

Kērussōmen

A JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY FOR
THE AFRICAN CHURCH



This journal is intended to aid the work of Central Africa Baptist University in fulfilling its purpose to train the next generation of servant leaders in Africa for Great Commission living. The journal raises issues of theological importance and practical pastoral concern in order to cultivate Biblical discussion and to build up pastors and other leaders in African churches.

Editors

Billy Sichone PhD
Senior Editor

Benjamin P. Straub Th.M.
Editor

Saidi Chishimba
Publication Editor

Teri Hall
Mechanics Editor

Dickson Mwangi
Mechanics Editor

Copyright

Central Africa Baptist University retains all copyrights to the content of this journal. We encourage you to download and freely distribute the journal in electronic format. However, you must seek written permission for any print use of the journal. All use of the journal must acknowledge the source and not change the content.

Submissions

We welcome submissions to *Kērussōmen* which are in essential agreement with the beliefs and distinctives of Central Africa Baptist University. You can read about these at the following links:

<http://cabuniversity.com/about/articles-of-faith/>
<http://cabuniversity.com/about/distinctives/>

Editorials: submissions should be between 1,000 to 2,000 words each, addressing a topic of practical or pastoral concern.

Articles: submissions should be between 2,000 and 5,000 words in length and be of substantive scholarly nature, addressing a topic of practical Christian concern. Article submissions should demonstrate awareness of and interaction with key resources on the topic at hand and should follow Turabian format.

Submissions may be emailed to the editors: journal@cabuniversity.com. The editors reserve the right to refuse publication as well as to require recommended changes as a condition of publication.

Journal Contact Details

Central Africa Baptist University
8051 Lulamba Street,
Riverside Extension, Kitwe, Zambia

www.cabuniversity.com
journal@cabuniversity.com
+260 977 415011

Acknowledgements

Volumes printed in Zambia by: Imbila Publishers, 4776 Lulamba Dr. Kitwe, Zambia

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references in the journal come from the ESV® (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



It is a delight for me to write this introduction to *Kērussōmen*, a theological journal published by Central Africa Baptist University.

This Journal will reveal our commitment at Central Africa Baptist University to the explicit instructions Paul gave to Timothy to “Preach the Word.” In the midst of busy schedules and ministry challenges, the preacher must heed this charge. This Journal will challenge you to think deeply about doctrine, edify you with Biblical instruction, and encourage you with articles that nourish your soul.

The journal’s title, *Kērussōmen*, is a Greek name which means, “Let us preach!” We place this volume into your hands accompanied by a prayer to God that it will be a valued and helpful contribution to those across Africa who are engaged in the noble task of preaching.

We pray that Paul’s exhortation will be reality for every preacher who reads this Journal:

“preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Timothy 4:2–5)

Please accept *Kērussōmen* as our way of reaching out to you with loving encouragement as you serve Jesus Christ in gospel ministry.

“Let us preach!”

Philip S. Hunt
Vice Chancellor
Central Africa Baptist University
Kitwe, Zambia

To the Reader:

The editors of *Kērussōmen* offer you this volume with the hopes that you will grow in your understanding of, but more importantly, your love for and obedience to the third member of our great triune God, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's work in the life of believer is all too often either ignored or terribly misunderstood by the church today. While one extreme goes along as though the Spirit is not a separate person or is a mere dormant force, the other extreme attributes almost anything and everything to him.

The main theme of this edition traces some of the outworkings of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer as they serve in the body of Christ. It is hoped that readers will be encouraged to further explore the person and work of God the Holy Spirit in our current generation from biblical lenses.

The editors:



Billy Sichone



Benjamin P. Straub

TO EVERY NATION The State of the Church in eSwatini

Sifiso Dlamini and Brett Miller

If the church in eSwatini were a person, and we were her doctors, we could describe our patient as seriously ill, but with an expected recovery to full health and life. Our church in eSwatini is wide. The CIA Factbook (n.d.) records that 90% of Swazis identify as Christians. The



newspaper shows that we do not live out that truth. Pastors are in fistfights over leadership, and pastors impregnating church members seem to be commonplace. A diet of prosperity gospel junk food tainted with syncretism of African Traditional Religion contamination has left the church lumbering and ill, but the giant is rising. This brief country profile reflects on the current status of Christianity, how Christianity came to be this way in eSwatini, how Culture and Christianity interact, and the signs of hope for a healthier church.

Status of Christianity in eSwatini

In the parable of the soils (Mt 13:1–15 Mk 4:1–12; Lk 8:4–10), the farmer spreads the seed widely. It seems okay to start, but then it seems all is lost. Many seeds are lost to birds, sun, weeds, and stones, but those that grow deep hold produce tremendous fruit. Right now, the church in eSwatini is spread wide. 90% of the ground is covered with seed and potential. There is little evidence of a crop yet, but there never is when the seeds are first scattered.

In eSwatini, three large bodies help coordinate the churches with the government. The League of African Churches group is made up largely of Zionists, who make up about 40% of the population. The Council of eSwatini Churches was founded in 1976 and included the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Mennonites, and African Methodist Episcopal Church, among others. The Conference of Churches consists of the non-denominational Christian Churches, a more evangelical group, and churches not from the larger denominations. There are also churches called Ministries. They are unregulated and not affiliated with one of the three church groups. Many use that freedom for good; some take advantage of the lack of oversight to preach the worst type of prosperity “gospel” and heresy. There are about 2% who affiliate with Islam, which seems to be growing, and 8% other.

The constitution in eSwatini requires churches to register with the government, but the right to establish and operate as a church and freedom of religion are guaranteed. Registration is generally not difficult, and the government is supportive of Christian events. Good Friday is a week-long celebration culminating in a televised Easter service filling the largest venue in the country, Somhlolo Stadium. The King and the Queen Mother both preach strong sermons at such events. Government support for the Christian Churches is apparent but not exclusive.

There is a dissonance between eSwatini's 90% public declaration of Christianity, one of the highest in the world, and its corruption ranking of 130/180, according to Transparency.org (n.d.). Exploring this tension requires consideration of how it came to be that a largely Christian country struggles with the sin and consequences of greed and corruption. Nominal Christianity may be the norm and the majority, but it need not be the destiny.

History of Christianity in eSwatini

The stories a society tells itself, about itself, shape the thinking and identity of the people. In the case of the Swazis, the stories are deeply rooted in the history of the monarchy. Especially important are the origin narrative and the dream of King Somhlolo. They create a social background for the wide, if shallow, Christianity in eSwatini and provide clues for God's next work in the Kingdom.

Origin Narrative

eSwatini, as a country, was born through compromise and statesmanship. King Somhlolo was pressured by the Ndwandwe tribe and the growing Zulu armies. Rather than fight, King Somhlolo married the daughter of the king of the Ndwandwe tribe with the understanding that their son would be king. The power of the Zulu kingdom began to wane, and despite being driven further inland, the Swazis were not overrun.

Drawing from this history, Swazis are proud of their ability to negotiate and compromise. It is part of their national identity to seek a solution through discussion. While this approach was positive in politics, it has not been as effective in spiritual matters. Christ's exclusive claim to be the only way to the Father (John 14:6) leaves no room for compromise. Holding to absolute, uncompromised, and unwavering truth is seen as hostile and arrogant.

This is illustrated by a disagreement in the 1990's among the Zionists. Some Zionist pastors were appointed to their positions and sought a biblical education to help them serve their congregations. They were trained in Bible Colleges of other denominations as there was not training among the Zionists. They returned to the Zionist churches with the idea that they could be sure of their salvation. At the time, Zionists, not wanting to make a statement of assurance, said believers would

have to wait and see how their life would be measured in the judgment. They became known as the *bosindisiwe* – the saved ones. While Zionists were originally hostile to the idea, *bosindisiwe* are now the norm (cf. Cabrita).

Dream Narrative

King Somhlolo was part of another narrative that formed the nation. The King had a dream in which he saw strange people with white skin and hair like you would find on a cow's tail. In this dream, he saw these people entering his country in houses built on platforms and pulled by oxen. Furthermore, he saw that these people had in one hand a book, and in the other metal discs. In this dream he received the command to accept the book but to reject the metal discs. The king commanded his son, who would later become King Mswati I, to search for the people he had seen in the dream.

Sometime afterward, the news was received of a group of people resembling those whom King Somhlolo had seen in his dream, telling people in the Wakkerstroom area about *Mvelinchanti* ("He who appeared right at the beginning"). He also heard that their teachings were based on the same book that the king had seen in his dream. The king, therefore, sent a delegation to them to invite them to come to Swaziland and to teach the people this message.

The Swazis interpret this to mean that they should accept the Bible but reject the infection of greed from the West. Greed is considered an important sin and antithetical to the commands of the Bible. A view supported by the Word, for example, in Colossians 3:5-11. It is in the Swazi culture to embrace the Word and that predilection has been a help to the spread of the gospel. This, in combination with the desire for compromise and accommodation, has led many churches to be syncretistic.

