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Logoi Pistoi

We are pleased to announce the publication of the seventh volume 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, students, and associated academics. The Journal serves a dual role of showcasing research carried out within ACCS and generates critical thinking and debate on the 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, Dr Theron Young, and Dr Sehyun Kim. 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 seventh volume 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 commenced the internationalisation 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 an institute of higher education that operates in a niche market, offering degrees in Counselling, Ministry, Theology, and Education to its multi-denominational client group. Courses are offered at Diploma, 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

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Crucifixion of Christ: A Greco-Roman Fabric of Justice

Dr Xavier Lakshmanan

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***Abstract:** This paper is a study on the crucifixion of Christ. Christ's death is the essence of Christian faith. Christianity stands or falls by the atoning death of Christ. It is the heart of the gospel. It is the ontological foundation of Christian truth. The history of Christian thought witnesses to a variety of significant theories of atonement. Nevertheless, this research investigates the crucifixion of Christ from its socio-political context of the Greco-Roman world. It argues that the crucifixion of Christ was an execution of the Greco-Roman fabric of justice. Engaging the torture practices employed within the Graeco-Roman justice system, the author argues that the passion of Christ was not only to be seen as atoning for sin," but a violent death caused by a systematic political torture scheme, which was an integral part of the justice system of the day. Thus, the study will posit that a contextual socio-political exploration of Christ's crucifixion may prove fruitful, promising a fresh opportunity and resource for discoursing Christ's suffering and death in a meaningful way without limiting the biblical message of atonement, nor eroding the meaning of the biblical text with those who endured suffering and abuse amongst us.*

***Key Words:** crucifixion, atonement, suffering, culture, abuse, humiliation, justice*

Introduction

This paper is the first in a series of four studies on the crucifixion of Christ. The current study explores the crucifixion of Christ as a Greco-Roman fabric of justice. The second paper in the series will substantiate the crucifixion of Christ as a political hermeneutic of control. Third paper will examine the aesthetic of torture employed in the crucifixion of Christ. The final study will affirm that Jesus not only underwent all the torture practices of Rome, but also horrifying sexual abuse. Together, the series will provide a resource to engage the innocent- sufferings of Christ with those who endured abuse, humiliation, harassment, and shame amongst us.

The current research investigates the crucifixion of Christ from its socio-political context of the Greco-Roman world. It discourses the question whether Jesus died a religious death as has always been portrayed by the theological constructs of atonement? Or has he died a death as an execution of the Roman juridical system, which has religious significance? In this paper, the author argues

that the crucifixion of Christ was an execution of the Greco-Roman fabric of justice though his death has a religious and spiritual significance. Engaging the torture practices employed within the Graeco-Roman justice system, the study posits that the passion of Christ was not only to be seen as an atoning sacrifice for sin, but a violent death caused by a systematic political torture scheme, which was an integral part of the justice system of the Roman empire. The author contends that a contextual socio-political investigation of Christ's crucifixion may prove fruitful, promising a fresh opportunity and resource for discoursing Christ's suffering and death in a meaningful way without limiting the biblical message of atonement, nor eroding the meaning of the biblical text. Thus, an abused Saviour but innocent, can be seen as a resource for a theological engagement with those who endured sexual abuse, humiliation, harassment, and shame in life.

Such a specific focus of the study is not to undervalue the author's theological position that Christ's death is the essence of Christian faith. Christianity stands or falls by the atoning death of Christ. It is the heart of the gospel. It is the ontological foundation of Christian truth.¹ Nevertheless, it is to affirm that a huge amount of research is directed to understanding the biblical and theological concept of Christ's suffering and death over the past ages. The history of Christian thought witnesses to a variety of significant theories of atonement,² ranging from Anselm's vicarious satisfaction, Abelard's moral influence, Gregory of Nyssa's bait and hook model, Martin Luther's happy exchange, and René Girard's scapegoating account, and so on.³ Though important, these theories have been subject to stark theological, anthropological, and philosophical critique for their incompetent metaphysical frameworks to address the methodological, conceptual, contextual and existential complexities of life.⁴

Investigating the socio-political reality of Christ's crucifixion as a fabric of justice, the study will first locate the practice of crucifixion in the framework of justice in the ancient world. Second, the author will demonstrate the place of crucifixion in the justice system of the Greek world. Third, the study will engage the practice of crucifixion within the Roman context of justice. Finally, the paper will reflectively demonstrate the implications of Jesus' crucifixion to us today.

1. Crucifixion in the Framework of Justice

What was the place of crucifixion within the framework of justice in the ancient world? Was the crucifixion linked to the religious systems or to the political and juridical systems? Crucifixion has often been structured within a contextual framework of justice in the ancient world.⁵ It was a

¹ F. W. Grant, *Atonement: In Type, Prophecy and Accomplishment* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020), 1-224.

² For modern interpretations of the theories of atonement, see Thomas Hywel Hughes, *The Atonement: Modern Theories of the Doctrine* (Routledge, 2018), <https://www.perlego.com/book/14906655/revival-the-atonement-1949-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021).

³ Catherine Cornille provides a sweeping analysis of such theological critiques and sets out pathways for comparative theological engagement. Catherine Cornille ed., *Atonement and Comparative Theology: The Cross in Dialogue with Other Religions* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2021), 1-320.

⁴ Cornille ed., *Atonement and Comparative Theology: The Cross in Dialogue with Other Religions* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2021), 1-320.

⁵ Edward Peters, *Torture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

widespread method of execution in the ancient world.⁶ It was a form of capital punishment of utmost brutality.⁷ Crucifixion was designed in such a way to slow down the painful death of the victim so that the execution on the cross will become a long lasting public spectacle that will declare to the public that it is the favourite Roman method of disposing the enemies of the state.⁸ Cross was used as a “method of terrorising” the public and the opponents alike.⁹

Hands and feet of a human being was nailed or tied to a cross or a picket, leaving the body to hang in a public exhibition for several hours and days till death occurs.¹⁰ The form of crucifixion, the severity of torture, and the politically intended outcomes always varied from social context to context.¹¹ Invented by Persians, it was practiced by Indians, Assyrians, Scythians, Taurians, and Carthaginians.¹² The Greeks and Romans implemented sophisticated methods of crucifixion in which it was not always evident whether the victim was crucified alive or dead, nailed or bound to a stake.¹³ But what is always clear is that the victim was killed in the most cruel way, subjecting them to extreme public indignity, humiliation, and shame.¹⁴ The executioners demonstrated extreme rage, caprice, and sadism upon the victim, who went through several atrocious customary torture practices such as flogging prior to the execution.¹⁵ The soldiers with rage and hatred bore the prisoners; nailed them to the cross with a hope that the horrifying sight will move the besieged to surrender. Some victims were rolled in wild animal’s skins, torn to death by dogs, or fastened on crosses and burned to serve as lamps by night.¹⁶

⁶ This paper does not engage with the Jewish context of the crucifixion while it maintains that Jews also practiced such methods of execution as “burning, stoning, being thrown from a high cliff, and crucifixion. All structured within a theocratic fabric of justice. Mark P. Donnelly and Daniel Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain: Torture and Punishment through History* (The History Press, 2012), <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021). Paul Winter also provides a systematic presentation of the argument that the Jews of Jesus’ time had adopted the practice of crucifixion as part of their legal system. He substantiates that it is the Sanhedrin that sentenced Jesus. Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 91-109. <https://www.perlego.com/book/653746/on-the-trial-of-jesus-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021).

⁷ Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 2, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021).

⁸ Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 2, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021).

⁹ Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 2, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021).

¹⁰ Winter *On the Trial of Jesus*, Chapter 7, <https://www.perlego.com/book/653746/on-the-trial-of-jesus-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021). CF. Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021).

¹¹ Peters, *Torture*, Chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021).

¹² Peters, *Torture*, Chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021). CF. Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 2, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021).

¹³ Paul Winter *On the Trial of Jesus*, Chapter 7, <https://www.perlego.com/book/653746/on-the-trial-of-jesus-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021). CF. Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), <https://www.perlego.com/book/1733821/crucifixion-pdf> (Accessed: 21 September 2021).

¹⁴ Paul Winter *On the Trial of Jesus*, Chapter 7, <https://www.perlego.com/book/653746/on-the-trial-of-jesus-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021). CF. Hengel, *Crucifixion*, Chapter 4, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1733821/crucifixion-pdf> (Accessed: 21 September 2021).

¹⁵ Gary Habermas and Benjamin C. F. Shaw, “Crucifixion in the Ancient World: A Historical Analysis,” *Eleuthera* 5, No. 1 (2021), 15. Hengel, *Crucifixion*, Chapter 4, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1733821/crucifixion-pdf> (Accessed: 21 September 2021).

¹⁶ Hengel, *Crucifixion*, chapter 4, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1733821/crucifixion-pdf> (Accessed: 21 September 2021).

In his classical work on *Crucifixion*, Martin Hengel provides a systematic historical account of the pervasiveness and cruelty of crucifixion.¹⁷ His analysis methodically engages with the way in which the most obnoxious death of the cross executed from the world of ancient barbarianism to Greek-speaking to Roman occupied Palestine.¹⁸ Hengel's conclusions are frightening for his account competently demonstrates the extreme offensiveness of the Christian message.¹⁹ It vigorously depicts that the Jesus of Nazareth died the most gruesome death of all crucified²⁰ though there are natural tendencies such as the one developed by David Strauss who claimed that Jesus was not dead but “half-dead” and survived hours of crucifixion, and later declared risen.²¹

Nevertheless, the weakness of Hengel's account lies in the specific perspective he employed in his inquiry. Heavily influenced by a Christian worldview and a contemporary humanitarian social justice approach, he narrates the history of crucifixion out of its original structures of justice. Though such an approach appeals to the postmodern mind, it is deficient in the process of investigating the reality of crucifixion. It is at this point, Edward Peter's recent work *Torture* is an epistemological tool to understand the ontological nature of crucifixion, structured and regulated within a socio-contextual framework of justice, is helpful.²² It can be construed through Peter's arguments that, though the human capacity to inflict pain on fellow humans in the name of legal systems, for personal gratification, and struggle for power and control is globally common, it may be pedantic to sentimentally overemphasise it out of the fabric of justice system in the context.²³ Peter's decisive position can be further justified by *The Big Book of Pain*, in which Donnelly and Diehl explore the systematic use of torture, cruelty, and torment as a means of punishment over the ages.²⁴

Consequently, moving beyond the customary “sentimental” positions, Peter argues that crucifixion and torture began as “a legal practice,” within a framework of justice, whose essence consists always in “its public character.”²⁵ The systemic function of torture within a legal constitution was to operate as a process of “inquiry after truth by means of torment.”²⁶ The particular torment could be physical, mental or emotional, legitimately ordered by a magistrate. Such a procedure of torture was heavily practiced in Graeco-Roman world and later applied to European civil law systems until nineteenth centuries.²⁷ As a result, there is a distinction between assaults of all kinds and a

¹⁷ Hengel, *Crucifixion*, Chapter 4, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1733821/crucifixion-pdf> (Accessed: 21 September 2021).

¹⁸ Hengel, *Crucifixion*, Chapter, 4, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1733821/crucifixion-pdf> (Accessed: 21 September 2021).

¹⁹ Hengel, *Crucifixion*, Chapter, 4, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1733821/crucifixion-pdf> (Accessed: 21 September 2021).

²⁰ Hengel, *Crucifixion*, Chapter 4, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1733821/crucifixion-pdf> (Accessed: 21 September 2021).

²¹ Habermas and Shaw, “Crucifixion in the Ancient World: A Historical Analysis,” 14.

²² Edward Peters, *Torture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

²³ Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

²⁴ Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021).

²⁵ Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

²⁶ Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

²⁷ Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021).

practice of torture. Torture is a practice of torment organised and executed by a higher authority within the juridical procedure while assault is an act of barbarianism, causing pain and torment outside a juridical system.²⁸ This leads us to explore how the crucifixion and torture practices were linked to the fabric of justice in the ancient Greek world.

2. Crucifixion in the Greek Framework of Justice

Crucifixion and the related torture practices as a distinct fabric of justice system in the Greek world emerged by the invention of *nomos*, an abstract system of law in 700 BC.²⁹ This striking transition of the communal legal system to a complex system of human social relations introduced the problem of evidence and a distinction between the free humans and the slaves.³⁰ The Greek's traditional understanding of the law consisted of an *agon*, a communal witness; guided by *themis*, the contextual customs; and supported by an *epikeia*, the appropriate behaviour.³¹ But the issue of evidence pushed the Greeks away from the communal fabric of justice to a system of *dike* in which in the early stages, the voluntary arbitrators pronounced the justice statements. This juridical procedure oriented them to an organised system of trials.³²

This position can be further argued by referring to a systematic analysis that Aristotle provided in the fifteenth chapter of the first book of his seminal work, *Rhetoric*. Aristotle portrays five extrinsic juridical tools as a “non-technical means of persuasion” in the legal process of a trial: “the laws, witness, contracts, torture, and oaths.”³³ He consistently demonstrates the rules that must be employed in the context of an “accusation and defence.”³⁴ His use of the Greek terminology *basanos* for torture that philologically expresses the idea of inserting a metallic rod as a criterion to measure and verify the validity of its content, is revealing.³⁵ Aristotle maintained that “justice is like silver, and it must be assayed by the judges, if the genuine is to be distinguished from the counterpart.”³⁶ The pathway to the truth is “an examination by torture,” which is the only “form of evidence that is infallible.”³⁷ In this way, for Aristotle, “rhetoric exists to affect the giving of decisions,” the moral verdicts.³⁸ The process of trial, then, is a most rigorous inquiry into authenticating the trustworthiness of the scenario under trial. Francis J Ranney's recent work, *Aristotle's Ethics and Legal Rhetoric: An Analysis of Language Beliefs and the Law* methodically

²⁸ Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021).

²⁹ Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 2, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021). CF. Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

³⁰ Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

³¹ Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

³² Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

³³ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. and ed. W. Rhys Roberts and Paul Negri (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2012), <https://www.perlego.com/book/110217/rhetoric-pdf> (Accessed: 24 September 2021).

³⁴ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, <https://www.perlego.com/book/110217/rhetoric-pdf> (Accessed: 24 September 2021).

³⁵ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, <https://www.perlego.com/book/110217/rhetoric-pdf> (Accessed: 24 September 2021).

³⁶ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, <https://www.perlego.com/book/110217/rhetoric-pdf> (Accessed: 24 September 2021).

³⁷ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, <https://www.perlego.com/book/110217/rhetoric-pdf> (Accessed: 24 September 2021).

³⁸ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, <https://www.perlego.com/book/110217/rhetoric-pdf> (Accessed: 24 September 2021).

engages with Aristotle’s description of rhetoric as a legitimate skill of persuasion in determining the nature of law and its relationship to justice.³⁹

Thus, the newly invented legal system based upon *nomos* introduced the Greek’s human relations to another complex justice issue of who must be subjected to the trial procedure of *basanos*?⁴⁰ It is always the slaves and foreigners who will be subjected to this form of torture trial.⁴¹ This caused a distinction between the free citizens and the slaves by which the slaves were referred to as *andrapoda*, meaning “human-footed stock” as against *tetrapoda*, which means “four-footed stock.”⁴² On the one hand, the Greek judges had the legal rights to subject the slaves to corporal torture in a context in which the evidence is not convincing. This could be within or outside the spheres of the system of justice. On the other hand, a citizen in an accused criminal suit can still demand to increase the torture of a slave. This clearly reveals the Athenian attitude to the evidence raised from the trial-tortures of the slaves and its authenticity of use.⁴³

It is in this context of torture within a justice framework, Plato’s analysis of the “just man” in his *Republic* is helpful.⁴⁴ In this most influential work on political theory, Plato describes his philosophical vision of the nature of justice and the ideal state.⁴⁵ His aim was to provide a clear definition of justice as against his late teacher Socrates who neglected definitions. Plato’s analysis is presented as dialogues between Socrates and three other speakers.⁴⁶ In the second book of the *Republic*, Plato discourses that the just man must not be subjected to the same punishment and torture as the unjust man. Nevertheless, he laments that the just man who is misjudged as an “unjust will be scourged, racked, bound – his eyes burnt out; and, at last after suffering every kind of evil, he will be impaled.”⁴⁷ Thus, the Greek capital punishment consisted of “beheading, poisoning, crucifying, beating to death with clubs, strangling, stoning, hurling from a cliff, and burial alive.”⁴⁸

This further becomes clearer in Plato’s exposition of the Socratic morality in his work *Gorgias*.⁴⁹ Plato portrays that the crucifixion of an unjust was often preceded by a series of torture. If a person is caught in a criminal plot, he will be “put to rack and mutilated and his eyes burnt out and after himself suffering and seeing his wife and children suffer many other signal outages of various kinds is finally crucified or burned in a coat of pitch.”⁵⁰ An event that describes such an execution

³⁹ Francis J. Ranney, *Aristotle’s Ethics and Legal Rhetoric: An Analysis of Language Belief and the Law* (Abington: Routledge, 2017), 1-212.

⁴⁰ Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

⁴¹ Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021).

⁴² Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

⁴³ Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

⁴⁴ A. E. Taylor provides a comprehensive analysis of Plato and his work in his book *Plato: The Man and His Work* (Abington: Routledge, 2013), <https://www.perlego.com/book/1675750/plato-the-man-and-his-work-rle-plato-pdf> (Accessed: 28 September 2021).

⁴⁵ Plato, *Republic* (Simon and Schuster, 2016), <https://www.perlego.com/book/778449/republic-pdf> (Accessed: 28 September 2021).

⁴⁶ Plato, *Republic*, <https://www.perlego.com/book/778449/republic-pdf> (Accessed: 28 September 2021).

⁴⁷ Plato, *Republic*, Book 2, <https://www.perlego.com/book/778449/republic-pdf> (Accessed: 28 September 2021).

⁴⁸ Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021).

⁴⁹ Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work*, Chapter 4, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1675750/plato-the-man-and-his-work-rle-plato-pdf> (Accessed: 28 September 2021).

⁵⁰ Plato, *Gorgias* (Glasgow: Good press, 2019), <https://www.perlego.com/book/1943786/gorgias-pdf> (Accessed: 28 September 2021).

in 4th century BC, is Alexander the Great's strategic crucifixion of 2000 prisoners in the siege of Tyre, which Stephen English provides a comprehensive and systematic presentation in his work *The Sieges of Alexander the Great*.⁵¹ The Greek practice of crucifixion and the related torture scheme as a way of authenticating the validity of truth within the confines of the rule of the law immensely contributed to horrifying sophistications within the Roman fabric of justice, which we will explore hereafter.

3. Crucifixion in the Roman Context of Justice

Influenced by the Greek, Phoenician, and Carthaginian systems of justice, the Romans introduced the performance of crucifixion in the 3rd century BC.⁵² As a capital punishment, it continued for 500 long years in the history of Roman Republic.⁵³ The Romans maintained that crucifixion was the most horrific and disgusting death of all.⁵⁴ The punishment of crucifixion was performed for such crimes as treason, abandonment of the enemy, the revealing of secrets, provocation to rebellion, murder, nocturnal impiety, magic, and fabrication or distortion of wills.⁵⁵ The primary victims in Roman empire who received such harsh punishment were the members of the low social status known as *humiliores* - slaves, foreigners, and pirates. In addition, political agitators and religious activists, and disobedient soldiers were executed on the cross.⁵⁶ As in the Greek system, the members of the upper class known as *honestiores* were inflicted with more humane punishments. Nevertheless, the *honestiores* could be subjected for interrogation by torture for crimes of treason.⁵⁷ The Roman slave-masters had the right to punish their slaves with any form of torture when they were suspected or accused within the household. The historian Theodor Mommsen argues that this domestic discipline of torture in the process of inquiry for truth became the basis for the Roman civil and criminal laws.⁵⁸

Consequently, Edward Peter argues that the Roman Republic, including crucifixion and torture can be understood only within the framework of "private justice" that began from a feud system to a juridical administration through several forms of legal action.⁵⁹ Thus, the fabric of justice developed from a voluntary third-party arbitration to a communal arbitration organised by the state. Ultimately, it emerged to be the "procedure *cognitio extra ordinem*" in which the state took

⁵¹ Stephen English, *The Sieges of Alexander the Great* (Pen and Sword, 2010),

<http://www.perlego.com/book/2447660/the-sieges-of-alexander-the-great-pdf> (Accessed: 28 September 2021).

⁵² Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021).

⁵³ Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021).

⁵⁴ Hengel, *Crucifixion*, Chapter 5, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1733821/crucifixion-pdf> (Accessed: 21 September 2021).

⁵⁵ Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 2, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021). CF. Hengel, *Crucifixion*, Chapter 5,

<https://www.perlego.com/book/1733821/crucifixion-pdf> (Accessed: 21 September 2021).

⁵⁶ Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 2, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021). CF. Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1,

<https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

⁵⁷ Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021).

⁵⁸ Theodor Mommsen, trans. William P. Dickson, *The History of Rome (Volumes 1-5): From the Foundation of the City to the Rule of Julius Caesar* (Good Press, 2019), <https://www.perlego.com/book/1940309/the-history-of-rome-volumes-1-5-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021).

⁵⁹ Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

the control of administering the juridical procedures.⁶⁰ This development within the Roman legal system introduced several renewals. First, it increased the power and control of the state. Second, specific actions of individuals were defined as actions that placed the security and wellbeing of the society in danger. Third, it was maintained that such actions could threaten the “peaceful benevolence of the gods.”⁶¹ This system of justice was later developed into a form of Roman trial, governed by a single magistrate who is a member of the second highest class in the Roman society and well informed about legal matters.⁶² According to the “imperial privilege” of Rome, the emperor was vested with a legislative authority to not only make the law but also, with the privilege to make exceptions to the law as it pleases him.⁶³

In this context, the formal character of complaints that consists of categorising and weighing evidence gained much greater sophistication. Mommsen affirms that there is no indication in the history of Roman Republic that anyone violated the principle of evidence.⁶⁴ Fully persuaded with the justice system, Cicero expresses his approach to the inquiry of evidence through torture.⁶⁵ He approves that in a situation of trial, one must first support the institution of torture and speak about the efficacy of pain.⁶⁶ It is a way of listening to and respecting the opinion of the ancestors who have approved the torture as a tool of inquiry.⁶⁷ In this way, Claudius always “exact examination by torture”⁶⁸ while Domitian tortured those who seemed hiding evidence by “inserting fire into their private parts.”⁶⁹

The original motive behind torture as a rigorous means of inquiry into evidence evolved into greater sophistication.⁷⁰ As a methodical procedure of capturing the victim’s attention, the entire process of torture in detail was described to them by exposing them to the torture chambers and the horrifying tools of their forthcoming pain. Then the victim was sent back to their cells to contemplate on what was going to be done to them.⁷¹ In such situation, the thoughts of torture would lead some victims to confess what they know. But the strong-willed ones would think that the torture is already decided to be executed even if the victim revealed the truth.⁷²

⁶⁰ Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

⁶¹ Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

⁶² Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

⁶³ Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

⁶⁴ Mommsen, trans. William P. Dickson, *The History of Rome (Volumes 1-5)*, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1940309/the-history-of-rome-volumes-1-5-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021).

⁶⁵ Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 2, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021).

⁶⁶ Marcus Tullius Cicero, trans. Charles Duke Yonge, *Cicero’s Orations* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2018), <https://www.perlego.com/book/823592/ciceros-orations-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021).

⁶⁷ Cicero, trans. Charles Duke Yonge, *Cicero’s Orations*, <https://www.perlego.com/book/823592/ciceros-orations-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021).

⁶⁸ Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

⁶⁹ Peters, *Torture*, chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/731754/torture-pdf> (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

⁷⁰ Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021).

⁷¹ Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021).

⁷² Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 30 September 2021).

