways. The DSM-5 moved PTSD from anxiety disorders into a new category of "trauma and stressor related disorders" (APA, 2013) but did not further delineate PTSD into other discrete categories as desired by trauma specialists. In 2018, the ICD-11 created an additional category of stress disorder applied to adults named Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD) that recognised the "severe and persistent issues such as, first, problems in affect regulation; second, beliefs about oneself as diminished, defeated or worthless, accompanied by feelings of shame, guilt or failure related to the traumatic event; and finally, difficulties in sustaining relationship and in feeling close to others" (ICD-11, 2019). Research has been ongoing in each of these areas of trauma to further refine treatments that can be targeted to each part of the spectrum.

Fisher (2017b) advocates for recognising and normalising the adaptations people make to survive their trauma as understandable rather than pathological, including the severe dissociative disorders found in those who have experienced complex trauma. It is not necessarily helpful to trauma survivors to have the effects of their experiences pathologised with a psychological diagnosis. Rather, the adaptations each person makes, whether conscious or unconscious, to survive their situation makes sense in light of what they have endured (Fisher, 2017b). Having labels applied may discourage individuals from coming forward for treatment due to the stigma attached to psychological treatment, especially in industries such as the military (Hoffman & Kruczek, 2011) and Christian ministry (Bryant-Davis, 2020). Normalising reactions to trauma as an adaptation to survive the event may provide an opportunity for community acceptance and support to emerge.

Polyvagal Theory as pioneered by Dr. Stephen Porges explains the physiological origins of the danger response as inherently integrated with the human body's vagus nerve. It has two branches, one that turns on the defense response and one that inhibits it through social engagement (Wagner, 2016). This theory states that when confronted with danger a person first seeks to use contact with other kind and protective people to ensure safety. Failing to find safety with other people, the defense response is turned on first to fight, flight or active freeze; however, if these strategies are not successful the person will collapse or dissociate. Porges (2020) asserts, "Defensive states emerge from neural platforms that evolved to defend, while simultaneously compromising capacities to down regulate our defenses through the co-regulation with a safe and trusted individual" (p. 136). Thus one of the key aspects of therapy for trauma is to provide an environment of safe relational connection with clients, the "healing relationship" (Herman, 2015), so they can tone down the sounding of the alarm (defenses) on the smoke detector.

Treatment of Trauma

Approaches to treatment of the effects of trauma and PTSD vary widely. What is agreed on is the need for physical and emotional safety as a first step (Herman, 2015; Kezelman, & Stavropoulos, 2019; Phoenix Australia, 2013; Rothschild, 2010; U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017; van der Kolk, 2014). Using mindfulness (Fisher, 2017a; Rothschild, 2010; van der Kolk, 2014) and grounding strategies to contain flashbacks and other symptoms of hyper- or hypoarousal (eg., dissociation) enables a sense of safety within body and mind. As Siegal (2015) proposed, facilitating the client to stay in the "window of tolerance" enables the person to regulate their emotions and stay in contact with their mind's executive functions to proceed with the other steps in trauma recovery. Often clients can be assisted to regulate through psycho-education regarding "why traumatic memory may be absent or fragmented, and how a dysregulated nervous system perpetuates the symptoms and disrupts the ability to tolerate emotion or stress" (Fisher, 2017a, p. 58). Establishing physical safety is also important for the short and long term stabilisation of the person's mental health, including addressing suicidality.

A second theme of agreement in the literature is the need for thorough assessment of the history, type of trauma the person experienced and other mental health conditions that may be present (ISTSS, 2019; Phoenix, 2013; U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017). There are significant differences between PTSD after a single incident and CPTSD. Not all therapies for standard PTSD are suitable for clients experiencing CPTSD. The Blue Knot Guidelines (Kezelman & Stavropoulos, 2019) include 44 recommendations specifically for clinicians working with complex trauma and assert there is "the need for aspiring and practising therapists to understand the ways in which working with complex trauma clients requires adaptation of standard counselling principles" (p. 31). An example of the different mindset needed is to consider that clients with one traumatic incident leading to PTSD will most likely be seeking to reinstate their ability to regulate their thoughts and feelings; whereas those with multiple incidents experiencing CPTSD may be learning to regulate for the first time (Kezelman & Stavropoulos, 2019). Another factor in assessment will be determining the presence of other mental health conditions such as depression or substance abuse. Phoenix Australia (2013, p. 11) states that the rate of co-morbidity of other mental health disorders is 86% for men and 77% for women. In some cases it is helpful to treat the PTSD first and at other times be treated concurrently with the other disorder. However this is at the discretion of the practitioner.

A third aspect of treatment that is considered crucial by a number of trauma specialists is assisting people to access their social support network and other resources. Herman (2015) emphasises reconnection to self and others. Hoffman and Kruczek (2011) contend that "social support is one of the most consistently identified and protective factors when coping with mass trauma" (p. 1096). Phoenix Australia (2013) recommends that a part of recovery from PTSD be focused on psychosocial rehabilitation. Working to establish social supports with people who have experienced complex trauma will undoubtedly take longer due to their damaged trust in the safety of human connection; nevertheless, having nurturing

contact with other people is a vital human need. Clients can also be encouraged to develop their other resources, such as intelligence and vocational competence of the "normal life self" (Fisher, 2017b). A lesser-known resource may be self-compassion. Maheux and Price's (2015) research has shown utilising self-compassion seems to reduce PTSD symptoms.

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of treatment is whether the person needs to remember the traumatic event(s). Herman (2015, p. 176) advocates for "reconstructing of the trauma story" and Phoenix Australia (2013, p. 14) states "the cornerstone of treatment involves confronting the traumatic memory." On the other hand, Rothschild (2010, p. 2) asserts "for some of you [survivors] focusing on the past will not be necessary or desirable." Rothschild (2010) recommends that the person be guided by what improves their quality of life. The Blue Knot Guidelines also contend that therapy is most effective when it has less emphasis on the specific details of remembering a traumatic event and more emphasis on working with the "legacy," or implicit memory, of the event (Kezelman & Stavropoulos, 2019, p. 60). It is crucial to be guided by the client, although not in a way that entrenches avoidance of the trauma and its symptoms. Therapists must ensure the pace of any remembering or exploring of memories is within the client's window of tolerance, allow the client to be the one in control of the content of the session and promote the link between the present symptoms and past memories. All of these things will safeguard against re-traumatising the person.

Models of Healing

There are significant variances regarding the acceptability of treatment models for PTSD. Some of the published guidelines propose evidence-based models such as Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TF-CBT), Exposure Therapy, and Eye Movement and Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) (ISTSS, 2019; Phoenix Australia, 2013; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017). Trauma specialist van der Kolk (2014) recommends EMDR, yoga and Internal Family Systems (IFS) as developed by Richard Schwartz but not TF-CBT. Kezelman and Stavropoulos (2019) propose that manualised treatments such as TF-CBT are limited in application to single traumatic events. Nevertheless since they are easier to study, are applied within the research setting to a narrower population type than is commonly presenting with symptoms of CPTSD and being more well-known, they may attract more funding. Less easily studied, with few or no randomised control trials, therapies such as Pat Ogden's Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, Peter Levine's Somatic Experiencing or Fisher's (2017a) Trauma-Informed Stabilisation Treatment provide alternatives that address the mind *and* body in treatment. Perhaps the aim of research could be, not in proving a particular therapy to be effective for all clients with a trauma history, but rather in matching the treatment to the client's presentation.

The therapies presented so far approach treatment of PTSD taking into account the individual client and their problematic symptoms but frequently minimise the context or system in which the traumatic events or the process of recovery occurs. Hoffman and Kruczek (2011) assert the need for a "comprehensive systems approach that allows

conceptualization and response at the individual, family, community, and societal levels . . . that can account for the complexity of trauma" (p. 1088). They contend that recovery must include factors related to culture, community resources and the potential for post-traumatic growth. Davis (2015) has also written about the need for a shift during trauma recovery from a focus on psychopathology and symptoms to "a focus on strengths, gifts, assets and the opportunity to reflect on spiritual themes both individually and collectively in a communal setting" (p. 11). One such method is used by the Trauma Healing Institute (2020) that trains community survivors to work safely in a group situation drawing on Christian spiritual resources to promote healing and restoration of individuals and communities after trauma.

Sensitivity to cultural factors that may exacerbate or ameliorate PTSD symptoms is important to consider in treatment options. Bernardi, Engelbrecht and Jobson (2019) provide an in-depth review of differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures understanding of "control, agency, responsibility, and independent self-aspects" (p. 99) in relation to development of PTSD. Each of these has a variety of impacts on how a client views themselves, both individually and in relationship with their community. A brief summary is that those from individualistic societies tend to appraise a trauma in terms of how it affects their levels of control and collective societies tend to look at how the trauma has changed their relationships and public aspects of self. Keeping these differences in mind, especially with many assessment tools calibrated toward a Western mindset, will alert a therapist to the need to attend to cultural factors in trauma's impact on the client and their social context.

Traumatic events and subsequent PTSD occurs in up to 30% of cross-cultural workers (Carr & Schaefer, 2010), a rate that is higher than is typical for those in Western societies from which a number of workers originate. Very few leaders of mission or non-government organisations (NGO) are trained in mental health treatment. Thus providing appropriate intervention to address the wounds of trauma can be limited due to a lack of ability to identify those who are struggling which may result in a delay of treatment. Then, if identified, fields may lack access to mental health professionals. To combat these challenges of identification and accessing treatment, Carr (2015) recommends: leaders receive training in mental health first aid, plan ahead for provision of debriefing after a traumatic event, encourage opportunities for self-care, facilitate peer support, normalise stress responses to crises during field preparation, and create team cultures where "it is safe to reveal emotional difficulties and that the response will be a confidential and compassionate one and not a punitive or judgmental one" (Some specific recommendations, para 4).

Some organisational or Christian spiritual multicultural factors may also play a part in either healing or further wounding a worker detrimentally impacted by trauma. For example, further wounding occurs when attitudes toward obtaining treatment stigmatise the worker or if they themselves believe something is wrong with them or their level of faith that they have become unwell. A key factor in resilience and post-traumatic growth according to Carr and Schaefer (2010) is having a "healthy theology of suffering" (paragraph 16). Bryant-Davis (2020) provides two questions that, when discussed in an open manner, facilitate continual

development of one's theology of suffering: "How has your faith been shaped by your trauma?" and "How has your trauma shaped your faith?" [Video webinar].

Conclusion

Working with survivors of trauma is a complex endeavour. Often survivors come stuck in a danger response of hyperarousal, smoke detector going off at full volume, or hypoarousal, disconnected or dissociated from themselves and their surroundings. Therapists can establish a healing relationship and approach the work in a non-pathologising way, facilitating survivors to achieve safety, draw on their resources, and be guided by the person as to whether they desire to remember the traumatic event(s) in detail. Holding a framework that differentiates between single event PTSD and complex PTSD as well as sensitively exploring the client's cultural and social context will enable the therapist to match the therapeutic model to the client's needs.

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Quantum Theology:
Bridging Theology and Science

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Abstract: The following essay will examine the work of various theologians in the search for an appropriate synthesis of physics and theology. The essay will analyse their various perspectives, their methods, and their interpretation of scripture in light of new developments in Quantum Mechanics and the quest to locate a conversation point where science and theology intersect. This article will provide an introduction to the history of the quanta, from the first tentative description in the 11th century, to the formal concept of Classical Physics in the 19th century and the discovery of Quantum Physics in the early 20th century. It will also address the concerns of Albert Einstein as relayed to two graduate students who were granted an audience with him in the early 1950s, and how these concerns are related in turn to epistemology as concerns human and trinitarian interactions; and how these interactions alter our conception of them as the disciplines of physics and theology converge.