Christianity and Culture

These two stories are representative of the cultural stories that bring identity to the Swazis. Christianity is interpreted through cultural lenses and Swazi culture is no different. Being a disciple requires a transformation of the mind (Romans 12:1-2) and the starting point is our sinful flesh expressed in culture. As we are transformed, we find there are beautiful and beneficial portions of Swazi culture that find easy expression as our new person in Christ. Respect for seniors, respect for authority, and love of family are traditionally Swazi and Christian values. Matthew 5 records Jesus as saying that the peacemakers are blessed, which is at the heart of Swazi culture and is large in Swazi Christianity.

Not all elements fit as nicely, and not all positive elements find easy, positive expression in Swazi Christianity. The eighth commandment (Exodus 20:15) requires that we not steal, and God hates bribes (Exodus 23:8), yet the corruption found outside the church by non-Christians is also practiced by Christians outside the church and in. Court cases are not uncommon among those seeking leadership. Group culture is a strength, until it limits the expression of those who God has equipped for special service. Even in the church, jealousy rears its ugly head.

Sub-communities in eSwatini are not all included in the group. One sub-community in eSwatini where group culture and inclusion are lacking among Christians is the Deaf community. Since eSwatini is a primarily oral culture, Deaf Swazis are often left out of public discourse, including in the church. The Deaf community of eSwatini is, by many measures, an unreached, unengaged people group. There is no Bible in their heart language (eSwatini Sign Language), few churches attempt to reach the Deaf community, and the only weekly options for Christian fellowship are in the city of Manzini. Since the Deaf community is scattered throughout the country, many Deaf

people cannot attend services. The paucity of Christian discipleship available to the Deaf community has unfortunately left the door open for other religions and cults, particularly the Jehovah's Witnesses, to make inroads into the Deaf community.

One final area worthy of consideration is the misalignment many churches in eSwatini face when interpreting the Bible. Because of a large power-distance in secular and social arenas, there is also (often) a power-distance within the church. Western missions planted many churches with a hierarchical, denominational, leadership structure that worked well in the independent culture of the West, but here it has often become an unhealthy power. Those in power in the churches are often distanced from the people by layers of hierarchy and power distance. That power and lack of connection and oversight often brings a temptation to corruption.

Clearly, these ailments are not exclusive to eSwatini or even excessive compared with other places in our broken world. The breadth of Christianity without the depth of discipleship has weakened the worldwide church. While this may all sound like bad news, it is also a tilling of the soil, where seeds can take root.

Signs of Strength

In July of 2021 there was some political unrest, and while that is visible, there is also an invisible unrest in society and in the Church. The rapid shifts in education and media have made known many ideas and surfaced many questions among the Swazis. Older, rural Swazis and their grandchildren used to have similar cultural frames of reference. That is no longer the case, given smartphones and the decreasing cost of data. Older rural Swazis have very different questions than young urban Swazis. Those questions, the very cause of chaos and angst, have made jealousy and corruption become more visible. The youth are

seeking answers, and the Word has those answers. Some positive approaches moving forward include the growth of biblical literacy, the shift toward elders, and a desire for answers outside of the African Traditional Religion.

Biblical Literacy

There is an increase in opportunities for biblical education in eSwatini. When Zion Bible College started at the request of the League of African Churches of eSwatini in 2004, there were few places that would accept a Zionist pastor. 20 years later more than two thousand students have graduated from a 4-year program of Bible Study. Students have the opportunity to attend a number of denominational and non-denominational colleges. Add to that the internet with open, free access to many quality programs, the Swazi who is interested in finding answers to life's questions in the Word has ready access to do so.

Elders

The cultural idea of the “Big Man” being both in charge of all the details and distant from the people is breaking down. Power distance seems to diminish with each new generation, especially those who have access and understanding of the internet and the wider world that their elders do not share. Corruption and bribery may seem more common, but they are now surfaced and rejected in ways they were not in the past. The same may be true with the violence against women. When the Gender Based Violence campaign kicked off a few years ago, it seemed to bring a flood of issues, but they were always there. The social program to bring awareness simply cast light on a deeply rooted social problem.

When Christians observe the lowering of power distance and increased accountability, many churches are looking toward a Biblical model. The largely Western hierarchical

denominational control is still present but it is now questioned. Many Swazis are looking at the Bible for answers, rather than the denomination, or tradition, and finding a model of plurality and parity of elders. Elders, while still not the majority, are less rare than they used to be among the Zionist churches. Other denominations are finding, whether elder in title or just in nature, an increasing accountability and Godly elders working together provide transparency and connection that the followers seek

This shift is visible in the Church and in the government. The Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, and Minister of Trade in particular are seen as solid followers of Christ. They profess and have largely acted in sync with the scriptures. Several Swazi business leaders too, have traded in cultural Christianity for Biblical Discipleship, so many are seeing the difference real Christian leaders can make. The growing desire for change, coupled with the positive example, is powerful. There seem to be seeds taking root and showing us how to grow.

Answers Outside African Traditional Religion

Church attenders and nominal Christians are looking for answers outside African Traditional Religion (ATR). This is true of the Zionist churches and many of the other churches as well. The answers offered by reductionistic, humanistic, atheistic Western perspectives are quickly understood as empty of the spiritual reality that is well understood in Africa. Even the well-meaning non-governmental organizations that seek to serve are often rife with corruption and theft. At best their utility is hampered, and at worst they become an industry for those who can bilk well intentioned donors with only a few photo-op opportunities to send to the West for more funding.

The people who are really hurting are often bereft of help while organizers live lavish lifestyles. Such corruption is so common that it is often expected by many Swazis, and failing to provide some of the largess to friends and family, regardless of the mandate, is seen as greed. Thankfully, this too is coming to light and being exposed. The truly good deeds of many churches are clear and powerful, despite, or perhaps because they avoid the limelight as they serve. The Biblical approach is showing itself as the path of righteousness. It is differentiating from the world and the Word is showing the way.

Conclusion

It is clear that the church in eSwatini faces many challenges. Many professed members of the church are really only members of a club with the name Christian attached. The breadth of diffusion of the church into the culture is both a challenge and a resource. The spiritually aware, those pricked by the Spirit, have access to and eyes to see the true gospel. It is there, in portions of many denominations and individual churches. There is a growing groundswell of love for the Word and the Lord. The diffusion of the good news is proceeding the depth of discipleship. The chaotic chorus of voices pulling people from the gospel are becoming a contrasting background, as the light of the Word is shining. Jesus commissioned us to make disciples, rather than members. eSwatini has made members, rather than disciples, but that is changing. The love of the Lord is shifting from widespread shallow words to speaking and knowing the truth. As N. T. Wright writes:

Modernity reduced love to romantic sentimentalism; postmodernity reduced it to money, sex and power. Jesus spoke of it, and acted it out, as the ultimate meaning of truth itself, and as the ultimate mode of knowing necessary to apprehend and speak that truth. (Wright, 2013 p. 79).

Imagine the power of eSwatini, the pulpit of Africa, speaking with the voice of the Truth in Word and deed. As Africa embraces its role as the heart of Christianity, an honour borne and lost by the Middle East, Europe, and now the USA, we see the Spirit moving. The next great awakening is in Africa. May eSwatini be the soil for 100-fold fruit. May we spark the fire of the spirit in our kingdom and continent.

***Sifiso Dlamini**, M.Th. serves as pastor for Manzini Fellowship Church in eSwatini, is Academic Dean at Zion Bible College, and teaches at eSwatini Medical Christian University.*

***Brett Miller**, D.M., M.Th., M.B.A. serves as a missionary and Administrator for Zion Bible College in eSwatini. He also is an Adjunct Instructor for Liberty University in the doctoral program for Servant Leadership.*

Bibliography

- 2022 report on international religious freedom: Eswatini. (n.d.). Retrieved 13 May 2024, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/eswatini/>
- 2023 corruption perceptions index: Explore the results. Transparency.org. (n.d.). Retrieved 13 May 2024, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2023>
- Cabrita, Joel. "7. Youthful Reformers and the Politics of Bible Schools in the Kingdom of Swaziland". *The People's Zion: Southern Africa, the United States, and a Transatlantic Faith-Healing Movement*. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2018, pp. 229-263. <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674985780-008>
- Central Intelligence Agency. (n.d.). Explore All Countries Eswatini Africa. Retrieved 13 May 2024, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/eswatini/>
- Wright, N. T., *Creation, Power and Truth: The Gospel in a World of Cultural Confusion*. SPCK, 2013.