Thus, in his *Big Book of Pain*, Donnelly and Diehl argue that torture and crucifixion must be always seen within the fabric of justice for it always befits a crime and torture was practiced as a means of punishing actual criminals.⁷³ For them, it is difficult to see a legal or penal punishment to be any different, specifically to envisage it from the sentimental perspective. They substantiate that the criminal who acted against the existing moral code was “publicly whipped, crucified, or otherwise horribly killed or maimed.”⁷⁴ Such a public execution with extreme torture provided an illustration of the enforcement of the law, ensuring the safety and security of the law-abiding citizens.⁷⁵ This is the precise context in which the crucifixion of Christ was considered as the most aggravated form of capital punishment of unspeakable cruelty.

It follows then that when Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified it must be imagined that Jesus of Nazareth was subjected to a systematic treatment of torture, abuse, and crucifixion. All within the structure of Roman justice. Nevertheless, the important question one must ask is: when does punishment become torture? Were the torture practices always performed under the confines of the fabric of justice? Were there instances in which the practices had gone out of the justice motives to assault motives? Based upon the trial narratives in Mark 14:15-20; Matthew 27:26-31, it must be concluded that in the crucifixion of Jesus, the trial practices of torture outrageously crossed the boundaries of the justice motives to sexual assault motives. For instance, the soldiers led Jesus inside the praetorium and called together the whole battalion in Mark 15:16. Does praetorium mean a chamber of organised torture inside the headquarters as recent studies debate? They stripped him two times and clothed him with a purple cloak as per Matthew’s account. Is this referring to an account of sexual abuse, sexual humiliation, sexual harassment, and subsequent shame? They saluted him, struck him, mocked him, spat on him, knelt in homage to him, and pulled out his beard. Are these not cruel acts of abuses? The ultimate question remains that can the socio-political reality of Christ’ crucifixion and the related torture, abuse, assault, and humiliation that he endured provide a resource to those of us who have experienced similar realities of life and suffer the pain of subsequent shame and drama? Can Jesus who brings spiritual healing, also bring emotional and psychological healing to humans in sympathy and identification? In other words, can Jesus say, “me too.” I will explore these questions in my later papers.

Recently, there are several studies moving into this direction: for instance, David Tombs, *The Crucifixion of Jesus: Torture, Sexual Abuse, and the Scandal of the Cross*. Routledge, 2022.

Jayne R Reaves and David Tombs, “Me Too Jesus: Naming Jesus as a Victim of Sexual Abuse,” *International Journal of Public Theology*, 2019.

Michael Trainor, *The Body of Jesus and Sexual Abuse: How the Gospel Passion Narratives Inform a Pastoral Response*. Wipf and Stock, 2014.

⁷³ Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021).

⁷⁴ Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021).

⁷⁵ Donnelly and Diehl, *The Big Book of Pain*, Chapter 1, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1528423/the-big-book-of-pain-pdf> (Accessed: 29 September 2021).

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Biblical Theology of The Body: Providing Compassion & Conviction to Body Dysmorphic Disorder & Gender Dysphoria

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***Abstract:** Clinical studies reveal that about 2-3% of the general population is affected by Body Dysmorphic Disorder, with another 0.002% - 0.015% affected by Gender Dysphoria. The cultural and clinical responses to these disorders have not always been consistent, and the added frustration of those with a biblical worldview may add further confusion, shame, and withdrawal. This presentation seeks to address the problem of not developing a theologically robust view of the human body, which may result in a lack of informed and compassionate clinical care for clients. This presentation will highlight the research and ongoing development of clinical interventions with both body dysmorphic disorder and gender dysphoric disorder and provide tools to develop consistent therapeutic care that is theologically informed and clinically proficient.*

***Key Words:** Theology of the Body, gender dysphoria, Biblical worldview, Counselling.*

1. Introduction

God Creates; Man Falls; Jesus Saves; The Spirit Redeems; God Wins. This is the story of God in connection with humanity, and it is the narrative to help us understand the purpose and plan of God and our bodies. God created our bodies as a good thing to be enjoyed in our connection with God and each other. However, the sin and fall of mankind into sin have corrupted God's good design for our bodies and have brought significant distress in our daily lives, especially for those who struggle with the issues of body dysmorphic disorder and gender dysphoria. Nevertheless, the hope of the gospel is that even in the most broken and challenging situations, individuals can find

meaning, purpose, and, eventually, restoration. This is not some Pollyannaish view that has no application for our physical realities, but a robust and holistic view of God's redemption that finds meaning in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Next to the topics of race and ethnicity, the issues of our bodies, sexuality, and gender are some of the most discussed and hotly debated topics in our culture today. Christians, however, tend to disengage when it comes to the discussion of our bodies and sexuality. We see the liberties our culture has taken with this issue, and we retreat in fear, frustration, and discouragement. In this vacuum of silence, other voices and perspectives will distort God's original and good design. It is the responsibility of Christians who have the hope of the gospel to speak truth to the issue of our bodies and sexuality and provide clarity amid the confusion.

1.1. Statement of Problem

Clinical studies reveal that about 2-3% of the general population is affected by Body Dysmorphic Disorder (Rautio, 2022), with another 0.002% - 0.015% affected by Gender Dysphoria (Almazan & Keuroghlian, 2021)). The cultural and clinical responses to these disorders have not always been consistent, and the frustration of those with a biblical worldview may add further confusion, shame, and withdrawal. This presentation addresses the problem of current therapeutic responses, specifically gender dysphoria, and the concerns of not developing a theologically robust view of the human body, which may result in a lack of informed and compassionate care for individuals.

1.2. Purpose Statement

The purpose of this paper is to understand the research and ongoing development of clinical interventions for both body dysmorphic disorder and gender dysphoria and provide tools to develop consistent therapeutic care that is theologically informed and clinically proficient. A theologically informed and clinically proficient response includes clarity in theological foundations (*Head*) that informs how we should view our bodies; the development of compassionate care (*Heart*) to those who are struggling with various physiological and psychological distresses; and therapeutic interventions (*Hand*) to provide hope and care to those that are hurting.

While this essay intends to present both the issues of body dysmorphic disorder and gender dysphoria, the analysis of these two psychological issues will contrast the discrepancies in therapeutic approaches and, specifically, the current inconsistencies with the therapeutic interventions toward gender dysphoria.

To better understand some of the issues and frustrations about body dysmorphia and gender dysphoria, two vignettes of fictional clients and their presenting problems are presented:

1.3. Vignette #1: Susan

1.3.1. Initial Intake

Susan is a 16-year-old single Asian female. She claims she has excessive appearance concerns, stating that she is fat and ugly. In particular, Susan states that she considers her arms and waist too big compared to the rest of her body. There are some food restrictions that Susan engages with,

but she is not below average weight. She has regular exercise routines but does not purge or abuse laxatives as a weight control measure.

1.3.2. Family History

An examination of Susan's family history highlights that she is the oldest of two siblings. She has normal relationships with her siblings, as she has both periods of frustration and times of pleasant engagement with both. Susan describes her parents as strict and overprotective, as is usual with most Asian parents (Garcia, 2021). In a discussion with Susan's parents, they describe her as constantly asking about outfits that make her look slim and note that she is overly concerned about looking overweight. This seems to align with some research indicating that constant concern regarding appearance may indicate deeper psychological pathology (Phillips et al., 2005). Susan's parents have also stated that she is falling behind in grades as she often is late or misses classes due to excessive time spent in front of the mirror assessing her thinness or slender profile. This also resonates with research noting levels of dysfunction in regular activity such as schoolwork in light of psychological distress (Rautio, 2022). Susan's parents say she dislikes socializing with others because of her appearance, believing she is overweight and not attractive enough to be with other people.

1.3.3. Medical Examination

After the initial intake and recording of family history, it is imperative to conduct a medical examination to better understand the nature of Susan's psychological distress and any medical indicators that may be present. Upon examination, Susan is found to have a weight of 115 pounds and a height of 5'5". She has a BMI calculation of 19.1, indicating a healthy body mass. Examination of her labs shows normal blood levels and further medical history suggests a regular pattern of menstrual periods. This is an essential indicator to rule out the prevalence of a possible eating disorder (Collison & Barnier, 2020).

1.3.4. Diagnosis

A proper diagnosis can be given after the initial intake, family history is provided, and the medical examination is completed. Susan is preoccupied with one or more perceived physical defects in her body, has performed repetitive behaviors (specifically with frequent mirror checking), and this preoccupation causes clinically significant distress and impairment in her life (Turner & Cadman, 2017). Considering the medical examination, a diagnosis does not seem to meet the diagnostic criteria for an eating disorder, but an appropriate diagnosis would be body dysmorphic disorder, indicated with poor insight (Rautio et al., 2022).

1.3.5. Treatment

With the diagnosis of body dysmorphic disorder indicated with poor insight, a therapeutic intervention involving cognitive behavior therapy and medication management seems warranted. The therapeutic intervention includes identifying maladaptive thoughts and cognitive errors (Fang et al., 2020), generating alternative beliefs that challenge intrusive thoughts (Aldea et al., 2009), and pursuing cognitive restructuring (Turner & Cadman, 2017). The efficacy of cognitive behavior therapies in the treatment of body dysmorphic disorder has long been established as an effective

tool for helping clients move beyond the struggles they are dealing with. This, combined with selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (better known as SSRIs), can be a powerful combination in helping clients with these distressing psychological issues (Uzun & Ozdemir, 2010).

1.4. Vignette #2: Natalie

1.4.1. Initial Intake

The initial intake of Natalie indicates that she is a 14-year-old single white female. Her initial clinical visit was to seek help in dealing with significant anxiety and depression (Karvonen et al., 2022). Natalie specifically communicated that she sometimes feels like a boy trapped in a girl's body (de Graaf et al., 2022). Considering these feelings, Natalie strongly desires to dress and present herself as a male. She indicates that she has been experiencing these feelings and thoughts for the past year and a half.

1.4.2. Family History

An assessment of Natalie's family history shows that she is the middle of three siblings and that her relationships with her siblings carry no significant anxiety or concern. Natalie would describe her mom as caring but indicated that she felt her dad was distant and uninvolved most of her life. This resonates with research indicating parental engagement, distancing, and developmental realities (Deiana et al., 2016). Further discussion with Natalie's mom indicates that her grades have declined over the past year, which differs from most of her high academic performance in previous years. Her mom also reported that Natalie seems more socially withdrawn and isolated from most of her peers at school.

1.4.3. Medical Examination

Natalie did not feel comfortable in allowing a physical examination to be performed. This is in keeping with research that highlights adolescents with gender dysphoria struggle with allowing physical examinations given the anxiety they feel about their gendered realities (Vardi et al., 2008).

1.4.4. Diagnosis

Natalie evidences a marked incongruence between her experienced and expressed gender and biological gender. She also strongly desires to be rid of her primary sex characteristics and has expressed a desire to be treated as a male (Hill et al., 2020). These desires, in conjunction with the significant distress and impairment in social relationships and school functioning over the past six months, meet the diagnostic criteria for gender dysphoria.

1.4.5. Treatment

Current research encourages that appropriate treatment for Natalie and her diagnosis should include multiple affirmations. These affirmations include therapeutic gender affirmations (Garz et al., 2021) and social affirmations encouraging family and friends to refer to her by her preferred pronouns (Katherine et al., 2017). These gender and social affirmations may need further legal affirmation by encouraging Natalie to pursue name and gender changes in formal and legal

contexts (Miranda-Novoa, 2022). While not as popular and still controversial for some, further affirmations may come in the form of medical procedures. This may include using medicinal affirmations in the form of pubertal or hormonal suppressions (Kuper et al., 2019) and surgical affirmations involving gender reconstruction (Almazan et al., 2021).

1.4.6. Discussion

While Susan and Natalie are both fictional vignettes, they represent a conglomeration of real individuals who experience significant psychological distress in their physiological situations. While both theological and psychological responses to these issues are critical, our ability to speak truth is significantly improved with an empathetic and caring consideration of first importance. It limits our ability to speak the truth without the ability to show love.

However, the response to Susan and Natalie is further frustrated, considering the therapeutic responses given to each client. With Susan's diagnosis of body dysmorphic disorder, the therapeutic community recognizes her pain and seeks to rally around her. It challenges her to acknowledge that the way she thinks about her body is incorrect, and therefore, the therapeutic intervention is to change her thinking about her body. In contrast, given the diagnosis of gender dysphoria given to Natalie, the therapeutic community rallies around her, encourages her, and affirms that the way she thinks about her body is correct. Therefore, the therapeutic response to Natalie is not for her to change her thinking but for her to change her body and to have others affirm this transition. With Susan, how she thinks about her body is incorrect, so she needs to change her thinking. With Natalie, how she thinks about her body is correct, so she needs to change her body. The inconsistency in dealing with real psychological distress centered on the body only confuses and frustrates attempts to provide help and healing.

2. Developing a Biblical Theology of the Body

Considering the inconsistencies and frustrations regarding the therapeutic responses to these psychological issues, it becomes even more apparent to have a grounding in God's truth to help navigate these complex issues. However, quoting a Bible verse or two does not help engage with these issues. Christians must think seriously about God's truth and integrate these ideas into thoughtful and compassionate care for hurting people.

One method of engaging with God's word to help cultivate a robust theology is developing a *Biblical Theology* of the body that tracks the narrative of God's truth over the timeline of scripture. As noted in the book *Biblical Theology* by Roark & Cline (2018):

Biblical theology is a way of reading the Bible as one story by one divine author that culminates in who Jesus Christ is and what he has done, so that every part of the Scripture is understood in relation to him. Biblical theology helps us understand the Bible as one big book with lots of little books that tell one big story. The Hero and centerpiece of that story, from cover to cover, is Jesus Christ. (p. 26).

God's word focuses on the person and work of Jesus Christ. We should never impose an interpretive lens to read scripture as a treatment model for individuals who struggle with various psychological issues; that is not the point of God's word. However, the hermeneutical principle of

“one interpretation with many applications” can be applied to these situations, and this paper argues that it is the responsibility of Christians to consider the sacred text and develop a comprehensive theological response that is both biblically accurate and clinically helpful to those struggling with these issues.

2.1. Creation

The Genesis account gives significant insight regarding the creation of man and his unique position in God's created order (Genesis 1:26, 27; Genesis 2:7). As a creature made in the *"Imago Dei,"* man not only has unique spiritual and immaterial distinctiveness but also corporal and physical uniqueness. This uniqueness is further exemplified in the method by which God creates. God speaks the creation of all other things simply through the power of His words, and it becomes a reality. However, in the creation of man, God does something different. His engagement with the dust of the earth to form and create the body by which He breathes life into highlights man's unique nature, both spiritually and materially. The body is the medium by which we communicate with God, with each other, our environment, and how we understand God's specific (the Word) and general (the World) revelation. This theological truth should temper us between thanksgiving for the unique joy of being created by God (Psalm 8:4-6) and humble recognition of our limitedness and dependence on our creator God (Luke 10:27-28; Acts. 17:28). The goodness of this body is further highlighted by the last verse in the creation account where both Adam and Eve enjoy their fellowship with God, enjoy their fellowship with each other, and enjoy their fellowship with their environment noting that the nakedness of their bodies is a source of joy and not one of shame. In a biblical theology of the body, the first message of God's story highlights how the body is good.

2.2. Fall

However, with our first parents' rebellion, sin's curse enters the human condition and affects us at every level, including our bodies. The Genesis account highlights that once their eyes were opened, one of the first realizations was their bodily nakedness and the shame that followed (Gen. 3:7). The shame of their physical bodies was an indicator of their brokenness within their environment, with each other, and ultimately with their Creator. However, attempts to cover their nakedness would prove futile as the human condition has continued to experience shame, abuse, and brokenness within our bodies. Several stories throughout the scripture (1 Kings 18:28; Proverbs 23:20-21; 1 Cor. 6:18) provide insight into how mankind has taken the good gift of our physical bodies and twisted it for our evil desires. What started as a good gift from God, mankind has broken in our rebellion, and the consequences of this brokenness are both spiritual and physical (Gen. 3:19).

2.3. Christ

As the Old Testament begins with the creation of a man, the New Testament begins with the birth of the God-Man. While Jesus is not a created being like angels or humans, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ carries profound and critical importance for all of life. The incarnation boldly claims that while sin has brought brokenness and pain to our lives, God's love is greater than our sin, and He does not give up on His creation. The fact that God the Son became man (John 1:14) proves the importance of mankind's redemption in the mind and heart of God. God did not take on angelic

form to redeem angels, but He did 'incarnate' human form to redeem mankind. While there is nothing that mankind can do to earn or prove his worth before God (Isaiah 64:6), it does show the heart of God in his relentless pursuit of his fallen creation to become that which He created (John 1:14). The creator became part of the creation to save both body and soul. Not only did He take on human flesh to purchase our redemption through physical death (Col 1:22, Heb. 10:5, 10; 1 Peter 2:24), but He also conquered death in a physical resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20; 1 Peter 1:3). It is through this resurrection that we have a present help and future hope.

2.4. Redemption

The physical resurrection of Christ was a profound and needed aspect of our total salvation. While Christ did die as an atonement for our sins and defeated death (1 Cor. 15:54-57), he also was resurrected to life to ascend (Acts 1:9) and send the Holy Spirit as our Comforter (John 14:26). He continues to be a physical advocate (1 John 2:1) on our behalf to the Father. He can sympathize with our current struggles (Heb. 4:15), knowing the emotional, spiritual, and physical realities we face.

The redemption of our bodies is also highlighted by how our physical realities have new responsibilities in service of God and His kingdom. Since God has purchased us through the finished work of the Son, we now are to be ambassadors of God since our bodies are now the dwelling place and temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Temples were physical structures for people to “encounter” and worship the gods of their religions. However, in God’s kingdom, He calls His people, who are now indwelt with the Holy Spirit, to go to the nations and encounter them where they are (Matt. 28:16-20). This commission from God gives new purpose and meaning to how we view our bodies and use them to advance His kingdom.

2.5. Glory

With the knowledge of this present help, we can also joyfully praise our God for a theology of the body that gives us future hope. Paul makes this natural connection between the physical resurrection of Christ and the future resurrection of God's children. "But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?'" (1 Cor. 15:35). Paul responds with surprising and inspiring insight: "So is it with the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory" (1 Cor. 15:42-44). Paul later gives further information regarding this physical resurrection of the saints as he ties it to the truth of Christ’s physical resurrection: “For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17). This future hope of physical resurrection should produce present comfort and a longing for the fulfillment of our total salvation (1 Thessalonians 4:18; 1 John 3:2, 3).

Not only will God physically bring us to Himself and transform our "corruptible into incorruptible," but He will also come back to this earth in physical form to establish His kingdom in physical rule (Acts 1:11; 2 Thess. 1:10). While His first advent was the taking on of a body in humility and death, His second advent will be a return in His physical form in power and dominion

(Phil. 2:6-11). We look at this physical return with anticipation and joy, knowing that this current life is not the ultimate reality for our spirits or our bodies.

3. Application to Care

3.1. Empathize

As was mentioned before, the first responsibility of anyone in a position of care is to empathize with and understand the current realities of clients (Moschella, 2019). Our ability and responsibility to empathize with their distress is essential in communicating care and truth about their situations. Indeed, they do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. This truth could not be more relevant for our current discussions and the issues of sexual and gender issues.

3.2. Engage: Depravity, Disability, Diversity

In concert with our empathetic posture, our responsibility to engage with clients is to examine the model of care which we take and apply to our client's situations. Research by Yarhouse (2015) indicates a helpful distinction to consider when engaging with individuals who struggle with gender dysphoria. He notes three cultural lenses (attitudes we may have when we engage with these issues) that should be considered. The first of these is a *depravity* lens that looks at the issues of gender dysphoria and recognizes that it results from our sinful and depraved contexts. This is the primary lens of the Evangelical community, as it may look at a problem as a spiritual issue and seeks to address and remedy these issues through spiritual disciplines. A second response looks at issues of gender dysphoria through the *disability* lens. This is the primary lens of the counseling and therapeutic community, and it views the issues of gender dysphoria as simply a reflection of the broken world we live in. The appropriate response is to address individuals with care and compassion and provide a place for healing and reflection. A final response to the issues of gender dysphoria is to view it through the lens of *diversity*. This is the primary lens of our current secular culture, which views the reality of gender dysphoria (and, therefore, transgenderism) as an opportunity to celebrate diversity and the uniqueness of individuals transitioning from one gender to another gender. The appropriate response with this lens is love and acceptance, as individuals should be embraced and encouraged.

None of these lenses are intended to be an exhaustive response to the issues of transgenderism, nor are they intended to be the only response in isolation from each other. The benefit of these three lenses is seen on multiple levels. First, this allows individuals to consider the lens through which they primarily view those who deal with gender dysphoria. If your default response is a depravity lens, then you understand the consequences of sin and the need to help individuals connect their spiritual realities to God. If your default response is a disability lens, you can help provide a place of healing and reflection to those who are hurting and broken. If your default lens is diversity, then you can celebrate individuals as valuable, not because of their gendered realities, but because of the Image of God that is a reality within them. This provides insight into where our default response may be and the opportunities each lens provides in dealing with these issues.

However, this also allows us to see where we need to grow in our response to those who deal with gender dysphoria. Once individuals are willing to engage with their default response lens, they can consider how they might need to lean into the other lenses to develop a more holistic response to clients. Suppose an individual has a default lens of depravity. While they may recognize the problem of sin and our separation before God, how can they grow in their compassion toward hurting people and find ways to accept them joyfully regardless of their spiritual condition? Suppose an individual has a default lens of disability. They may be compassionate in seeking to create places of healing and growth, but how can they grow in acknowledging the spiritual realities of sin while still valuing individuals who are made in the Image of God? If the default lens is diversity, they may be accepting of individuals, but how can they grow in their acknowledgment that we must also engage with the spiritual lostness of people and recognize that those made in the Image of God still are broken and need help to find healing and hope? These lenses can also provide an opportunity to engage clients as to how they view their physical and gendered struggles and how they may need to reorient their perspectives to find hope and healing beyond their distress.

3.3. Encourage

Ultimately, we hope to provide a level of encouragement that can speak to the struggles that individuals are experiencing. Research has consistently found that engaging clients within a holistic framework will provide the greatest opportunity to grow and develop resilience in the face of significant struggles (Kaur, 2021). This includes a response informed by our clients' biological, psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual realities and seeks to provide spiritually consistent and clinically robust holistic care.

These issues are not without considerable struggle, debate, and controversy. However, with a theologically robust framework, Christians can find ways to be both salt and light to those struggling with their bodies. Hope both in this life and beyond.

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A Paradigm for Contemporary Christian Ministry: A Public Theology Approach

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***Abstract:** Christian ministry is participation in the *missio Dei* within its own particularity through the Messiah's ministry (Mark 10:45). Here service precludes superiority. Success is re-defined in a sacrificial context. The task that we have is to validate and express Christian ministry within the context of a contemporary public whose priorities would appear to contrast those of Mark 10:45. The challenge before us is to adhere to the radical implications for Christian service in the light of Mark 10:45. In this sense, the essence of relationship is embedded in public theology as a public discourse, participation and personal engagement with those who do not necessarily share our beliefs and convictions, a moving from ourselves to engage with the "other." The I-You dynamic at its fundamental expression. And yet, in the rather amorphous sense of going "public" who do "I" identify as "you," the "other"? Going even further, what is the driver for such an engagement?*

***Key Words:** *Levanus, the other, relationship, society, public theology.**

Introduction

Christian ministry is participation in the *missio Dei* within its own particularity through the Messiah's ministry (Mark 10:45). Here service precludes superiority. Success is re-defined in a sacrificial context. The task that we have is to validate and express Christian ministry within the context of a contemporary public whose priorities would appear to contrast those of Mark 10:45. The challenge before us is to adhere to the radical implications for Christian service in the light of Mark 10:45. This, then, brings us to a public Christian ministry/theology.

Brian Massingale identifies three essential characteristics of a public theology:

- a. Public theology addresses multiple and profoundly urgent and immediate issues.
- b. Public theology is practised within a pluralistic and diverse community.
- c. Public theologians are firmly committed to their faith.¹

Public theology is, then, a going out from and going into. We go out from our theological academia or ecclesial safety zone and into the public marketplace of divergent faith ideas and practices so as to interact with the public. Such interaction, however, is intended to go beyond a verbal exchange of ideas.