Introduction

Religion and science have always seemed incompatible, to some, at least - "almost as incompatible as the idea that a particle can also be a wave, you might say."[1] Upon closer inspection, the relationship between science and faith is not as incompatible as one might surmise, and that the two may just be more similar than we ever could imagine. Non-Newtonian physics makes many scientists and theologians ask whether quantum mechanics might be the bridge between science and theology - the intersection point - for which they have been searching. For Quantum physics tells us that "by making a decision, you might be creating your answer, and if you had made another decision or used another method, the truth

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[1] Gordon Arielle Eden, *Can Quantum Physics Teach Us About God and Ourselves?* 2020. [Online. Accessed 5.12.2020 Static link: https://www.magellantv.com/articles/can-quantum-physics-teach-us-about-god-and-ourselves].

you settled on might have ended up looking very different."[2] As scientists began to study the mechanics of the quanta (protons and electrons) in the early 20th century, they began to observe that these entities exhibited strange behaviour, and as the field developed, scientists began to break open "everything previously known about science"[3] and raised deep questions – questions usually left for metaphysicians.

One of the problems of Classical Newtonian mechanics was that it described *Force* in terms of the impact of masses on "the inert frame of other masses."[4] This left no room for the *Force* of the Spirit, as understood by Aristotelian and Platonic active immaterial principles. "When mass and motion (velocity) were integrated within the fields of energy (E=mc2), this opened up new possibilities for conceptualizing the human experience of temporality and causation."[5] In the mid-1950s, two graduate students were granted an audience with Albert Einstein, the originator of the equation, in which Albert Einstein attempted to discuss the implications of Quantum Theory, which "Einstein considered "spooky…."[6] Theologians such as Wolfhart Pannenberg have tried to produce a synthesis of the theology of the Holy Spirit and post-Newtonian Physics, contending that God is also a "field of Force," and have increasingly borrowed terms from Field Theory and Quantum Mechanics to describe the actions of the Trinity[7]. For example, Pope Benedict XVI once described the part of the Catholic Mass, the consecration, as "nuclear fission."[8] The way that this nuclear fission occurs is through the action of the Holy Spirit when the sacred ministers invoke the same Spirit upon the elements of communion in the pre-Consecration *epiclesis*:

"Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ."[9]

When the priest speaks Christ's words over the elements:

"This is My Body…This is My Blood… (*Hoc est enim Corpus Meum…Hic est enim Calix Sanguinis Mei…*)."[10]

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[2] Eden, *Can Quantum Physics Teach Us About God and Ourselves?* [Online. Accessed 5.12.2020 Static link: https://www.magellantv.com/articles/can-quantum-physics-teach-us-about-god-and-ourselves].

[3] Eden, *Can Quantum Physics Teach Us About God and Ourselves?* [Online. Accessed 5.12.2020 Static link: https://www.magellantv.com/articles/can-quantum-physics-teach-us-about-god-and-ourselves].

[4] F. LeRon Shults, "Current Trends in Pneumatology," Plenary address given at the University of Nordic Systematic Theology Conference, 2007 [online. Accessed: 18.10.2020. Static link: https://www.academia.edu/1283807/Current_Trends_in_Pneumatology]

[5] Shults, "Current Trends in Pneumatology," 3.

[6] B. Rosenblum & Fred Kutter, *Quantum Enigma – Physics Encounters Consciousness* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 2007), 5.

[7] Timothy Harvie, "God as a Field of Force: Personhood and Science in in Wolfhart Pannenberg's Pneumatology," *Heythrop Journal 52*, no. *2* (2011): 1.

[8] http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20050821_20th-world-youth-day.html

[9] Catholic Church, *Roman Canon – English translation according to the Third Typical Edition* (2011), 680.

[10] Catholic Church, 680.

This means that the elements are made Holy through the action of the third person of the Trinity working in concert with the First and Second persons in one holy, undivided substance.

Odd Behaviour

Classical mechanics describes the interaction between two objects in terms of particles. In the 11th century, Ibn al-Haytham, the Arabic scientist, wrote the 7-volume treatise *Book of Optics*, which described light in these terms.[11] The problem came when particles were observed in experiments to have a wave-quality, and hence to be present in two places at once – observed by a variation on the classical "slit experiment." This was problematical, because classical mechanics could not explain this behaviour from the standard argument. Even though the two phenomena – waves and particles – are explained in different experiments, they both are "complementary in nature."[12]

Classical Newtonian physics describes the physical world, but what of its complementary, the supernatural. Indeed, many physicists have "uncritically adopted platonic realism" as their personal interpretation of the meaning of physics, and – at least according to Victor Stenger – are being "disingenuous when they disparage philosophy"[13] for they adopt "the doctrine of one of the most influential philosophers of all time"[14] – Plato.

It is a well-known principle of science that one is unable to observe the natural world without altering it in some way – this is known as the Observer Effect. Phil Mason contends that in the world, God is "the ultimate observer," and dedicates chapter 5 of *Quantum Glory* to this premise.[15] God can and does intervene in the world, and he chooses to intervene through the action of the Holy Spirit and the answering of the prayers of his people.

The consideration of the Holy Spirt as a force is the aim of Pannenberg, as he is one theologian attempting to find new ways of understanding the action and person of the Holy Spirit "in ways which are faithful to traditional theological sources."[16] He accomplishes this by appealing to field theory "as it has been developed by modern physics."[17] Pannenberg examines the etymological and philosophical roots of "both field theory and pneumatology in the Stoic understanding of the doctrine of the πνεῦμα as the field of all material existence."[18] This conception of field was once rejected by apologists but has since been

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[11]Alison Wright, "Let there be Light," *Nature Materials* 9, no. 5. (2010): 1
https://www.nature.com/articles/milephotons01
[12] Tordorka Lulcheva Dimitrova & A. Wells, "The wave-particle duality of light: A demonstration experiment," *American Journal of Physics* 76, no. 2 (2008): 1
[13] Victor Stenger *et al.*, "Physicists are Philosophers, Too," *Scientific American,* 2015 [online] static link:
https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/physicists-are-philosophers-too/
[14] Ibid.
[15] Mason. *Quantum Glory,* 110.
[16] Whapham Theodore James, "Spirit as Field of Force," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 67, no. 1 (2014): 15–32.
[17] Whapham, "Spirit as Field of Force," 15–32.
[18] Whapham, 15–32.

reopened by modern physics in the development of field theory as a way of understanding the animation and biding qualities of nature which "are devoid of materialism."[19]

Quantum Field Theory in Human Relations

The presence of field theory in pneumatology should be seen as an important way of understanding "the loving relations between persons" grounded in mutual self-giving which respects the individual, "in contrast to those who ground love primarily in compassionate suffering."[20] This mutual self-giving is present in the sacrament of marriage (ie. the loving relation between husband and wife),[21] and, by extension, the fruits of that marriage – from parents to children. This poses a conundrum for some theologians who contend that supernatural knowledge cannot be expressed in human propositions, as the supernatural truths transcend human knowledge.[22] When the Holy Spirit is conceived of as an abstraction, it is vulnerable to the human imagination, but when it is seen through the lenses of scripture and Christian doctrine, the fantasies disappear, and the reality manifests itself.

The conception of the Holy Spirit as an impersonal force does not lend itself to the Christian conception of a personal God, and since the main tenant of Christian belief – that which separates Christianity from Islam and Judaism – is that God is three persons in one essence, this concept of the Spirit as an impersonal force has the unmistakable ring of pantheism. Within Islam the Holy Spirit " القدسروح " *Ruh al-Qudus*, is mentioned in the Quran a total of 4 times.[23] Three times the words refer to Jesus being strengthened by the Holy Spirit,[24] and the fourth time it is identified as the one who brought down God's message to the prophet Mohammed.[25]

Order Out of Chaos

Paul Mason explains that "the Word of God is not a mere sound,"[26] that it conveys "simple and complex information."[27] It is similar with the Holy Spirit, and the complex information is relayed both verbally and in written form when we read about the Holy Spirit in the scriptures or hear them proclaimed in a liturgical setting. Increasingly, we see the transfer and adoption of scientific terminology into theology – particularly in the work of Amos Yong, from the concept of force in the cosmological sciences and field theory, to the concept of spirit in the biological sciences. In Yong's version of events, his reading is "not strictly *ex*

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[19] Whapham, 15–32.
[20] Whapham, 15–32.
[21] Catholic Church - Francis. *Amoris Laetitia,* 2016, 73.
[22] John M McDermott, "Is the Blessed Trinity Naturally Knowable? St Thomas on Reason, Faith, Nature, Grace, and Person," *Gregorianum* 93, no. 1 (2012): 115.
[23] Sidney H. Griffith, "Holy Spirit," In *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān,* ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (2006), Brill: Lieden. 2: 442-444.
[24] Quran, 2:87, 2:253, 5: 110, and 16: 102.
[25] Griffith, "Holy Spirit," 442–444.
[26] Mason, *Quantum Glory, 177.*
[27] Mason, *Quantum Glory,* 110.

nihilio but is giving an order to the chaos"[28] of the primeval void, by God's Spirit hovering over the waters in the Genesis account of creation, common to both Christian and Judaic texts, and running through and alluded to in various accounts of creation in the Psalms.

God's Spirit as a supernatural force can also be demonstrated through the Genesis account. Merely by the power of speech "God said….," and the natural world obeys Him as if it were a direction from a King, "who merely has to speak for things to happen."[29] In Matthew 18:18, Christ said to His disciples, "Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." In recent quantum experiments, specifically, Bell Entanglement, a team of physicists at the University of Glasgow passed photons through "a liquid crystal material"[30] which caused some of the photons to become entangled. A beam splitter was then used on the entangled photons, turning them along two arms which separated the entangled photons and sent them along two different paths. Having been entangled, "they continued to share the same phase even after being separated."[31] The team then used a highly sensitive camera "to capture images of the entangled photon"[32] that hadn't passed through the filter. The images proved that each entangled photon "showed the same phase transitions as its partner,"[33] even though they had travelled along different paths.

Amos Yong contends that the separation of physics and theology is characterised as "a separation of method"[34] rather than of content, and that a pneumatological approach to the physical universe has "significant implications"[35] for the way in which we observe and communicate with the world God made. It also has significant implications for the way in which we think and talk about the Holy Spirit in academic writing.

As post-Newtonian physics advances, we find that the assumption that "any conflict between science and religion is based on epistemology,"[36] an assumption which is inbuilt into the history of Western academic thought, is being called into question more and more by sociologists. This jump required higher echelon-thinking, quantum thought, if you will. The advent of Chaos Theory in the 1960s using computer modelling and showing complex interactions between classical systems, such models as the Butterfly Effect, for instance.

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[28] Mikael Liedenhag, and Joanna Liedenhag, "Science and Spirit: A Critical Examination of Amos Yong's Pneumatological Theology of Emergence," *Open Theology* (2015): 1. 10.1515/opth-2015-0025.

[29] Barry L Bandstra, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2008), 39.

[30] Ryan Whitwam, *Scientists Capture Photographic Proof of Quantum Entanglement,* 2019.[Online. Accessed: 18.10.20 https://www.extremetech.com/extreme/295013-scientists-capture-photographic-proof-of-quantum-entanglement].

[31] Whitwam, *Scientists Capture Photographic Proof of Quantum Entanglement,* [np].

[32] Whitwam, *Scientists Capture Photographic Proof of Quantum Entanglement,* [np].

[33] Whitwam, *Scientists Capture Photographic Proof of Quantum Entanglement,* [np].

[34] James Smith K. A, and Amos Yong, *Science and the Spirit: A Pentecostal Engagement with the Sciences* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 1 muse.jhu.edu/book/1559.

[35] Smith, and Yong, *Science and the Spirit,* 1.

[36] John H Evans, and Michael S Evans, "Religion and Science: Beyond the Epistemological Conflict Narrative," *Annual Review of Sociology* 34, no. 87 (2008): 105. Static link: https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134702?journalCode=soc

As Lorenz stated in his 1972 paper, "If the flap of a butterfly's wings can be instrumental in generating a tornado, it can equally well be instrumental in preventing a tornado. And that would be impossible for us to know,"[37] is now being shown as active in a similar fashion in the quantum world via "cold-atom experiments."[38]

According to David E Conner, in an article published in the *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy*, "the idea of Quantum non-locality is highly suggestive"[39] for any philosophical theology associating the perception of God or the Sacred "either with some aspect of nature, or with nature as a whole."[40] J Wentzel van Huyssteen suggests a pathway towards interdisciplinary dialogue and points to the "sharp demarcation"[41] within the modernist framework between theology and science. Bernard M Loomer writes concerning the sheer size of God, and the idea that God has the utmost size means God includes everything, even that which he is not, according to traditional theology. For example, Loomer contends that God, in accordance to his size must include evil and incompleteness, and "he admits that most people will not appreciate"[42] this inclusion of evil and incompleteness, but "he affirms this theological choice nevertheless."[43] However, this view is not in accord with traditional church teaching on the nature and problem of evil and discounts the existence of the devil as acting in opposition to God and the divine plan for human salvation.