ARE WE OUT OF STEP WITH THE SPIRIT? THE HOLY SPIRIT'S
DISTINCTIVE NEW COVENANT MINISTRY IN THE THEOLOGY OF
J.I. PACKER

Jonathan Nthani

Introduction

It is not an overstatement to suggest that two hundred years ago, keen students of pneumatology, that discipline of systematic theology concerned with the study of the person and work of the Holy Spirit, would be hesitant to echo, with a slight modification, the words of the wise man of Ecclesiastes, “Of making many books *about the Holy Spirit*, there is no end” (Eccl. 12:12).¹ In fact, such a time-frame estimate may be rather generous. Even A. W. Tozer, writing only 71 years ago, lamented, “Our blunder (or shall we frankly say our sin?) has been to neglect the doctrine of the Spirit to a point where we virtually deny Him His place in the Godhead.”² W. H. Griffith Thomas, writing only five years after Tozer, used church history to illustrate the same point:

After making every allowance for historical circumstances, it is surely not without significance that the Apostles’ Creed contains ten articles on the Person and Work of Christ, with only one on the Holy Spirit. And when we consider the scarcity of references in the New Testament to the Holy Communion, contrasted with the prominence given to it in the history of the

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptures referenced are from the *English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

² A. W. Tozer, *The Divine Conquest* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1950), 65–66.

Church, we have another significant illustration of the comparative neglect of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.³

All of this has now changed. Today, of making many books and writing many essays concerning the Holy Spirit, there appears to be no end!⁴ By and large, this is a welcome development. Any inquiry into the Godhead is a step in the right direction and, in so far as the discoveries are orthodox, will only serve to be of profit to the inquirer. As God Himself has told us, He “rewards those who seek Him” (Heb. 11:6).

This is true of inquiries into the Holy Spirit in particular. Indeed, there would be something wrong if we were *not* encouraged by this renewed interest in the Holy Spirit.⁵ However, is it possible that, in the midst of all of this Spirit-

³ W. H. Griffith Thomas, *The Holy Spirit of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955). Commenting on Thomas’ observation, Larry Dixon adds, “The early Christian creeds mention the Spirit, but often quite sparingly” (Larry Dixon, “The Other Comforter: The Place of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity.” *Emmaus Journal* 013:1 [Summer 2004]: 119). In addition to the observation already made by Thomas on the Apostle’s Creed, Dixon observes the absence of any reference to the Spirit in the Chalcedonian Creed with sparse references in the Athanasian and Nicene creeds, respectively.

⁴ Towards the close of the twentieth century, authors writing on pneumatology appeared to begin feeling the need to open their books with a justification for yet another publication on the Holy Spirit. For a case in point, see J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1984), 19.

⁵ “To study the Holy Spirit’s work is an awesome venture for anyone who knows, even at secondhand, what the Spirit may do” (Packer, *Keep in Step*, 17). Immediately prior to this comment, Packer warns his readers, “I ask you now to check before God your willingness to learn this new supernatural lifestyle, at whatever cost to your present way of living; for there is nothing so Spirit-queenching as to study the Spirit’s work without being willing to be touched, humbled, convicted, and changed as you go along.” We would do well to heed this counsel.

frenzy, we have failed to see the heart of the Spirit's activity today? To play on a well-worn proverb, could it be that we have missed the tree of the Spirit's essential ministry for the forest of His bountiful blessings? Could it be that the result of such an oversight are people working for different goals other than the Spirit's so that we are, at best, limiting His influence in our individual and church lives or, at worst, striving against Him by pulling in exactly the opposite direction as He is? To use Pauline parlance, are we out of step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25)?

The late low-church Anglican theologian James Innell Packer, surveying the theological landscape of contemporary evangelicalism, answered that set of questions in the affirmative. Examining the corpus of his writings, it appears to be a burden of Packer's to expose what he perceived to be a significant blindness in our perception of the Holy Spirit's primary role in the New Covenant and to present a clearer picture of the heart of the Spirit's activity today as a corrective. For Packer, "the key thought unlocking understanding of the Spirit's new covenant ministry is that he mediates the personal presence and ministry of the Lord Jesus."⁶ Any conceptions of the Spirit which do not have this Christocentric emphasis fall short of the biblical standard.

The presentation and evaluation of this proposition is the focus of this paper. The paper will contend that Packer's insistence on the exultation of Christ's person and work as the framework within which the Holy Spirit carries out His ministry in the New Covenant and the prism through which all of the Spirit's activity today must be viewed is thoroughly biblical; yet his position is out of step with a significant portion of contemporary evangelical thought and practice.

⁶ Ibid., 16.

The paper will first provide a comprehensive overview of the Spirit's distinctive New Covenant role as seen in Packer's theology before proceeding to evaluate Packer's argument from the standpoint of Scripture. The paper will end by offering concluding thoughts and suggesting practical implications pertinent for life and ministry.

Packer on the Holy Spirit's Distinctive New Covenant Ministry

Before proceeding to delineate J. I. Packer's conception of the Spirit's primary New Covenant role, it will be helpful to highlight the result of Packer's own exegesis of contemporary pneumatology regarding the heart of the Spirit's activity today. This will provide a helpful contrast against which Packer's position may be seen more clearly.⁷

What the Spirit's Distinctive New Covenant Ministry is Not

Packer considers conceptions of the Spirit's primary role in the New Covenant presently in vogue in evangelicalism as either about power, performance, purity, or presentation. All four categorizations, Packer argues, are insufficient in reaching to the very heart of the Spirit's ministry today. Each will now be looked at in turn.

⁷It is important to clarify that the present concern is not merely what the Spirit does or does not do. Packer would be the first to admit that the Spirit is engaged in a whole host of activity, and this paper will show as much. Rather, the present concern is whether there is a single, unifying objective from which springs everything else that the Spirit does. This will be seen in the use of such modifiers as *distinctive*, *primary*, *main*, and *essentially* in speaking of the Spirit's New Covenant ministry.

Power

Packer contends that some people view the Holy Spirit's role in the New Covenant as primarily about power, that the Spirit's whole business today is concerned with granting strength and ability to weak and struggling believers to do what they of themselves have no strength or ability to do. Rather than dismissing the notion outright, Packer commends its importance for the Christian life.⁸ Power, after all, is a significant term in the New Testament as numerous texts show.⁹ Believers need power to live the Christian life, and it is indeed a ministry of the Spirit to supply this power.

But is it *the* ministry of the Spirit to grant power to believers to live the Christian life? Is the supply of power the end-all-be-all of the Spirit's activity in the New Covenant? Packer hastens to deny the suggestion, declaring that "pleasure in today's power talk cannot be unmixed. For experience shows that when the power theme is made central to our thinking about the Spirit and is not anchored in a deeper view of the Spirit's ministry with a different center, unhappy disfigurements soon creep in."¹⁰ These disfigurements can be seen in the way this perspective "promises more than God has undertaken to perform in this world," and the results can only be frustration and disorientation when believers are not experiencing in their

⁸Packer, like Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9, makes much of weakness and its relationship to God's power. He contends that "the way of true spiritual strength, leading to real fruitfulness in Christian life and service, is the humble, self-distrustful way of consciously recognized weakness in spiritual things" (J. I. Packer, *Weakness is the Way: Life with Christ Our Strength* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012], 15).

⁹See Acts 4:33, 6:8; Romans 15:13; Ephesians 3:16; and Romans 15:18-19, to mention a few.

¹⁰Packer, *Keep in Step*, 26.

daily lives the extraordinary power for victorious living that this perspective promises them.¹¹

Making the power theme central to the Spirit's activity, then, is fraught with danger. "The real need," Packer says, "is for deeper insight into what the doctrine of the Spirit is really about."¹²

Performance

By *performance*, Packer thinks of those who view the doctrine of the Spirit in the New Testament as essentially about the exercise of His gifts. In this perspective, the use of spiritual gifts—especially the charismata—is the quintessential mark of Spirit activity in the Church. It follows, therefore, that the more gifted the person is, the more Spirit-filled they are considered to be.

As with *power*, Packer does not consider proponents of the *performance* view as completely wide of the mark. It is true that "all capacities for service that subsequently appear in a Christian's life should be seen as flowing from" the Spirit.¹³ Packer's appreciation of the Spirit's *performance* ministry is rooted in his firm belief in the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, insisting that "every-member ministry in the church of Christ should be the rule everywhere; all gifts are given to be used, and not to use them is to quench the Spirit."¹⁴

But making *performance* the guiding motif for the Spirit's activity in the Church is wholly unbalanced. Giftedness is never

¹¹J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 370.

¹²Packer, *Keep in Step*, 27.

¹³J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), 150.