In this sense, the essence of relationship is embedded in public theology as a public discourse, participation and personal engagement with those who do not necessarily share our beliefs and convictions, a moving from ourselves to engage with the “other.” The I-You dynamic at its fundamental expression. And yet, in the rather amorphous sense of going” public” who do “I” identify as “you,” the “other””? Going even further, what is the driver for such an engagement?

We may, at this point, look to the irrefutable evangelistic impetus of the Great Commission; to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18). We engage with our community(ies) with a redemptive intent. Public theology exchanges the dialogue metaphor to one of ministering to, of being there for. This being so, the challenge is to locate a public discourse with which we may engage. Is there a contemporary public paradigm that may resonate with the Christian ministry paradigm that we associate with Mark 10:45?

In my quest for a response, I came across Terry A. Veling’s² book; *For You Alone: Emmanuel Levinas and the Answerable Life*.³ The first three words of the title stood out: *For You Alone*. Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), however, was as yet unknown to me.

I teased out the context of engagement with and the serving of the “other” to the point of a non-reciprocal responsibility to and for the “other.” Was this the philosophical answer to my question regarding a biblically framed and motivated Christian ministry within a contemporary public? Do we have here a similarity to Jesus’ description of His ministry (Mark 10:45)? Are we called to emulate this highest form of altruism, of being there for the “other,” to give for the “other.”? “I” being there for “you””?⁴

¹ Bryan Massingale, “Theology in the Public Square in the Twenty-First Century,” *Horizons* 43 (2016): 351-373.

² A senior lecturer at the Australian Catholic University.

³ Terry A. Veling, *For You Alone: Emmanuel Levinas and the Answerable Life* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014).

⁴ Emmanuel Levinas often quoted Alyosha Karamazov’s famous line from Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880): “We are all responsible for everyone else- but I am more responsible than all others.” (Anselm Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World* (T&T Clark, 2004), 10.

Levinas resonated with my aspirations for a contemporary public theology paradigm that intends to do exactly what its title indicates. That is, to go public to a public, a positive and potentially transformative⁵ engagement; to give and to serve.⁶

Levinas took me out of my ministry comfort zone with a challenge; am “I” responsible to the public “you”? As is succinctly but rather understated; “to read Emmanuel Levinas is to be unsettled.”⁷ Welcome to the intriguing, enigmatic, frustrating yet exciting world of Emmanuel Levinas:

One of the most profound, exacting and original philosophers of Twentieth-century Europe. His post-rational ethics stands as the ultimate and exemplary challenge to the solitude of Being, a rigorous and moving testimony of one’s infinite obligation to the other person. Levinas’s teaching reveals ethics to be the first philosophy: his call to responsibility henceforth obliges thought to refer not to the *true* but to the *good*. In assuming this colossal responsibility, Levinas has changed the course of contemporary philosophy.⁸

My initial foray into the complex world of Emmanuel Levinas identified a philosophical bridge of understanding of the dynamic of the “I” and “Other” for a Christian ministry within and to the Australian public. From a public theology perspective here is a moral/ethical obligation that spells out, admittedly within a complex Levinarian vocabulary, my responsibility as the “I” to “you” as the “other” to my public.

But, first, we need to enter Levinas’s own public. He was born of Jewish parents in 1906 in Latvia, then a part of Russia. As members of the *Maskilic* or enlightened Jewish families, Levinas’ family would have: “spoken Russian, rejected orthodoxy,⁹ and embraced traditional Russian culture while keeping kosher and observing the rituals of traditional Jewish life.”¹⁰ The Levinas family endured the restrictions placed on the Jewish population causing them to relocate several times. In 1923 Levinas enrolled in the University of Strasbourg where he entered the regime of philosophical studies, particularly as related to the disciplines of sociology, psychology and theology. In this way, his philosophical direction was more in line with the practical realities he had encountered in his previous studies of Russian literature such as Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and Pushkin. Here we see the first glimpses of what will eventuate in Levinas’s identifying ethics as the core element of philosophy.

⁵ Positive and transformative for both partners in the engagement; the “I” and the “you.” Although, it is recognised that our intent in a public theology is not to receive a benefit. Rather, it is to give benefit to. Reciprocity and non-reciprocity is a theme throughout Levinas’ I-You dynamic. The benefit that “I” receive may be ostensibly intangible, yet, in the context of a ministry participation in the *missio Dei*, one of inexplicable joy and satisfaction (Acts 20:24).

⁶ I am deliberately using the word “public” in this context to indicate the group, the people, the person. It is not a locational term, being where. Rather, it is a relational term, being who.

⁷ Sean Hand (ed.), *The Levinas Reader* (Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 10.

⁸ Sean Hand (ed.), *The Levinas Reader*, 10.

⁹ Levinas’s education did not follow traditional Talmudic focused education. His Talmudic studies did not commence until the mid 1940’s under the enigmatic Monsieur Chouchani with his first collection of essays on Jewish thought not published until 1963.

¹⁰ Ethan Kleinberg, *Emmanuel Levinas’s Talmudic Turn: Philosophy and Jewish thought* (Stanford University Press, 2021), 16.

The Russian novel, the novels of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy appeared to me to be completely preoccupied with fundamental things. Books that were traversed by anxiety, by the essential, by religious unease; but that read like a quest for the meaning of life ... It was certainly in the sentimental love of these novels that I found my first philosophical temptations.¹¹

Indeed, in his published thesis, *The Theory of Intuition*, Levinas laid the theoretical groundwork for “what would later become his foremost concern, ethics and the place of the Other.”¹²

There is another reason why the phenomenological reduction, as we have interpreted it so far, does not reveal concrete life and the meaning that objects have for concrete life. Concrete life is not the solipsist’s life of a consciousness closed in upon itself. Concrete Being is not what exists for only one consciousness. In the very idea of concrete Being is contained the idea of an inter-subjective world. If we limit ourselves to describing the constitution of objects in an individual consciousness, in an *ego*, the *egological reduction* can only be a first step toward phenomenology. We must also discover ‘others’ and that intersubjective world.¹³

Events were coming together that would deeply impact Levinas,¹⁴ which he identified as one of the greatest catastrophes of human history, one that would leave an indelible mark on Levinas personally and philosophically. In 1930 he took up a teaching position at the Alliance Israelite Universelle in Paris. In the same year, he became a naturalized Frenchman. Nine years later, he entered service in the French army. He was captured as a French officer in 1940, only being released in 1945.

Although unaware of the extent of the horrors of the extermination camps during his years in the internment camps, “segregated with the other Jewish soldiers in a special section of the camp and made to wear the yellow star of David on his uniform”¹⁵ focused his attention on “being-Jewish.” Levinas was later to identify the extent of that as yet unknown horror, the Holocaust, not only for the Jewish people¹⁶ but for theodicy itself:¹⁷

... (T)he Holocaust of the Jewish people under the reign of Hitler seems to me the paradigm of gratuitous human suffering, in which evil appears in its diabolical horror. This is perhaps not a subjective feeling. The disproportion between suffering and every theodicy was shown at Auschwitz with a glaring, obvious clarity. Its possibility puts into question the

¹¹ Poire, *Emmanuel Levinas: Qui Etes-vous?*, 69. Quoted in Kleinberg, 20-21.

¹² Kleinberg, 28.

¹³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Theory of Intuition in Husserl’s Phenomenology*, Translated by Andre Orianne, 2nd edition (Evanston, IL: North western University Press, 1995), 150. As cited in Kleinberg, 29.

¹⁴ Levinas’s 1934 essay “Quelques reflexions sur la philosophie de l’hitlerisme (Some Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism) on the impending evils of the Nazi regime evidences his developing “concern for ethical dimension of philosophy.” (Colin Davis, *Levinas, An Introduction* (Polity Press, 1996). See his further development of the ethics/philosophy dynamic in his later essay, *Ethics as First Philosophy*, first published in 1984 and republished in Sean hand (ed.) *The Levinas Reader* (Blackwell Publishing, 1989), 74-87.

¹⁵ Kleinberg, 34.

¹⁶ Although his immediate family survived the Holocaust, his broader family did not.

¹⁷ Michael L. Morgan, *The Cambridge Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), Chapter 1.

multimillennial traditional faith. Did not Nietzsche's saying about the death of God take on, in the extermination camps, the meaning of a quasi-empirical fact?¹⁸

We find here the seeds that would bear fruit in his radical dismemberment of a rational philosophy and its replacement by an ethics first philosophy. His future contribution to a public theology is sourced in his personal experience of the horrific denial and attempted destruction of the I-you relational dynamic. For Levinas, the Holocaust was nothing less than the denial, denigration and destruction of the uniqueness of the "other" to become a "that," an object rather than a "who." A depersonalization that strips the victim of relational significance, nullifying any ethical responsibility¹⁹ toward that which is objectified/depersonalized, a "that." The name is eradicated to be replaced by a tattooed number. The Holocaust is Levinas's poetic testimony.

His testimony to the Holocaust and its irreducible influence on his philosophical journey has within itself an expressed moral imperative: to hear the testimony and to consequently heed the testimony.

Consider Levinas's oft-quoted narrative of a dog called Bobby. Yelting relates the story within its context:

As a French army officer, he was spared deportation to the Concentration camps and placed in a prisoner of war labour camp where he spent five years as a woodcutter in the forest. He relates a story from this about a friendly dog named Bobby. When returning to the camp after a day of labour he and his fellow prisoners would face the glares and insults of the villagers and prison guards, who saw them as nothing more than dirty *Juden*.²⁰ Bobby, however, befriended them. 'When we used to come back from work,' Levinas says, 'he welcomed us, jumping up and down ... this dog evidently took us for human beings.'²¹

The contrast is ethically charged against a backdrop stark in its brutality, a compelling call for a moral response, a recognition of a moral responsibility that goes beyond a momentary reader response. The moral imperative is to be²² as Bobby rather than the villagers or the prison guards. The implied reversal of moral actions speaks volumes within Levinas's I-You dynamic. Be, but not like the villagers or guards. Rather, be like Bobby. Look beyond the abject misery of the exterior, the beleaguered faces of the prisoners. See not objects (prisoners). See beings (persons). Here is poetic testimony that shocks the reader into active ethical action. Who am I in this testimony; a villager, a prison guard, a prisoner perhaps? Or are we Bobby? Hand reminds us that Levinas's

Moral combat, based on peace for the other, is one more indication of the radical challenge to thought posed by the philosophy of Levinas. In the age of Auschwitz, Levinas shows that to

¹⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: Thinking of the Other*, Translated by Michael B. Smith, Barbara Harshaw (Columbia University Press, 1998), 97.

¹⁹ Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 97.

²⁰ Emmanuel Levinas was born in 1906 to Jewish parents in Lithuania. He moved to France in 1923. He became a French citizen in 1932. His parents, brothers and parents-in-law perished in the Holocaust. His wife and daughter survived, having found refuge with the nuns of St. Vincent de Paul.

²¹ Terry A. Yelting, *All for You: Emmanuel Levinas and the Answerable Life* (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2014), 2.

²² I initially used the term "act." However, Levinas's ethical first principles is not based on right actions but on right being. And yet, Levinas would even challenge our perception of "being." See Hand's comment below (fn 15).

be or not to be is not the ultimate question: it is but a commentary on the better than being, the infinite demand of the ethical relation.²³

What, then, would be the moral imperative if “I” and “you” are locked into altruistic isolation? Being other than the other is not, itself, a cause of isolation. Peter Hodgson follows Levinas in applying that “otherness,” not in an isolational sense. Rather, “otherness” is a community sense in which alterity is “the precondition of all genuine relationships.”²⁴ Yes, “I” am different to “you.” Yet there is something shared, a commonality, a being. Hodgson observes:

We know that we are not alone in the world and that we exist in *interpersonal relations*. There are others like ourselves, others in whom we see ourselves reflected, others whom we must *recognize* to be other, and whose experience we can never immediately experience ourselves.²⁵

Different but the same. The same but different. A connective that may divide but intends to unite. Levinas identifies “the infinitely strange and mysterious presence of something which contests my projected meaning of it”²⁶ as the “face.” It is that “face” that draws us closer even as we are drawn away from it. Hodgson continues his application of Levinas’s “other,” “face,” “being,” as a pre-condition of the “I” and “You” coming together in community. We are looking, not at a community of like-minded, of shared experience. Rather, it is the opposite. What binds the community together is the attraction of the opposite.

The face of the other makes claims upon us, claims of both compassion (suffering with the other) and obligation (suffering for the other). When persons provide compassion and sympathy for each other in a relationship of mutuality and inclusion, then freedom is experienced in the realm of the interpersonal. Freedom means not only presence to oneself but also presence with and for others ... There is in human being the possibility for an authentic communion of free and equal persons, in which is found a full mutuality of recognition and an intending of the other for the sake of the other.²⁷

There is, here, a bridge to the diverse Australian public. The recognition of the difference of the other within the juxtaposition of the sameness/difference of the other: *a shared being*.

Hodgson further critically engaged with Levinas at the point in which the I-You are seemingly over and against each other.²⁸ Moving from Hegel’s I-I of the “absolute ego” to Levinas’s I-You “standing in infinite irreducible otherness to each other.” Hodgson posits a third dynamic, “a triple mediation in which I and You remain other yet related in a third, a We (I-You-We) ... the community.”²⁹ To make it clear, Hodgson affirms that “the We is not an undifferentiated fusion of persons but a reciprocity of recognition that produces a new kind of differentiated wholeness, a liberated communion of free persons.”³⁰

²³ Sean Hand (ed.), *The Levinas Reader*, (Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 7-8.

²⁴ Peter C. Hodgson, *Winds of the Spirit: A Constructive Christian Theology* (SCM Press, 1994), 203.

²⁵ Peter C. Hodgson, 203.

²⁶ Hodgson, 203.

²⁷ Hodgson, 203.

²⁸ Hodgson, 294.

²⁹ Hodgson, 294.

³⁰ Hodgson, 294.

For our purpose here we identify Hodgson’s “We” with the societal context that affirms both individual and communal identity. William Placher takes up the philosophical construct of identity in community at length, particularly within a Hegelian versus Levinian dialogue. We will see coming out of this dialogue that Levinas’s concept of I-You is not intended to destroy the I to be replaced by an amorphous You; nor is the I somehow absorbed into the You, making something else that is neither I or You. Hodgson, as discussed previously, used the term “reciprocity of recognition” as indicative of a mutuality that maintains the uniqueness of individual identity. Placher considers the same individuality/mutuality from the perspective of the humanity’s social construct.

The human self, to use a bit of jargon that has become a philosophical cliché, is socially constructed. In important ways, I do not find out who I am by introspection in isolation but by how other people define me and how I define myself in interaction with them ... The expectations and responses of those around us shape all of us; indeed, we become selves, persons, in interaction with others, in a social context.³¹

How unlike this is to the contemporary trends such as the Me2 Movement. A sense of social responsibility is required of the community without corresponding reciprocity by the individual. In its place is a social acceptance of ‘me’ as I am. Conversely, there is the individual, damaged, a refugee from the community. The pathos of the lone voice. In isolation, self-imposed exile, metaphorical reminders of what had been and what was lost. Hesitancy (fear?) of social re-integration that would only uncover past wounds. What healing is that? Only loss. Placher reminds us, however, that “interaction with an other is basic to my identity as a person.”³²

How do I define myself within community without “losing control of my identity?”³³ Two scenarios are suggested. The first pictures a mortal combat in which I am victor over the “other.” I remain in control. Yet, in reality, it is a pyrrhic victory. Now I find myself in “an isolation that threatens even my own identity.”³⁴ The second scenario is that of locating, not a combatant, but a passive identifier, one who never criticises, nor threatens.” Placher uses the analogy of the teacher who questions their students on the success of delivery of the subject the day before the final exam. The expectations are obvious. A negative result implies an unfavourable exam result.

According to Placher, Levinas contra Hegel, suggests a third scenario. The I-You with you “The Other as Other” who, according to Levinas “is not an alter ego. The Other is what I myself am not. The Other is this, not because of the Other’s character or physiognomy, or psychology, but because of the other’s very alterity. The Other is really other, and not, at the end of the day, only a part or projection of myself.”³⁵

Placher’s summary is incisive from the perspective of our identity within the relationship of community, of our public. As he notes,

³¹ William Placher, “The Triune God: The Perichoresis of Particular Persons,” In John Webster and George P. Schner (eds.), *Theology After Liberalism: A Reader* (Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 100.

³² Placher, 100-101.

³³ Placher, 101.

³⁴ Placher, 101.

³⁵ Placher, 101.

I can really be myself only in relation, and I can be in true relation only if I fully respect the otherness of the other. That means doing a host of things: becoming vulnerable, accepting that I am not fully in control, not in a position to control, or therefore to know, how the story will turn out.³⁶

In all this discussion of I-You-We, of identity in community, or more specifically, in relationality, we remain well within Levinas's framework of the priority of ethics, of ethics as first philosophy, "the objective reality of ethical values."³⁷ In all this, the moral dilemma remains in focus in an age very much like our own described by Min as

An age bleeding from the 'crimes of logic'(Camus) unprecedented for their scale, art and technological efficiency, in a world ever haunted by the permanent possibility of war, the only way for human beings to live together in peace and justice (Levinas) insisted, is the ethical recognition of the infinity of the other that transcends and resists all categorical mediation and the establishment of a communion of others in fraternity and solidarity.³⁸

Min suggests that the biblical/theological context of Levinas's proposal of an ethics of community is reflected in contemporary liberation theologies.

Levinas echoes certain central themes from the Judean-Christian tradition, themes forcefully recovered for our attention in recent decades by Liberation theology. These are themes such as finding the 'traces' of God in the marginalized others of history, the widow, the orphan, and the stranger; the primacy of the ethics of preferential option for the poor; ethics rooted in the confrontation of egotrous egos with the concrete 'faces' of others and in the selfless surrender to their appeal; the prophetic denunciation of the ideologies and instruments of domination and the prophetic annunciation of an eschatological, transcategorical utopia of liberated human community.³⁹

Min goes on to critique Levinas's anticipated "liberated human community" expressed through "the irreducible transcendence of the other"⁴⁰ as one that is ahistorical; not grounded in history.⁴¹

Levinas is quite right in insisting that the other as other is irreducible in his ethical transcendence and infinity. However, by categorically denying all historical and ontological mediation of the other, he isolates the other from the concrete totality of constitutively mediating sociohistorical relations, which alone would provide the essential context and condition for the genesis and actualization of the ethical transcendence of the other as a *human-*not angelic -other and thereby also reifies and reduces the other to an ahistorical abstraction.⁴²

³⁶ Placher, 101-102.

³⁷ Anselm Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World: A Postmodern Theology After Postmodernism* (T&T Clark, 2004), 7.

³⁸ Anselm Min, 7.

³⁹ Anselm Min, 12.

⁴⁰ Anselm Min, 22.

⁴¹ Anselm Min, 12.

⁴² Anselm Min, 12-13.

If Min is correct in his assessment here of Levinas's ahistorical approach to the 'other,'⁴³ the very historical context of Levinas's Holocaust as the historical precedent for his ethics as first philosophy is challenged. From my initial reading of Levinas, I do not see this intention. Perhaps, a response to Min's critique may be found in the influence of phenomenology on Levinas. Hand observes that phenomenology was one of the most important influences on Levinas in the development of his ethics as first philosophy. There is certainly an element, at the very least, of the historical.

... phenomenology involves the methodical analysis of lived experience from which can be derived the necessary and universal truths of all experience. Human experience is no longer seen as pure *cogito*, but as always tending towards something in the real world. Rather than proceed by abstract deduction, or dialectic, the phenomenological method enables consciousness to become reflexive, to recognise the intentionality that allows an object to emerge as meaningful. The lack of presuppositions in such a method reveals the relation between logical judgement and perceptual experience. Truth and meaning are shown to be generated.⁴⁴

Our discussion of community interacts with this historic/ahistoric perception of the "Other." Ethics, as has been defined previously is not the practice of right behavior toward another, but of right relationship with the other. Indeed, a being for the other. At the heart of what we are saying in regards to being in community there is "the ethical encounter with another human being." Levinas, in reality, moves very much within the realm of religion.⁴⁵ As Hand acknowledges, "The communication which must be established in order to enter into relation with the being of the Other means that this relation is not ontology but rather a place where knowledge cannot take precedence over sociality."⁴⁶

Colin Davis reminds us that

Levinas is not interested in establishing norms or standards for moral behaviour, nor in examining the nature of ethical language or the conditions of how to live well. In most contexts, the French word used by Levinas, *l'éthique*, might just as well be translated by 'the ethical' as by 'ethics;' and the ethical, like the political (as distinct from politics in the more restricted sense), refers to a domain from which nothing human may be excluded. Levinas's ethics, as an enquiry into the nature of the ethical, analyses and attempts to maintain the possibility of a respectful, rewarding encounter with the Other; and it endeavours to discern the sources of a humane and just society in this encounter.⁴⁷

We conclude with Levinas's critical assessment of the Parisian culture. The implications for own internet/iphone/text community are exceedingly uncomfortable:

⁴³ Min's critique of Levinas's approach as an ethics without history is discussed in depth (12-23) is summarized: "My argument, thus far, has been that his 'one-sided' concern for the infinity of the other to the exclusion all historical mediation is too costly precisely for the other's own historical well-being, the one thing necessary," (23).

⁴⁴ Sean Hand, 2.

⁴⁵ Part 2 of Veling's superb introduction to Emmanuel Levinas includes an extensive discussion of his Talmudic writings (89-176).

⁴⁶ Sean Hand, 4.

⁴⁷ Davis, Introduction.

The café is a place of casual social intercourse, without mutual responsibility. One goes in without needing to. One sits down without being tired. One drinks without being thirsty ... the café is not a place. It is a non-place for a non-society, for a society without solidarity, without commitment, without common interests, a game society ... Society without yesterday or tomorrow, without responsibility, without seriousness-distraction, dissolution. Here you are, each at your own little table with your cup or your glass. You relax completely to the point of not being obligated to anyone or anything, and it is because it is possible to go and relax in a café that one tolerates the horrors and injustices of a world without a soul ...⁴⁸

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Potential and Challenge: The Bible's Role in 21st Century Schooling

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***Abstract:** Does the Bible still have a role in 21st century schooling? This paper suggests that it does, as the authoritative document of one religion exercising its right to speak into the public space. However, this right is highly contested, and the Bible's role varies in function and impact according to differing school systems. Four areas are presented where the Bible already has an impact, either directly or indirectly, and the challenges addressed, reflecting research in four Christian schools.*

***Key Words:** Scripture, Christian education, Christian schooling, inclusion, equity.*

Introduction

Imagine a senior class in a public high school. Pastoral care being a very important part of school provision, this class is undertaking some training to address bullying. The two women who lead the training are external providers. They begin their training by asking everyone in the group to stand. They then instruct women, disabled, non-white, and overseas-born students to sit one by one. Left standing are the young white, Anglo men. They are then told that they are the core problem in our society. They are the sources of the toxic masculinity and racist patriarchy that oppresses and excludes minority groups. Now imagine one of those young men, whom I will call Harry. He interprets the training as, ironically, a form of bullying and takes his complaint to the principal, who professes to have no idea of the nature of the pedagogy or the sort of ideology underlying the approach of the providers and he agrees to never have these providers in the school again.

Now picture a student in a Christian school whom we will call Fiona. She is asked about her vision for herself in twenty years' time. This is what she says:

If everything works out the way I hope, then I hope to be either living in Byron Bay or in London and working for National Geographic where I am getting paid to travel around the world, writing about the stories of families and people worldwide. I hope to have starred in a few theatre shows either in Australia or London and hopefully will be living in a cute home by the beach with my husband and two kids where we will attend a church in this area.