Van Huyssteen writes concerning the relationship of life-changing religious faith to the "overwhelming and on-going successes of contemporary science."[44] Van Huyssteen holds that the problem of rationality "holds the key to understanding the forces that have shaped the radically different domains of theology and science."[45] While rationality, empiricism, and epistemology are beyond the scope of this present essay, this author would like to point out that these are valid areas for further research and fruitful discussion toward interdisciplinarity.

Conclusion

This essay has examined various points of view concerning the proposed synthesis of pneumatology, quantum field theory, and the Holy Spirit as a force, the reconciliation of the fields of quantum physics and theology, and the implications of this unification upon academic theology and people's personal relationship with the Holy Spirit. It has done so

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[37] Peter Dizikes, "When the Butterfly Effect Took Flight," *MIT News Magazine* (2011): [np]. Online. Static link: https://www.technologyreview.com/2011/02/22/196987/when-the-butterfly-effect-took-flight/

[38] Zeeya Merali, "The Butterfly Effect gets entangled," *Nature* (2009): [np]. Online. Static link: https://www.nature.com/news/2009/091007/full/news.2009.980.html.

[39] David E Conner, "Quantum Non-Locality as an Indication of Theological Transcendence," *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 27 no. 2/3 (2006): 265.

[40] Conner, "Quantum Non-Locality as an Indication of Theological Transcendence," 265.

[41] Christopher L Minor, "Review of *The Shaping of Rationality: Toward Interdisciplinarity in Theology and Science*," *Pro Ecclesia: A Journal of Catholic and Evangelical Theology* (2001): 4.

[42] Conner, "Quantum Non-Locality as an Indication of Theological Transcendence," 265.

[43] Conner, "Quantum Non-Locality as an Indication of Theological Transcendence," 265.

[44] J Wentzel van Huyssteen, *The Shaping of Rationality: Toward Interdisciplinarity in Theology and Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 1.

[45] Huyssteen, *The Shaping of Rationality,* 1-2.

through a study of the nature of the Holy Spirit as depicted in Christian and Islamic tradition, and how the concept of Spirit was conceived by the Stoics as the *pneuma* being the force that bound everything together. The essay has also examined the influence of Plato on modern physics and presented a study of different ideas and conceptions of rationality and epistemology.

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Interpreting Imprecatory Psalms

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Abstract: Serious ethical challenges have been raised against the imprecatory psalms in recent times. Imprecations are often perceived by contemporary readers to be immoral and out of place in the Bible, particularly when considering the Lord Jesus' command to love our enemies. This paper will present a study and assessment of the imprecatory psalms in the context of the full biblical record. It will be argued that the challenges raised against the imprecatory psalms can be satisfactorily answered. Furthermore, it will be demonstrated how a Christian can carefully and wisely use the imprecatory psalms in private prayers.

Introduction

Interpretation of the imprecatory psalms is one of the great challenges for a contemporary Christian reader of the Scriptures. Serious ethical questions have been raised against the content of the imprecatory psalms in which the psalmists pray for judgement, curse and calamity upon their enemies.

The following paper will begin by providing an overview of the characteristics of the imprecatory psalms and problems raised against them. An assessment of the imprecatory psalms in a biblical context will follow which will answer the key challenges. The analysis will finish with a description of how effectively the imprecatory psalms can be used as a model for personal prayers.

An Overview of Imprecatory Psalms

It is first necessary to describe the features that define and characterise the imprecatory psalms. The following section will first describe what an imprecatory psalm is and will then detail the problem that many readers in the contemporary context have with the imprecatory psalms.

What is an Imprecatory Psalm?

An imprecation is an invocation of a judgement, curse or calamity uttered against another person.[1] By extension, an imprecatory psalm is one in which the imprecation is the chief element of the psalm.[2] Psalms with imprecations, therefore, can either be classified as imprecatory psalms or psalms with imprecations depending on how the imprecations are used in the psalm.

Scholars differ on the precise list and number of imprecatory psalms and psalms with imprecations. Comparing the opinion of scholars indicates that approximately five to nine psalms can be called imprecatory psalms with a total of at least 18 psalms containing imprecations.[3] Imprecatory psalms are attributed to David, Asaph and the exiles in Babylon.[4]

Issues Facing Imprecatory Psalms

Imprecatory psalms present an ethical problem for many contemporary readers who assert that imprecations are immoral and out of place in the Bible.[5] A particularly strong objection

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[1] J. Carl Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138 (1981): 35; Robert L. Thomas, "The Imprecatory Prayers of the Apocalypse," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 126 (1969): 179; John Shepherd, "The Place of the Imprecatory Psalms in the Canon of Scripture – Part 1," *Churchman* 111, no. 1 (1997): Section "Introduction:" Johannes G. Vos, "The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms" in *Westminster Theological Journal* 4 (1942): 123.
Gilbert defines imprecation in the wider Old Testament context as "any statement linked to an announcement of destruction" (Pierre Gilbert, "The Function of Imprecation in Israel's Eighth-Century Prophets," *Direction* 35, no. 1 (2006): 49.) and an imprecatory motive in the ancient Near East as referring to "what is most often alluded to as a curse or an announcement of destruction." Gilbert, "The Function of Imprecation in Israel's Eighth-Century Prophets," 46.
[2] Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 35.
Shepherd classifies imprecatory psalms as "those where the imprecations play a significant part in the Psalms." Shepherd, "The Place of the Imprecatory Psalms in the Canon of Scripture – Part 1," Section "Introduction."
[3] By comparing the various scholars, this author concludes that a careful study would need to be conducted on all psalms with imprecations to determine which are genuinely imprecatory psalms. The various opinions of scholars are as detailed below.
Imprecatory psalms are variously identified as the following. Kelley lists five: 69, 109, 137, 139 and 143. H. Kelley, "Prayers of Troubled Saints," *Review and Expositor* 81 (1984): 379. Laney lists at least nine: 7, 35, 58, 59, 69, 83, 109, 137 and 139. Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 36. Lessing lists 32 psalms: 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 17, 28, 31, 35, 40, 52, 54, 55, 56, 58, 59, 68, 69, 70, 71, 74, 79, 83, 94, 104, 109, 129, 137, 139, 140, 141, and 143. Reed Lessing, "Broken Teeth, Bloody Baths, and Baby Bashing: Is There Any Place in the Church for Imprecatory Psalms?," *Concordia Journal* 32 (2006): 368. Vos lists six psalms: 55, 59, 69, 79, 109 and 137. Vos, "The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms," 123.
Psalms with imprecations are variously identified as the following. Lensch gives a number of at least 18 psalms with as many as 50 imprecations. Christopher K. Lensch, "Prayers of Praise and of Imprecation in the Psalms," *WRS Journal* 7, no. 2 (2000): 2. Martin lists no more than 18 pslams. Chalmers Martin, "The Imprecations in the Psalms," *The Princeton Theological Review* (1903): 537. Surburg gives a number of at least 28 psalms including 5, 6, 7, 10, 17, 18, 26, 28, 31, 35, 40, 55, 56, 58, 59, 68, 69, 70, 71, 79, 83, 104, 109, 129, 137, 140, 141, 143 and 149. Raymond F. Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," *The Springfielder* 39 (1975): 88.
[4] According to Laney, Psalms 7, 35, 58, 59, 69, 109 and 139 are Davidic; Psalm 83 is attributed to Asaph; and Psalm 137 is exilic. Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 36.
[5] Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 37; Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," 89; Vos, "The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms," 123-124.
Surburg oddly provides two different lists of imprecatory psalms which are most vehemently singled out by critics. He states in one place that imprecations in Psalms 35, 69 and 109 are thought to be out of place in the

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has been raised by interpreters who have perceived that imprecations are inconsistent with the Lord Jesus' command: "love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you," (Matt 5:44).[6]

A range of solutions have been proposed by scholars in an attempt to explain the imprecatory psalms and resolve the problems that have been raised against them. Current scholarship in the field indicates that there are three main ways in which scholars attempt to resolve the problems.[7] The first proposed solution is that the imprecatory psalms were written for a different time and place, an opinion which has been explained variously as follows: the imprecatory psalms were appropriate only for the dispensation in which they were written,[8] they were written in a culture where cursing was an integral part of life,[9] or they represent a sub-Christian morality because God's revelation then was at a low stage of development.[10] The second proposed solution is that the words are those of the writer of the psalm alone, they were not inspired by the Holy Spirit.[11] The third proposed solution is actually a collection of proposals which indicates that the imprecatory psalms require a certain amount of reinterpretation. This proposed solution includes proposals such as: the

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Bible. Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," 89. He also states that Psalms 55, 69, 109 and 137 are "singled out for special censure by the critics." Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," 92.

[6] Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 37.
Surburg adds that "The presence of utterances calling upon God to punish people and to judge them severely are felt by many readers of the Psalter to be out of harmony with the principle that the children of God should love even their enemies." Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," 89. All quotations are from the New King James Version

[7] While most scholars list a number of discrete solutions that tend to have been raised historically, Pauls states that "Historically, the imprecations have been handled in one of two ways. They have been either handed off pejoratively to the spirit of the Old Testament, or interpreted in some fashion as positive prayers which really have God's best interests in mind and not the personal motives of the psalmists" (Gerald Pauls, "The Imprecations of the Psalmists: A Study of Psalm 54," *Direction* 22, no. 2 (1993): 76). This author has identified three categories of potential resolution as stated in the text of the paper.

[8] This solution is raised by: Pauls, "The Imprecations of the Psalmists: A Study of Psalm 54," 76; Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," 89, 92 and 97; Vos, "The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms," 124-5.
This solution is rejected by: Lensch, "Prayers of Praise and of Imprecation in the Psalms," 2-3; Martin, "The Imprecations in the Psalms," 541; Pauls, "The Imprecations of the Psalmists: A Study of Psalm 54," 76; John Shepherd, "The Place of the Imprecatory Psalms in the Canon of Scripture – Part 2," 1; Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," 97-8; Vos, "The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms," 125.

[9] This solution is raised by: Gilbert, "The Function of Imprecation in Israel's Eighth-Century Prophets ," 46-7; Lessing, "Broken Teeth, Bloody Baths, and Baby Bashing: Is There Any Place in the Church for Imprecatory Psalms?" 369; Shepherd, "The Place of the Imprecatory Psalms in the Canon of Scripture – Part 2," Section "Holy War."

[10] This solution is raised by: Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 38-9; Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," 91, 94.
This solution is rejected by: Gary A. Anderson, "King David and the Psalms of Imprecation," *Pro Ecclesia* XV, no. 3 (2006): 271; Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 39; Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," 101.

[11] This solution is raised by: Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 38, 40; Vos, "The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms," 127; Martin, "The Imprecations in the Psalms," 539.
This solution is rejected by: Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 38, 40; Vos, "The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms," 127-8; Martin, "The Imprecations in the Psalms," 540.

imprecations were a prediction of doom, not an expression of a desire for destruction;[12] the imprecations should be understood in a figurative or spiritual sense;[13] they were moral outbursts about unusually brutal and inhuman crimes;[14] they only express a predicted feeling of gratification if the enemy happened to suffer judgement;[15] they are quotes from the enemy, not the desires of the writer of the imprecation;[16] or they are prayers with God's best interests in mind and do not reflect the personal motives of the writer.[17]

An Analysis of Imprecatory Psalms

Rather than critiquing each proposed solution described in the previous section, the approach taken in the following section will be to firstly examine how imprecations are treated in the New Testament and then to list some key considerations for the reader of the imprecatory psalms.