¹⁴J. I. Packer, *Taking God Seriously* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 50.

used in the New Testament as the main barometer for spiritual maturity. Instead, the New Testament emphasis, time and again, is on Christlike character.¹⁵ Packer's argument is that "any mindset which treats the Spirit's gifts (ability and willingness to run around and do things) as more important than his fruit (Christlike character in personal life) is spiritually wrong-headed and needs correcting."¹⁶

Purity

It may seem surprising at first that Packer should include *purity* as the third category of perspectives that does not form the sum and substance of the Spirit's work in the Church today. Surely this is the great end to which the Spirit is working? The purifying of the people of God? After all, the Spirit of Whom we are speaking is the *Holy Spirit*, the Spirit of *Truth*! His very name seems to communicate what He is all about!

Perhaps even more than *power* and *performance*, an emphasis on purity as a key ministry of the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant runs in full accord with the testimony of Scripture.¹⁷

¹⁵ Packer's searching words at this point warrant deep reflection: "What the Corinthians had to realize, and what some today may need to relearn, is that, as the Puritan John Owen put it, there can be gifts without graces; that is, one may be capable of performances that benefit others spiritually and yet be a stranger oneself to the Spirit-wrought inner transformation that true knowledge of God brings. The manifestation of the Spirit in charismatic performance is not the same thing as the fruit of the Spirit in Christlike character (see Gal. 5:22-23), and there may be much of the former with little or none of the latter. You can have many gifts and few graces; you can even have genuine gifts and no genuine graces at all, as did Balaam, Saul, and Judas" (*Keep in Step*, 30).

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 31.

¹⁷ The Spirit is grieved by impurity (Ephesians 5:30), He makes believers aware of their impurity (the wretched man of Romans 7 feels wretched because the Spirit makes Him feel wretched), and it is He

Purity, by all New Testament accounts, is a big deal for the Holy Spirit!¹⁸

And indeed, it is. However, says Packer, “experience shows that pitfalls surround those who make moral struggle central in their thinking about the Holy Spirit.”¹⁹ The particular pitfall Packer has in mind here is legalism. Such individuals who make the fight for moral purity the essence of the Christian life become Pharisaic, “more concerned to avoid what defiles and adhere to principle without compromise than to practice the love of Christ.”²⁰

Presentation

By presentation, Packer has in view those who believe the Spirit’s ministry is primarily one of bringing to them an awareness of eternal things. Its major strength is that it argues that the Spirit’s work is to shift our gaze outwards and upwards, to set our minds “on things above” (Col. 3:2) by making us aware of those very things which are above; but its shortcomings are that it makes far too little of the word of God that the Spirit

Who works in them to aid them with power (that word again!) to mortify the deeds of their flesh and to strive for purity (Rom. 8:13).

¹⁸ Says Packer, “Scripture insists so strongly that Christians are called to holiness, that God is pleased with holiness but outraged by unholiness, and that without holiness none will see the Lord” (J. I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness* [Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1992], 9).

¹⁹ Packer, *Keep in Step*, 34.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 35. Further, “Their problem is that their tunnel vision makes their passionate, grace-given commitment to law-keeping appear to them as the whole of spiritual life. But rule-keeping without relational closeness to God and one’s fellow human beings is not Christ-like, and [it] is a way of missing holiness rather than a method of achieving it” (Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, 165).

presents to believers and makes far too little of Jesus Christ Whom the Spirit actually presents.

What the Spirit's Distinctive New Covenant Ministry Is

So then, having been left dissatisfied by these different aspects of the Spirit's work (for that appears to be all that they are, aspects), could we find a thread that runs through and connects all of these wonderfully different workings of the Spirit just discussed? What is the Spirit *really* up to these days? His multifaceted ministry is readily recognized, but is there a core, a focal point, a central controlling hub which governs all that He does? As Packer himself asks, "Is there one basic activity to which his work of empowering, enabling, purifying, and presenting must be related in order to be fully understood? Is there a single divine strategy that unites all these facets of his life-giving action as means to one end?"²¹ And if there is, what is it?

Presence

Packer defines what he considers to be the distinctive ministry of the Holy Spirit in terms of *presence*. By *presence*, Packer "does not have in mind the divine attribute by which we know God to be everywhere simultaneously."²² Nor does he have in view merely Jesus's promise that the Holy Spirit would be with His own forever (John 14:16). Rather, Packer is thinking Christocentrically. The presence of which he speaks is *Christ's* presence. According to Packer, the distinctive ministry of the Holy Spirit is to mediate the presence of Christ to the redeemed sinner—that is, to grant to the redeemed sinner a knowledge of

²¹ Ibid., 42.

²² Sam Storms, *Packer on the Christian Life: Knowing God in Christ, Walking by the Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 129.

Christ's presence with him as his Savior, to show to him "what the cross reveals of Christ's love for him, to bring home to him the pardon Christ won for him, to change his heart and to make him love his Savior"—so that he might respond to Him with love and praise.²³

Packer suggests that the Holy Spirit's role in the life of believers is to do three things for them. Note the Christocentric nature of these three operations:

1. To witness within their hearts to their ongoing union with the risen Savior, and to their adoption into the Father's family, and to their inheritor status with Christ who is now their elder brother in that family;
2. To change their character into the moral likeness of Jesus by enabling them to practice the virtues of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (the fruit of the Spirit according to Gal. 5:22-23)—their sanctification; and
3. To equip them for ministries of word and work that will in truth be Christ Himself in them, ministering to His people through His people.²⁴

In other words, "The key to understanding the New Testament view of the Spirit's work is to see that his purpose is identical with the Father's—namely, to see glory and praise come to the Son."²⁵ This glory-ministry, Packer contends, is the marrow of the Spirit's ministry in the New Covenant and permeates all of what He does. Thus, Packer defines the Spirit's

²³ J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 201.

²⁴ Packer, *Taking God Seriously*, 49-50.

²⁵ J. I. Packer, *Affirming the Apostles' Creed* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 110.

distinctive New Covenant ministry in terms of John 16:14 where Jesus, speaking of the Spirit, declares, “He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”²⁶ Everything the Spirit does is designed to glorify Christ in the sight of believers so that they themselves might glorify Christ in their hearts and with their lives.

Biblical Evaluation

Packer’s thesis will now be weighed against the biblical record. This biblical evaluation will concern itself with considering whether the New Testament Scriptures present such a Christ-oriented perspective of the Holy Spirit’s ministry.²⁷

The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ

An important question requiring a serious answer pertains to whether or not there is evidence to suggest the New Testament writers were burdened to present the Holy Spirit as especially the Spirit of Christ. This question is pertinent because J. I. Packer depends heavily upon it as a key foundation for his argument. He says, “That it is the special ministry of the Spirit since Pentecost to mediate Christ’s active presence is clear in the New Testament. There, as exegetes often point out, the Spirit is always viewed as the Spirit of Jesus Christ, God’s Son.”²⁸ The Spirit’s Christocentric work in the life of the Church becomes for Packer merely the outworking of His position in the New

²⁶ See Storms, *Packer on the Christian Life*, 129.

²⁷ Packer would approve of his work being put to the test of Scripture in this way. See Leland Ryken, *J. I. Packer: An Evangelical Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 329.

²⁸ Packer, *Keep in Step*, 44. Elsewhere, Packer contends that the Holy Spirit “was given at Pentecost to indwell all Christians as *the Spirit of Christ*” (emphasis added), and it is from this role that He does all that He does in the life of the believer (Packer, *Taking God Seriously*, 48).

Covenant as the Spirit of Christ. We shall now examine evidence from the Gospels, with brief comments on the witness of the rest of the New Testament, to ascertain the truth of this claim.

The Spirit as the Spirit of Christ in the Gospels

To begin with, it is necessary to observe evidence to suggest that the Gospel writers present the Spirit as especially the Spirit of Christ in their Gospels. This can be seen in the way the Spirit is shown to be a key player in all but two of what theologians have generally considered to be the most significant events in the life and ministry of Jesus (His conception, baptism, temptation, transfiguration, passion, resurrection, and ascension).²⁹ These “pneumatological moments,” as Graham Cole describes them, reveal to us the Spirit’s significant role in the life of Christ.³⁰

What shall we infer from this brief observation of the Spirit’s significant activity in the earthly life of Christ? Simply

²⁹ For this particular insight, much gratitude is extended to Graham Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 149-150.