Leaving aside any comparison of outcomes of public versus Christian schools, what I find fascinating about these two young people is firstly that they both profess to be Christians and secondly how their thinking reflects not only the zeitgeist but a wide variety of assumptions about what it means to be human. In the senior years of high school, they have already developed a functional worldview addressing the ‘who am I?’ and ‘what is my purpose?’ questions. Despite their common Christian faith, they appear to present a rather different set of answers to these key questions. To me they represent many of the complex issues confronting the role and practice of education in our society today, and what role, if any, the Bible might play. I am going to suggest that there are four areas, hinted at in the experience and aspirations of these two students, that are potentially impacted by the Bible. Some aspects of these areas are applicable to all systems, some only to faith-based schooling in what is of necessity a brief review.

1. The Aims of the School System

Australia is blessed with many systems or alliances of schools and Christian staff make a considerable contribution to all of them. Unfortunately, teacher education courses rarely critique or even uncover the hidden assumptions of their programs. That the subject “philosophy of education” appears to be out of favour in teacher education attests to this. It rarely appears as a discrete unit in any ITE course and is to be regretted, given that enduring questions of nature and purpose are often encountered for the first time in such a unit. In an era when all knowledge is contestable and contingent, our teachers may be losing the ability to interrogate assumptions about humanity and knowing, and the end of education as well as the means. A rigorous anthropology and epistemology are perhaps not seen as relevant to the aims of schooling where teachers are urged to focus simply on what works for the individual needs of students, especially those in certain targeted groups. These currently include, rightly, Indigenous, EAL/D speaking and disabled students. However, the end of education is rarely described beyond inclusion and equity, despite teachers being commonly referred to as agents for social change (See for example, Woodrow & Caruana, 2017 and Cochran-Smith & Keefe, 2022). There appears to be an absence of a coherent philosophy of education, with clear goals related to what we preserve, what we change as a society, and how we go about it; all focussed on a coherent understanding of the aims and functions of our schools. The key terms “inclusion” and “equity” require the nuancing that a sound philosophy of education offers, and that philosophy is always based on assumptions related to personhood, knowledge and knowing. Here then is the first potential link between the Bible and schooling.

This was what Harry recognised and acted on. He rejected the view of humanity being presented, based on assumptions around systematized power, and opposing groups of victims and oppressors. Instead, nurtured in the Christian faith, he took the Bible as his chief source of authority for understanding humanity and asserted its valid, albeit contested, place in schooling. He modelled

an approach applicable to all systems for understanding the aims of schooling beyond simplistic understandings of inclusion and equity. This aligns with Volf's claim that secularism's demand for the exclusion of religion from the public space (of which education is one component) is untenable, given the tendency of 21st century postmodern communities to be religiously diverse (Volf, 2011). Harry had been nurtured in the Christian faith by his parents in a way that went beyond personal salvation into questioning the secularist assumptions about humanity and culture that he met in that classroom. He had a clear opinion that education should not have as its aim the promotion of one ideological perspective through manipulative pedagogy that disrespected him as a person.

Encouragingly there has been a renewed focus on what could be termed "nurture" in relation to the aim and function of the curriculum, the basis for teaching and learning in the school. For example, curriculum scholar, Bill Pinar (2011; 2013) refers to "formation" or *Bildung*, the classic German understanding of academic and character development as a co-function of the curriculum. Ethics thus assumes a central role in his understanding of the aims of schools and schooling. Links with the Bible in this endeavour are obvious, although equally obvious is contestability of its foundational role in ethical frameworks and the desirability of a *telos* for student formation.

One Bible-based conceptualization of the end of nurture, with potential application across all systems, is that of Martin Dowson (2023). He argues that education should be seen in terms of wisdom as an organising construct. The aim of all education is, he claims, "the getting of wisdom," understood as the application of knowledge and understanding to life in general. This is an attainable goal for all, due to the common grace of God who chooses to reveal the meaning He has placed in the universe. But Dowson also sees Jesus Christ as "the Wisdom of God, and in Christ are also hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." "Divine wisdom" is seen as the application of knowledge and understanding for the glory of God and the benefit of humanity and is only possible in Christ. This suggests a divergence of secular and Christian education at this point, in that the full achievement and expression of wisdom is only possible for the Christian. However, it is still an understanding of the general aim of education that is clear and applicable for students of all and no faiths and one clearly based on the Bible.

Meredith Lake's analysis of the place of the Bible in colonial Australia may also be helpful in relation to establishing the link between the Bible and the aims of school education. Firstly, she recounts that as an artifact of "cultural heritage" the Bible supported "shared cultural assumptions" with implications for the early foundations of Australian society and institutions (2018, p. 10). While the traditional "transmission of culture" aim of schooling is problematic in a 21st century multicultural society, Christian educators could usefully promote the exploration of our cultural heritage, including the spiritual, as a more appropriate and achievable goal, supporting the need for social cohesion. This would involve acknowledgement and interrogation of the "shared cultural assumptions" that have contributed to 21st century Australia.

Secondly, Lake claims the Bible was regarded as a sacred word, connecting people to the living God. It was this status that she claims is "crucial to its impact in culture" (2018, p. 13) and crucial for the subjective transformation of individuals who seek to adopt its worldview (2018, p. 15). Given that it may act as the meaning-making core of a student's identity (Hunsberger, Pratt &

Pancer, 2001; Kunnen & Bosma, 2000), religion, whether expressed in a religious tradition or not, is important for the learning of many if not most students. Any aim that is related to the Bible must therefore acknowledge the role of the spiritual in the life of persons, as indicated in the foundational education document of the country, the Alice Springs (Mpartwe) Education Declaration (2020). The Bible is crucial to unpacking the meaning and implications of this declaration and not only from a Christian perspective. Particularly important is a biblical understanding of persons and knowing, as these form the key assumptions of a well-developed philosophy of education with clear and achievable goals. They form the bridge between the Bible and school policies and practices.

2. Students and Personhood

Students are wonderful sources of unusual yet insightful understandings about life and belief. Those of us who are educators often expect that students will think through the issues with us, see the wisdom of what we are advocating, and adopt an aligned lifestyle. Presumably stemming from these expectations, my research in two Christian schools found an overuse of an apologetics approach to pedagogy and an emphasis on biblical information in Religious Education classes. This may be the case in State schools as well, wherever God’s Word is opened with a confessional aim. But there may also be very real antipathy to the Bible that flows from students’ objections in relation to one controversial issue. Biblical sexual and gender ethics were particularly highlighted by girls in my doctoral research.

I haven’t analysed the Bible enough because the school really doesn’t go deep into ethical matters and ... controversial topics ... So I don’t agree with the Bible’s view of homosexuals and like how women are portrayed. ... My whole moral ethics thing is more based upon personal freedom rather than anything else. ... “I’m kind of on the fence about the existence of God ... I’m not 100 per cent sure I want to follow him. If I follow the Bible to the letter, I don’t think I would be a great person (Reference?)

There is a clear rejection of the authority of the Bible in relation to current ethical and moral issues, perhaps a suggestion of biblical norms as evil in “I don’t think I would be a great person.” I suggest that these students lacked a rich and plausible account of human nature, a picture that emphasises flourishing within biblical boundaries. Indeed, if we are to establish a sound theory of teaching and learning, or a comprehensive understanding of culture and community, Smith (2003) reminds us that any adequate theory in this area is,

A normative one that conceives of humans as moral, believing animals and human social life as consisting of moral orders that constitute and direct social action. (Smith, 2003, p. 7).

I would like to suggest that the Bible’s picture of students as “made in the image of God” is almost unfathomable to students. It requires unpacking in a way that supports the development of a healthy identity as the basis for life choices. Cortez (2017) focusses our attention on the ontological and epistemological centrality of Jesus Christ to our understanding of what it means to be human. Ontologically, he states, that “Jesus is the one in whom God establishes what it means to be human.” Epistemologically, “the New Testament emphasizes the uniqueness of Jesus’s revelatory significance for our vision of humanity.” For Cortez, these two central facts lead to an “inherently

teleological” understanding of what he refers to as “Christological anthropology.” “Eschatological consummation” thus becomes an inextricable aspect of what it means to be human, offering a Bible-based, Christ-focussed understanding. This is not the place to analyse Cortez’ ideas in any depth; I would simply like to suggest that such assumptions could lead to something like the following description of what it means to be human. I have included some suggested implications for schools while conceding that they may be implemented more fully in a Christian school.

Human Persons are:

- a. Created by God in His image and purposed to image Him. As truly man and truly God, Jesus reveals the nature of that image. All students are therefore worthy of respect and dignity, and capable of learning. The qualities of justice, truth, and love displayed by Jesus should govern all activities school-wide so that students will be disciplined in reflecting His image.
- b. Religious beings, possessing a drive towards meaning. This aspect of human nature is often overlooked in textbooks and subject syllabi, and not considered in the classroom. Filling the void, false gods can be used as an almost-exclusive perspective through which subjects can be viewed. For example, “sustainability” as a cross-curriculum priority can potentially become “environmentalism.” These perspectives can distort school subjects overtly or covertly; so subject knowledge should be studied with discernment for hidden assumptions and ideological topic choices. Pedagogical content knowledge might also take account of the spiritual nature of students and incorporate consideration of relevant issues (Barton, 2015). As they seek to make meaning of their learning, the biblical metanarrative, focussed on Jesus Christ, offers a plausible and coherent means of making sense of the many disparate aspects of a student’s study.
- c. An indivisible entity, while being multidimensional. Students cannot be reduced to any one dimension of their being (eg. reason or emotion). Education is inevitably always to and of the whole person, although the zeitgeist may emphasise one dimension at the expense of another. At the same time, students will have particular strengths and/or giftedness in certain areas.
- d. Inextricably related to the world, with all its richness and fullness. We are created beings, not angels, not gods. We are always embodied and embedded, responsible for stewarding our world, anticipating a new creation under Christ’s lordship. Students need increasing and challenging opportunities to develop their values, decision-making skills, and leadership capacity, all within a responsive understanding of their humble yet exalted place in the universe.
- e. Gifted with responsible freedom to shape and fashion the world. In this respect, the Bible majors on the freedom of living under grace, while containing specific commands and general principles that establish boundaries and accountability. Students should therefore be introduced to hermeneutics, on the assumption that the Bible is the active Word of God,

relevant to the whole of life. Teachers with an intellectual mastery of their subjects can also demonstrate discernment and enthusiasm about their subjects as products of human culture so that students will develop a love of learning and intellectual challenge and embrace their role as culture-formers (Crouch, 2008).

- f. Sexual beings, male or female, two complementary kinds of humanity. The affirmation (within appropriate God-given limits) of students in a broad conception of gender roles and needs is necessary for sound personal and community development.
- g. Communal beings, experiencing their individuality primarily in terms of their unique contribution to community. A dynamic school culture develops when students take hold of the privilege of living in a relationship of loving service to each other and God, involving self-giving, acceptance and faithfulness, and the capacity to contribute to the common good.
- h. Fallen and fallible human beings, in need of salvation, nevertheless living under the common grace of God, with a God-given conscience and capable of knowing truth about God's world. Therefore, welfare policies must establish appropriate boundaries, acknowledging human capacity for evil and good.

If this is indeed a reasonably comprehensive account of the human person, the implication is that it is more or less relevant across all systems, although some aspects will be contested more highly than others.

3. Curriculum and Knowing

This paper assumes, with Eisner and Smith and Lovat, that every type of curriculum lays out a worldview or promotes an ideology and hence stimulates students to appropriate some vision of the world for themselves (Eisner, 2003; Smith & Lovat, 2003). At this point, school systems, and even Christian schools diverge in practice. Public schools may assume aspects of the cultural zeitgeist while still adhering, for example, to a complex, perhaps contradictory understanding of students and knowing. Recognising Biblical authority challenges Christian schools to interrogate the what, how and why of their curriculum for the worldview it promotes.

Various approaches have been adopted over the past 30 years. They include the alignment of the Biblical metanarrative with the curriculum as an optional interpretive framework. The Bible may also be studied in the curriculum somewhere as a cultural artifact. A third possibility is that the disciplines are regarded as complementary. Biblical theology taught in a Christian Education class and secularized Science in science class. However it is done, for faith-based schools, failing to align worldviews may impact on plausibility of their beliefs in their eyes of their students. I address two issues only with potential and challenge in relation to the role of the Bible in curriculum.

“Jesus has an Office”: Firstly, some Christian schools appear to quarantine Christian faith, and the Bible in particular, into a discrete subject supported by staff in a discrete office. Although

traditional, this may have the effect of marginalizing it as irrelevant to the “real work” of the school. Hence the saying “Jesus has an office.” Staff who were personally committed to Anglican faith were free in both schools of my research to teach in a way that linked their subject with Christian Studies. However, for the most part, the spiritual understanding of students functioned in unacknowledged ways in the curriculum as it was enacted in the classroom on the basis of the functional separation of Christian Studies from other subjects. Teachers made decisions based on their personal understanding of what it is to be human and their associated version of what Ewing (2016) has referred to as the Storylines of the curriculum and this did not necessarily align with the school’s Storyline in subtle ways. Green (2012) in her study of an English academy school very similar to the schools I studied found that a complementary, even dualistic curriculum framework had a negative impact on student engagement with Bible teaching, referring to

the structural separation of Christian Bible teaching from the secular subject curriculum, with the exception of RE. The study concluded that this structural separation compounded the view widely held in liberal secular society that religion is only relevant to the private sphere (Green, 2012, p. 397).

She further cautioned that while a specific Christian Education subject enhanced biblical knowledge, the reshaping of student worldview was not a particularly evident outcome. Instead, the subject was thought to act in a “symbolically powerful role in the intentional ethos” (Green, 2009, p. 455). It may be that the Christian Education subject was not then accorded by students what has been called the “credibility of rationality” (Cooling, 2012, p. 91). This would appear to challenge the complementarity approach to alignment in any school promoting a particular faith. Further, in relation to the secular subject curriculum, it is widely acknowledged that students need to learn to work with the dynamic of a discipline, learning a “mental map” (Groundwater-Smith, Ewing & Le Cornu, 2015) of it and knowing how its knowledge claims are justified, including the role of beliefs in these claims (Wheeler, 2010). This would indicate that any exclusion of the Bible as the Christian metanarrative promoting understanding and critique is at best artificial.

The Issue of Constructivism: We have already noted the powerful, inherently normative nature of curriculum. This naturally leads us to ask, “What values and beliefs are of the most worth?” There are several other classic curriculum questions of relevance to Biblical understandings, especially in the area of epistemology where assumptions are made that are critical for selection of content (Smith & Lovat, 2003). For example, “What knowledge is of most worth *to learners*?” (Smith & Ewing, 2002, p. 26) positions the learner at the centre of the valuing process. I suggest that we may be at a tipping point in the way that personal life history and preference influence criteria of “most worth” to be determined by identity issues (Pinar, 2013, p. 63). The question “Whose knowledge?” (Smith & Ewing, 2002), seems to hint at that with its hints suspicion of universal knowledge and biased power groups in knowledge selection. Whenever a State accrediting body, such as NESA in NSW, develops a new syllabus, it presents a document with clear answers to these questions. Accrediting bodies are frequently criticised for their neo-liberal emphasis on content or “basics” (Miedema, 2017). Thus syllabus answers to the normative questions often remain unarticulated and unquestioned, even in Christian schools, despite their importance. They remain examples of the core concern of curriculum: “the nature of knowledge,

how we know and how we can prove that we know” (Smith & Lovat, 2013, p. 12), one component of the bridge between the Bible and schooling. I suggest that this is particularly important in teaching the syllabi emanating from NESAs in its emphasis on constructivist understandings of knowers and knowing. This is not the place to discuss this in detail, but I present one educator’s approach to this challenge.

Trevor Cooling, Professor Emeritus of Christian Education at Canterbury Christ Church University in the UK, advocates Anthony Thiselton’s approach to the role of the Bible in schools, particularly in relation to student learning. For Cooling, Thiselton’s concept of responsible hermeneutics offers an effective way of harmonizing the most helpful insights of constructivist theories of learning with a commitment to biblical authority (Cooling, 2014). This is done through being faithful to the biblical text while replacing “the literalist, militaristic conception of obedience with creative faithfulness to the Bible as a shaping narrative” (Cooling, 2014, p. 59). This, according to Cooling, offers a “creative harmony” between the concepts of self-authorship suggested by constructivism and biblical authority. The Bible remains in control of the learning while according a place for students to interpret and develop meaning. I finish this section with a quote that I have found so helpful in understanding knowers, knowing and curriculum in the light of biblical truths,

Humans beings may know objective truth in the sense that they may know what actually conforms to reality, but they cannot know it objectively, that is, they cannot escape their finitude and...their fallenness, and therefore the limitations of perspectivalism, and thus they cannot know anything completely or from a neutral stance (Carson, 2008, p. 101).

4. The Life of the School Community

The final area I wish to address, in which the Bible has a potential role, is that of the shared life of the school community. We learn from JKA Smith (2009) of the power of the day-to-day practices or liturgies of schooling in relation to formation in a community. I suggest the Bible may relate to this in a number of ways.

An Indirect Role: Some indirect ways in which this happens are suggested by Lake’s “shared cultural assumptions,” a remnant of which still function in 21st century schools. These often unarticulated and unrecognised assumptions function to a certain extent in schools of all systems. For example, welfare policies generally hint at a biblical foundation in respect for the needs of the individual, establishment of boundaries for individual and common good, and measured responses to breaches. Classroom Management is currently one of the Priority Areas for Initial Teacher Education (See, for example, <https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-01/elaborations-in-priority-areas.pdf>). This policy approach is driven by a recognition that students need connection to their school community, and failure to abide by the rules of behaviour agreed to by that community are seen as disruptions in that relationship. It is essentially a combination of justice and mercy (Fyson, 2017), modelled on Christian foundations.

A More Direct Role: The Bible potentially has a rather more direct role in a faith-based Christian school, as suggested by my above emphasis on a Bible-based understanding of persons and knowing. However, this is not without challenges, even in a Christian school. In response to my

research of religious identity in the boys school, the Head lamented that he was limited in achieving a rigorous and well-explained link between school practices and the Christian faith by the negative responses of many parents.

The culture we're in couldn't be possible without Christianity because Christianity sets up the norms ... in a post-Christian culture, they want the Kingdom of God without the King or God.

The challenges in attempting to allow the Bible to guide community understanding and practice was further highlighted by one of the Christian Studies teachers. In relation to the character education program, which emphasised virtuous manhood, she expressed doubts that a biblical understanding could be applied with much clarity.

I think we as humans cannot articulate what it is to be female or male in that full and comprehensive understanding ... that's a part of the curse of this epoch of time.

In the girls school there was a similar suggestion that students wanted the kingdom without the king, and Fiona perhaps reflects that in her vision of a comfortable life, with church attendance tacked on almost as an afterthought. Other students were disdainful of the way the Bible was used in the school community, saying,

The Principal is very like Bible-oriented so I feel like this school just follows that path.

Developing a community that is reflective of and responsive to the Biblical metanarrative, then, is not always a straightforward endeavour, even in a Christian school. Ideally, it manifests in rich relationships of love, grace, and truth; but must also be linked in some way to the more formal activities of school if it is not to be seen as marginal to the 'real life' aspirations of students (Smith & Shortt, 2002). Further, Charles Taylor's (1989; 2007) claims that a robust culture is required to support the plausibility of any story of the flourishing life. If the Christian metanarrative is to be given credence by students, then the Bible must be the touchstone for all the school community policies and practices in a Christian school. In the public school it may guide more indirectly various policies and practices. In both sites, there exists potential for the Bible to be seen to "work" through embodiment and modelling, and nurturing towards spiritual maturity.

There are obvious limitations to what I have presented above. Time limits depth. However, I trust I have presented a broad enough survey to see how relevant the Bible is to the endeavours of all in education and particularly, the enterprise of schooling in the 21st century. It potentially impacts on our understanding of the purpose of education, undergirding school culture with a rich picture of Christological anthropology and insights into processes and products of knowing and knowledge.

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Correlation of Salvation and Humanism: M. M. Thomas' Reflections on Lukan Narratives

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Abstract: The correlation of salvation and humanisation forms the crux of the biblical exegesis of M.M. Thomas. He provides a secular contextual biblical exegesis based on the various ideas of the West and the East, pleasing to the pluralistic context to bridge the contextual ideological divide. He proposes humanisation as a method of solution to contextual issues. For Thomas, both religious faiths and secular ideologies address the question of the path of salvation for humanity. This paper explores one of Thomas's commentaries on Luke: *Jesus, God's Anointed, Luke 1-9, Contextual Theological Bible Commentary.* The paper limits its focus to passages such as Luke 2:29-32, 1:46-55, 4:16-21, and 3:3-18, giving a secular-contextual reflection by considering the integration of salvation and humanisation. His hermeneutic is concerned with exegeting not only the Word but also the World, and it is situated in the secular context of the 20th century's socio-political complexities.

Key Words: *Christology, salvation, humanisation, exegesis, hermeneutics, method, narratives.*

Introduction

In the wider theological project of M.M. Thomas, it is hard to pinpoint his concise definition of humanisation, as his entire articulation centres around humanisation and salvation. He incorporates his own context in exegesis to delve into the concept. In his commentaries on Luke, Thomas blends his contextual interpretation of Christology with diverse philosophical themes from the West and the East, appealing to the pluralistic milieu to bridge the contextual ideological divide. In His Lueken exegesis, Thomas utilises Karl Barth's concept of God's humanity; while Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx are integrated into his articulation of Christology.

The commentary touches on liberalism, democracy, communism, Marxism, totalitarianism, the French Revolution, socialism, fascism, nihilism, capitalism, modern science, and Indian Renaissance thought. As well, Thomas tries to read the Lukan text from the perspective of Hindu reformation, drawing on reformed thinkers from Swami Vivekananda to Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and the political thinker, Gandhi. Thomas's intention was not a scientific investigation of the biblical text by digging out its root meaning. Rather he looked at the context through the biblical text. In this process he sees Christ not primarily as a religious figure but as the central figure in the project of humanisation.¹

This article limits its study to salvation and humanisation based on one of his commentaries on the gospel of Luke: “*Jesus, God’s Anointed, Luke 1-9, Contextual Theological Bible Commentary.*”² Considering the theological broadness of Lukan narratives, the paper takes a general approach referring to a few select texts such as Luke 2:29-32, 1:46-55, 4:16-21, and 3:3-18, giving a secular-contextual-reflection by considering the integration of salvation and humanisation. My analysis will show how Thomas’s reading of Luke was informed by the socio-political complexities of his context. At times, I indicate the complexities of a particular Malayalam term that has shades of meaning that are not easily translatable into English.

1. Humanisation in Thomas’s Perspective

In Thomas’s articulation, the term humanisation means liberation from all oppressive and destructive forces inherent in the social, political, and religious structures that dehumanise humanity. He aimed to establish a better human community based on justice, love, freedom, and human dignity according to the Christian theological understanding of humanity.³ In this regard, Thomas states, while interpreting 1 Samuel 8:1-9, that “humans are those individuals and people who create history. The freedom of humans in history is ultimately God-given; even God will not negate it.”⁴ As assumed by Swami Abhishiktananda, God, meeting the human “in the cave of the heart,”⁵ is similar to Thomas’s perception of how human beings, at the heart of their interiority, experience the dignity and credibility of life when they encounter Christ.

Robin Boyd assumes that Thomas’s concept of humanisation must be understood “in relation to Christ, the true man; the kind of humanity which he wants to see established on earth is the pattern of real-life established by the one whom with the Indian theologian Pandipeddi Chenchiah called

¹ The whole draft is a simplified and modified version of my PhD dissertation: *Exegeting the World: M.M. Thomas’s Secular Commentaries on Scripture*, submitted to Charles Sturt University. My research work is found at <https://researchoutput.csu.edu.au/en/publications/exegeting-the-world-mm-thomass-secular-commentaries-on-scripture>.