Imprecations in the New Testament

The key objection made against the imprecatory psalms by contemporary readers is the assertion that imprecatory language is out of place in the Bible, and particularly the New Testament where the Lord Jesus commanded that we love our enemies. Before considering this issue, some background for assessing the relevance of imprecatory psalms for a contemporary reader will be presented by showing some uses of imprecatory language in the New Testament. This will cover New Testament quotations of imprecatory psalms and examples of New Testament passages which use imprecatory language.

Both the Lord Jesus and the apostle Peter were recorded to quote imprecatory psalms in the New Testament. When quoting an imprecatory psalm, they did so in two ways: by either quoting from the psalm or quoting the imprecation within the psalm. Psalm 69 was a significant psalm for the Lord Jesus and one instance where He was recorded to have quoted from the psalm. John's narrative notes Him saying: "But this has happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated me without a cause.'" (John 15:25).[18] Peter attributed two imprecations from Psalms 69 and 109 to Judas in Acts saying:

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[12] This solution is raised by: Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 39; Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," 94; Vos, "The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms," 125. This solution is rejected by: Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 40; Vos, "The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms," 126.

[13] This solution is raised by: Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 39; Vos, "The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms," 126. This solution is rejected by: Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 39; Vos, "The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms," 126-7.

[14] This solution is raised by: Vos, "The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms," 129. This solution is rejected by: Vos, "The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms," 129-30.

[15] This solution is raised by: Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," 95.

[16] This solution is raised by: Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 37. This solution is rejected by: Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 38.

[17] This solution is raised by: Pauls, "The Imprecations of the Psalmists: A Study of Psalm 54," 77. This solution is rejected by: Pauls, "The Imprecations of the Psalmists: A Study of Psalm 54," 77.

[18] Both Lensch and Martin conclude that Psalm 69 found a place in his heart during his ministry; they also state that Psalm 69 is quoted five times by Jesus and His apostles, and Martin adds that it is alluded to several

"For it is written in the Book of Psalms: 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it;' and, 'Let another take his office.'" (Acts 1:20).[19]

Language which is consistent with the imprecatory psalms is also used throughout the New Testament. Paul wrote the following words to the churches of Galatia: "if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:9).[20] In Revelation, John recorded: "under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held" (Rev 6:9) cried out, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Rev 6:10).[21] Rather than being rebuked for such words, they were comforted as recorded in Revelation 6:11. Later in Revelation, the Lord Jesus is pictured in glorious appearance sitting on a white horse "clothed with a robe dipped in blood" (Rev 19:13).[22]

From the examples above, it is clear that the imprecatory psalms have been quoted in the New Testament. It has also been made clear that the New Testament uses language which is similar to language used in imprecatory psalms where required. This shows that the imprecatory psalms are not inconsistent with the New Testament and, by extension, the Bible as a whole. The key objection that the imprecatory psalms are inconsistent with Jesus' command that we love our enemies will be addressed in the next section.

Keys to Reading Imprecatory Psalms

There are a number of key considerations to make when reading the imprecatory psalms. They include the consistent emphasis on loving enemies throughout the Bible, covenants in the Bible, David's character, the actions of the writers, language in the cultural context, and divine inspiration.

The concept, love for enemies, is one which is thought of as a typically New Testament concept. Nevertheless, a careful reading of the Old Testament shows that it is a consistent command to God's people throughout the whole Bible.[23] One example concerning caring for

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more times. Lensch, "Prayers of Praise and of Imprecation in the Psalms," 4; Martin, "The Imprecations in the Psalms," 552.

Surburg states that Jesus quoted from "Psalm 69 and 109, two of the most criticized of the Maledictory Psalms." Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," 97.

[19] Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 36; Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," 97; Shepherd, "The Place of the Imprecatory Psalms in the Canon of Scripture – Part 2," Section "New Testament Use of the Imprecatory Psalms."

[20] Lensch, "Prayers of Praise and of Imprecation in the Psalms," 4; Lessing, "Broken Teeth, Bloody Baths, and Baby Bashing: Is There Any Place in the Church for Imprecatory Psalms?," 369.

[21] Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 36; Lensch, "Prayers of Praise and of Imprecation in the Psalms," 4; Thomas, "The Imprecatory Prayers of the Apocalypse," 126-7.

[22] Shepherd notes the vividness of Revelation 19:1-16. Shepherd, "The Place of the Imprecatory Psalms in the Canon of Scripture – Part 2," Section "Imprecations in the New Testament."

Fruchtenbaum explains the scene and source of the blood. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*. rev. ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2004), 341, 345).

[23] Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 39; Martin, "The Imprecations in the Psalms," 541; Pauls, "The Imprecations of the Psalmists: A Study of Psalm 54," 76; Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory

an enemy's livestock with the command: "If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it." (Exod 23:5). A further example is the command for Israelites to love other Israelites as they would love themselves, to not take vengeance or bear a grudge (Lev 19:18).

A faithful reading of the imprecatory psalms requires the reader to remember details of the covenants recorded in the Old Testament.[24] Part of God's covenant promise to Abraham included the words "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you" (Gen 12:3). David, as one of Abraham's descendants and God's anointed, could rightfully claim to be God's representative to carry out God's purposes in Israel.[25]

David's life, attitude and actions toward his personal enemies must be considered when reading those imprecatory psalms which have been attributed to him. While David's faults have been made obvious in the Bible, he did not show a revengeful attitude during his life.[26] In Psalm 58, David wrote, "The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance;" (Psalm 58:10), yet he resisted killing his enemy Saul on two separate occasions.[27] This information can also be used as a guide when reading the remaining imprecatory psalms written by Asaph and the exiles.

None of the writers of imprecatory psalms, including David, Asaph and the exiles expressed a desire to carry out the imprecations within the psalms themselves.[28] David did not plan on taking revenge himself, he prayed to God and handed over responsibility for judgement and retribution to Him.[29] This was also the case for Asaph in Psalm 83. While the exiles addressed their imprecation against Babylon directly in Psalm 137, they did not attribute the actions to themselves.

The expressive use of language in ancient Hebrew poetry and culture also warrants consideration when reading the imprecatory psalms. Scholars of Hebrew poetry and biblical hermeneutics note that hyperbole is a literary technique sometimes used within the psalms

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Psalms," 98; Shepherd, "The Place of the Imprecatory Psalms in the Canon of Scripture – Part 2," Section "The Imprecatory Psalms and the Old Testament."

Shepherd provides the clarification that the Old Testament did distinguish between the attitude required towards fellow-Israelites and towards foreigners, but for neither was it to be one of hatred. Shepherd, "The Place of the Imprecatory Psalms in the Canon of Scripture – Part 2," Section "Love Your Enemies – Apparent Contradictions."

[24] Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 41-2; Lessing, "Broken Teeth, Bloody Baths, and Baby Bashing," 367-368, 369; Shepherd, "The Place of the Imprecatory Psalms in the Canon of Scripture – Part 1," Section "The Imprecatory Psalms and the Psalter."

[25] Martin, "The Imprecations in the Psalms," 547; Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," 99-100.

[26] Martin, "The Imprecations in the Psalms," 542-543.

[27] Anderson, "King David and the Psalms of Imprecation," 276, 278.

Note that Anderson places Psalm 58 in the context of these two events. Anderson, "King David and the Psalms of Imprecation," 272-3.

[28] Martin, "The Imprecations in the Psalms," 543; Shepherd, "The Place of the Imprecatory Psalms in the Canon of Scripture – Part 1," 10; Shepherd, "The Place of the Imprecatory Psalms in the Canon of Scripture – Part 2," Section "Blessings and Curses."

[29] Shepherd, "The Place of the Imprecatory Psalms in the Canon of Scripture – Part 1," Section "Theological Issues."

to increase the effect of what is being said.[30] A further observation of some scholars is that in Near Eastern culture strong emotions tend to be most clearly recognized as genuine when expressed extravagantly and demonstratively.[31]

The final and most important consideration to make when reading the imprecatory psalms is the affirmation of the biblical writers that the imprecatory psalms were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.[32] This is most clearly stated by Peter when, referring to Psalms 69 and 109, he stated, "this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David" (Acts 1:16).[33]

When the key considerations and biblical context detailed above are taken into account, it is clear that the questions raised and objections expressed against the imprecatory psalms can be satisfactorily answered. The evidence shows that the imprecatory psalms are not out of place in the Bible, that the writers of the imprecatory psalms were not immoral in expressing the words of the psalms and that God was just in answering the imprecatory psalms.

Applying Imprecatory Psalms in Prayer

The imprecatory psalms should be read, studied, taught, preached on and used in devotions by Christians and in local churches given that they are part of the Scriptures and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Care and wisdom must, however, be taken in the use of the imprecatory psalms or similar material in private and public prayers. Presented below are some guidelines in the use of imprecatory psalms in one's own prayers based on findings stated above.

First, the description, biblical context and key considerations presented above need to be well understood and acknowledged before using imprecatory psalms in personal prayers.

Second, while the content of the imprecatory psalms encourages a Christian to be honest, open and clear in their prayers, the use of imprecations against one's enemies must be

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[30] Duvall and Hays define hyperbole as "an expression of strong feeling, hyperbole intentionally exaggerates." J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 2012), 378-9. Kaiser and Silva similarly define hyperbole as "a type of overstatement in order to increase the effect of what is being said." Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moises Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994, 2009), 161.

[31] Both Martin and Estes express this more strongly than is possible in this limited study of the topic. Martin quotes Dr. John DeWitt and states: "With regard to the lamentations and the imprecations of the psalms alike, it is much to the point not to forget that we are dealing with the poetry of the fervid, impassioned and demonstrative East, where to this day feeling of any kind is scarcely thought to be genuine unless it is expressed extravagantly." Martin, "The Imprecations in the Psalms," 543-4. Similarly, Estes states that "In many cultures, and in particular in the Near Eastern world, emotions tend to be recognized as genuine only when they are expressed extravagantly. The harsh sentiments that dominate the imprecatory psalms, therefore, could well be hyperbolic expressions of the psalmists' actual desires employing conventional ancient Near Eastern language." Daniel J. Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005, 2013), 173.

[32] Pauls, "The Imprecations of the Psalmists: A Study of Psalm 54," 78; Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," 93, 97.

[33] Surburg, "The Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms," 97.

avoided. All Christians shall listen to the consistent command throughout the Bible to love their enemies.

Where imprecatory psalms and similar language may be used is where God's enemies are being referred to and where such use is consistent with the covenants and revelation as recorded in the Bible. One should hesitate to identify specific people at such times recognising that the Lord "is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Conclusion

The imprecatory psalms as written by David, Asaph and the exiles in Babylon have been found to be challenging literature for scholars to rightly interpret and apply in the contemporary Western culture. The invocations of judgement, curse and calamity against enemies have caused many readers to challenge the ethics and morality of such statements, particularly when the New Testament command to love one's enemies is considered.

It has been shown in this paper that the imprecatory psalms were not condemned in the New Testament, rather they were quoted by the Lord Jesus and apostle Peter. There are also many passages in the New Testament where language has been used which is clearly consistent with the language of the imprecatory psalms.

Key considerations have been discussed which support the morality of the writers and the justice of God by demonstrating that the consistent emphasis on loving enemies throughout the Bible, covenants in the Bible, David's character, the actions of the writers, language in the cultural context, and divine inspiration. When such key considerations are acknowledged and careful guidelines are applied, the imprecatory psalms are appropriate to be used private prayers.

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Tradition & Context: Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

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Abstract: What kind of meal did Jesus and his disciples share together on the night before the crucifixion? Did Jesus celebrate and eat the Passover meal during the Last Supper? These questions are essential to understand Paul's institution of the Lord's Supper stated in his letter to the Corinthians, specifically in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. How is Paul's institution of the Lord's Supper related to the Gospels' account of the Last Supper?