³⁰ With respect to Christ’s conception, the Spirit’s significant role may be seen in the prophecies involving Zechariah, Elizabeth, Simeon, Mary and Anna, as well as in His operation in Mary’s womb to conceive the Messiah (Matthew 1:20). With respect to Christ’s baptism, which all four Gospel writers record (always an indicator of significance), the Spirit descends upon Christ “in bodily form” (Luke 3:22). It is the Spirit who leads Christ into the wilderness for His conflict with the devil (Luke 4:1), and it is “in the power of the Spirit” (4:14) that he leaves the conflict victorious to commence his teaching, preaching, and healing ministry. Though the Holy Spirit is not explicitly mentioned in the crucifixion accounts, the writer to the Hebrews later teaches us that Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin “through the eternal Spirit” (Hebrews 4:14). The resurrection falls into the same category, for Paul later teaches us in such texts as Romans 1:4 and Romans 8:11 that the Spirit was heavily involved in the raising of Jesus Christ from the dead.

that, in the Gospels, the Holy Spirit is preeminently the Spirit of Christ. He is Christ's closest companion, with Him in His most trying hours, sustaining and aiding His life and His ministry. Long before His outpouring at Pentecost, evidently, the Spirit was already at work, and that work was Christocentric in focus.³¹ We shall now see that the Spirit retains this Christocentric focus when He comes at Pentecost.³²

The Spirit as the Spirit of Christ at Pentecost

Perhaps the clearest teaching in all of Scripture concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit from Pentecost onwards is found in the Upper Room discourse of John's Gospel. Jesus had just told His disciples that He is leaving them, and they cannot go with Him (John 13:36). The disciples are understandably

³¹ This is Packer's contention: "...the Spirit serviced the Son throughout his earthly life from the moment when, as the Creed says, he was 'conceived by the Holy Spirit'" (*Affirming the Apostles' Creed*, 110).

³² Robert Peterson describes Pentecost as "Christ's Pentecost," arguing that Pentecost was Jesus's deed and must therefore be viewed Christocentrically (Robert Peterson, *Salvation Accomplished by the Son: The Work of Christ* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012], 206-226). Martyn Lloyd-Jones had similar convictions regarding the centrality of Christ at Pentecost and in the book of Acts: "And it is enlightening to notice in the remainder of the New Testament following the gospels [that] it is still the Lord Jesus Christ who dominates the situation. There are some people who try to persuade us to call the book of the Acts of the Apostles, the book of the Acts of the Holy Spirit. But that would be quite wrong. Luke himself makes that perfectly clear at the beginning of the book: 'The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach.' It is Jesus who goes on doing it. There you see, the great activity of the Spirit. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who stands out, who dominates the scene. Acts is the continuing story of his work, The Spirit leads men to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ" (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Prove All Things: The Sovereign Work of the Holy Spirit* [Sussex: Kingsway Publications, 1985], 108-109). At Pentecost, then, the spirit came as the spirit of Christ.

distraught, and it is to provide words of comfort and reassurance to their troubled souls that Jesus speaks the words of chapters 14-16 generally and promises the gift of the Spirit particularly.

Of first concern in this biblical evaluation is what at first glance appears to be Jesus confusing His own identity with the Spirit's. In John 14:16, Jesus describes the coming Spirit as "another Helper," the word *another* signifying, as Packer contends, that the Spirit would not be coming to begin a new ministry but to carry on Christ's ministry.³³ What Christ was to His disciples, the Spirit would continue to be to and for them. In fact, Christ makes the eyebrow raising claim in verse 18 that He Himself would return to be with the disciples. What does Christ mean that He would come to the disciples, that they would see Him again after a little while? Is He speaking of His return to them in His resurrection after His departure in death? Or is it perhaps a reference to His second coming? Neither explanation fits the immediately preceding context and the wider context of the Upper Room discourse. Nor is this an identity crisis on Jesus's part. Rather, the ministry of the Spirit would be so inextricably linked to Jesus that the Spirit's coming would be (not *would be like* – Jesus says it would actually *be!*) Christ Himself coming! In other words, the Spirit would bring the presence of Christ to the disciples!³⁴

³³ See J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, 149.

³⁴ The immediately preceding context, as we have already seen, has Jesus promising the Holy Spirit as coming to continue Jesus's ministry to His disciples. Further, the reference to the Spirit as One Whom "the world cannot receive" (v. 17) clearly runs parallel to Jesus's teaching in verse 19 that only the disciples and not the world would be able to see Jesus at His return. More broadly in the context of the Upper Room discourse, the departure of which Jesus has been speaking is His ascension. This is what concerns His disciples, and this is what Jesus is seeking to address. It is therefore quite clear that when Jesus

Further, in John 16:14, Jesus teaches what is the sum and substance of the Spirit's activity here on earth from Pentecost onwards. The Spirit would be concerned with glorifying the Son of God. All of His activity would be a taking of what is Christ's and a giving of the same to the disciples. Nothing that the disciples would receive would be received apart from Christ being the source.³⁵ It is Christ's righteousness that the Father would impute by the Spirit through their faith (1 Cor. 1:30); it is Christ's peace the Spirit would work in their hearts (Col. 3:15); it is Christ's holiness that the Spirit would begin to conform them to (2 Cor. 3:18); and it is Christ's likeness that the Spirit would transform them into on the last day (1 John 3:2)!

says that He Himself would return to be with His disciples, He is speaking of the Spirit coming to be with His disciples.

At first glance, the difficult text of 2 Corinthians 3:17 also appears to reveal a confusion of Trinitarian identities, this time by Paul. How is the Lord (who in context is clearly Christ) the Spirit? Space prevents a fuller treatment, but the short answer (and we must proceed with caution here lest we do violence to the distinctiveness of the three Persons of the Godhead) is precisely the argument being advanced in this paper – the Spirit's lot lies with Christ, so that in a very real sense the Spirit acting is Christ acting. Paul can therefore ascribe the identity and activity of the One to the Other, much like he does in Romans 8:9-11. Such is the inextricable link between Christ and the Spirit in the New Testament!

³⁵ Bavinck is helpful here: "In the second place, there is certainly an imputation, a transfer of Christ's merits to our account. But one must be careful to understand this transfer correctly. For Christ cannot be divided. One cannot possess a few of his merits without possessing all the others, nor all of them together without his person. Neither in justification nor in sanctification can one participate in his benefits without being in communion with his person. To whomever he is imputed and granted, he is imputed and granted totally." Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 263.

All of this, a mere scratching of the biblical surface, is to say that the entire New Testament is bent towards Christ. The reason for that should be apparent by now. The Holy Spirit, who inspired the pages of the New Testament, is Himself the Spirit of Christ and is therefore bent toward Christ in His New Covenant ministry.

Conclusion

Having considered J.I. Packer's theology of the Spirit's distinctive ministry in the New Covenant and weighed it against the biblical record, it is readily apparent that the New Testament does indeed present the Spirit as Christocentric in the orientation of His activity. In fact, there is reason to believe Packer actually does not go far enough, for the Spirit's Christocentric focus appears to spring from something much deeper, something that lies in Who the Spirit is as a Person.

Graham Cole, picking up from Dietrich Bonhoeffer who argued that the "what" of Christ's achievements can only be understood through the "who" of His Person,³⁶ helpfully suggests that "the 'what' of the Spirit's work needs to be seen through the lens of the 'who' of the Spirit."³⁷ Some scholars have tried to get to the core of this character trait of the Spirit when they have described the Spirit sometimes as the "shy" member of the Trinity and other times as the "hidden" member of the Trinity. Cole perhaps comes closest to getting to the heart of the matter when he describes the Spirit as "self-effacing" and that practice of the Spirit where He is always pointing away from Himself to the Father and the Son as "self-effacement" or "divine

³⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Positive Christology," in E. J. Tinsley, ed., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (London: Epworth Press, 1973), 56.

³⁷ Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 281.

selflessness.”³⁸ Packer’s illustration of the Spirit’s Christocentric ministry is itself a wonderful illustration of the Spirit’s self-effacement:

I remember walking to a church one winter evening to preach on the words “he shall glorify me,” seeing the building floodlit as I turned a corner, and realizing that this was exactly the illustration my message needed. When floodlighting is well done, the floodlights are so placed that you do not see them; you are not in fact supposed to see where the light is coming from; what you are meant to see is just the building on which the floodlights are trained. The intended effect is to make it visible when otherwise it would not be seen for the darkness, and to maximize its dignity by throwing all its details into relief so that you see it properly. This perfectly illustrates the Spirit’s new covenant role. He is, so to speak, the hidden floodlight shining on the Saviour.

Or think of it this way. It is as if the Spirit stands behind us, throwing light over our shoulder, on Jesus, who stands facing us. The Spirit’s message to us is never, “Look at me; listen to me; come to me; get to know me,” but always, “Look at him, and see his glory; listen to him, and hear his word; go to him, and have life; get to know him, and taste his gift of joy and peace.” The Spirit, we might say, is the matchmaker, the celestial marriage broker, whose role it is to bring us and Christ together and ensure that we stay together.³⁹

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 283-284.

³⁹ Packer, *Keep in Step*, 57-58.

As counterintuitive as it may sound, it is hard not to marvel at such high (or as the Spirit would surely prefer, lowly) pneumatology!

Viewing the vast terrain that is the Bible's references to and accounts of the Holy Spirit's work from the standpoint of His Person clarifies the whole issue. Of course, the Spirit's ministry is Christocentric! To strive for anything different would be completely out of character! It is the Spirit's delight that glory redounds to Christ, and it is in the exaltation of Christ, that distinctive ministry of the Spirit that Packer so persuasively argues for, that "the magnificence of divine selflessness"⁴⁰ is most clearly seen.