² Apart from commentary on Luke, to explore in depth the concept, I will also consider his book on “*Salvation and Humanization.*”

³ Thomas, *Salvation and Humanization: Some Crucial Issues in the Theology of Mission in Contemporary India* (Madras: CLS, 1971), 1.

⁴ Thomas, *The Throne of David Contextual Theological Biblical Commentary 1 & 2 Samuel*, translated by T.M. Philip (Tiruvalla: CSS, 2006), 61.

⁵ Robin Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1994), 312.

adi purusha of the new creation.”⁶ Thomas synchronises his focus on humanisation with Chenchiah, noting that Christ offers salvation in the light of the new humanity. Christ is the *adi purusha* (first man) of the new creation. Christ, as *adi purusha*, bridges the gap between God and man through his radical entry into cosmic history; through his existence in history, he transforms humanity.⁷ Thomas discovers that the “ultimate framework of reference”⁸ between anthropology and theology is the concept of “God-for-man.”⁹ He borrowed the terminology of Karl Barth, “the humanity of God.”¹⁰ He strives for a humanisation centred on Christ; that is, a Christocentric humanisation. Thomas says, “the mission of salvation and the task of humanisation is integrally related to each other, even if they cannot be considered identical.”¹¹ He finds salvation beyond the Christian mission’s proclamation, and therefore, it must operate in the domains of history and politics, where humans exist as genuine humans.¹²

Thomas interprets humanisation through scripture’s revelatory events. The Mosaic revelatory event, according to him, is a historical revolution. Humanisation is how Moses liberated the people of Israel from Egypt, and David from the Philistines’ hands. The Old Testament’s prophets looked forward to receiving the Messiah who would liberate people from all forms of inhumanity, giving them abundant life to make them genuine people of God. Thomas sees this messianic expectancy fulfilled in Jesus as the liberator of humanity. He accepts Zachariah’s song, recorded in Luke 1:67-79, in terms of Christ as the liberator who provides salvation to Israel and all humanity.¹³ While interpreting revelatory events, Thomas relied on Bultmann’s concept of demythologisation, which claims the “centrality of the *kerygma* that God has acted in Jesus Christ for the redemption of man.”¹⁴ This revelation of God is wrapped in classical Hellenistic theism. Thomas interprets the concept of demythologisation as a process of separating the essential meaning “from out-of-date thought-forms of biblical mythology,”¹⁵ making it pleasing and acceptable to the modern minds in the language of “modern philosophy of existence.”¹⁶ Following Bultmann, Thomas affirms that “the New Testament worldview itself is primarily existential.”¹⁷ At this point, the Gospel’s proclamation becomes necessary to move humans from a false existence to an authentic existence.

2. Integration of Salvation and Humanisation

Responding to the Lukan record, Thomas interprets salvation offered through Christ to all humanity as universal. He affirms: “salvation is the state of living of a people who live as free people protected from enemies, fearlessly and peacefully, who worship God in spirit and truth,

⁶ Robin Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, 319.

⁷ Thomas, and P. T. Thomas, *Towards An Indian Christian Theology* (Tiruvalla: CSS, 1998), 174 & Robin Boyd, *Indian Christian Theology*, 150, 319.

⁸ Thomas, *Salvation and Humanization*, 7.

⁹ Thomas, *Salvation and Humanization*, 8.

¹⁰ Thomas, *Salvation and Humanization*, 8.

¹¹ Thomas, *Salvation and Humanization*, 8.

¹² Robin Boyd, *Indian Christian Theology*, 319.

¹³ Thomas, *Jesus, God’s Anointed, Luke 1-9, Contextual Theological Bible Commentary*, Malayalam Commentary Translated by T.M. Philip (Tiruvalla: CSS Books & BTTBPSA, 2007), 18.

¹⁴ Thomas, *Acknowledged Christ*, 290.

¹⁵ Thomas, *Acknowledged Christ*, 294.

¹⁶ Thomas, *Acknowledged Christ*, 294.

¹⁷ Thomas, *Acknowledged Christ*, 294.

receiving from God forgiveness of their sin, and who share divine light to those who live in darkness.”¹⁸ Salvation invites humans “to put on the New Humanity offered to all men by God in the New Man, Jesus Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen.”¹⁹

Thomas sees salvation in terms of humanisation as both are integrally related in their correlation and inseparable from inward reality. He sees salvation as the “spiritual inwardness of true humanisation.”²⁰ The correlation of these two concepts is the vehicle for communicating the Christian faith in a pluralistic context, such as India, where salvation is closely linked to humanisation.²¹ In India’s social structural settings, with its mentality of discrimination, “the outcasts, the poor and the orphans saw Christian faith as the source of a new humanising influence and the foundation of a human community.”²² People found that conversion to Christ was “the spiritual source of new humanity on earth in which their human dignity and status were recognised.”²³ For Thomas, salvation is humanisation in its eschatological aspect, in which the struggles for the realisation of true humanity in the history of the world continue to point out the eschatological dimension of judgement and fulfilment.²⁴

2.1. Luke 2:29-32

Thomas’s understanding of Simeon’s song (Luke 2:29-32) is that it shows the universality of salvation offered by Jesus Christ.²⁵ It is offered to the whole human race: “for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel” (Luke 2:30-32). The song echoes the thought of the second Isaiah, and Thomas affirms that Isaiah, the prophet’s proclamation of salvation will reach the entire human race through Israel. The light would spread to the whole world through the Servant of Yahweh who would fulfil it by his suffering and death on the cross.²⁶ He claims that the suffering servant on the cross remains to display all that is good in religion, state, and society. This also reveals the human’s innermost spiritual contradiction. The cross is positioned in the world by God as a symbol to expose humanity’s deepest contradictions to themselves and others.²⁷ Here, the cross becomes a catalyst for humanization, where the true message of salvation resides. Thomas states that the importance of “salvation is the spiritual inwardness of true humanisation, and that humanisation is inherent to the message of salvation.”²⁸ The cross is an indicator for assessing and judging people, religious institutions, and their leaders.²⁹

¹⁸ Thomas, *Jesus, God’s Anointed*, 56.

¹⁹ Thomas, *Salvation and Humanisation*, 3.

²⁰ Thomas, *Salvation and Humanisation*, 10.

²¹ T. M. Philip, *The Encounter Between Theology and Ideology: An Exploration into the Communicative Theology of M. M. Thomas* (Madras: C.L.S., 1986), 114.

²² Thomas, *Salvation and Humanisation*, 14.

²³ Thomas, *Salvation and Humanisation*, 14.

²⁴ Thomas, *Salvation and Humanisation*, 15.

²⁵ Thomas, *Jesus, God’s Anointed*, 18.

²⁶ Thomas, *Jesus, God’s Anointed*, 56.

²⁷ Thomas, *Jesus, God’s Anointed*, 60.

²⁸ Thomas, *Salvation and Humanisation*, 10.

²⁹ Thomas, *Jesus, God’s Anointed*, 60.

2.2. Luke 1:46-55

According to Thomas, Mary's song (Luke 1:46-55) symbolises her spiritual blessedness while also demonstrating that Jesus offers all humanity a revolutionary salvation. Thomas employs the Malayalam term *anandam*, which means 'bliss,' 'joy,' or 'happiness,' to define Mary's exaltation.³⁰ In Sanskrit, the same concept is rendered as *ananda*. *Aa* means 'from all sides,' and *ananda* means 'joy' or 'bliss.' *Ananda* is an eternal feature of *Brahman* (God) that humans experience while being joined with him; that is, there is no distinction between the knower or experiencer and the known or experienced while being engaged in enormous bliss in Hindu spirituality.³¹ In temporal reality, *ananda* is pure joy or bliss gained through aspiration in communion with the Highest self; thus, *anandam* might be interpreted as supremely blissful in self.³² Mary's spiritual bliss, according to Thomas, is an *anandam* for being chosen by God, who recognised a humble servant who would provide the world with a Saviour. Thomas interprets, "He who is mighty, has done great things for me" (Luke 1:49). The great deed is not limited to the actor's personal life; instead, it has universal significance and the objective that the entire world should know God and thereby be renewed. The transformation is internal as well as external and includes human persons and social structures. Thomas quotes Luke 1:51, "He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts," to interpret spiritual pride. This includes not only the personality but also the social sphere. The social expression of pride involves the oppression of weaker people in society by the dominant classes and the economic system that enables them to enjoy privilege by exploiting the poor. When Christ comes, revolutions will occur in these contexts based on his kingdom's justice. It would be a turnaround, a reversal and there is no way of avoiding this social change.³³

The structures that do not offer justice to humanity will not last long because of humanity's foundation and the goal of world history built on God's purposes. Through his life, death, and resurrection, Christ demonstrated the justice of love and the kingdom in the history of humanity.³⁴ The crucified Christ's bodily resurrection is an event that occurred in the secular history of humanity. Jesus Christ, as a man, was a physical being and a historical human being. Thomas claims that the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is profound in its interpretation of the risen Christ as the first fruit of the harvest; Christ launched an historical revolution to establish the triumph of Christ over the principalities, powers, and ultimately death, which led him to the kingdom.³⁵ Thomas says that "when individuals and societies attempt to organise their life in opposition to justice, God's judgement is revealed through revolutions."³⁶ God's mercy and transforming power

³⁰ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 52.

³¹ Kiran Kumar K, "Well-being from the Hindu/Sanatana Dharma Perspective" in *The Oxford Book of Happiness*, edited by Susan A. David, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 374, assessed from https://books.google.com.au/books?hl=en&lr=&id=HwQRplZYh3AC&oi=fnd&pg=PA371&dq=Hindu+concept+of+ananda&ots=DX2FL_Dm4d&sig=gFKXKE7vv7IG80NiKqKVABabTVk#v=onepage&q&f=false.

³² K. P. Ajeaz, "Trinity as Sat-Chit-Ananda in the Thought of the Indian Theologian Brahmabandav Upadhyaya," *The Asia Journal of Theology* 23, no. 1 (April 2009): 85, accessed from <http://atesea.net/publication/ajt-latest-issue>.

³³ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 54.

³⁴ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 54.

³⁵ Thomas, *Salvation and Humanisation*, 30.

³⁶ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 54.

will operate throughout these changes. The last word will be uttered not by God's judgement, but by God's mercy, and that it is the message of the Gospel of Christ, the crucified and risen.³⁷

2.3. Luke 4:16-21

Thomas explores the significance of Jesus' sermon in the synagogue, mentioned in Luke 4:16-21. In modern times, scholars regard it as the Nazareth Manifesto, which emphasised Jesus's mission. For Thomas, it advocates salvation's integral nature to all humanity in its universal significance, carried out by Jesus Christ,³⁸ "to preach good news to the poor." Thomas translates the word "poor," signifying "those who cannot stand on their own; their dependence is only on God."³⁹

The other meaning that he ascribes to the word 'poor' is "helpless as having no participation in power structures or the decision-making process."⁴⁰ It refers to "social oppression"⁴¹ combined with "economic poverty."⁴² For Thomas, biblically speaking, the essence of the Bible in this regard is the "human decision-making power."⁴³ People who have lost the capacity of decision-making are under slavery and regarded as broken-hearted. Taking this view, Thomas interprets Isaiah's prophetic words "binding the broken-hearted" as meaning that "the sense of the self and the free decision-making power lost due to their life as slaves should be regained to them, and they should be empowered to stand on their legs as free people."⁴⁴ He argues that God's people are creators of history; they must participate in society by enabling it to shape history following God's purpose for their lives. "Release to the captives"⁴⁵ refers to the social liberation of societies from "the clutches of violent rulers and be established in justice."⁴⁶ Thomas declares this to be the heart of the Nazareth Manifesto. "Recovering the sight of the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" denotes social liberation from all dark forces.⁴⁷

Thomas summarises the substance of Jesus' manifesto: "to release the captives from prisons, to make a people out of the slaves who have lost their ability to make decisions under long-time slavery, empowering them to affirm themselves; to conscientise those who live in darkness; to liberate the oppressed; to proclaim that the Day of the Lord that redeems all people leading to freedom is imminent."⁴⁸ For him, this is the heart of the Gospel of the kingdom of God. It ensures that the path is opened for the restoration of all human beings to Sonship. It can be found in the new humanity, where everything will be merged together. This new humanity will encounter the forces of dehumanisation in its search for humanness.⁴⁹

³⁷ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 54, 55.

³⁸ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 18.

³⁹ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 84.

⁴⁰ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 84.

⁴¹ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 84.

⁴² Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 84.

⁴³ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 84.

⁴⁴ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 84.

⁴⁵ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 84.

⁴⁶ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 84.

⁴⁷ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 84.

⁴⁸ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 85.

⁴⁹ Thomas, *Salvation and Humanisation*, 3, 4.

2.4. Luke 3:3-18

While interpreting Luke 3:3-18, Thomas refers to John the Baptist in the discussion to highlight John's initiation of a movement of renewal among the Israelites, preparing them to hear the message of Jesus. In this case, John was an instrument for witnessing reality.⁵⁰ In the same way, Thomas affirms that "even the Israelite history, according to the assessment of the early church, was only God's prior action leading to the Messiah's advent and the birth of the Christian church."⁵¹ In this framework of thinking, he argues that Christian theology's inevitability is to evaluate human history across a broad spectrum, with a particular focus on the history of religions, spiritual, and moral movements. This evaluation needs to take place "in the light of Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate end of everything."⁵² He claims that Christian theology's norm in assessing all these structures is that the Holy Spirit works in all spiritualities, moral, and social movements.⁵³

3. Towards a Secular Contextual Reflection

Thomas accepts the proposition that "it should be recognised that all these are objective and independent historical realities, unrelated to Christian theology."⁵⁴ He meant to emphasise that all these realities have principles within them that are independent. They can explore the inner life of their social world. They have the right to examine the Christian faith in terms of its reality and ideals. Thomas states that "faith in Christ as the ultimate truth persuades Christians to interpret Hinduism in the light of Christian theology."⁵⁵ This phenomenon can be found worldwide, especially in pluralistic societies. Thomas claims that Hinduism is a religion with its own history. Adherents of Hinduism believe that they have the eternal right to interpret Christianity in the light of Hindu *sanadhana dharma*,⁵⁶ a Sanskrit term which has various meanings referring to all human beings' original religion. It implies that it is a *manava dharma*, an eternal human religion or eternal law, that existed in such a distant past that nothing could be asserted with certainty. Hindus claim that it is indeed the eternal human religion.⁵⁷ Raimon Panikkar, in his study on Hinduism, notes that when the root word *dh* is analysed, the etymological Sanskrit term *dharma* becomes more apparent in its origin. It means "to take" or "to sustain." According to the Mahabharata, *dharma* is understood as that which preserves or sustains humankind. In general, *sandhana dharma* refers to an eternal or absolute set of responsibilities that include ethical principles such as honesty, purity, benevolence, compassion, tolerance, forbearance, generosity, and asceticism.⁵⁸

⁵⁰ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 65.

⁵¹ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 65.

⁵² Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 65.

⁵³ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 65.

⁵⁴ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 65.

⁵⁵ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 65.

⁵⁶ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 65.

⁵⁷ Shrikant Prasoön, *Eternal Human Religion Hinduism: Classified and Simplified* (New Delhi: V&S Publishers, 2011), 24, 25, assessed from ATLA,

<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTA5M213d19fMTAxMDU3MV9fQU41?sid=1281f3e9-46f1-4ffd-a65e-62baed8a6ac6@pdc-v-sessmgr03&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1>.

⁵⁸ Raimon Panikkar, *Hinduism: The Dharma of India*, Part Two (New York: Orbis Book, 2017), N.P, assessed from ATLA,

<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTA5M213d19fMTkwMTMyM19fQU41?sid=1281f3e9-46f1-4ffd-a65e-62baed8a6ac6%40pdc-v-sessmgr03&vid=0&format=EK&rid=5>.

Chakkarai, an Indian Christian thinker, interpreted *sanadhana dharma* in terms of scripture by emphasising the Old Testament's assertion that a moral governor rules the moral governance of the world. The moral governor enforces God's righteousness in the world as *sanatana dharma*, and by this, he provided the concept with a new, dynamic meaning.⁵⁹ As the point of contact, Thomas says that it is only when the Christian faith inclusively accepts the fact of *sanatana dharma* that it can make meaningful dialogue with other faiths and secular ideologies, which is necessary for humanisation.⁶⁰

Thomas says that several Old Testament prophets and John the Baptist prioritised social justice and love for neighbours. John's audience asked him, "What then shall we do?" John responded, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise" (Luke 3:11, 12). Thomas interprets John's dialogue in context. He says, "if society has both the poor whose humanity is stultified due to lack of food and clothing and the rich who enjoy an abundance of material prosperity, it proves that society is immorally structured."⁶¹ This statement points to the significance of balancing multiple realities, such as the poor and rich in society. The exhortation is focused upon advocates of the "path of righteousness to organise fraternities which share those things such as food and clothing that are essential for material wellbeing."⁶² Thomas points to the fact contained in the scriptures that there are instances among religious groups where people detach themselves from the tradition of social separation based on a rich-poor class structure. They shared everything of their material possessions, as well as communed in brotherhood. The early church followed this trend, as found in Acts 2:4.⁶³

Conclusion

Humanisation is a theme that keeps appearing in Thomas's theological interpretation of the scriptures. Thomas looked at the Exodus liberation movement and Davidic victory over the Philistines as part of humanisation. The theme of humanisation is especially prominent in his Lukan Christology, where he blends the study of the text with a study of the obstacles to human dignity in modern pluralistic societies. Thomas pays close attention to the revolutionary events in biblical history. He views world history as a series of revolutions in which he discovers God at the heart of all struggles for a new humanity. Thomas analyses Jesus's teachings recorded in Luke as a paradigm for God's ultimate purpose for the world, which is to build the kingdom of God.

Thomas interpreted Simeon's song in terms of the universality of salvation offered through the suffering servant on the cross. It pointed out the contradiction in everything including humanity's inner spiritual aspect. For Thomas, the cross of Christ is a symbol of the meeting point between the ways of God and the ways of human beings in this world.⁶⁴ He saw the cross as placed by God

⁵⁹ R. H. S. Boyd, "The Use of the Bible in Indian Christian Theology" *Indian Journal of Theology*, (1973):152, accessed from https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ijt/22-4_141.pdf.

⁶⁰ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 65.

⁶¹ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 66.

⁶² Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 66.

⁶³ Thomas, *Jesus, God's Anointed*, 66.

⁶⁴ T.M. Philip, "Diavasthravishkaram: M.M. Thomasinte Nilapadukal," [Theological Expressions: M.M. Thomas's Perspective], in *Dr M. M. Thomas: Jeevithavum Sakshyavum*, Malayalam, [M.M. Thomas: Life and Testimony], edited by K. A. Abraham (Tiruvalla: The Theological Literature Council, 2016), 102.

in the world to assess, judge and humanise people and establishments. Thomas finds in Mary's song that Christ provides salvation to all, transforming human beings and social structures. The Nazareth Manifesto underlined the mission to liberate communities from injustice, and John the Baptist's invitation was to accept the process of renewal and social justice inaugurated in Christ. Thomas's secular contextual reflection addressed the situation, particularly the socioeconomic gap between the rich and poor classes.

Once more it is clear that Thomas sees the Bible not primarily as a religious revelation for believers. He reads scriptural texts in a Christ-centred way, but it is precisely this Christ-centredness that opens up the Bible to include the whole world within its scope, from Indian philosophy to modern atheism and revolutionary politics.

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Ezekiel: God's Reassuring Presence as a Model for Resilience in a Challenging Society

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***Abstract:** The Bible encompasses compelling narratives that deeply resonate with the human condition. This is particularly true for the prominent experience of the 'Exile' when many faced devastation, abandonment of communal structures, forcible relocation to unfamiliar lands, adversities, and traumas. Amidst this backdrop, certainly, the book of Ezekiel provides a narrative that articulates this indescribable grief and affirms God's reassuring presence as a model for resilience in a challenging society even today. Drawing from one of the most complex narratives of the Bible, the study examines how Ezekiel's difficult form of communication may be a tangible sign of God's presence in human life. Remembering Ezekiel's narrative is a way of learning from the past to inform and live the present, and of constructing a resilience ultimately grounded on the understanding of divine presence and on the resulting capacity to adapt to what happens in life. Therefore, this study explores the Bible's enduring impact on society's and life's challenges, offering insights for navigating the intricate interplay between biblical narrative and societal development.*

***Key Words:** Prophecy, divine presence, humanity, resilience, interpretation, narrative.*

Introduction

The Bible holds a central position in the religious and cultural heritage of numerous civilizations. As an enduring religious text, it has significantly shaped, and continues to exert direct and indirect influence on, human history, ethics, values, societal structures, behaviours, and norms. One of the

fundamental purposes of the Bible seems to be that of providing insights into God's nature and character and his actions in human societies. Thus, the Bible encompasses compelling narratives that deeply resonate with the human condition. This is particularly true for the prominent experience of the 'Exile' when many faced devastation, abandonment of communal structures, forcible relocation to unfamiliar lands, adversities, and traumas. Amidst this backdrop, certainly, the book of Ezekiel provides a narrative that articulates this indescribable grief and affirms God's reassuring presence as a model for resilience in a challenging society even today. Amidst the uncertainties of life, which God does Ezekiel portray? Drawing from one of the most complex narratives of the Bible, I intend to examine how Ezekiel's difficult form of communication may be a tangible sign of God's presence in human life. Remembering Ezekiel's narrative is a way of learning from the past to inform and live the present, and of constructing a resilience ultimately grounded on the understanding of divine presence and on the resulting capacity to adapt to what happens in life.

1. What is Resilience?

In general, we may consider "resilience" as that capacity to bear and/or give sense to crisis, trauma, or tragedy. It may be considered a form of being "impermeable" to difficulties, a process of adapting well in the face of adversity, suffering, and threats. When someone faces a traumatic experience, he may become so vulnerable as to feel like breaking apart, losing the mind, or sensing a fracture, but at the same time, the experience may lead the person toward something greater than themselves. However, these concepts may fail to describe the biblical concept of resilience. Consequently, I attempt to explore here the Bible's enduring impact on society's and life's challenges, offering insights for navigating the intricate interplay between biblical narrative and societal development.

Ezekiel's narrative is the story of a people facing a devastating catastrophe, the Exile. Through that experience, they had to re-think and understand themselves in relation to God and to others. Thus, resilience may not be seen only as a form of overcoming, but of becoming aware of a higher sense in trauma and, most of all, of a higher presence in trauma, the divine presence, breathing new life into ours and finding solutions to repair and recover. We all live traumas. This society is challenged by all sorts of difficulties.

The Exilic community in the book of Ezekiel has witnessed resilience not as a personal quality proper of some, but as the collective experience of God's presence during times of troubles and suffering. As Psalm 118 recites, "*The stone the builders discarded has become the cornerstone,*" what sometimes seems to destroy may instead be transformed into a message of hope, a message of resilience as a disclosure to life even in the face of challenges and sufferings. Paradoxically, what happens in life may bring humans closer to the divine. This is what the experience of Ezekiel seems to convey, among other messages, as it offers a pattern for resilience even in today's challenging society.

2. Ezekiel: a Pattern for Resilience

In Ezekiel, as well as in Hosea and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, we read that prophets' lives were used by God as a symbol of his actions and relationship with Israel. For instance, Moses'

leprous hand is a sign of God's presence to deliver Israel from Egypt (Ex 4,6-7); Aaron's garment is a sign of God's holiness (Ex 28); Isaiah's walk for three years naked and barefoot is a sign and a wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia (Is 20); Hosea's choice and loss of his wife represents God's relationship with Israel (Hos 1); Hosea's children are named according to the judgments of God upon Israel (Hos 1); Ezekiel's lying on both side symbolizes the siege of Jerusalem (Ez 4); the list could continue.