Introduction

This paper aims to show how tradition engages a particular context which consequently results to a reconfiguration of tradition. Specifically, it focuses on Paul's re-institution of the Lord's Supper in the Church at Corinth. Part of the study in this paper is an analysis of the nature of the Last Supper in relation to the Passover. The Gospels suggest that the Last Supper occurred during the time that the Passover is being held. Subsequently, the Gospels' account of the Last Supper is analyzed in relation to the Corinthian passage to discover similar and contrasting themes. Lastly, the Corinthian experience will be situated within the socio-political and cultural context of the Graeco-Roman Empire in order to understand the theological and ethical dimension of Paul's re-appropriation of tradition.

The Last Supper and the Passover

Studies on the nature of the Last Supper have fascinated biblical scholars especially in relation to the feast of the Passover. The Synoptics described how Jesus and his disciples celebrated their last meal together. It indicates that Jesus ordered his disciples to prepare for the Passover that they intended to celebrate (Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7-8). Both Matthew and Mark are clearer than Luke that Jesus ate his supper with the twelve (Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:17-18 compare with Luke 22:14-15).

Joachim Jeremias made a proposal that the Last Supper was a Passover meal.[1] He made several strong arguments, like Jesus and his disciples reclined at their meal together, which is a Passover ordinance, a symbol of their liberty when they had been slaves in Egypt (Mark 14:18; Matthew 26:20; Luke 22:14; John 13:12, 23, 25, 28). The meal precedes the breaking of bread which is a prominent feature of a Passover (Mark 14: 18; Matthew 26:21). Another one, according to the Synoptics, they concluded their supper with the singing of a hymn (Mark 14:26; Matthew 26:30), a second part of the *Hallel* which closed the Passover meal. But for Jeremias, the most convincing argument for the paschal character of the Last Supper is Jesus' announcement of his impeding passion by speaking words of interpretation over the bread and the wine. Jesus acted as the *paterfamilias* explaining to a son the peculiarities of the meal in connection with the Exodus (Deuteronomy 26:5-11). In the Passover meal, interpretation of the elements is a fixed part of the ritual.[2] Jesus took the case of the Passover and the ritual interpretation of its special elements as an occasion for his interpretation of the bread and wine at the Last Supper. Thus, we derive the meaning of the Lord Supper as a remembrance that Jesus is our paschal lamb.[3] But of course this view of Jeremias has been challenged by other scholars.[4] Professor Gunther Bornkamm's objections are based on the occurring events that would appear impossible to have taken place in the Feast of the Passover of the 15th Nisan. Jesus went to Gethsemane on the Passover night (Mark 14:26). It was not lawful to leave Jerusalem on that night. Likewise, the carrying of arms was forbidden on festivals (Luke 22:38, Mark 14:43, 47,48). Also, there is no reference to the Passover lamb and the bitter herbs in the account of Mark. The weightiest are the sessions of the Sanhedrin and the condemnation of Jesus to death on the night of the Passover. Range of theories concerning the relationship between the Last Supper and the Lord's Passover have been proposed and general consensus remains difficult to establish.[5]

Within the four Gospel accounts, John's chronological account of the Passover has its own challenge about the issue of the Last Supper. According to John, Jesus died at the time the Passover lambs were being offered at the Temple (John 13:1; 18:28; 19:14, 31, 42). In short

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[1] Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. Norman Perrin (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1996), 41-62. For a theory that the Last Supper is the Passover, see I. Howard Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper* (UK: Paternoster Press, 1973). The Last Supper is not an account of a historical meal of Jesus with his disciples, but an account of the first institution of the Eucharistic meal as celebrated after the resurrection. See also, A. J. B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1952).

[2] Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus,* 56.

[3] Bornkamm disagreed with Jeremias underscoring that many features of the Passover are lacking in the Last supper. He argues that the phrase "on the night …" does not speak of the Passover or even characterize the last supper of Jesus as the Passover. The decisive impediments to accept Jeremias's view is that in the Lord's Supper there are no explanation for the lamb, the unleavened bread and the bitter herb. The Lord supper explanation on the bread and cup is totally alien and has no analogy to Jewish celebration of the Passover. Gunther Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 132.

[4] Jeremias provided ten objections to his theory, see Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 62-82.

[5] For an overview of some of the theories and thier major proponents, see Leonardo F. Badia, *The Dead Sea People's Sacred Meal and Jesus' Last supper* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1979), 19-27. Badia presented various views of scholars and theories about the Last Supper in relation to the Passover. Helpful is the list of works by the major authors he cited in his overview.

John predated the Passover of the Synoptic placing the Last Supper on Thursday (14th Nisan) instead of Friday, the day of the Passover (15th Nisan). John finds an ally in the account of Luke when Jesus said "*I have eagerly desired to eat the Passover with you before I suffer, for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God*" (Luke 22:15-16). Chronological differences between the Synoptic and Johannine accounts contain other issues. It forms a serious problem on the side of the Synoptic writers as far as historical accuracy is concerned. Furthermore, if John's chronology is correct it casts doubt on the theory that the Last Supper occurred on the Feast of the Passover. Various theories have been forwarded to solve this contradiction between the Synoptic accounts and John's. One probable analysis is that John and the Synoptics were using different calendars. This view proposes that the Passover (Nissan 15) was eaten on two different days in the year of the crucifixion. Two groups of Jews (Sadducees and Pharisees) have different manner of counting the days of the month. One group held the beginning of Nissan 15 on Thursday evening while the other group on the evening of Friday. In theory, the Synoptics reported the Last Supper from the vantage point of the latter, while John took the view of the former. Unfortunately, its main weakness is that it is based on conjecture and that there is no evidence that the Passover lambs were slaughtered on two consecutive days.[6]

Neverhteless, evidence shows that the Last Supper operates within the *framework* of the Passover. It means chronological differences does not remove the theme of Jesus as the Paschal lamb. John framed his narrative differently from the Synoptics. Textual evidence shows that while John antedates the Last Supper by twenty four hours so that Jesus becomes the Paschal lamb. In the same manner, John remains dependent on the tradition that resembles the understanding of the Synoptics that the Last Supper is the Passover.[7] Moreover, this explains the divergent traces of Passover elements in the Last Supper that seem difficult to reconcile because they come from various sources. Most modern scholars agree that various strands of the Last Supper tradition constitute the Gospel narratives and Paul's account. For example, one view states that Markan and Pauline traditions come from different sources, the former is more Semitic and the latter Hellenistic.[8] There are others who observe the shifting tradition, Mark on soteriological, while Paul on eschatological.[9] It is not a question of which form of tradition is the earliest and most original. But the critical historical reconstruction ascertains that the narrative has been securely based on "early and reliable tradition" and passed through various line of transmission.[10] Therefore, I tend to agree with the observation of Bradshaw that the attempt made by many scholars to harmonize the text is actually attempting the impossible.[11]

The words of Jesus over the bread and wine is another point of discussion for many scholars. From the outset, it is very clear that Jesus gave different meaning over the bread and wine

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[6] Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper*, 73.
[7] Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament,* 22.
[8] Paul Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins* (London: Oxford, 2004), 3.
[9] James D.G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), 161-168.
[10] Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper*, 56.
[11] Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, 10.

than the traditional Passover meal. Furthermore, the Synoptics recorded the words of Jesus over the wine and related it to the covenant. The Synoptics indicate that Jesus blessed the bread and the wine. But only in Luke's account we find that Jesus gave the blessing of the bread after the first blessing of the wine (Luke 22:19-20 compare with Mark 14:22 and Matthew 26:26). Jesus related the wine to the covenant (Matthew 26:27-28; Mark 14:23-24, Luke 17:17-20). But Matthew alone mentioned the expiatory effect of Jesus' blood for the forgiveness of sins while Mark 'related that Jesus' blood is "*poured out for many.*" Unique to Luke's account is when he related the blood of Jesus to the new covenant and commanded his disciples to divide it among them. Also, the Synoptics recorded the eschatological words of Jesus. All of the accounts indicate Jesus' vow of abstinence until the coming of the Kingdom of God may suggest that the Synoptic writers perceived the Last Supper as an anticipated messianic banquet (Matthew 26: 29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:16, 18). Both Matthew and Mark mentioned the vow once and describe Jesus' Last Supper as the last step in the final phase of the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

Textual evidence and literary analysis clearly suggest that Gospel writers have written their reflection of the same historical event in the life of Jesus and his disciples. Since it is a reflection, their differences suggest their varying theological emphasis. It is because what is recorded in the Gospels is not an actual description of the night that occurred on the fateful night before the death of Jesus, but a retrospective, a post-Easter reflection. As argued earlier, both the Synoptics and John despite of their seeming contradictions can be clearly read within the theological framework of the feast of the Passover which is Yahweh's act of redemption on behalf of his people. Evidences also show the intention to relate the symbols of the bread and wine to the redemptive act of Jesus, which suggests the fact that the Last Supper is recorded as part and parcel of the passion narrative. The varying degree of alteration and changes as indicated by the Synoptics and John (including Pauline text on the Lord's Supper) is a clue for the existing tradition being redefined to fit the intention of a particular author. What we have in our Gospels are records of tradition that goes back to the life of Jesus, which have been transformed by Christian communities. The variant readings do not cast any doubt that the Gospels and Paul are reporting the same material resulting from the inception of the Communion in the church.[12]

Continuity and Discontinuity of Traditions

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 has been regarded as Paul's institution of the Lord's Supper. It is also believed to have been written earlier to the Synoptic and Johannine accounts. Allusion to the importance of the Eucharist is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 and 10:1-22, but it is only in 11:23-26 that Paul discusses the rites of the Lord's Supper. In this section, the Corinthian passage is analyzed based on its socio-political and cultural context of the body of Christ in Corinth. Afterwards, significant themes from this passage are investigated in relation to the Gospel accounts. The goal is to determine how a particular tradition (that is believed to go

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[12] Albert Eichhorn, "The Lord's Supper in the New Testament," *Society of Biblical Literature: History of Biblical Studies* 1 (2007): 68.

back to the event of Jesus and his disciples) has taken new shape as it encountered a different set of circumstances.

At the outset, Paul's discussion on the Lord's Supper is motivated by a strong rebuke on the abuse of this important gathering. In short, it is not solely a doctrinal or theological issue, but behavioral or ethical. This can be demonstrated by Paul's repeated phrase " *when you come together*" (17, 18, 19). As it appears in the passage, it is connected with Paul's dissatisfaction of their attitude when coming together, "… *it is not for the better but for the worse*" (v.17) "… *I hear there are divisions among you*" (v.18), "… *I hear that there are factions among you …*" (v.19). What precisely was Paul referring to in this gathering or coming together is the observance of the Lord's Supper. "…*When you come together it is not really to eat the Lord's Supper*" (v.20). Their attitude and manner are inappropriate for the kind of occasion whenever they come together. For Paul, the fact that they ended up with one of them "*goes hungry and another drunk*" (v.21) proves only that there is disorder. Even before the meal started, a sense of division defined the relationship they have as a community. "*For when the time comes to eat, each of you go ahead with your own supper*" (v.21). Their relational problem which affects the true essence of coming together for the Lord's Supper is tantamount to contempt for the church of God and direct humiliation of the poor (v. 22). Paul's following discussion on the Lord's Supper in 11:17-33 is framed within the context of division within the community of God.

Gerd Thiessen's work on the social setting of Pauline Christianity is remarkably helpful in terms of the use of sociological method as part of biblical exegesis. In the case of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, Thiessen observes that the usual focus of the exegetical work is primarily on the theological aspect concerning the institution of the Lord's Supper. What is clearly emerging in the passage are the social factors that gave result to the conflict. Therefore, since the nature of the conflict at Corinth has a social background, this condition can be related to the theological issues which are present in 1 Corinthians 11:17ff.[13] As a result, both theological as well as sociological dimensions should be taken into consideration in the process of analysis. Discussion on Paul's ethical and theological emphasis will be tackled later.

The nature of their gathering is in the context of a meal or a supper. Primarily, it denotes the main meal of the day without any reference to the timing. In short, Paul's rebuke centers on their attitude suited for the occasion in which they come together to eat together. When they come together, the occasion is not simply to eat a regular ordinary meal, but the Supper of the Lord.[14] We need to bear in mind that Paul's description of the Lord's Supper was deeply connected to the problem of disintegration in the Corinthian's sense of the community. The issue is division and faction in the body of Christ. Paul in 10:17 already emphasized their unity as a body is constituted in their sharing of one bread. Therefore, their divisions at the

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[13] Gerd Thiessen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 146.