Implications

How should this affect our lives and ministries? For starters, we must examine our theology and practice to see if the New Testament's Christ-centered view of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is our own and, if we discover it is not, work for its discovery (or recovery, if it has slipped our grasp).

Secondly, we must take seriously the Latin maxim *crux probat omnia* - the cross is the test of everything. That is to say that "no convictions and experiences save those that center on Christ as God incarnate and man's only Savior ought ever to be ascribed to the Spirit of Christ as their source."⁴¹ This will become the standard against which we measure the legitimacy of religious movements and Christian denominations, which is merely the teaching of the apostle John (1 John 4:1-3).⁴²

⁴⁰ Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 281.

⁴¹ Packer, *Keep in Step*, 193.

⁴² As John MacArthur insists, "The Spirit's work is always centered on the Savior. Any ministry or movement He empowers will share that same priority and clarity" (John MacArthur, *Strange Fire* [Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2013], 41). For similar arguments, see also Jonathan

Third, we must “bring fellowship with Christ right to the center of our worship and devotion.”⁴³ One of the ways in which we may know that we are making progress in that direction is to examine our hymnody. Larry Dixon challenges, “When we with best intentions sing praise songs with words like, ‘Spirit, we praise You. We worship and adore You. *Glorify Your name in all the earth,*’ we are missing the biblical emphasis that the Spirit’s task is to glorify *Christ*. If our hymnody is, as someone once put it, unfrozen theology, then we had better make sure our theology is biblical.”⁴⁴ Endeavoring to conform our worship to biblical standards will indeed lead us to be trinitarian but, as Gordon Fee puts it, it will also mean to “not focus on the Spirit as such, but on the Son, crucified and risen, Savior and Lord of all.”⁴⁵ *Christocentricity* then, if the word may be permitted, is a key measure of true, biblical worship.

Fourth, Christ must be the theme of our preaching. We must not merely fit Him in at the end of our sermons. Rather, He must dominate our preaching, and our preaching must be aimed at igniting love for Christ in the hearts of God’s people. This will transform both the content and the manner of our preaching. And since it is the Spirit’s singular business to glorify the Son, we should never deceive ourselves into thinking preaching that exalts anything or anyone else reaches the hearts of God’s people with the blessing of the Spirit.

Edwards, *The Great Awakening* (New Haven: Yale, 1972), 249; D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Great Doctrines of the Bible: God the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003); and Charles R. Swindoll, *Growing Deeper in the Christian Life* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1986), 188.

⁴³ Packer, *Keep in Step*, 193.

⁴⁴ Larry Dixon, *The Other Comforter*, 114 (emphasis in original).

⁴⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 902.

Fifth, our entire conception of spiritual maturity must be aligned to the Bible's. It is instructive that of the key Pauline qualifications for the office of an overseer (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9), only one has to do with giftedness. Scripture always shifts the burden of spiritual maturity onto character, and that is because the truest evidence of the Spirit's work in the heart of the believer is Christlikeness.⁴⁶ We must therefore be wary of quickly promoting to high positions of leadership individuals who excel in their abilities but lack in the fruit of the Spirit. It is not the way of the Spirit to prioritize gifts over Christlike character.

Finally, we must learn of the Spirit Himself to be self-effacing. It is quite insightful to note that immediately after declaring of Christ and himself, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30), John the Baptist does just that, literally disappearing from off the face of John's Gospel, never to be heard from again, while Jesus Christ comes front and center in the rest of the Gospel. This should not come as too much of a surprise. John, after all, is he who was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15). Little wonder, then, that the Baptist was so self-effacing, so glory-deflecting, so Christocentric in his life and ministry. This is the way of the Spirit. Let us keep in step with Him.

Jonathan Nthani is the pastor at Kafue Reformed Baptist Church in Kafue, Zambia. He is currently pursuing a Master of Divinity with the Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Minneapolis, Minnesota. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in ICT.

⁴⁶ The Spirit comes to transform the character of believers "into the moral likeness of Jesus by enabling them to practice the virtues of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Packer, *Taking God Seriously*, 49). For Packer, the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 is the character of Christ.

Bibliography

- Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. "Positive Christology." In *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, edited by E. J. Tinsley, 56. London: Epworth Press, 1973.
- Cole, Graham. *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007.
- Dixon, Larry. "The Other Comforter: The Place of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity." *Emmaus Journal* 013:1 (Summer 2004): 114.
- Edwards, Jonathan. *The Great Awakening*. New Haven, CT: Yale, 1972.
- Fee, Gordon D. *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*. Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2012.
- Kuyper, Abraham. *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Henri De Vries. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975.
- Lloyd-Jones, David Martyn. *Great Doctrines of the Bible: God the Holy Spirit*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003.
- . *Prove All Things: The Sovereign Work of the Holy Spirit*. Sussex: Kingsway Publications, 1985.
- MacArthur, John. *Strange Fire*. Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2013.
- Packer, J. I. *Affirming the Apostles' Creed*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.
- . *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1993.
- . *Keep in Step with the Spirit*. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1984.
- . *Knowing God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973.
- . *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990.

- . *Rediscovering Holiness*. Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1992.
- . *Taking God Seriously*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.
- . *Weakness is the Way: Life with Christ Our Strength*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.
- Peterson, Robert A. *Salvation Accomplished by the Son: The Work of Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Ryken, Leland. *J. I. Packer: An Evangelical Life*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.
- Storms, Sam. *Packer on the Christian Life: Knowing God in Christ, Walking by the Spirit*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.
- Swindoll, Charles R. *Growing Deeper in the Christian Life*. Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1986.
- Thomas, W. H. Griffith. *The Holy Spirit of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955.
- Tozer, A. W. *The Divine Conquest*. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1950.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: AN UNENDING COLLISION

Kelechi O. Bartram

Introduction

Even as one has given his or her life to Christ and lives as Christian daily, there is still an unending collision between this Christian and the Holy Spirit. This collision does not exempt any Christian whether clergy or laity so an adequate understanding of this experience as on-going will equip the pastors in ministry to consistent love and guiding of their congregation towards conscious and constant watch of their spiritual and relational walk with the Holy Spirit; knowing that they also experience the same unending collision. Daniel Akin and Scott Pace acknowledged, “Ministry is service to God that is accomplished by meeting the spiritual and physical needs of people. For the pastor to effectively serve others and assess their needs, we must have a biblical and theologically informed view of humankind. Establishing a proper perspective of humanity will provide us with the foundation to evaluate our own spiritual condition, experience spiritual growth and equip our people to do the same.”¹ When the pastors understand that even in their own lives there is an unending collision with the Holy Spirit irrespective of their years in pastoral ministry, it will serve as basis to understand the struggles laypersons go through in their spiritual journey. R. C Sproul noted, “In a certain sense, Christians are carnal throughout their lives; that is, we never in this life completely vanquish the impact of the flesh. We have to

¹ Daniel Akin and Scott Pace, *Pastoral Theology: Theological Foundation for Who a Pastor Is and What He Does* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 124.

struggle with the flesh until we enter into glory.”² The constant question every Christian must ask is has his or her old nature died completely that it does not challenge them again? If the answer is yes, congratulations but if the answer is no, then this study spurs the latter to sober reflection. Furthermore, another question that begs an answer is does the Christian still feel immune from the challenges of thoughts, will, emotions, dictates and pressures of their old nature. “At the fall, our relational capacity was distorted by sin, the imago Dei was not destroyed. Through Christ, God redeems our fallen nature and re-establishes our relationship with him, even though our relational capacity is not immediately or entirely restored.”³ Since this relational capacity between the Holy Spirit and the Christian is not completely restored; the supposed gulf in relational capacity defines an unending collision as the Holy Spirit directs the believer, his old nature, which is not completely vanquished also gives its own direction, hence a collision.

The Holy Spirit

Historically, from the council of Nicaea finally to the council of Constantinople in 381AD, the Spirit is confessed as “Lord, the giver of life whom with the Father and the Son is to be worshiped and glorified.”⁴ Hence, with respect to salvation the persons of the Trinity in their distinctiveness played related roles. Tertullian elaborated, “Substance is what unites the three aspects of the economy of salvation; person is what distinguishes

² R.C Sproul, *Everyone’s A Theologian: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Sandford: Reformed Trust Publishing, 2014), 206.

³Akin, *Pastoral Theology: Theological Foundation for Who a Pastor Is and What He*, 127.