The examples of God using the lives of His messengers as the "arena" for His self-revelation—transforming their experiences into vivid demonstrations of his work—offer a fresh perspective on the nature of prophetism and reveal a distinctive form of divine presence within human suffering and trauma. Ezekiel's life exemplifies this concept: his ministry is marked by "prophetic" personal disabilities, such as intermittent muteness and restricted movements, as well as by striking symbolic acts. Through these, his life becomes a "prophetic" life—a dynamic, living manifestation of God's message. His experiences, tragedies, and emotions are transformed into divine messages to Israel. Hence, Ezekiel may be seen as a "living theophany," embodying the mass-media theorist Marshall McLuhan's famous adage in a reimagined form: "The medium is the message." *De facto*, Ezekiel's entire being is involved in his ministry.

In Ezekiel 9, the prophet is led on a visionary journey by a mysterious figure, during which he witnesses the departure of the כבוד (the glory of God) from the Temple (Ezek 9-11). Against this dramatic backdrop, Ezekiel is tasked with delivering God's oracles to Israel in unconventional ways. His ministry communicates symbolically through his body and performative actions, which demand interpretation from the audience. The prophetic identity of Ezekiel is encapsulated in the divine declaration: "I have made you a מופת" (a sign or wonder; 12:6). This statement highlights how Ezekiel transcends the role of a mere spokesperson—he becomes a living sign of God's presence and purposes.¹

The book of Ezekiel portrays the prophet's life as a 'microcosm' of Israel's experience, particularly during the Exile. Ezekiel's life and actions, both tangible and deeply symbolic, are transformed into a living message, vividly testifying to God's relentless and enigmatic work manifested through his very being. The prophet's existence becomes the *locus* where the culmination of God's judgment unfolds. Through a sequence of profound rhetorical sign-acts, Ezekiel reveals, through his own life, the destiny of God's people.

The narrative begins with the vision of the divine chariot in chapter 1,² an overwhelming display of God's presence and irruption into the world of the prophet and the people, and moves toward the departure of the כבוד culminating with Ezekiel's call to be a מופת in chapter 12.³ The descending vision of God finds its completeness with an ascending כבוד. In this pivotal moment, Ezekiel

¹ For a broader discussion on the use of מופת in Ezekiel, his מופת -identity, and the narratives of ch. 12 and 24, see Stefano Salemi, *A Linguistic-Theological Exegesis of Ezekiel as Mōphēt - "I have made you a sign" (Ezekiel 12:6)* (Studia Semitica Neerlandica; Leiden: Brill, 2024). This chapter substantially draws upon the insights and analysis presented in Salemi's monograph published by Brill.

² Regarding the relationship between Ezekiel 1 and the rest of the book, see also Kirsten Nielsen, "Ezekiel's Visionary Call as Prologue: From Complexity and Changeability to Order and Stability?," *JSOT* 33.1 (2008): 99-114.

³ The mobility of God is demonstrated through the departure of his glory (כבוד) from the temple (chs. 8–12), symbolising His sovereignty and freedom from human dependence.

assumes a new role as a מופת, embodying the unfolding divine drama. The loss of his wife (ch. 24) prefigures the destruction of the Temple, presenting a deeply symbolic parallel between personal grief and national tragedy.

The interplay between divine presence and absence,⁴ symbolised by the departure of the כבוד, shapes the structure of the text while it intertwines with Ezekiel's symbolic ministry, identity, and life. Ezekiel's life, marked by profound limitations—his muted speech,⁵ constrained movements,⁶ and suppressed emotions⁷—becomes a continuous sign of his prophetic mission. This constrained prophetism underscores the book's theological themes and provides a framework for understanding Ezekiel's unique role.⁸ In the midst of a terrifying and overwhelming relationship with God, while the book opens and closes with the divine presence, Ezekiel's limited prophetism shapes the theology of the book and accompanies the character of Ezekiel as a 'continuous' sign of his ministry.

These observations raise essential questions about the prophet's function within the narrative. If the כבוד serves as a visible sign of God's presence, does Ezekiel, as a מופת, function as a substitute for that presence? What is he a sign of, or for? What does Ezekiel signify to his audience? And, how does his peculiar ministry respond to the crisis of communication between God and Israel? Ezekiel's life and actions offer a tangible illustration of Israel's traumatic experience during the

⁴ On the motif of 'divine abandonment' in Ezekiel, see Daniel Isaac Block, *By the River Chebar: Historical, Literary, and Theological Studies in the Book of Ezekiel* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2013), 73-99.

⁵ From the outset, the book of Ezekiel reveals that God places the prophet in a state of intermittent muteness. This fluctuating condition persists throughout Ezekiel's ministry, from its inception until the promise of Jerusalem's restoration in chapter 33. According to the text, this inability to speak seems to serve as a response to Israel's failure to heed God's voice. Paradoxically, Ezekiel's silence mirrors the people's lack of response to God, symbolising a human absence that corresponds to the perceived absence of the divine.

⁶ In Ezekiel 3:24b-26, the prophet is obliged to self-isolate, to bind himself with cords, unable to reprove and speak.

⁷ Chapter 24 marks the climax of this phenomenon, where the absence of verbal communication extends to the suppression of emotional expression. Ezekiel is instructed not to mourn the loss of his wife. Ironically, the same chapter (v. 27) contains the promise of the prophet's speech being restored, perhaps symbolising Israel's renewed readiness to listen to God's word.

In recent years, there has been a growing focus on the language of emotion in discussions of the Hebrew Bible. This area has gained significant interest in biblical studies, often incorporating insights from contemporary psychological and cognitive research on emotions. See Francoise Mirguet, "What is an 'emotion' in the Hebrew Bible?," *BibInt* 24/4-5 (2016): 442-465; Paul A. Kruger, "Emotions in the Hebrew Bible," *OTE* 28/2 (2015): 395-420 (Kruger has several publications on the topic available in the bibliography of this cited article); Deena F. Grant, *Divine Anger in the Hebrew Bible* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2014); Silvia Schroer and Thomas Staubli, "Biblische Emotionswelten," *KatB* 132/1 (2007): 44-49; John H. Elliott, "Envy, Jealousy, and Zeal in the Bible: Sorting out the Social Differences and Theological Implications – No Envy for GOD" in *To Break Every Yoke: Essays in Honor of Marvin L. Chaney* (ed. Robert B. Coote and Norman K. Gottwald; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 344-364; Andreas Wagner, *Emotionen, Gefühle und Sprache im Alten Testament: Vier Studien* (KUSATU 7; Waltrop: H. Spenner, 2006). See also the SBL collection of essays exploring the rich array of emotions in biblical literature in F. Scott Spencer (ed.), *Mixed Feelings and Vexed Passions: Exploring Emotions in Biblical Literature* (Resources for Biblical Study 90; Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2017).

⁸ God's sovereignty and presence are reconfirmed in 48:35, יְשֻׁמָה יְהוָה, "the Lord is there."

Exile.⁹ His ministry not only conveys divine messages in uncommon ways but also models resilience and provides a theological framework for interpreting suffering.

Ezekiel's oracles, delivered to the captives by the river Chebar apparently before Jerusalem's fall, serve three primary purposes:

1. To call Israel to repentance.
2. To reveal their dependence on God.
3. To correct misconceptions about God's character.

As Daniel Block notes, the book portrays a God who is both deeply invested in His relationship with His people and willing to stake his reputation on their fate.¹⁰ As a מופת, Ezekiel embodies God's oracles and reflects divine emotions, acting as both a mirror and mediator of Israel's trauma. In a time of apparent divine absence, the prophet serves as a paradoxical representation of God's presence, mediating divine purposes while revealing God's shared suffering with His people.

Confirmation of this concept is the sign of the death of Ezekiel's wife in 24:15-24, which is a clear testimony of how the Jewish trauma is God's trauma and the prophet's trauma:

15 The word of the LORD came to me: 16 Mortal, with one blow I am about to take away from you the delight of your eyes; yet you shall not mourn or weep, nor shall your tears run down....18 So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died. And on the next morning, I did as I was commanded. 19 Then the people said to me, "Will you not tell us what these things mean for us, that you are acting this way?" 20 Then I said to them: The word of the LORD came to me: 21 Say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of your eyes, and your heart's desire ... you shall not cover your upper lip or eat the bread of mourners. ...24 Thus Ezekiel shall be a sign to you; you shall do just as he has done.

Just as Ezekiel was commanded to conceal his mourning over the loss of his wife, so too was Israel called to suppress its grief over the destruction of the Temple. In a parallel manner, God partakes in the suffering of his people, who are symbolically represented by the Temple as his spouse. Ezekiel's suppression of grief for his wife mirrors both Israel's mandated response to the destruction of the Temple and God's bereavement (and apparent absence) for the loss of his spouse-Israel. Ezekiel's symbolic actions and behaviours serve as a profound theological instrument, conveying a central theme of the book of Ezekiel: God's suffering is expressed through

⁹ For further studies on the question of trauma in Ezekiel see Nancy R. Bowen, *Ezekiel* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries; Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 59-80 and 209-216; Elizabeth Boase, and Christopher G. Frechette (eds.), *Bible through the Lens of Trauma* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2016), 1-48, "Some of the paradoxes with which the book of Ezekiel confronts readers can be approached and perhaps even grasped, though a hermeneutics of trauma that concentrates on questions of narrative," 44.

¹⁰ As Block states God is "not only passionate about his relationship with his people but also willing to stake his reputation on their fate or fortune," Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); Idem, *The book of Ezekiel Chapters 25–48* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 47.

the person of his prophet and ultimately through the experiences of his people. This parallel further reveals that God's pain for his people's plight is mirrored in the prophet's suffering.

Ultimately, Ezekiel's life presents a theology of comfort—or an “antalgic” theology (ἀντί - ἄλγος, against pain). The prophet's symbolic actions become a profound illustration of the medieval principle of *aliquid stat pro aliquo* (“something stands for something else”): the trauma of Israel is mirrored in the prophet's life, which in turn reflects God's own suffering. Humanity's pain is intertwined with God's pain, and in the midst of suffering, God's presence is revealed; this is the core substance of the concept of resilience. The symbolic actions of the prophet serve as a “transubstantial” experience. His entire life is transformed into a divine performance or mimic, where every action, emotion, and experience becomes a reflection of God's presence and message. As a living theophany, the prophet embodies the divine experience, turning his very existence into a dynamic and symbolic revelation of God's work and purposes to his people.

3. The Symbolic “Language” of Ezekiel

Ezekiel's symbolic actions appear designed to leave a lasting impression on the minds of his audience, serving as a tangible representation of God's oracle. These actions function as a form of visible instruction, allowing the prophet to enact the very messages conveyed by the symbols. The emotions evoked—fear, hope, comfort, dismay, and others—resonate not only with Ezekiel himself but also with the people of Israel, engaging them in the prophetic experience.

In his comprehensive commentary on Ezekiel, Zimmerli interprets these symbolic actions as a unique medium of divine self-revelation: “... the symbolic action, by its development into a proof-saying, becomes an element of God's self-revelation to his people,” and “...the prophetic suffering becomes a vehicle for a message to be practised by the prophet.”¹¹ Building on Zimmerli's insights, the book of Ezekiel can be understood as a profound testament to the prophetic significance of “suffering” as a channel of divine communication. Ezekiel's symbolic actions serve as a multifaceted manifestation of God's presence, portraying not only his actions and emotions but also the resilience required to endure the hardships of the Exile. Ezekiel is a “sign” of that resilience, that capacity to adapt in the face of adversity and to experience and encounter God's presence in transformative and different ways.

Ezekiel's resilience is not merely about deriving meaning from trauma; it also involves recognising the divine force at work amid life's challenges. This divine presence invigorates human existence, offering both healing and the potential to rebuild, regardless of the societal circumstances in which individuals find themselves. Through his life and actions, Ezekiel illustrates how divine resilience can inspire renewal and hope, even in the midst of profound suffering.

A Jewish prayer recites, וּבְטוֹבוֹ מְחַדָּשׁ בְּכֹל יוֹם תָּמִיד מַעֲשֵׂה בְרָאשִׁית

“In His goodness, he renews every day, always (continuously) the work of creation.”

This Jewish morning liturgy describes God as the One who continually renews the work of creation, every day, in his goodness. Ezekiel is exactly a testimony of that opportunity to recommit

¹¹ Zimmerli, W., *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel: Chapters 24-48*, 504.

every day to the blessing of that recreation and face daily life even when filled with challenges, because God is always present. Tragedy and trauma are not endured in isolation, as they are met with divine solidarity and shared experience. Human struggles become part of a larger narrative in which the divine is actively involved, as 2 Chronicles 32:8 affirms: "... with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles." This verse is a powerful testament to God's intimate involvement in the lives of his people, not as a distant observer, but as an active participant in their suffering and triumphs. The divine engages directly with human challenges, offering assistance and participating in the battles of life.

This shared experience speaks to the relational nature of God, who does not remain aloof from human pain but enters into it, bearing it alongside his people. The divine presence transforms moments of struggle into opportunities for hope and renewal, emphasising that no challenge is faced alone. Such a vision reassures that amid hardship, there is a greater force at work, guiding and supporting, and ultimately working toward restoration and purpose. And, this is a reminder of his enduring presence and his promise to uphold and deliver. In times of despair and conflict, this divine solidarity offers both comfort and hope, reinforcing the truth that we are never abandoned, and that our battles, however overwhelming, are enveloped in the strength and purpose of God's overarching plan.

4. God's Reassuring Presence as a Model for Resilience

The symbolic actions narrative of Ezekiel certainly presents various challenges, but it stands in the Bible as a message of hope. Ezekiel's form of communication via mimes, and active-parables is a concrete and tangible sign of God's effort to be present in human life and sorrows even in the most thought-provoking ways. Ezekiel's resilience encompasses the profound recognition of a higher power that imbues these challenging moments with a transcendent essence. In times of hardship and adversity, this divine presence becomes an unwavering source of strength and inspiration, breathing new life into our weary spirits. This is the model of resilience, Ezekiel can offer even today: a guiding force, illuminating the path toward recovery and restoration, helping us find solutions to mend the wounds inflicted by life's trials, and urging us to not just survive, but to thrive. This resilience arises not from human strength alone but through an awareness of God's active and comforting presence amidst pain and uncertainty. It is through this awareness of a higher sense and presence within a challenging society that we discover the capacity to endure, adapt, and ultimately transform ourselves.

In a society grappling with challenges and crises, Ezekiel's example resonates deeply. His prophetic ministry and symbolic actions serve as a testament to God's unwavering commitment to engage with humanity, transforming suffering into hope and loss into restoration. By embodying the divine message, Ezekiel becomes a model of how to navigate the complexities of life with faith, courage, and adaptability. Through Ezekiel, we are reminded that God's reassuring presence is not confined to the pages of a text but continues to offer strength, guidance, and renewal in the face of life's most daunting challenges. Resilience, therefore, becomes a profound journey of self-discovery and spiritual growth, rooted in the belief that there is a greater purpose in our experiences of suffering and healing, and a greater personal presence: God.

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A Look at Periphrastic Verb Construction in the Greek New Testament

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***Abstract:** This study of the New Testament's use of the periphrastic construction seeks to identify periphrasis where it appears and to understand its syntactic functions. The participle, an important element in periphrastic constructions, functions in a variety of usages and this fact complicates its identification as a member (or not) of the periphrastic construction. Unfortunately, manuals of Greek grammar and syntax treat the topic from two extremes. Introductory grammars tend to treat the topic in a very cursory manner (or not at all); other, more detailed studies, tend to overload the discussion with technical details that make it difficult for intermediate Greek students to follow. For this reason, the present study attempts to meet the needs of intermediate-level Greek students and to give a clear and concise description of the construction with illustrations that will aid the reader in exegesis of the biblical text.*

***Key Words:** Bible, biblical language, Greek grammar, exegesis, interpretation*

Introduction

***Purpose of the study:** This study of the New Testament use of the periphrastic construction began with the present author's desire to competently identify periphrasis where it appears and to understand its various functions. The participle, an essential element in periphrastic constructions, functions in a variety of usages and this fact complicates its identification as an element (or not) of the periphrastic construction. Unfortunately, manuals of Greek grammar and syntax treat the topic from two extremes. Introductory grammars tend to treat the topic in a cursory manner (or not at all);¹ more detailed treatments can overload the discussion with details that make it difficult for*

¹ Robertson (1934, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*) gives no detailed definition or description of what constitutes a periphrastic construction in the Greek NT. Nor do Robertson and Davis (1977, *A New Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament ...*) define or give details of what constitutes periphrasis.

readers to follow.² The present study aims to provide a clear description of the construction along with illustrations that can aid reader in analysis of the biblical text.

Materials: The Greek text used for this study is the Nestle-Aland, 27th edition [NA27] of *Novum Testamentum Graece* as provided within the *Accordance Bible Software* program.³ English translations are from the English Standard Version (ESV),⁴ from other versions as indicated or from the author.

Sources of NT texts cited for the study: The present investigation results from a review of nearly all NT texts containing periphrastic constructions. No claim is made that every possible NT periphrastic construction has been identified. Examples included in the study came primarily from materials found in NT Greek grammars, syntax manuals, periodical articles, and similar sources.⁵

1. Basic Description of Periphrasis

Essential Features: Wallace provides a basic description of what forms a periphrastic construction: “An anarthrous participle can be used with a verb of being (such as εἶμί or ὑπάρχω) to form a finite verbal idea. This participle is called periphrastic because it is a *roundabout* way of saying what could be expressed by a single verb.”⁶ Two essential items of this definition are (1) the *verb of being* and (2) the *anarthrous participle*. A third essential feature is that (3) the verb of being and the participle must be located in the same clause. Characteristics of these features are further described below.

Exceptional Cases?: Some grammarians deny that all constructions conforming to the basic description should be classified as periphrastic. Young thinks that “In some cases the εἶμί and participle retain their independent force.” He offers Acts 19:14 as an example.⁷ However, the predicate in that verse could reasonably be regarded as a periphrastic construction. Other examples are needed in order to clarify and establish Young's point. Fanning also thinks that some similar formations of copula and participle should *not* be identified as periphrastic. He gives the following explanation.

There are expressions in the NT which look similar, but bear a different sense from the periphrastic phrases, and there is very little beyond appropriateness in the context to serve as a basis for deciding between the options. Two of these similar expressions are: (1) independent εἶμί denoting existence, location, or a quality, with the participle as a separate modifier of some

² Authors and titles of the grammatical and syntactical resources used for this essay are listed in the bibliography.

³ *Accordance Bible Software*, version 13.4.1, 2022, OakTree Software, Inc.; NA27 = Barbara Aland and Kurt Aland, editors. 1993. *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th edition. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies.

⁴ ESV = English Standard Version, 2001, Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

⁵ The most comprehensive listings of sources are found in (1) Wallace, 1996, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*; (2) Blass and Debrunner, 1961, *A Greek Grammar*; of the New Testament ...; (3) Porter, 1989, *Verbal Aspect*; (4) Boyer, 1984, "The Classification of Participles ..."; and (5) Turner, 1963, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. III Syntax*. NOTE: Porter (1989, p. 455) notes that Turner's list (*Syntax*, 87-89) contains some errors. Turner's listing includes some typographical errors, examples from Greek manuscripts not used in the text of NA27, at least one overlooked example (Matthew 10:26) and examples based on a differing definition of periphrasis.

⁶ Wallace, 2000, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax*, p. 281.

⁷ Young, 1994, *Intermediate New Testament Greek* p. 161; Zerwick (1963, *Biblical Greek*. p. 126) raises the same issue.

sort; and (2) equative εἰμί, with the participle functioning as a predicate adjective or substantive. It is at times difficult to judge whether a given phrase is periphrastic in the sense intended here.⁸

The functional criteria of Fanning's definition are subjective and complicated (as Fanning admits). Functional criteria might include, among other things, emphasis and independent function of the copula, or the “completely adjectivized” use of the participle. Porter concludes that for functional definitions “... the practical result is that virtually identical constructions are one time periphrastic, the other not ... because of the subjectivity of such criteria.”⁹

It seems preferable to accept Fanning's exceptional expressions as cases of periphrasis, especially since those constructions seem to function just like periphrastic constructions as to aspect and tense. Thus we see that commentators and translators may differ on how to analyze the participle (i.e., as functioning adjectivally or periphrastically). In the absence of clear guidelines to resolve ambiguities, it would inevitably fall to an interpreter's own judgement to decide the issue. Since authorities disagree on which combinations qualify as periphrastic constructions, the non-specialist is left in a quandary.

Conversely, Mantey states that “when a participle and εἰμί are found together the construction is unquestionably periphrastic.”¹⁰ Clearly, the determination that a construction is periphrastic must begin with form rather than function. In the present study, formal elements of the construction take precedence over functional categories. Lacking clear indications to the contrary, it is assumed that periphrasis exists wherever the key elements of the construction are present: a (verb of being) copula and anarthrous (and usually nominative case) participle appearing in the same clause.¹¹

Other Constructions: Some authorities apply the term *periphrastic tense* to constructions other than the ‘copula and participle’ combination described above. For example, the combination of the verb μέλλω “to be about to” followed by an infinitive is sometimes classified as a ‘*periphrastic*’ tense form.¹² Porter's response is, “Certain verbs in Greek - e.g., μέλλω, θέλω, δύναμαι, δεῖ, and a few others - appear frequently in conjunction with infinitives. These are not properly called periphrastic verbal constructions.”¹³ Such constructions do not fall within the purview of the present study.

2. Why were Periphrastic Constructions Used in Lieu of Simple Verb Forms?

An author's selection of a periphrastic construction might have been determined by one (or more) factors.

⁸ Fanning, 1990. *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*, p. 311.

⁹ Porter (1989, p. 452) includes a more complete discussion of the problem.

¹⁰ J. R. Mantey, 1939, “The Mistranslation of the perfect ...,” pp. 247-248.

¹¹ For a useful definition of *clause*, see below, §VI. Clause Definition.

¹² Blass and Debrunner, 1961, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, p. 81; Turner, 1963, p. 89; and others.

¹³ Porter, 1992, *Idioms of the Greek of the New Testament*, p. 197. Cf. also, Burton, 1900/1976, p. 71.

2.1. Selection Options within the NT Language: Fanning identifies, in broad categories, three ways that periphrasis functioned within the Koine Greek verbal system.¹⁴ These options do not express syntactical functions different from corresponding simple constructions; the options are distinguished on the basis of how they relate to existing monolectic (i.e., simple) verb forms in the NT Greek language system, as in the following categories.

Substitute periphrasis “in which the periphrastic combination is equivalent (or virtually equivalent) in meaning to an available monolectic form.”¹⁵ That is, the periphrastic construction was used where a monolectic verb form could have been used. The author, for a variety of reasons, chose to use the compound form. Possible options for the choices are summarized below.

Suppletive periphrasis “where the periphrastic expression fills in for a monolectic form which is no longer extant.”¹⁶ This, of course, is merely a specific case of substitute periphrasis.

Expressive periphrasis “when the periphrastic phrase provides a sense which a parallel monolectic form does not possess.”¹⁷

2.2. Option Specifics: Fanning's categories can be developed according to the specific factors listed here below.

Aramaic Influence [substitute periphrasis] - The periphrastic form corresponds to the Semitic background of reported speech or OT citation. This is especially true of the imperfect periphrastic construction, which corresponds directly to the use of a very common Aramaic construction of the ‘copula *hawa*’ (and Hebrew *haya*) followed by a participle.¹⁸

Emphasis [substitute periphrasis] - At times the periphrastic forms are used to create an expression that is “rhetorically more forceful” than the equivalent simple forms.¹⁹ Mounce explains that, “Originally a periphrastic construction was used to emphasize the continuous force of the participle (which is why the aorist participle never occurs in this construction).”²⁰ For example, in Acts 25:10 Paul declares to Festus, “I am standing (ἔστώς εἰμι) before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried.” Paul's form of statement emphasizes the existing state of his situation. Reversal of the regular periphrastic order (i.e., copula-participle > participle- copula) gives additional emphasis to the construction. This function of emphasis is not likely to be present every place where it is used, given “the frequency of this construction in the New Testament (especially Luke, Mark, and John).”²¹

Stylistic or euphemistic reasons [substitute periphrasis] - In many cases the author's use of periphrasis may be nothing more than a stylistic preference with no exegetical significance.²² For

¹⁴ Fanning, 1990, p. 310 (often citing Aerts, 1965, *Periphrastica*, pp. 76-90).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Cf. Dana and Mantey, 1927, *A Manual Grammar of the New Testament*, p. 233.