[14] Anthony Thieselton, *First Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2006), 183.

Lord's Supper discredits the unity they have.[15] After pointing out the problem of division, Paul reminded them an important tradition which was not new to the Corinthians.

The phrase "*what I receive from the Lord , I passed unto you*" does not necessarily mean that Paul received this tradition directly from the historical Jesus. It is clear from the text that Paul did not claim to be the originator of the tradition but a receiver. Ian Howard Marshall says that Paul was using a vocabulary from a Jewish teacher when he mentioned "*I received … I passed*…." It shows that Paul was citing "an existing form of words" and deemed it as somewhat an "official statement."[16] A. J. B. Higgins even suggests that Paul was not simply "reproducing the actual words of Jesus" but in the context of Rabbinic tradition he might be "possibly giving his own version of what he received" or a "Rabbinization of the tradition."[17] Perhaps, Paul was quoting a statement that he received from other Christians possibly Antioch, Damascus and Jerusalem. Therefore, it is likely that Paul's knowledge of how the Lord's Supper should be celebrated has its origin to the practice of the church in Jerusalem.

In the previous discussion, the textual and literary analysis suggests that the tradition of the Last Supper presented by the Gospel writers operates within the theological framework of the Passover. Jesus' words over the bread and the wine are related to two important themes; the New Covenant and the expected coming of the rule of God: the Kingdom of God. On the other hand, Paul stated that the tradition that gave shape to the Lord's Supper is based on the tradition he received from the Lord. In short, both Paul and the Gospels have their source on the tradition of Jesus which predated their written narrative. Since the goal of this paper is the analysis of Paul's institution of the Lord's Supper, the remaining discussion will focus on how he reinterpreted for the communities in Corinth the living tradition of Jesus. To do this, first, the eucharistic words of Jesus as narrated by Paul, will be analyzed in relation to the Gospels. Secondly, how Paul reinterpreted the tradition of Jesus in dealing with the problem of division in the community in Corinth will then be examined. Lastly, we will draw some ethical implications from Paul's theological discussion on the meaning of the Lord's Supper.

> [23] For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [25] In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." [26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26, NRSV)

Paul says that the tradition being handed to them goes back to the time of Jesus "*on the night he was betrayed*." The phrase is an allusion to the Last Supper celebrated during the Passover as indicated in the Gospels. Therefore, the Passover offers an interpretative key to Paul's institution of the Lord's Supper. The "historical anchorage" of the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper, according to Anthony Thieselton, is undoubtedly focal both in the pre-

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[15] Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 5th ed.* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2014), 587.

[16] Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper,* 32.

[17] A. J. B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the NT: Studies in Biblical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1952), 27.

Pauline and Pauline tradition. The historical context and the words of Jesus as cited in the tradition frames the liturgical words within the context of the Last Supper as a new Passover meal.[18] In the Synoptics, Jesus' words over the bread and the wine find reference to his sacrificial death and the covenant. The Synoptics recorded the breaking of the bread by Jesus after blessing it and distributed it to his disciples. Both Matthew and Mark contains an imperative to "take" the bread, while only the former has the command to "eat" it (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22). Luke on the other hand, simply broke the bread and gave it to his disciples with the command to do receive it as a "remembrance," which is similar to Paul (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11: 23-24). Moreover, the blood signifies the covenant (Matthew 26: 27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:20). Both Matthew and Mark mentioned the expression, "this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many" (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24). But again, Matthew deviated from Mark by giving an expiatory sense to the blood ("*which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins*").

Furthermore, only Luke, and Paul used the adjective "new" in reference to the covenant. Similarly, Paul's institutional statement over the bread and the cup (wine) is actually a proclamation of the death of the Lord until he comes (1 Cor 11:26), which also resonates with the source of the tradition that goes back to the event "on the night he was betrayed." Therefore, Thieselton is correct in concluding that the connection between the words of Jesus and Paul's explanation of their meaning resurfaces from the viewpoint of the Passover and the Passover meal.[19] Participation in the Lord's Supper does not commemorate the event of the Passover narrated in Exodus 12, instead, the meal becomes the occasion to visibly proclaim the death of Christ to all who participated in it, therefore, it is a form of discipleship. The phrase "*this is my body*" and "*this cup is the new covenant in my blood*" symbolizes the redemptive act of Jesus that paved the way to a new relationship with God and one another. Paul's recital of the words is intended to remind his readers of the *spirit* in which the meal should be observed.[20]

Conversely, there are important themes that Paul mentioned in his letter which are absent in the Gospels. Noteworthy is the word "remembrance " and "proclamation." Compared with the Gospels, substantial difference lies on Paul's repeated use of the phrase "remembrance of me" in v.v. 24, 25. It is absent both in Mark, Matthew and John, while Luke mentioned it only once. Also, Paul's additional comment about the Lord's Supper as a "proclamation of the Lord's death" in v.26 is also absent in the Gospel narratives. Instead, the Synoptics record the abstinence of Jesus until the coming of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25; Lk. 22:18). Paul's giving importance to the observance of the Lord's Supper as a form of proclamation is his own interpretation and it serves as a clue to where his present concern lies.[21] His main concern rests on the proceeding verses which contains a warning about an inappropriate spirit in coming together for the supper of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11: 27-32).

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[18] Thieselton, *First Corinthians,* 183.
[19] Thieselton, *First Corinthians,* 184.
[20] Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community,* rev. ed. (Massachusetts: Hendrikson, 1994), 82-83.
[21] Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 547.

This then is followed by an admonition to correct their out-of-step attitude during the observance of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11: 33-34).

As previously mentioned, Paul's institution of the Lord's Supper is motivated by an emerging problem in the house churches in Corinth which is conditioned by socio-economic factors. Paul's appeal to tradition is not intended to instruct the Corinthians on the proper observance of the rites of the Lord's Supper, but primarily on the attitude appropriate for this sacred occasion. This is Paul's clear variance with the Gospels. In the Gospels, the tradition of the Last Supper is placed within the passion narrative. What we have in the Gospels and in Paul's account is a post-Easter reflection of the tradition of the Last Supper perceived in the framework of the Passover. In like manner, Paul's reinterpretation of the tradition is dependent on its core emphasis (death, redemption, covenant, and eschatological hope) but reconfigured in the social context of the Corinthians. Consequently, Paul's institutional words over the Lord's Supper is accompanied by his own interpretation, which is unique in comparison with the Gospels (1 Corinthians 11:26). In order to clarify this the following discussion will focus on the social context of Paul's institution of the Lord's Supper.

Paul's Reinterpretation of Tradition in Sociological Context

Sociological reading of Paul's concept of the Lord's supper helped us to carefully consider the social condition of the problem in Corinth. As demonstrated, Paul's use of the tradition was heavily influenced primarily by sociological factors and not merely doctrinal or theological in nature. At the same time, sociological analysis assisted us to uncover Paul's use of tradition in the broader perspective namely, the social stratification embedded in the social ethos of Roman Empire. Below is a brief discussion on reading Paul's concept of the Lord's table as perceived in the context of the Roman banquet ideology.

The ancient meal was a social institution shared by all communities regardless of national ethnicity or religious underpinning. This is the kind of meal being shared by the early Christians recorded in the New Testament particularly in the gospels and some Pauline epistles. Here, Dennis E. Smith's work entitled *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World*, is helpful for the discussion. The gathering of early Christians around a meal was nothing unusual. All of the groups in the ancient world were doing the same thing. In short, the early Christians were just "following a pattern found throughout the ancient world."[22] His work shows that various studies and proposals on the origin and distinctiveness of the early Christian meal are all derived from the same Roman banquet tradition. Furthermore, the fact that early Christian's sense and experience of community was derived from table fellowship, early Christian liturgy was founded in the ideology of Roman banquet.[23] The most significant example is Paul's sharing of bread and wine as an "act that created a "one body" that is to say, was a "community-bonding ritual." Sharing of

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[22] Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 279.

[23] Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist,* 279.

bread and wine in a formal banquet was a "powerful form of social bonding."[24] Early Christian meals take the form of a Roman banquet club. The purpose of which is to honor a patron deity, thus it contains elaborate religious elements.[25] Smith concludes, that the early Christians' theology of community was significantly linked with the ritual of a table banquet in Graeco-Roman culture. In short, Christian meals were not unique in the culture in Greco-Roman world.

The above analysis is true to Greco-Roman context in which a meal "represents a social code" which signifies "patterns of social relation." (Footnote is required). Meals in every banquet galvanizes social bonding that leads to special ties. This aspect constitutes for the development of ethical social obligation defined not by individuals but as group values. Overall, in the Greco-Roman context, the nature of banquet tradition offers strong evidence that Christian communities gathered around this kind of meal which was shared by other communities. Smith and Tausig conclude that the Roman banquet not only provides a framework on the nature of the Christian meal but also a basis for the development of the "ideology" connected with their meal.[26] Interestingly, the nature of the meal is one central element in Paul's discussion of the Lord Supper. Paul's "words of institution" should not be detached from the Corinthian understanding of the nature of the meal. While it is true that the Lord Supper is an interpretation of what happened in the remaining hours of Jesus with his disciples, at the same time Paul's primary concern was the problem of division conditioned by social stratification. Basically, Smith is arguing that Paul's "theology" of the Lord's Supper "did not develop in a vacuum" instead, it was rooted in a "pre-existing ideological structure" of Roman banquet and "recast … in Christian terms."[27] For Smith, Paul's social ethics was derived from a banquet tradition of social obligation. Only later, in the coming generations were new theologies produced to support the new forms.[28]

Smith's conclusion that the Lord's Supper is simply a "recast" from the Roman banquet ideology should be clearly qualified. He would like to challenge the idea that the early Christians were distinct "by its creation of community of equals" (Footnote) which made them very attractive. Instead, the banquet tradition already "provided a model for such discourse." (Footnote). Smith argues that diners were aware of their different social ranking as part of the social stratification, yet a social meal also promoted social equality. Banquet meals "tended to breakdown social barriers" (Footenote) because in the ideology of the banquets two opposing social realities occur. Because of the inherent aspect of banquet as friendship, trust, and pleasure, the tension that occurs within social stratification on one

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[24] Dennis E. Smith, and Hal E. Taussig, *Many Tables: the Eucharist in the New Testament and Liturgy Today* (Oregon: WIPF, 2020), 29.

[25] Smith, and Taussig, *Many Tables*, 29.

[26] Smith, and Taussig, *Many Tables*, 36.

[27] See Smith's discussion in chapter 7, *From Symposium to Eucharist,* 173-217.

[28] Smith concluded his book with these words, "The picture of the earliest Christian communities that emerges from this study, then, is of communities that were formed sociologically and theologically by the ritual and banquet ideology. This was simply groups formed in the Graeco-Roman world. But over the generations, Christianity began to take on new forms and developed supportive theologies." Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist,* p.285.

hand, and social equality on the other tips the balance. It is because the prime component of social ethics discourse under the ideology of banquet was the ethical category of friendship.[29] Granted the Roman banquet tradition could be the social context of the conflict in Corinth, it does not mean that the Lord's Supper rite is rooted in a pre-existing ideological structure of the Roman banquet, if rooted means main foundation. In spite of many similarities with Roman *collegium* or a *symposium* (social gathering and an occasion for gaining or showing social status) the Lord's Supper is not identical with such associations. Rather, because of the many similarities with the meal-gathering in Roman culture, the Corinthians may have viewed their gatherings as some sort of "association" and behaved accordingly at the Lord's Supper.[30] On the contrary it was the tradition of the Last Supper in the framework of the Passover that the source of the Lord's Supper is rooted. The abuse that occurs at the Lord's table stems from their failure to recognize the theological and ethical implication of the spirit behind the sharing of this "sacred" meal: "*when you come together it is not really to eat the Lord's Supper.*" The occasion of the gathering transforms the occasion of the meal. Paul's rebuke on the attitude of the believers was a direct attempt to deconstruct the social stratification which defines the nature of the social clubs in ancient Graeco-Roman culture.[31] So while it is true that Smith's sociological reading of Paul's account is helpful to see the role of ideology in perceiving the issue of conflict and Corinth, I think he fails to integrate the theological aspect in his analysis.