⁴T.A, Smail, “Holy Spirit,” in *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic*, ed. Martin Davie et al. (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2016), 422.

them. The three persons of the Trinity are distinct, yet not divided, different yet not separated or independent of each other.”⁵ By way of deduction, Basil, Irenaeus, Athanasius and Tertullian held to the equality of the three persons of the Trinity. Although, acknowledging the divinity of the third person of the Trinity caused disunity between the Eastern and Western blocks of Christendom and by 1054 A.D it was settled. In relation to the Holy Spirit as co-equal to the Father and Son in the Godhead, he works in imparting knowledge of God and new life in Christ to the Christian community and individual believer and establishing God’s will in creation and recreation.⁶ By this assertion, the person of the Holy Spirit is agreed and laid to rest the earlier emphasis on the Holy Spirit as “the guiding, moving force that produced the Bible, the word of God.”⁷

Theologically, R.T. Kendall affirmed, “The Holy Spirit is a person, just as Jesus is a person, hence Jesus introduced him”⁸ (John 14:16-17). Millard Erickson attested, “the Holy Spirit is the point at which the Trinity becomes personal to the believer; the Holy Spirit is active within the lives of believers; he is resident within the Christian, the person through who the entire Triune God currently works.”⁹ There are scripture references that connect the nature of the Holy Spirit to God: lying against the Holy Spirit is lying against God (Acts5:3-4). Also, the temple of

⁵Alister McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction To The History Of Christian Thought*, 2nd edition (West Sussex: John Wiley, 2018), 54.

⁶Smail, “Holy Spirit,” in *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic* 421.

⁷Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academia, 2013), 814.

⁸R.T., Kendall, *Understanding Theology: The Means of Developing A Healthy Church In The 21st Century* (Katurayake: Christian Focus Publishing, 1998), 173.

⁹Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academia, 2013), 812.

God as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 3:16-17, 19-20) and the Holy Spirit shares Omnipotence with God (1Cor. 2:10-11). The power of the Holy Spirit is attributed as the power of the Most High (Luke 1: 35; Rom. 15:19) and all persons of the Trinity share eternal life (Heb. 9:14; 1:10-12). In creation, the work of the Holy Spirit is attributed to God (Gen. 1:2); the Great Commission emphasized the relationship of the Godhead (Matt. 28:19-20), the giving of Spiritual gifts (1Cor. 12:4-6), and in the wording of the benediction the persons of the Trinity are mentioned (2Cor.13:14).¹⁰

In addition, on the personality of the Holy Spirit in the words of Kendall “is a sensitive person.”¹¹ Erickson observed that the Holy Spirit expressed attributes of human personality; he prays (John 14:26; 15:26; 17:7), he possesses intelligence, knowledge, will, emotions (1Cor.12:11; Eph. 4:30; Acts 15:28), also the Holy Spirit can be victimized as a human person often experiences (Acts 5:3-4), aggrieved (Eph. 4:30), quenched (1Thes 5:19), resisted (Acts 7:51) and blasphemed (Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:29). In functions, the Holy Spirit teaches, regenerates, speaks, intercedes, commands, searches, testifies, guides, illuminates, reveals, and convicts (Rom. 8:26, John 16:8).¹²

Biblically, Benjamin Warfield observed that the person of the Holy Spirit is well pronounced in the Bible and attested “We need only note that the ‘Holy Spirit’ meets us at the very opening of revelation... the Pentateuch and historical books provides us with the outline of the doctrine; its richest

¹⁰Robert Letham, *Systematic Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 86-87.

¹¹Kendall, *Understanding Theology: The Means of Developing A Healthy Church In The 21st Century*, 176.

¹²Erickson, *Christian Theology, 3rd edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academia, 2013), 825.

depositories among the prophets are Isaiah and Ezekiel.¹³ On whether there are issues basic to the Old and New Testament's understanding of the Holy Spirit Warfield intimated, "The New Testament writers identify their 'Holy Spirit' with the 'Spirit of God' of the older books. All that is attributed to the Spirit of God in the Old Testament is attributed by them to their personal Holy Spirit. It was their own Holy Spirit who was Israel's guide and director and whom Israel rejected when she resisted the leading of God"¹⁴ (Acts 7:51). Furthermore, on the issue of concord by both testaments on the subject of the Holy Spirit, "in both Testaments the Spirit of God appears as the executive of the Godhead... if in the New, God works all that He does by the Spirit, so in the Old the Spirit is the name of God working. After the entrance of sin into the world, the work of the Spirit of God on men's spirit is always set forth in Old Testament."¹⁵ The Spirit of God was the author of faith (2Cor.4:13), he spoke through the prophets (Matt. 22:43; Mark 7:36; Heb. 3:7; 10:25; Zach 7:12; Neh. 9:20; Isa. 42:1; 61:1, Joel 2:27, 28). There are scripture evidences that the writers of the New Testament understood the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. The Old Testament Spirit of God is the Personal Holy Spirit of the New Testament. Also, relating to the spirit of humankind, the Holy Spirit works in the spirit of humans; influencing (1Sam. 10:6), inspiring (1Pet. 1:21), creating new heart and right spirit in people (Ps. 51:11; Isa. 43:10).¹⁶

¹³Benjamin Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines, reprinted* (Wiltshire: Cromwell Press, 2002), 102.

¹⁴Ibid, 103.

¹⁵Ibid, 106.

¹⁶Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines, reprinted*,104.

The Human Person as Relational Being

Historically and biblically, it is a given in the Christian circle that humans are God's creatures, made in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:27, 28). The concept expressed in the notion of image is as a representation, a model similar in form; humans represent the presence of God. In functional terms, likeness expresses the inner nature of man, which reflects something vital in the nature of God. The combination of image and likeness connotes human as having capacity for intellectual, emotional, moral and relational dispositions.¹⁷ The human person is endowed with ability to express his personhood.

Theologically, Gerald Bray claimed, "Person emphasizes the relational aspect of the individual and what links him to others, personhood implies relational identity. Personhood makes relationship possible."¹⁸ These natural endowments by God position human with power for choice making, "these powers are intellect, sensibility, will, together with that peculiar power of discrimination and impulsion, which we call conscience."¹⁹ The question is who controls this human person? The scripture points out that all of human power endowments are subjected to depravity (Eph.2:1-3). Clarence Thiessen disclosed, "Adam could will to sin or not to sin. After the fall, man's ability to sin became inability not to sin. Man now may desire to change but he is unable of merely willing to change his moral state (Rom. 7:18)."²⁰

¹⁷Kelechi Agubama, "More Gains, More Harm: The Environment AT Crossroads" in *BETFA Journal of the Ogbomoso Circle*. Vol. 10, 2015, 137-138.

¹⁸Gerald Bray, *A Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 137.

¹⁹Clarence Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Revised by Vernon Doerkson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 162.

²⁰*Ibid*, 163.

Therefore, the human heart and spirit; his inner life, will, intellect, knowledge, mind, emotion, relational capacity is controlled by personality and power beyond human's ability (Eph.2:1-3; 4:18; 2Cor. 4:4).

The human in this state, Thiessen stated, "The Spirit of God works through the will of man to turn him to God, so man wills to do God's will. Man's will being brought into harmony with God's will (John 7:17; Phil.2:13)."²¹ The question is does this act of the Holy Spirit completely influence the will of the human person once for all life time or are there times of intermittent collusion since the former occupant of the human will, still lives and persistently seeks their cooperation.

The Holy Spirit and The Christian Life

Millard Erickson stated "Jesus attributed to the Holy Spirit the ability to change human hearts and personalities; the Holy Spirit works conviction (John 16:8-11) and regeneration (John 3:5-8) within Christians."²² John MacArthur remarked, "Conversion is real as profession of faith is and must commensurate with evidence of change in the life of a believer in Christ. It is impossible for a converted person to remain unchanged. In regeneration, the very presence of the new nature; the presence and power of the indwelling Holy Spirit indicates that we are indeed changed and changing people."²³ Bruce Milne reiterated at repentance there is a "change of mind concerning sin and evil, human response to God connected to faith (Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38; 20:21), and closely related to

²¹Ibid, 163.

²²Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd edition 825.

²³John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds. *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Illinois: Crossway, 2017), 207.

conversion (change in direction).²⁴ MacArthur's statement that, 'we are indeed changed and changing', gives an idea that this change is once but yet continuous, is a pointer to the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. Norman Geisler corroborated "sanctification is a process in the present by which God is making us righteous; is the process by which God get sin out of us (actually); gives us victory over the world (1John 5:4), victory over flesh (Romans 7:24-25) and victory over the devil (Jam. 4:7)."²⁵ The Christian life is in oneness with Christ (Rom.6:1-11, Gal. 2:26), in resurrection (Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1-3), in ascension and reigns in the heavenly places (Rom. 5:17; Eph. 2:6) shares Christ's coming glory with him (Phil.3:20; 1John 3:2).The Christian engages in daily repentance; repeated turning away from sin as the Spirit discloses to him. This involves a continuous dying to self and sin²⁶

The view addressed above are in consonance that Christian growth to maturity is progressive and not a one-time experience but with daily dying to sin, repentance, changing, and brokenness and as Sproul put is "this is an area in which there is a genuine synergism, cooperation; sanctification is a cooperation process in which God works and we work. He works in us to change our very nature, and we cooperate with Him."²⁷ However, the above understanding was refuted by the teaching of John Wesley on 'Christian Perfection', "One may attain a state of sinless perfection in their life. This state has been attained by

²⁴Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982), 187.