¹⁹ Blass and Debrunner, 1961, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, p. 179.

²⁰ Mounce, 1993, *Basics of Biblical Greek*, p. 276.

²¹ Young, 1994, p. 161.

²² Easley, 1994. *User-Friendly Greek: A Common Sense Approach to the Greek New Testament*, p. 47.

example, McKay notes that in John 20:30-31, “ἔστιν γεγραμμένα and γέγραπται both mean the same, but each better suits the rhythm of its own sentence.” Periphrasis was a ready option when the writer wished to improve the balance or rhythm of a sentence.²³

Morphology [suppletive periphrasis] - For some verbs the simple form was rare or disappearing from the language of the NT era. These include forms of (a) the third person plural, perfect middle/passive,²⁴ (b) the perfect middle-passive subjunctive and optative,²⁵ and (c) the future perfect.²⁶ In other situations it mattered little whether one used a simple or periphrastic instruction. In fact Porter notes that an imperfect periphrastic construction “... often occurs in a context with other narrative imperfective verbs (cf. Matthew 7:20; Mark 1:21-22; Luke 4:32; 19:47).”²⁷

Durative/progressive action [expressive periphrasis] - Perhaps a frequent reason for selecting a periphrastic form was to specify an action as durative-progressive in nature. This is especially true for the present periphrastic tense.²⁸ The simple present tense can function in a number of ways that are not specifically progressive.²⁹

Future aspect [expressive periphrasis] - The aspect of the simple future tense in Greek is ambiguous and debatable.³⁰ A periphrastic form can make clear the progressive aspect of a future statement. Robertson acknowledges the durative nature of most future periphrases.³¹

3. Periphrastic Tenses

In general, periphrastic tense constructions function just like simple verbs³² in the following tenses: present, imperfect, future, perfect, pluperfect, and future perfect. The aorist tense does not appear in the system of regular periphrastic constructions. Mounce indicates that “Originally a periphrastic construction was used to emphasize the continuous force of the participle (which is why the aorist participle never occurs in this construction).”³³ However, as indicated below (§ XIII, E and § XIV, C), the aorist tense appears in a small number of “exceptional cases” but with “copula verbs other than εἶμι.”

The table below demonstrates the periphrastic tense constructions with regard to tense and showing the respective aspect functions.

²³ McKay, 1994, *A New Syntax of the Verb in New Testament Greek: An Aspectual Approach*, p. 9.

²⁴ Mounce, 1993, p. 276; Dana and Mantey, 1927, p. 231.

²⁵ Blass and Debrunner, 1961, *A Greek-English Lexicon ...*, p. 179

²⁶ Blass and Debrunner, 1961, *A Greek-English Lexicon ...*, p. 179

²⁷ Porter, 1989, p. 458

²⁸ Stevens, 2008, *New Testament Greek Intermediate*, p. 427; Greenlee, 1963, *A Concise Exegetical Grammar*, p. 11; Dana and Mantey, 1927, *A Manual Grammar of the New Testament*, p. 231; Fanning, 1990, *Verbal Aspect ...*, p. 312; and other authorities.

²⁹ For example, other usages include *instantaneous*, *iterative*, *customary*, etc. See Wallace, 1996, pp. 513-539.

³⁰ Campbell, 2008b, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek*, p. 83.

³¹ Robertson, 1934, p. 878.

³² Boyer, 1984, "The Classification of Participles: A Statistical Study," p. 172.

³³ Mounce, 1993. *The Basics of Biblical Greek*, p. 276. Possible exceptions are in Luke 23:19 (aorist passive participle), John 28:30 (variant κ*, aorist passive participle), and 1 Peter 1:6 (aorist passive participle).

Table A - Tense and Aspect Features of Periphrastic Forms			
1 Periphrastic Tense	2 Periphrastic Aspect	3 Copula Tense	4 Participle Tense
Present	internal/progressive	Present	Present
Imperfect	internal/progressive	Imperfect	Present
Future	external/summary	Future	Present
Perfect	perfective-stative	Present	Perfect
Pluperfect	perfective-stative	Imperfect	Perfect
Future Perfect	[debated]	Future	Perfect

4. Verbal Aspect

Verbal aspect is an important feature to consider in the analysis of periphrastic formations. Simply defined, “Verbal aspect is ... the portrayal of the action (or state) as to its *progress, results, or simple occurrence*.”³⁴ Three aspects are clearly distinguishable in the Koine Greek system: (1) the **progressive** (a.k.a., internal, imperfective or continuous), which denotes an activity as in progress, (2) the **summary** (a.k.a., external, undefined or aorist), which views the action as a whole or as a simple event, and (3) the **perfective-stative** (a.k.a., perfective, stative, completed, or resultative), which expresses an enduring state resulting from an action.³⁵

Table A indicates aspect categories (column 2) represented in the Greek tense-forms as follows: (1) the progressive aspect is evident in the *present* and *imperfect* tenses, (2) the summary aspect is evident in the *aorist* and (likely) the *future* tenses, and (3) the perfective-stative aspect is evident in the *perfect* and *pluperfect* tenses.³⁶ Very few examples of the future perfect tense, whether simple or periphrastic in form, appear in the New Testament. Those examples appear in passages where the use of the tense is much debated, yet exegetically significant for some doctrinal discussions.³⁷

It is the combination of the copula and participle forms that provides the tense and aspect characteristics of the periphrastic constructions (see Table A). The participle will be either present or perfect in aspect, and the related copula is most frequently a present, imperfect, or future tense form of εἶμι.³⁸ The present, imperfect and future periphrastic tenses are formed with a present participle. The perfect, pluperfect and future perfect periphrastic tenses are formed with a perfect participle. Campbell has determined that, “There is no conflict between the aspect of the auxiliary and that of its partnering participle.”³⁹ Since copula verbs like εἶμι do not possess a full set of tense forms (lacking aorist and perfect forms), there is no meaningful aspect choice and no possibility

³⁴ Wallace, 1996, p. 499.

³⁵ Authorities differ in the terminology used to describe verbal aspect. The system adopted in Table A is that of Wallace (1996, pp. 499-504). For other discussions of verbal aspect see McKay, 1994, pp. 27-34; Mounce, 1993, pp. 118-120; Young, 1994, pp. 106, 117; and Campbell, 2008b, pp. 120, 135-136.

³⁶ Wallace, 1996, pp. 500-501.

³⁷ See, for example, Mantey, 1939. “The Mistranslation of the Perfect Tense in John 20:23, Mt 16:19, and Mt 18:18” *JBL* 58.3: 243-249.

³⁸ Fanning, 1990, p. 310.

³⁹ Campbell (2008a, *Verbal Aspect and Non-Indicative Verbs*, p. 33) gives a detailed discussion of aspect in this work.

of conflict with the participle aspect.⁴⁰ It is worth mentioning that the participle also contributes voice to the construction.

5. Clause Definition

Given that an essential feature of the periphrastic construction is that “the verb of being and the participle must be located in the same clause,”⁴¹ a definition of what constitutes a clause will be helpful here. Wallace gives a succinct definition that serves the focus of this study: “Clauses are units of thought forming part of a compound or complex sentence. Each clause normally contains a subject and predicate or a nonfinite verbal form (i.e., either an infinitive or participle).”⁴²

In periphrastic constructions, a verb of being and participle combination comprises the predicate of the clause. A clause that contains only a participle form does not serve for periphrasis. Also, if a verb of being and participle are located in different clauses of a sentence, they do not constitute a periphrastic construction. John 1:15 is a good example of a “non-periphrastic” combination.

NT text: Ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ ... λέγων, οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον, ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν.

ESV: John bore witness ... , “This **was** he of whom I said, ‘**He who comes** after me ranks before me, because he **was** before me.’”

6. Copula Characteristics

Another feature of periphrastic constructions to consider is the copula.⁴³ The verb εἰμί is by far the most common copula used in this construction. Other verbs are used but much less frequently.⁴⁴ The copula provides grammatical information such as mood (i.e., indicative, subjunctive, etc.), person, and number⁴⁵ without other semantic content.⁴⁶ Aspect and voice are contributed by the participle; tense is a feature of the periphrastic construction unit as a whole.

Summary of periphrasis features contributed by the copula.

1. *Person*: first, second or third
2. *Number*: singular or plural

⁴⁰ Porter, 1992, pp. 24-25.

⁴¹ This is the third element of the "Essential Features" of the definition of periphrasis (§II A, p. 2 above).

⁴² Wallace, 1996, p. 656.

⁴³ The term 'copula' signifies "state of being verb" and is the preferred term in many sources that discuss periphrastic tenses. Wallace (2000, p. 38, n.7) uses the term 'equative verb' with the same meaning. Copulas (from Latin *copulare* 'to join') connect the clause subject with its complements.

⁴⁴ See section XIV, C. "Copula verbs other than εἰμί."

⁴⁵ Campbell, 2008a. *Verbal Aspect and Non-Indicative Verbs*, p. 34. See also Porter, 1996. *Studies in the Greek of the New Testament: Theory and Practice*, pp. 106-107.

⁴⁶ Friberg, et al., 2001. *Analytical Greek New Testament: Greek Text Analysis*, vol. 1. (Silver Mountain Software).

3. *Tense*: present, imperfect, or future. The copula tenses combine with the tenses of the participle (present or perfect) to create the six tenses of the periphrastic constructions (See Table A, column 1).

4. *Mood*: indicative (most commonly), subjunctive, imperative; also (rarely) infinitive and participle. See §XIV, B, “Non-indicative copulas.”

5. Aspect? - Porter considers the copula (i.e., εἰμί) to be aspectually neutral and thus not a feature contributed to the periphrasis.⁴⁷ Other verbal roots whose features might include aspect are very rarely found in periphrastic constructions.

Some analysts note that the copula εἰμί can function independently to signify “there is/are (was, were, etc.)” in these constructions.⁴⁸ Turner observes, “No doubt in some instances the copula really means *there is* or *there are*, but not in the vast majority.”⁴⁹ While this observation is certainly correct, it need not imply that the verb functions in a manner different than in a periphrastic construction (in which case the participle's function would be merely adjectival). Mark 15:40 is a good example of this situation. Note the progressive-durative nature of the periphrasis, even while the copula predicates the existence (‘there were’) of the women.

NT text: ἦσαν δὲ καὶ γυναῖκες ἀπὸ μακρόθεν θεωροῦσαι.

ESV: **There were** also women **looking on** from a distance.

7. Participle Characteristics

The first feature of the periphrastic construction to consider is the participle. But, identification of periphrasis is complicated by the fact that the participle also has non-periphrastic functions.⁵⁰ It can function as an adjective or a substantive and as an indicative or imperative verb. It can appear in the nominative or genitive cases in “absolute” usage. It is regularly used as a dependent verbal participle with a number of specific uses (e.g., adverbial, complementary, circumstantial, etc.), including the periphrastic use. However, a few constraints on the use of participle can aid in its identification in periphrasis.

7.1. Participle Constraints in Periphrastic Usage

Clause constraint: The periphrastic participle will always be located in the same clause as the copula. For example, if the copula is located in an independent clause, but the participle is located in a dependent clause, then it is not to be considered an element of a periphrastic construction. For

⁴⁷ Porter, 1989, p. 447. McKay (1994, p.10.) notes that "... the aorist corresponding to εἶναι is γενέσθαι." Along with γίνομαι a limited number of other verbal roots (aside from εἰμί) are found, which could employ the aorist tense and so express summary aspect. See §XIII, C, "Copula verbs other than εἰμί."

⁴⁸ At least seventeen examples have been identified, but perhaps more exist. See Matthew 27:55; Mark 15:7, 40; Luke 2:8; 4:33; 5:29; 12:52; 13:1; 17:35; 18:2; John 2:6; 5:2 (?), 5; Acts 2:5; 21:23; 25:14; Jude 18.

⁴⁹ Turner, 1963. *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. III Syntax*. p. 88.

⁵⁰ Wallace, 1996, p. 612ff.

the most common type⁵¹ of periphrastic construction, Mantey's observation is worth repeating: "... when a participle and εἰμί are found together the construction is unquestionably periphrastic."⁵²

Subject agreement constraint: The participle of the construction will be in agreement with the grammatical subject of the copula, including number (singular or plural) and gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter).⁵³ The one exception to this constraint is that neuter plural subjects can take a singular copula and participle, as is true in simple verb constructions.⁵⁴

Anarthrous constrain: Wallace asserts that "An anarthrous participle can be used with a verb of being ... to form a finite verbal idea."⁵⁵ That is to say, the periphrastic participle is never articular.

Case constrain: In the common construction, the participle appears in the nominative case.⁵⁶ Boyer notes, "The case used is almost always the nominative, since the participle is in a sense a subjective complement of the copulative verb, requiring that the case be the same as that of the subject."⁵⁷ With the copula verb εἰμί the participle case will always be nominative. Where other copulas are used an accusative case participle is possible.

Tense constrain: In the common type of periphrastic construction, the present participle and perfect participle are used but no other tenses of the participle.⁵⁸ As indicated in § IV "Periphrastic Tenses" (q.v.), in exceptional cases an aorist participle may be found.

7.2. Features Contributed by the Participle

Features that the copula contributes to the periphrasis are listed above in section 6 entitled "Copula Characteristics. Here below the features contributed by the participle are presented.

Aspect: The participle carries the element of aspect for the periphrasis, as detailed above in § 6. "Verbal Aspect."

Voice: The participle contributes voice to the construction, which may be active, middle, or passive (or middle-passive by form).

7.3. Multiple Participles Joined with a Single Copula

Some formations combine multiple participles with a single copula (called a concatenation construction). Fanning claims that of 89 imperfect periphrastics in the NT, just "... a few of these

⁵¹ The "most common type" of periphrastic construction has a form of εἰμί as its copula. However, other copulas are possible in which the construction formation can differ somewhat from the common type. See "§XIII, Exceptional cases, C. Copula verbs other than εἰμί."

⁵² Mantey, 1939, pp. 247-248.

⁵³ Porter, 1996. *Studies in the Greek of the New Testament: Theory and Practice*, pp. 106-107. See also Porter, 1989, p. 453.

⁵⁴ Wallace, 1996, p. 399. Matthew 18:18 provides two examples of this feature.

⁵⁵ Wallace, 2000. *The Basics of New Testament Syntax*. p. 281. Also, see Turner, 1963, pp.87-89.

⁵⁶ See Wallace, 2000, p. 281.

⁵⁷ Boyer, 1984, p. 172.

⁵⁸ Wallace, 2000, p. 281.

containing multiple participles after one occurrence of εἰμι.⁵⁹ In more than thirty (30) constructions of the NT corpus two or more participles are used to create a periphrasis with a single copula. A good example is in Matthew 24:38.

- ὡς γὰρ ἦσαν ... **τρώγοντες** καὶ **πίνοντες**, **γαμοῦντες** καὶ **γαμίζοντες**,
- *They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.*

The conjoined participles need not be of the same tense or voice as John 18:18b demonstrates.

- ἦν δὲ καὶ ὁ Πέτρος μετ' αὐτῶν **ἑστῶς** (perfect active) καὶ **θερμαινόμενος** (present middle).
- Peter also **was** with them, **standing** and **warming himself**.

7.4. Conjoining with Adjectives

Participles are verbal adjectives and, as such, they can combine in lists with adjectives in the periphrastic formations. Boyer holds the view that a participle can function as a predicate adjective especially "... when the participle occurs in a list of parallel predications alongside an adjective or other descriptive phrase."⁶⁰ Wallace notes that perfect passive participles are indistinguishable in the periphrastic function from participles that actually function as predicate adjectives.⁶¹ Yet, other authorities seem to suggest that a participle functioning adjectivally does not function as an element of periphrasis.⁶² If indeed adjectives can join with participles in periphrastic formations, it is important to note that this happens only rarely. Titus 3:3 provides an example. (Adjectives are underlined; participles are in bold font).

- ἡμεῖν γὰρ ποτε καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀνόητοι, ἀπειθεῖς, **πλανώμενοι**, **δουλεύοντες** ἐπιθυμίαις ...
- For *we* ourselves *were* once foolish, disobedient, **led astray**, **slaves** to various passions...

8. Order of Periphrasis Elements

The most common order of elements has the participle (B) following the equative verb (A).⁶³ The reverse order (i.e., B-A) is thought to be somewhat rare by a few authorities.⁶⁴ However, in 38 cases (roughly 11% of the NT total) the participle precedes the copula.⁶⁵ This order is found with each of the periphrastic tenses, minus the (very rare) Future Perfect tense. Some examples are as

⁵⁹ Fanning, 1990. *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*, p. 314, note 261.

⁶⁰ Boyer, 1984. "The Classification of Participles: A Statistical Study," p. 172.

⁶¹ Wallace, 1996. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 647, note 83.

⁶² Turner (1963. *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. III Syntax*, p. 88) opines that "... sometimes the instances are only apparently periphrastic, the ptc. being adjectival." Blass and Debrunner (1961, p. 180) speak of instances in which the participle is adjectival and only seemingly periphrastic.

⁶³ Friberg, et al., 2001. *Analytical Greek New Testament: Greek Text Analysis*, vol. 1.

⁶⁴ Young, 1994, p. 161; Porter, 1989, *Verbal aspect in the Greek of the New Testament*, p. 448, citing Regard (1919. *La phrase nominale dans la langue du Nouveau Testament Phrase*, esp. 109-89).

⁶⁵ Porter (1996, pp. 106-107) agrees that the participle may either precede or follow the auxiliary. Boyer (1984, p. 172) counts 28 occurrences of the B-A order is low.

follows: Present - Mark 5:41; John 1:41; Acts 4:36; Imperfect - Luke 2:51; Ephesians 2:8a; Future - Matthew 24:9b; Perfect - Ephesians 2:8a; Pluperfect - John 3:24.

9. Separation of Copula and Participle

It has been asserted that in periphrastic constructions the “copula keeps very close to the participle.”⁶⁶ However, in more than a third of the constructions the two elements are separated by at least one intervening word and a separation of 3 to 6 words is common. Some examples are as follows: Matthew 27:33b (4 words); Mark 1:13 (5 words); Luke 2:33 (6 words); 9:29 (15 words?); John 1:9 (8 words); Acts 19:14 (8 words); Ephesians 2:12 (5 words), Revelation 21:12 (10 words).

The intervening words are limited as to function as Porter states, the “participle may either precede or follow the auxiliary but cannot be separated from it by anything other than **elements completing the participle** (such as adjuncts or complements; this is apart from postpositive conjunctions, of course).”⁶⁷ Typical intervening word functions are (a) the subject of copula verb, immediately after the copula,⁶⁸ (b) negative particles and (c) post-positive particles.⁶⁹

10. NT Periphrastic Constructions by Textual Groupings

10.1. Some Statistics

It is useful to know how frequently or infrequently the periphrastic formations can be expected in the Greek text. Table B presents the data according to NT book groupings and verbal tenses encountered. Comparison is made as to the number of times the corresponding simple tense appears in the NT. Other scholars may present statistics that differ slightly from those in Table B, but are in basic agreement.

Book Groups	Total	Present	Imperfect	Future	Perfect	Pluperfect	Fut Perf
Gospels-Acts	252	24	126	12	37	48	5
Epistles	73	28	10	1	28	6	∅
Revelation	15	2	4	∅	5	4	∅
Total	340	54	140	13	70	58	5

⁶⁶ Turner (1963, p. 89) further states, "there are hardly more than four exceptions to this rule in Mark." However, the present author found at least 15 constructions where the participle is separated from the copula in Mark.

⁶⁷ Porter, 1996. *Studies in the Greek of the New Testament: Theory and Practice*, pp. 106-107. Mantey agrees (1939. "The Mistranslation of the Perfect Tense in John 20:23, Mt 16:19, and Mt 18:18." pp. 247-248).

⁶⁸ Porter (1989, p. 460, bold emphasis added) observes that nearly all "...periphrastic constructions in John place the subject between the auxiliary and the Participle: e.g. 1:9, 28; 2:6; 3:23; 5:5; 10:40; 18:18, 25, 30." In the same work (p. 477) he remarks regarding Luke 23:19, where ten words separate the participle from its copula, "The intervening distance is larger than usual, but the causal clause is probably best seen as modifying the Participle and acceptable periphrasis results ..."

⁶⁹ Cf. also Porter, 1989. *Verbal aspect in the Greek of the New Testament*, p. 453.

Simple Tense	Aorist	Present	Imperfect	Future	Perfect	Pluperfect	Fut Perf
NT Total	11,652	11,552	1,683	1,629	1,592	85	1

10.2. Comments on the Statistics for the Periphrastic Participles

Gospels-Acts: As might be anticipated, the imperfect and pluperfect tense numbers are high, owing to the historical/narrative character of the literature. Boyer notes that Mark and Luke used periphrasis much more than the other NT writers.⁷⁰

Epistles: The present and perfect tense numbers are higher, owing to the predominant nature of the literature as reasoned discourse.

According to Wallace, periphrastic forms employ 153 present participles (of 3686 in NT) to form the Present, Imperfect and Future tenses and 115 perfect participles (of 673 in NT) to form the Perfect, Pluperfect, and Future Perfect tenses.⁷¹ Differences in the totals for Table B here are due to a broader definition of what counts as a periphrastic construction.⁷² For example, Boyers' Table 3 only includes cases with the copula εἶμι (and no other verbs nor cases where the copula is only implied).

11. Usage of Periphrastic Constructions

Section 2 discussed the motivations for employment of periphrastic constructions, i.e. *why* such a formation might have been chosen. This section discusses *how* the formations function in the Greek text in general categories. The specific function of the periphrastic constructions in each tense are presented, along with examples in section XIII. "NT Periphrastic Examples."

11.1. General Observations

Periphrastic constructions may be equivalent to simple verbal forms in significance or may lend a particular meaning to the sentence that is not present with the corresponding simple tense form.⁷³ Campbell affirms that, "In terms of verbal aspect, participial periphrastic constructions convey the same aspectual and spatial semantic values that their finite equivalents convey. This is because the aspect of the periphrasis is determined by the participle, not by the auxiliary."⁷⁴ He adds, "In four out of five cases, the imperfective aspect of the periphrasis matches the imperfective aspect of the finite equivalent." Greenlee's view is similar, "Periphrastic forms may be translated like the corresponding regular forms, but emphasize either the progressive aspect or the resulting state."⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Boyer (1984. "The Classification of Participles", p. 171. Blass and DeBrunner agree (1961, p. 179). Zerwick (1963, §361) adds that more than half the total number of occurrences of the periphrastic construction are in the writings of Luke alone (i.e., Luke and Acts).

⁷¹ Wallace, 1996, p. 647, note 82. Boyer (1984, p. 179) generally agrees with these numbers.

⁷² See above, §II, "Definition of Periphrasis."

⁷³ McKay, 1994. *A New Syntax of the Verb in New Testament Greek*, pp. 8-9.

⁷⁴ Campbell, 2008b, pp. 118-120.

⁷⁵ Greenlee, 1963, p. 11.

Other syntactic conditions may be present with these formations. For example, the stative meaning is predominant in NT usage for periphrastic forms with a perfect participle.⁷⁶ Kubo asserts that with the present participle it (i.e., *periphrasis*) emphasizes continuing action and with the perfect or pluperfect participle, continuing results.⁷⁷

11.12. Simple Tense Form Equivalent

Periphrasis is normally equivalent to a simple tense verb construction.⁷⁸ While periphrastic tenses correspond to simple tense uses, the most frequent use cited in Greek grammars is the progressive/durative function. Simple tense forms are found with a broader range of uses simply because they appear with greater frequency than periphrastic forms.