Paul's re-interpretation of tradition clearly appears in the light of the Corinthian believers' social context. The problem of conflict and division is caused by social stratification which is an acceptable social dynamic in the Graeco-Roman culture. Furthermore, the Lord's Supper was an occasion for the believers in all walks of life to come and share a meal together. Paul's rebuke on the abuse of the Lord's Supper stems from the attitude of some believers (most probably the rich) in the way they treat their poorer members. Division erupts in their midst and in their coming together "*is not for the better but for worse*" (v.17). Paul reminded the Corinthians about the tradition that goes back to the time of Jesus "*on the night he was betrayed*" (v.23). Paul's institution of the Lord's Supper is shaped in the tradition of the Last Supper in the framework of the Passover. The elements represent the death, resurrection, new covenant and the realization of the eschatological hope. Paul's clear variance from the Gospel accounts was the inclusion of his own interpretation behind the spirit of the Lord's Supper (v.26). What is the implication of Paul's reinterpretation of the rite of the Lord's Supper in connection with the problem of conflict and division which affects the Christian unity of the believers?

Ethical Implication of Paul's Reinterpretation of Tradition

Traditions are essential to the life of any community particularly religious communities. Traditions constitute elements which shape one's beliefs, corporate memory and identity. As

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[29] Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist,* 105-123; 133-150.

[30] Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1995), 245.

[31] Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 244.

such, communities are nourished, critiqued and renewed for their growth and existence. But for Paul, tradition does not "collectively constitute" his gospel or 'dominate his thinking." It is an essential point of reference, "but no less certainly, he remains their interpreter."[32] 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26 belongs to a liturgical tradition which refers to Paul's statement "For I *received* … I also *handed* on …," an idiom for a passing of tradition. In passing it on Paul mentions two prominent words in this passage which are exclusive to him; "remembrance" (v.v.24, 25) and "proclamation" (v. 26). The former is associated with the significance of the bread and the wine, while the latter is for what the rite does. Victor Furnish says, that the tradition conveys "both *actions* and *sayings*" of the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed. Certainly the words of Jesus over the bread and the wine refer to his death. Now, Paul in his institution of the Lord's Supper reminded the Corinthians about this tradition not simply to remember the figure from the past, but to celebrate the living presence of the Lord. Similarly, the apostle's institutional words over the bread conveys indicative "statement" and instructional "imperative." The former refers to the words over the bread and wine which presents the sacrificial death of Jesus and the New Covenant. On the other hand, the latter denotes the action of "remembering." Thus, according to Furnish, every time the believers would gather to observe the Lord's Supper they remember and *affirm* the saving presence of the Lord and *proclaim* the "life-giving death" of Jesus. This truth constitutes their identity as the visible expression of body of Christ.[33].

The Apostle warned the believers of their attitude whenever they participate on this special occasion. He warned the believers about "*unworthy manner*" (v.27) and an admonition to examination (v.28), which notifies them about the possible judgment against themselves (v.29).

> [27] *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord.* [28] *Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup.* [29] *For all who eat and drink without discerning the body,[i] eat and drink judgment against themselves.*

The whole warning points to "*sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord*." Moreover, he admonished the believers to " *discern the body*" in order to avoid self-judgment. In keeping with the flow of his argument, "discerning the body" could refer to the church (not universal, but the local assembly in Corinth) as a visible expression of the body of Christ. Accordingly, the " body" may also mean the body of Christ as represented by the elements on the Lord's Supper. Therefore, this leads to Paul's rebuke that the Lord's Supper is not just an ordinary meal or a gathering similar to the Graeco-Roman clubs and associations. But reading it in the context of social relation of the Corinthian believers, to participate in "*an unworthy manner*" is to "eat in a way that provokes division" (v.18).[34] They should eat the Lord's Supper truly in honor of Christ's death and coming.[35] To "*be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of*

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[32] Victor Furnish, *The Theology of the First Letter to the Corinthians*, ed. J. D. G. Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 21.

[33] Furnish, *The Theology of the First Letter to the Corinthians*, 80-81.

[34] Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 606.

[35] Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 616.

the Lord" is to sin against the body of Christ, the people of God founded in the New Covenant. The Corinthians have failed to recognize that the community of believers is what the body of Christ stands for.[36]

Paul gave his recommendation on how to deal with their conflict and division;

> [33] *So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.* [34] *If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation.*

Since the Lord's Supper is not just an ordinary meal, whenever they come together for this purpose they should "*wait for one another.*" And if they feel hungry, they could satisfy their hunger in their own private houses. It appears that social distinction underlines the cause of the division. The problem of division came to him through someone else and he believed that it was happening in their midst (11:18). Most scholars agree that the division was between the rich and the poor (11:20-22).[37] Theissen says that the opposing groups were those who have no food and those who can avail for themselves. The latter were "at least to some degree well-off" and may have their own houses which give them a "high social status" while majority of the member belong to lower strata. For Thiessen, the early Hellenistic congregation in Corinth was marked with "internal stratification" in which few are wise and of noble birth. Furthermore, the text suggests that the problem was the attitude of the rich who go ahead and eat their own supper. This resulted in some to going hungry while others were drunk. The rich with their behavior were "humiliating those who have nothing." Their wealth gave them social status so that they 'can bring food both for themselves and for others." So most likely if some Christians have no *idiom deipnon* (private meal) it connotes that not all were able to contribute for the Lord Supper and that "the wealthier Christians provided for all (*ek ton idiom*)."[38] Sadly, the poor were being abused by their competition. The rich discriminated themselves from the poor by eating ahead and not wanting to wait for their arrival (11:21, 33). Also, discrimination is expressed by the quality and quantity of their portion in the meal, "one person remains hungry and the other gets drunk," and by

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[36] Richard Hays, *First Corinthians, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press , 1997), 200.

[37] Similarly, Ben Witherington sees the problem as "further stratification and division amongst 'the have and the have nots' portions of the church in Corinth." It appears that the context of the Lord's supper happened in social setting of a meal probably, an agape meal. Ben Witherington III, *Making a Meal* (Waco Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007). In a similar vein, Stephen Barton argues that the issue was about boundary marker. Some in Corinth intent on "collapsing together categories of household and church, and meal serves as boundary marker." Stephen C. Barton, "Paul's Sense of Place: An Anthropological Approach to Community Formation in Corinth," *New Testament Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 1986): 237.

[38] Witherington, on the other hand, perceives the problem as some Christians treated their gatherings as if it were a typical private Graeco-Roman dinner party which was associated with ancient Roman associations or club with all the frills and privileges attached to it. Paul's rebuke of those "who go ahead and eat their private meal" may correspond to the "private meal by the wealthy" in which portions were not available to those who have nothing. This kind of entitlement was a mockery of the body of Christ and a direct humiliation of the poor. The Lord's supper should be celebrated in the context of coming together as one people, as a church. But it seems that the rich were behaving as if they were on their own private houses. Paul's use of "house' (oikos) and "church/ assembly" (ekklesia) in the context is significant in the discussion. According to Witherington, "the overlap between house and church setting led, no doubt, to some social confusion as to what the convention of behavior should be." Witherington, *Making a Meal,* p.48.

separating themselves to eat their meal and refusal to share (11:21). Their eating practices were a demonstration of social status to the point of imposing shame (11:22).[39] Therefore, their blatant division was the main reason that Paul told them "*when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat.*" While the context was clearly the coming together of the church for the Lord's Supper, their behavior made a mockery of the true spirit of the celebration.

Paul's final imperative provides the resolution for their problem of conflict and division: "*So then, my brothers and sisters when you come together to eat, wait for one another*" (v. 33). The imperative to *wait for one another* may be interpreted as Paul's admonition to the rich - those who have enough - to wait for the poor - those who do not have enough so that they may eat the meal together and celebrate the Lord's Supper in one spirit. It may also mean "to welcome one another" (cf Romans 15:7), a reference to receiving the poor with unqualified welcome. Paul's solution has been perceived in various ways. For Thiessen, Paul's antidote for the problem was to come up with an agreement, "within their own four walls they are to behave according to the norms of their social status, while at the Lord's supper the norms of the congregation have the absolute priority. Clearly this is a compromise."[40] Paul was aware that the ethos of the Roman banquet ideology looms over the fragile unity of the community. Thus, according to Witherington, Paul was "trying to construct a social practice" which was counter-cultural to the ethos of Roman banquet ideology. He wanted the fellowship meal to be more "egalitarian "compared with the Graeco-Roman meal. Paul does not want to eliminate social distinction. But privileges associated with social status as seen in the Roman banquet should not be placed on the common meal of the believers, where their partaking of the one bread which constituted their unity as the body of Christ.[41] For Barton, Paul's instruction about the meal were intended to provide a venue for the "reordering of social relations in the church by restricting the household-based power" and to move away from competition toward cooperation.[42] Scholars' opinions vary on the precise sociological motif of Paul's resolution. But undeniably the clear emphasis centers on the fundamental meaning of their coming together for the Lord's Supper. *It is the essential foundation of their unity as one body.* Early on, Paul already associated the breaking of the bread with the sense of unity they have as the visible body of Christ when he said, "*And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? (1 Cor.10: 16b).* It is in the occasion of the Lord's Supper that the real essence of participation in the body of Christ occurs. Moreover, since the body of Christ is one, their diversity does not mean division but unity, "*Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf*" (1 Cor. 10:17). The theological emphasis of the Lord's Supper has ethical implications. It calls for a social reordering of the

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[39] For a view suggesting that Paul wanted to differentiate between commensality in church and at home when he differentiated the Lord's meal and the private meal (11: 20-21). Barton, "Paul's Sense of Place," 239.

[40] Thiessen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, 164.

[41] Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 616.

[42] Barton, "*Paul's Sense of Place*," 239.

body of Christ as alternative community, and possibly a critique against Roman banquet ideology as proposed by other scholars.[43]

The ethical implications of the Lord's Supper became evident only when it is perceived in the ancient Greco-Roman socioeconomic and cultural context. Biblical scholars undeniably benefit from the social analysis required to reconstruct the situation of the church at Corinth. It becomes clear that Paul, as a man of his time, clearly engaged the danger of division occurring among the believers. His appeal to the tradition was not to advance a purely new theological understanding in order to remedy the existing problem. Instead, he reminded the Corinthians that the tradition which have been faithfully handed down to them, constitutes their social identity. Their new identity which they received from the sacrificial death of Jesus should serve as a mirror of how they should relate to one another and to the world. Here, Paul's own interpretation of the Last Supper (1 Corinthians 11:26) is a call for the Corinthian to test their action under the cross of Jesus (*Crux probat omnia*).

Conclusion:

Paul's (re) institution of the Lord's Supper is an outworking of the living tradition that goes back to the historical Jesus. The sociological context of the Corinthians has influenced the reconfiguration of such tradition. Paul's genius to affect the theological and ethical implication of tradition is a result of his clear grasp of the Graeco-Roman cultural influence on the churches in Corinth. The tradition (clearly known by the Corinthians) has taken a new dimension as a result of its direct engagement with the social stratification that threatened the unity of the body of Christ. The rite of eucharist became a reminder (remembrance) of their true identity in Christ and a visible proclamation of the life-giving sacrifice of Christ.

Paul's reconfiguration of tradition exemplifies an important feature of contextualization. It is allowing the teaching of the Scriptures to speak afresh within the social context of a community. The Apostle's re-appropriation of the teaching of Jesus is a result of his ability to integrate culture and tradition as part of the process. Furthermore, the ethical implications brought about by this process has enabled the community to perform its task to be an alternative community and not a separatist and isolated one.