The simple verb form system includes the following tenses: present, aorist, imperfect, future, perfect, pluperfect, and future perfect. With the copula εἰμί the aorist tense is not found since this verb lacks aorist forms. Rarely, aorist formations can be found with the verbs ἔχω and γίνομαι [See §XIV, C “Copula verbs other than εἰμί”].

12. NT Periphrastic Examples

Discussion of the characteristics of each of the six regular periphrastic tenses follows. Information regarding tense usage is given along with illustrative examples. For comparison examples are included (in this order) of sentences that have (1) a simple tense, (2) a periphrastic active voice and (3) a periphrastic middle or passive voice; (4) references to some additional examples of each tense are provided where available. In both the Greek texts and English translations, copula are written in bold italic and participles are written in bold (non-italic).

12.1. Periphrastic Presents

A few authorities think that the present periphrastic is of relatively low frequency⁷⁹ but it actually appears more than twenty-five times in the indicative and more than fifty times total in the NT. The periphrastic present use is little different than that of the simple present and, like the simple present tense, the action of the periphrastic construction takes place in present time.⁸⁰

It is noteworthy that in Mark 2:18 both the periphrastic present and simple present of the same verb (νηστεύω “to fast”) are used. The simple present connotes customary action and the periphrastic construction is used to speak of an action happening at that time.⁸¹

Most agree that the periphrastic present denotes the durative (i.e., beginning or duration or completion or repetition) aspect of the verbal action,⁸² or even suggest that it is always durative.⁸³

⁷⁶ Fanning, 1990, p. 318.

⁷⁷ Kubo, 1979. *A Beginners New Testament Greek Grammar*. p. 123.

⁷⁸ Fanning, 1990, p. 310.

⁷⁹ Burton, 1978, *Syntax of Moods & Tenses in New Testament Greek*, p. 11; Chamberlain, 1941, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 72; Moule, 1971. *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek*. p. 17.

⁸⁰ Moule, 1971, p. 17; Fanning, 1990, p. 312.

⁸¹ Chamberlain, 1941, p. 75.

⁸² Dana and Mantey, 1927, p.231.

⁸³ Chamberlain, 1941, p.72.

Other terms in use seem to suggest the same function as the term durative: e.g., progressive (and customary or general truth),⁸⁴ linear⁸⁵ or continuing action.⁸⁶

Examples:

- **Simple Present Tense:** Matthew 5:26

ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθῃς ἐκεῖθεν, ἕως ἂν ἀποδῶς τὸν ἔσχατον κοδράντην.

Truly, **I say** [or, **I am saying**] to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

- **Periphrastic Active:** Colossians 1:6b (A-B order)

... καθὼς καὶ ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ **ἐστὶν καρποφορούμενον καὶ αὐξανόμενον**

... as indeed in the whole world **it is bearing fruit and increasing.**

- **Periphrastic Middle/Passive:** Luke 20:6b (B-A order)

πεπεισμένος γάρ **ἐστὶν** Ἰωάννην προφήτην εἶναι.

They are convinced that John was a prophet.

- **Other Periphrastic Presents:** Matthew 5:25; 27:33b; Mark 5:41; Luke 19:17; John 1:41; Acts 4:36b; 5:25; 2 Corinthians 2:17a, 6:14; 9:12; Colossians 2:23.

12.2. Periphrastic Imperfects

The imperfect is by far the most common of the NT periphrastic tenses,⁸⁷ especially notable in the Gospels and Acts (see Table B above). It is likely that many conversations recorded in the gospel accounts actually took place in a common Aramaic dialect used in Jerusalem and Judea in that period. Moulton notes that, “the imperfect is the only tense in which correspondence with Aramaic is close enough to justify much of a case for dependence.”⁸⁸ Robertson agrees that Aramaic was an influence, observing that, like the periphrastic imperfect, the simple imperfect already indicated a durative aspect so that the imperfect periphrastic was not necessary.⁸⁹

Indeed, the periphrastic imperfect functions very much like the monolectic (i.e., simple) imperfect.⁹⁰ Its most common function is to make evident (or even emphasize) the durative (i.e., continuation) aspect of the action expressed in the participle.⁹¹ A limited variety of other types of

⁸⁴ Burton, 1978, p. 11; Fanning, 1990, p. 312; Hewett, 1986, *New Testament Greek: A Beginning and Intermediate Grammar*, p. 151.

⁸⁵ Moule, 1971, p. 17.

⁸⁶ Boyer, 1984, "The Classification of Participles: A Statistical Study." *Grace Theological Journal* 5.2. p. 172-173.

⁸⁷ Fanning, 1990, p. 313.

⁸⁸ Moulton, 1906, *A Grammar of NT Greek: Prolegomena*, p. 226.

⁸⁹ Robertson, 1934, p. 888.

⁹⁰ Fanning, 1990, p. 314.

⁹¹ Burton, 1978, p. 16; Chamberlain, 1941, p. 75; Dana & Mantey, 1927, p. 231; Moule, 1971, p. 17.

action can be seen in the use of the periphrastic imperfect: repeated (= iterative) action as in Luke 5:16; 19:47; Acts 9:28; Gal 1:23;⁹² customary action;⁹³ and general or descriptive usages.⁹⁴

Examples:

- **Simple Imperfect Tense:** Matthew 13:34

... καὶ χωρὶς παραβολῆς οὐδὲν ἐλάλει αὐτοῖς.

... indeed, he **said** (or, **was saying**) nothing to them without a parable.

- **Periphrastic Active:** Matthew 12:4 (B-A order)

[Δαυὶδ] ... τοὺς ἄρτους τῆς προθέσεως ἔφαγον, ὃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἦν αὐτῷ φαγεῖν.

[David] ate the bread of the Presence, which *it was* not **lawful** for him to eat.

- **Periphrastic Middle/Passive:** Luke 4:38 (A-B order)

πενθερὰ δὲ τοῦ Σίμωνος ἦν συνεχομένη πυρετῷ μεγάλῳ.

Now Simon's mother-in-law **was ill** with a high fever.

- **Other Periphrastic Imperfects:** Matthew 19:22; Mark 1:22; 5:5; 7:29; 9:4; 10:32; 14:4; Luke 2:33, 51; 4:20, 38; 5:17; 11:14; 13:10, 11; 19:47; 23:12; John 1:9, 28; 13:23; Acts 1:10; 2:2; 8:1; 19:14; 22:19; Gal 1:22, 23.

12.3. Periphrastic Futures

As noted above {*Motivations ...*} the Greek simple future tense is aspectually ambiguous.⁹⁵ Fanning asserts that the simple future indicative does not on its own denote an aspect-value (i.e., progressive or iterative).⁹⁶ The simple future tense is normally 'punctiliar' so that a periphrastic future was needed to express durative/progressive action.⁹⁷ Yet the future periphrastic tense is almost exclusively found in biblical Greek in its era.⁹⁸

The most common use of the periphrastic future is to express durative/progressive action in future time.⁹⁹ Additionally, an emphasis on "continuance or customariness" is evident in some uses of the periphrastic future.¹⁰⁰ Fanning further identifies that usage ranges from "... a future stative sentence for the lexically stative verbs and the passives; to a progressive or iterative sense for the

⁹² Burton, 1978, p. 16; Fanning, 1990, 315; Porter, 1989, p. 461; Robertson, 1934, 888.

⁹³ Fanning, 1990, 314;

⁹⁴ Fanning, 1990, 315; Robertson, 1934, 888.

⁹⁵ Wallace (1996, p. 566, n. 1) notes that "Not all grammarians agree [*sic*, regarding future tense] ... The aspect is sometimes external, sometimes internal. Others regard it as especially neutral, the true "unmarked" tense. This tense is still something of an enigma, rendering any statements less than iron-clad."

⁹⁶ Fanning, 1990, p. 318.

⁹⁷ Burton, 1900, p. 36; Moule, 1971, p. 18; Robertson, 1934, p. 889; Wallace, 2000, p. 282, n. 30.

⁹⁸ Fanning, 1990, p. 317.

⁹⁹ Dana and Mantey, 1927, p. 232

¹⁰⁰ Burton, 1900, p. 36.

actives. A few others are sometimes cited as future periphrastics, but they display an independent use of εἰμί with the participle functioning as a modifier.”¹⁰¹

Examples: Note: no examples were found of the future periphrastic in B-A order.

- **Simple:** Hebrews 6:3

καὶ τοῦτο **ποιήσομεν**, ἐάνπερ ἐπιτρέπη ὁ θεός.

And this **we will do** if God permits.

- **Periphrastic Active:** Mark 13:25 (A-B order)

καὶ οἱ ἀστέρες **ἔσονται** ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ **πίπτοντες**

And the stars **will be falling** from heaven.

- **Periphrastic Middle/Passive:** Matthew 24:9 (A-B order)

καὶ **ἔσεσθε μισούμενοι** ὑπὸ πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου.

And **you will be hated** by all nations for my name’s sake.

- **Other Periphrastic Futures:** Matthew 10:22; 24:9b; Mark 13:13, 25; Luke 1:20; 5:10; 21:17, 24; 22:69; 1 Cor 14:9b.

12.4. Periphrastic Perfects

The periphrastic perfect in the NT commonly used the auxiliary εἰμί (about 40 times).¹⁰² It is found infrequently with γίνομαι and ἔχω (see §XIV. Exceptional Cases).¹⁰³ Moule notes that it is often difficult to see a distinction between the simple and the periphrastic perfect.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Burton identifies two common uses of this construction: *existing state* (with examples at Luke 20:6; John 2:17; Acts 2:13; 25:10; 2 Cor. 4:3) and *completed action* (with examples at Luke 23:15; Acts 26:26; Heb. 4:2).¹⁰⁵ Other authorities concur with Burton.¹⁰⁶

The stative meaning is the most common for the periphrastic perfect, with more middle-passive participles than active ones (i.e., 31 cases to 6).¹⁰⁷ The common existing state perfect in the NT uses a present subjunctive of εἰμί and a perfect participle with the result that the stative sense dominates.¹⁰⁸ Less commonly, the perfect periphrastic is used to highlight the consequent state produced by an action, i.e., expressing completed action.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰¹ Fanning, 1990, p. 318.

¹⁰² Chamberlain, 1941, p. 73.

¹⁰³ Chamberlain, 1941, p. 73; Burton, 1976, p. 40.

¹⁰⁴ Moule, 1971, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek*, p. 18.

¹⁰⁵ Burton, 1976, *Syntax of Moods & Tenses in New Testament Greek*, p. 40.

¹⁰⁶ Fanning, 1990, p. 318-320; Hewett, 1986, p. 152; Robertson, 1934, p. 903; Young, 1994, p.162.

¹⁰⁷ Fanning, 1990, p. 318-319.

¹⁰⁸ Burton, 1976, p. 49.

¹⁰⁹ Fanning, 1990, p. 319.

Some perfect periphrastic formations merely substitute perfect simple forms which are no longer used, such as middle-passive third-person plural forms of verbs whose bases end in a consonant.¹¹⁰

Examples:

- **Simple:** Acts 5:28

ἰδοὺ **πεπληρώκατε** τὴν Ἱερουσαλὴμ τῆς διδασκαλίας ὑμῶν

Here **you have filled** Jerusalem with your teaching.

- **Periphrastic Active:** Luke 20:6b (B-A order)

πεπεισμένος γὰρ **ἐστίν** Ἰωάννην προφήτην εἶναι.

For **they are convinced** that John was a prophet.

- **Periphrastic Middle/Passive:** Acts 2:13 (B-A order)

ἄτεροι δὲ διαχλευάζοντες ἔλεγον ὅτι γλεύκους **μεμεστωμένοι εἰσίν**.

But others mocking said, “**They are filled** with new wine.”

- **Other Periphrastic Perfects:** Matthew 10:26b; 18:20; Luke 12:6; 14:18; 20:6b; 23:15; John 2:17; 3:27; 6:31, 45; 12:14; 16:24; 17:23; Acts 2:13; 21:33; 25:10; Rom 7:14; 2 Cor 4:3; Eph 2:5, 8a; Heb 4:2; Jas 5:15; 1 John 1:4.

12.5. Periphrastic Pluperfects

The simple pluperfect tense in NT Greek describes an event that was completed in the past with results that existed in the past. The meaning of the periphrastic form of the pluperfect is not always different than the simple pluperfect meaning.¹¹¹ Periphrastic forms appear frequently in the NT, about 40% as often as simple pluperfect forms. Like the perfect periphrastic, pluperfect forms are used for an existing state (2/3 of the cases) and for completed action (1/3 of the cases) of a past act and the resulting state.¹¹² In some cases, the periphrastic use is intensive in force as compared to the simple form.¹¹³ Fanning further indicates that “verbs with a purely present meaning in the perfect occur in the pluperfect periphrastic and display a past stative meaning without reference to an antecedent occurrence.”¹¹⁴ The periphrastic construction is the common way of forming a third person plural of the pluperfect tense.¹¹⁵ The middle-passive is the most common voice-form with a ratio 38 to 14 over actives.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ Fanning, 1990, p. 320.

¹¹¹ Fanning, 1990, p. 319; Moule, 1971, p. 18.

¹¹² Burton, 1976, p. 45.

¹¹³ Dana & Mantey, 1927, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 232.

¹¹⁴ Fanning, 1990, p. 322.

¹¹⁵ Hewett, 1986, p. 152.

¹¹⁶ Fanning, 1990, p. 320.

Examples:

- **Simple: John 11:30**

οὐπω δὲ ἐληλύθει ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν κώμην

Now Jesus **had not** yet **come** into the village

- **Periphrastic Active: Luke 1:7 (B-A order)**

καὶ ἀμφοτέροι **προβεβηκότες** ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτῶν **ἦσαν**.

And both *were advanced* in years.

- **Periphrastic Middle/Passive: John 1:24 (B-A order)**

Καὶ ἀπεσταλμένοι **ἦσαν** ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων

Now they **had been sent** from the Pharisees.

- **Periphrastic Middle/Passive - Copula ἔχω: Mark 8:17 (B-A order)**

πεπωρωμένην ἔχετε τὴν καρδίαν ὑμῶν;

Are your hearts **hardened?** [*Have* your hearts **been hardened?**]

- **Other Periphrastic Pluperfects: Matthew 9:36b; 26:43; Mark 15:46; Luke 2:26; 4:16; 5:17; 8:2; 9:45; 15:24; 23:53; John 1:24; 3:24; 19:11, 19, 41; Acts 8:16; 13:48; 21:9; Galatians 4:3.**

Cases of an aorist participle used in a periphrastic construction are rare and questionable: Luke 23:19; John 18:30 (some mss); 2 Cor 5:19.¹¹⁷ If genuine, the construction appears to serve for the pluperfect.¹¹⁸ However, Porter (citing Aerts, 1965, *Periphrastica*) notes, “debate exists whether the Aorist periphrasis has the sense of a Perfect or of an Aorist.”¹¹⁹ He adds, “The Aorist periphrastic is distinct from Present and Perfect periphrastics and should be viewed as roughly equivalent to a timeless unaugmented simple Aorist Indicative.” Only a few examples appear in the NT: Luke 23:19; 2 Corinthians 5:19, and possibly Acts 8:13.

Example:

- **Periphrastic - Aorist Participle: Luke 23:19 (A-B order)**

ὅστις **ἦν** διὰ στάσιν τινὰ γενομένην ἐν τῇ πόλει καὶ φόνον **βληθεὶς** ἐν τῇ φυλακῇ

Who **had been thrown** into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Wallace, 1996, p. 647, n. 82.

¹¹⁸ Blass-Debrunner, 1961, p. 180, §355.

¹¹⁹ Porter, 1989, pp. 476-478.

12.6. Periphrastic Future Perfects

The simple future perfect tense in the NT is nearly extinct, so the periphrastic form was needed to fulfill this tense function.¹²⁰ Only a few examples of the tense are found in either form and with no apparent difference in meaning. Moule thinks that no periphrastic future perfects appear in the New Testament and that the participle of the so-called future perfect periphrastic tense actually functions as an adjective.¹²¹

Some disagreement exist as to the future perfect periphrastic usage. Blass and Debrunner assert that the emphasis is on duration.¹²² McKay thinks that the future-perfect tense “combines the perfect and future aspectual nuances.”¹²³ But Fanning states, “These denote the basic sense of the perfect (a condition produced by an antecedent occurrence) moved into future time.”¹²⁴

Examples:

- **Simple:** Hebrews 8:11¹²⁵

ὅτι πάντες εἰδήσουσίν με

they **shall** all **know** me,

- **Periphrastic Active:** Hebrews 2:13 (A-B order)

ἐγὼ ἔσομαι πεποιθὼς ἐπ’ αὐτῷ

I **will put** my **trust** in him. [I **will be** **trusting** in him.]

- **Periphrastic Middle/Passive:** Luke 12:52 (A-B order)

ἔσονται γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν πέντε ἐν ἐνὶ οἴκῳ διαμεμερισμένοι.

For from now on in one house there **will be** five **divided**.

12.7. Problematic Passages with Periphrastic Future Perfects

Key passages relating to the translation and interpretation of the periphrastic future perfect passive are found in Matthew 16:19 and 18:18.

- Matthew 16:19

καὶ ὃ ἐὰν δήσης ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται δεδεμένον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς,

¹²⁰ Blass and Debrunner. 1961. *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, p. 179. So also, Burton, 1976, p. 45; Dana & Mantey, 1927, p. 233; and Chamberlain, 1941, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 80.

¹²¹ Moule, 1971, p. 18.

¹²² Blass and Debrunner. 1961, p. 180.

¹²³ McKay, 1994, p. 51, §4.7.

¹²⁴ Fanning, 1990, p. 322.

¹²⁵ Bauer, *et al.* (1979, p. 555) regard the form as future; Accordance 13.4.1 tags it as future perfect.

καὶ ὃ ἐὰν λύσης ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς **ἔσται λελυμένον** ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

- Matthew 18:18

ὅσα ἐὰν δῆσητε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς **ἔσται δεδεμένα** ἐν οὐρανῶ,

καὶ ὅσα ἐὰν λύσητε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς **ἔσται λελυμένα** ἐν οὐρανῶ.

A) whatever you bind/loose on earth **will be bound/loosed** in heaven.

B) whatever you bind/loose on earth **will have been bound/loosed** in heaven.

These two passages are exegetically problematic. They are identical except for minor differences. A key question is whether to translate [ἔσται δεδεμένον/λελυμένον] as “will be bound/loosed” or “will have been found/loosed.” A number of scholars have published detailed treatments of the topic, q.v.¹²⁶ Their answers include grammatical, hermeneutical and theological points of view. Chamberlain thinks that in both passages the future perfect passive constructions should be translated as future perfect tenses in English (‘shall have been bound/loosed’) and not as future tenses (‘shall be bound/loosed’). He opines that the future translation seems “... to make Jesus teach that the apostles’ acts will determine the policies of heaven” and that the future perfect tenses “... makes the apostles’ actions a matter of inspiration or heavenly guidance.”

13. Exceptional Cases

13.1. Nul Copula

Boyer notes that “In a few cases a participle has been identified as periphrastic when an auxiliary is not present but seems to be implied by the sense of the context or by parallels where the same construction has the auxiliary.”¹²⁷ Wallace agrees with this statement and states, “The most frequent implied auxiliary is the equative verb, usually εἰμί, and usually in the third person. Other verbs might be implied if the preceding context has such a verb.”¹²⁸ In such cases it is necessary to determine the tense of this rare construction by context. Some examples can be found in Matthew 17:3; Mark 14:21; Acts 2:29; 17:23; Romans 13:9; et al loc.

13.2. Non-indicative Copulas

The use of periphrastic constructions with non-indicative copulas is somewhat limited in the NT as compared to indicative copulas. Fanning determined that “These periphrastic constructions

¹²⁶ See Cadbury, 1939. “The Meaning of John 20:23, Matthew 16:19 and Matthew 18:18.” *JBL* 58.3:251-254; Carson, 1984. “Commentary on Matthew 16:19 and future periphrastic tenses.” pp. 370-374; Chamberlain, 1941, p. 80; Elbert, 1974. “Binding Tense in Matthew 16:19 and Three Charismata.” *JETS* 17: 149-155; and Mantey, 1973. “Evidence that the Perfect Tense in John 20:23 and Matthew 16:19 is Mistranslated.” *JETS* 16.3:129-138. Also, Mantey, 1939. “The Mistranslation of the Perfect Tense in John 20:23, Mt 16:19, and Mt 18:18,” *JBL* 58.3: 243-249. Porter, 1989. *Verbal aspect in the Greek of the New Testament: with reference to tense and mood*. pp. 441-492.

¹²⁷ Boyer, 1984, p. 172

¹²⁸ Wallace, 2000, *Basics ...*, p. 38, n. 7.

occur also as substitutes for subjunctives, imperatives, optatives, and for infinitives and participles, but their main use is in parallel to indicatives ...”¹²⁹ Turner lists additional periphrases in which the copula form is a present subjunctive, perfect subjunctive, perfect imperative, perfect participle, infinitive or imperative.¹³⁰

Porter found two NT examples of a **participle auxiliary** in combination with **another participle** to form a periphrasis. He noted that: “The Imperative and Infinitive form of εἶμι + Perfect Participle in periphrasis are not found in the NT.”¹³¹ However, in one case (Acts 19:36) the Present Infinitive of ὑπάρχειν does appear with a Perfect Participle (κατεσταλμένου) if this may be admitted as a case of periphrasis.

Periphrastic constructions with a subjunctive copula are somewhat common. Wallace points out that the perfect middle-passive subjunctive is expressed exclusively by the periphrastic construction.¹³² By this writer's count non-indicative constructions appear as follows: Subjunctive - 17x; Imperative - 8x; Infinitive - 3x; Participle - 1x.

13.3. Copula Verbs Other Than εἶμί.

In fewer numbers than with εἶμί, other copulas appear in periphrastic constructions, most frequently γίνομαι and ἔχω.¹³³

The copula verb γίνομαι “to become” is found in some passages.¹³⁴ McKay points out that “... the aorist corresponding to εἶναι is γενέσθαι.” In eight of nine uses of this form of periphrasis γίνομαι is found in the aorist tense.¹³⁵ Fanning indicates that periphrastic constructions with γίνομαι “have the sense of ‘coming to be in a process or state.’”¹³⁶ Examples include Mark 1:4; 9:3; 9:7; Luke 9:29; 2 Cor 6:14; Col 1:18; Hebrews 5:12; Rev 3:2; 16:10.

The verb ἔχω “to have” is found a number of times (e.g., Mark 8:17; Luke 13:6; 14:18; 14:19; 19:20; John 17:13; Hebrews 5:14; Revelation 10:2; 14:1; 19:12; 19:16; 21:12).¹³⁷ In these formations the participle naturally takes the accusative case.

Very infrequently other auxiliary verbs are found: ἔρχομαι (Mark 1:39), πάρειμι (Luke 13:11), ἴστημι (Luke 23:10), προϋπάρχω (Luke 23:12, Acts 8:9), ὑπάρχω (Acts 8:16; 19:36), and οἶδα (Ephesians 5:5).

¹²⁹ Fanning, 1990, p. 309.

¹³⁰ Turner, 1963, p. 89.

¹³¹ Porter, 1989, pp. 475-476.

¹³² Wallace, 2000, p. 281.

¹³³ Wallace, 2000, p. 40; McKay, 1994, p. 11.

¹³⁴ Turner, 1963, p. 89; Chamberlain, 1941, p. 73; Blass and Debrunner, 1961, 180, §354.

¹³⁵ McKay, 1994, p. 10.

¹³⁶ Fanning, 1990, p. 310.

¹³⁷ Dana & Mantey, 1927, p. 231; Chamberlain, 1941, pp. 73-74; Fanning, 1990, p. 310.

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