Lastly, this paper is an invitation for a further conversation on the role of liturgy. How liturgy in our churches could serve as a *meaningful* remembrance of our identity as a covenant people of God? More importantly, how this sense of identity could *translate* into action. What

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[43] Streett sees it in a different vantage point; the fellowship meal of Paul was subversive and anti-imperialistic. He argues that whenever the early Christians gathered together to eat in the Lord's supper as community of the Kingdom, and in so doing "they upheld the ethics of the Kingdom & opposed the ideology of the Empire." R. Allan Streett, *Subversive Meals; An Analysis of the Lord's Supper Under Roman Domination During the First Century* (Oregon: Pickwick, 2013), page number please.

does it mean to be a covenant community of God in the midst of injustices, violence, oppression and war?

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Book Review

Dr Xavier Lakshmanan

Author: Xavier is a lecturer of systematic theology and hermeneutics. Currently he serves as the Dean of Research and Postgraduate Studies at Australian College of Christian Studies. Xavier has published a book, Textual Linguistic Theology in Paul Ricouer, and several articles in theology. He has completed his Doctor of Philosophy in theology and hermeneutic philosophy through Charles Sturt University, Australia. His research interest is in theology and philosophy.

Jensen, Michael P. *Theological Anthropology and the Great Literary Genres: Understanding the Human Story.* London: Fortress Academic, 2019. 1-205.

Jensen is the author of several important books, including *Martyrdom and Identity: The Self on Trial* (T&T Clark 2010) and *My God, My God: Is it Possible to Believe Anymore?* (Cascade books 2013). He earned his DPhil from the University of Oxford. He is a lecturer of theology at the Sydney College of Divinity and Australian College of Theology.

Jensen's work, entitled *Theological Anthropology and the Great Literary Genres,* is a brilliant piece of research, which is creative and constructive, making a significant contribution to contemporary theological conversation. The book is reader-friendly and easy to follow through as it is well structured. The reader delighted in the arguments, perspectives, and proposals of the author in the work though it does not escape several reflective observations. The book is an important piece of research in the field of narrative and ontology.

The work is all about a narrative discourse of life, a theo-anthropology based upon the narrative qualities of life (p.9). The way Jensen opens the book is unique: it is thoughtfully decisive and epistemologically revealing: "Stories are theological. And because they are theological, they are also anthropological. They tell us about God - or gods - and they tell us about ourselves" (p.1). Thus, stories are unique means for discourse of life. It felt like reading John Calvin's opening statement in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* where Calvin says: "True and solid wisdom consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and ourselves."[1]

The work is divided into seven sections. Jensen structures the seven chapters of the work in the following order: "Senses of Ending," "Genre as Theology," "Narrative and Ontology,"

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[1] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* trans. Henry Beveridge (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2012, 4.

"Epic," "Comedy," "Tragedy," and the "Gospel." The author maintains the unity of the work by employing logical arguments and consistent transitions to bring the central theme of the book to the Gospel of Christ as an "existential game-changer for the ages" (Back flap).

In the first chapter, entitled "Senses of Ending," the author establishes that human beings are narrative beings who always tell stories to one another and about one another (p.1). By analysing the novel of Julian Barnes and the work of David Shields and James Woods, Jensen demonstrates that the impulse of narrative not only calls for beginnings, middle and ends, which are the episodic dimensions of life, but also it organises the time for human beings (Pp.1-11). In other words, the author is analysing the narrative structure of existence in which life as a reality is endowed with a story-telling quality which consists of meaningful structures, semiotic patterns, and qualities of time. All within the constraints of narrative beginning and ending - birth and death - through the holding and moulding of time.

In the second chapter, namely, "Genre as Theology," the author outlines that the major genres are theological entities, and thus, they are "ontological domains" of meaning that relate human beings and their existence to realms that transcend them (Pp.13-26). He argues that "Genres form powerful systems for making meaning through literary texts, which orient human beings to certain accounts of transcendence, purpose, and identity" (p.13). Consequently, for Jensen, genres have an "ontological vehemence" to provide us with the surplus of meaning and the surplus of being. In this way, genres make theo-anthropological claims. Further, by juxtaposing a "taxonomy of theology," the writer explores the relation between human ordering of the world and the structure of being implicit in the world (Pp. 26-32). Jensen affirms that "Wisdom is an ontological principle: the fabric of the cosmos is on the same level as the business of ordinary human life" (p.28). Thus, for him, Genres are "patterns or structures of meaning-making" (p.31). As a result, they are "theo-anthropological" (p.31) and theological for "genres form part of divine ordering of the world and the human cooperation with that process" (p.31).

In the third chapter entitled, "Narrative and Ontology" (Pp.37-65), Jensen develops an account of the narrative theology in order for opening up the possibility of "a narrative ontology rooted in the divine being" (p.10). He demonstrates that "genres have an ontological significance" (p.37) in which "the world, and human experience, are narratological places" (p.37). Accordingly, the author argues that "the world really is a meaningful and meaning-generating place in storied form" (p.37). Following the intellectual impulses of Balthasar through a multitude of experts like Derrida, Barth, Lindbeck, Frei, Hauerwas, Ricoeur and others, Jensen arrives at the ontological affirmation that "story-types are reality themselves" (p.38). They are the narrative ontology of the divine human beings, which in Balthasar's terminology, is the "higher drama" of life that was in "the very heart of God" (p. 48). Thus, he arrives at developing a narrative ontology of both divine and human persons and their relationships (p. 60) as "a way of speaking about God's being that is in sympathy with God's own self-disclosure" (p.61).

In the following three chapters, the author provides a dense analysis of the three key genres of western literature, namely, epic, comedy and tragedy with an intention to constructively apply the theo-anthropological framework to these specific genre types (Pp.67-180). Needless to say, this is a constructive and ground-breaking contribution to the field of study in which the author shows to the reader right front of their eyes that "stories are fundamental to who we are" but "confirmed and completed by the divinely told story" as recorded in the Scriptures. In chapter four, Jensen inquires into the theo-anthropological commitments expressed in epic literature (p.67). He affirms that an "epic is the basic story that the human species tells itself about itself" (p.67). So, an "epic man is a mortal being who realises that he will one day die" (p.67). Thus, epic "traces the resilience of humankind in a world in which they are not immortal, nor are they sovereign" (p.96).

In the fifth chapter, the writer demonstrates that "the comic universe is a deeply moral one. Comedy may hide its moralism under laughter: but laughter is one of the most powerful instruments of justice ever devised" (p.103). The sixth chapter is dedicated to address the issue of tragedy in which humans come closest to seeing themselves as in the grip of fate (Pp. 139-180). For Jensen, "tragedy is simply the recognition in literary form that, in human life, suffering and death are inevitable" (p.139). Tragedy addresses the issue of "what is the way to be or things to do, in the midst of trials?" (p.139). Jensen argues that tragedy serves human beings by showing them that "there is much in human existence about which to weep, and to be afraid" (p.175). Nevertheless, the gospel is a drama that encompasses the tragic of human life to triumph, which is the final chapter of the book.

In the final chapter, namely, "Gospel" (Pp.181-186), the author concludes the book by arguing that "stories are fundamental to who we are" and it is "confirmed and completed by the divinely told story" as the Christian Scriptures presents (p.11). Jensen argues that "the death of Christ is the model for sacrificial service of the other" and "his death is the model for a new way of life with one another" (p.175). He establishes that the telling of stories moves us into the realm of "the ultimate concern" (p.181). Thus, human life is a series of events in which "we tell ourselves stories in order to live" (p.181). In this way, "The gospel is an ingenious plot with a surprising punchline: the empty tomb" (p. 183), which is an intimation of "more to come" - "'the sense of an ending that is not just an end-point, but a completion" (p.186).

Consequently, the author comes to the conclusion of the book where "the human is a linguistic creature" (p.54). Humans always tell stories, and they are always caught up in a story or stories. The quality of telling stories moves humans to the domain of the divine - the ultimate concern in Paul Tillich's words. As a result, humans inhabit a world, which is a "series of events" or narrative episodes, called life. However, the epic, comedy, and tragedy describe the human world incompletely. Nevertheless, the story of Christ in the gospels transforms the "sense of the ending," which in Heideggerian terminology, "the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all"[2] from being the "end-point" or dead end to the

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[2] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. John Macquarrie (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 307.

"completion" point in which end becomes endless, hope becomes more hopeful, mortal becomes immortal, partial becomes full, and temporal becomes eternal. Thus, the gospel of Christ as the redeeming story becomes the game-changer of the ages.

Additionally, the following features can be observed in Jensen's work. First, from the perspective of the central claim of the book, Jensen's approach is praiseworthy for he is attempting to accomplish an age long dream of several theologians in narrative theology. In the past, though narrative theologians claimed to do narrative theology, they often failed to really do it or show it done. Nevertheless, the distinctiveness of Jensen's work as a narrative discourse of life is a way of showing to do narrative theology. This is what Vanhoozer commented about Jensen's work, the research in narrative and ontology has gone to the extent to affirm that "Stories belong to various genres, and human identity is story-shaped" (Back Flap). But Jensen courageously travels a significant mile ahead to demonstrate that, "literary forms are themselves formative of human beings" (Back Flap). To put it in Paul Ricoeur's words, "man is language through and through."[3]

The second observation is about the focus of the book. In the first statement of the book, Jensen makes a clear promise to his readers, which he calls "the central claim of the book" (p.1). This reader can see Jensen developing the central thesis of the book systematically and methodologically engaging with several major traditions, perspectives and key thinkers in the field. He keeps the focus of the study always constant throughout the book. The form and the structure of the book is consistent and logically interrelated to each other, ultimately answering the principal question of the book. His analysis and appropriation of paradigms and traditions are stellar. His special interest to engage with primary literature in the field is so evident. He maintains clarity and simplicity along with excellent connections and transitions, which add to the style of his writing. Even an unfamiliar reader will not wander in the book because the pathways are straight, progression of thought is clear, and crossroads are well worked out with directions. The author's style of highlighting the major insights drawn from discussions at the end of almost every section as a continued thread of argument and conceptual development is very helpful. He perfectly brings the conversation to a fitting end in which he does not claim what he says he is doing but he clearly "shows" in front of the reader that each genre is a "theological approach" in which not just human but divine being is also open to a narrative conception.

Third, in this reader's observation, Jensen's work surpasses a mortifying common criticism levelled against great literature in the field of narrative theory. Experts vehemently criticise works in narrative such as Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* for they are dense theoretical and methodological analysis of narrative theory, having no narrative in them at all. In fact, Jensen's work is full of illuminating and interesting stories, examples, illustrations used in

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[3] Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Evanston: North-western University Press, 1974), x.

such a way of engaging in dialogical conversation without compromising the theoretical and methodological rigour.

Fourth, in this reviewer's experience, it is a dynamic narrative piece that not just makes claims to reality or makes mere recommendations for reality, but the book does present reality infront of the reader as if a performance. In this dramatic presentation, the reader is carried through the flow and current of the arguments to see and participate in what the author wanted to say. In other words, one can see and experience the reality in what is being said. To this reader's delight, looking through Paul Ricoeur, the author presents the world of the book in front of the world of the reader to encounter. In that encountering intersection, no genuine reader would escape a deconstructive collision that will result in a transforming reconstruction. No wonder why Vanhoozer observed Jensen presenting the genre of the gospel as an "existential game-changer for the ages" (Back Flap).

Another characteristic of the book is a powerful display of Jensen's commitment to biblical narrative. At times, his passion to forcefully engage with and critique the claims of skeptics and non-biblical positions is clearly evident. He not only strives to defend the validity of the biblical narrative but also, he ensures that every conversation in the book climaxes in the Christ-event, consisting of incarnation, cross and the resurrection of Christ. In reality, according to the perspective of the book, every Christian is caught up in the story of Christ, which is capable of transforming the temporal into eternal.

Finally, as a personal statement, this reader delighted in every bit of the book. At times, I felt that I am totally immersed in the author's thought. I could observe myself experiencing the *catharsis* Jensen discussed in several places in the book. I was able to feel the heuristic power arising from engaging with Jensen's thoughts and his arguments. Nevertheless, I have a favourite part of the book. I personally delighted in his analysis of the "theology of tragedy." In my analysis, *Theological Anthropology and the Great Literary Genres* is a great contribution to the field of contemporary theology.

Bbilography

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