²⁵Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology in One Volume* (Bloomington: Bethany House Publishers, 2012), 1151.

²⁶Milne, *Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief*, 178.

²⁷Sproul, *Everyone's A Theologian: An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 208.

only few but can and should be attained by all.”²⁸ Wesley’s assertion conflicts with Sproul’s view that “In certain sense, Christians are carnal throughout their lives; that is we never in this life completely vanquish the impact of the flesh. We have to struggle with the flesh until we enter into glory.”²⁹ In conjunction to Sproul’s observation, Geisler cited “Wesleyan claims lack biblical and experiential support. Even saints with remarkable maturity confessed they never completely overcome sin (Rom. 7:14-18). Most devout of God’s prophets and servants considered themselves woefully sinful when God revealed Himself to them (Isa. 6:1-8). We can get to the place where we are able not to sin but we can never in this life reach the point where we are not able to sin.”³⁰

Unending Collision in Christian Life Experience

If these assertions are scripturally clear, then it means the flesh, old nature, old man, no matter the nomenclature does not die completely in any Christian’s life. Scriptural injunction in Galatians chapter 5:19-21 “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like...,” was given to the Christians not the unbelievers. The question rises, which of the Christian today will exonerate him or her from the constant and consistent test from within and without not to commit any of these sins, even in our state of sanctification? Furthermore, the admonition to express the fruit of the Spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22-23 “But the fruit of the

²⁸Geisler, *Systematic Theology in One Volume*, 1151.

²⁹Sproul, *Everyone’s A Theologian: An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 206.

³⁰Geisler, *Systematic Theology in One Volume*, 1151.

Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control....” The question rises, from the clergy very busy in pastoral ministry and the fervent lay person who is not challenge by old nature against doing what is listed here on constant basis. Who among the Christians do not daily, consistently wrestle with abiding with and expressing these fruit. Therefore, corroborating the understanding of this unending collision Sproul posited “There is an element of the flesh that remains in the Christian that has to come under the constant scrutiny of the word of God and the discipline of the Holy Spirit.”³¹ As the Christian lives in this life, he or she is daily challenged by the old nature to do wrong so constantly and consistently even as the Holy Spirit points him or her to resist such and cooperate with God hence, an unending collision.

Implications for Pastoral Ministry in Africa

The Christians in Africa have found themselves in peculiar context, which tends to stifle their faith if not for the help of the Holy Spirit. A context fraught with unemployment, high level of illiteracy, poor health care facilities and health works migrating to other continents in the droves, problem of hunger, under productivity in agriculture, high population growth, technologically backwards, poor judicial systems and dictatorial leadership even in democratic dispensation, financial embezzlement and economic sabotages, terrorism, hatred for leaders, and poor governance.³² In the face of these challenges, it becomes difficult for Christians in African in order to survive

³¹Sproul, *Everyone’s A Theologian: An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 171.

³²Nita Chitadze, “The Economic Component of World Politics and Main Global Social and Economic Problems” in *World Politics and the Challenges for International Security*. 2022: 86 (accessed 2/12/2023) <https://www.igi-global.com>

not to devise ungodly means hence, the unending collision with the Holy Spirit whose leading is in constant tension with the dictates of the old nature that is not completely dead. A context where there is social, economic, and judicial inequality and intense grappling for power in defiance to democratic governance³³, cooperating with the Holy Spirit in Christian Living take the grace of God.

In this context, the pastoral ministry in Africa will be impactful if done in the purview of the grace of God and compassion armed with adequate knowledge of this unending collision experience. “Grace is the prevailing concept by which we must understand humanity in relation to our redeeming Creator. Grace is the divine means of our sanctification and spiritual growth is dependent on God’s unmerited favour (Titus 2:11-14).”³⁴ In the nurturing and guiding of God’s sheep, the pastors should understand the role of grace and compassion in order to have a Christ like heart for the parishioners.³⁵ This compassion must be extended to those Christians in the collision experience. John Swinton, stated “Compassion has to do with life orientation, it is all embracing, proactive emotion which genuinely reaches out to encompass its recipients with active love and acceptance.”³⁶ When the pastoral clergy understand

³³Anne Mahler, “Global South,” October 25th 2017.
<https://www.spanitalport.as.virginia.edu>

³⁴Daniel Akin, *Pastoral Theology: Theological Foundation For Who A Pastor Is And What He Does*, 127-128.

³⁵David Deuel, “The Pastor’s Compassion For People” in *John McArthur and The Master’s Seminary Faculty, Pastoral Ministry: How To Shepherd Biblically* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 214.

³⁶John Swinton, “Friendship in Community: Creating a Space for Love” in *Spiritual Dimension of Pastoral Care: Practical Theology in A Multi-Disciplinary Context*, eds, David Willows and John Swinton (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers), 104.

that they are not immune from this collision then they will advance that the;

The Christian life does not progress in a steady line from starting point of conversion until we are home in glory. For the most part, there is steady growth in the Christian life, but there are peaks and valleys. There may be occasions when Christian has a radical fall into protracted sin. In fact, Christians might fall into such egregious sin that they must undergo church discipline, excommunication, is necessary to restore a backslider to faith...as we move from spiritual infancy to spiritual adulthood, the peaks and valleys tend to smooth out. We become more stable, as it were in our Christian growth and fellowship.³⁷

The pastors must understand that their members are humans also laypersons should understand that their pastors are humans to avoid being overbearing towards one another. Rather relate through the lenses of grace and compassion to strengthen and uphold one another in Christ as the Holy Spirit enables the church.

Conclusion

This paper condemns the condoning of sin and handling issues of sin with levity or deliberately living in it. However, it advocates proper understanding of the Christian as a human person in whose life the old nature though pronounced crucified with Christ as ultimate reality yet he/she actually strives with daily. The Christian should walk as directed by the Holy Spirit even in this experiential collision with his/her old nature and are not supposed to be enslaved it rather submit to the Spirit of God for daily victory. It must be noted that because the Holy Spirit is God, He does not impose His will on the Christian but

³⁷Sproul, *Everyone's A Theologian: An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 207.

seeks a complete-hearted cooperation with the Christian as He leads in the journey of Christian life. The pastoral ministry should understand this and ask God for the grace to consistently love their congregation as the love the Lord.

***Dr. Kelechi Bartram** PhD serves at Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary (Igede Ekiti) and lectures in Theology and Hermeneutics.*

Bibliography

- Agubama, Kelechi. “More Gains, More Harm: The Environment AT Crossroads” in *BETFA Journal of the Ogbomosho Circle*. Vol. 10, 2015, 129-144.
- Akin, Daniel and Scott Pace, *Pastoral Theology: Theological Foundation for Who A Pastor Is And What He Does*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017.
- Bray, Gerald. *A Biblical and Systematic Theology*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012.
- Chitadze, Nita “The Economic Component of World Politics and Main Global Social and Economic Problems” in *World Politics and the Challenges for International Security*. 2022: 86 (accessed 2/12/2023) <https://www.igi-global.com>
- Deuel, David. “The Pastor’s Compassion For People” in *Pastoral Ministry: How To Shepherd Biblically*, John MacArthur and The Master’s Seminary Faculty, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005.
- Erickson, Christian. *Christian Theology*, 3rd edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academia, 2013.
- Geisler, Norman. *Systematic Theology in One Volume*. Bloomington: Bethany House Publishers, 2012.
- John Swinton, John. “Friendship in Community: Creating a Space for Love” in *Spiritual Dimension of Pastoral Care: Practical Theology in A Multi-Disciplinary Context*, eds, David Willows and John Swinton. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Kendall, R.T. *Understanding Theology: The Means of Developing A Healthy Church In The 21st Century* Katurayake: Christian Focus Publishing, 1998.
- Letham, Robert. *Systematic Theology*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2019.
- MacArthur, John and Richard Mayhue, eds. *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*. Illinois: Crossway, 2017.

Mahler, Anne. “Global South”, October 25th 2017.

<https://www.spanitalport.as.virginia.edu>

McGrath, Alister. *Historical Theology: An Introduction To The History Of Christian Thought*, 2nd edition. West Sussex: John Wiley, 2018.

Milne, Bruce. *Know The Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982.

Smail, T.A. “Holy Spirit,” in *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic*, ed. Martin Davie et. al. Illinois: IVP Academic, 2016.

Sproul, R.C. *Everyone’s A Theologian: An Introduction To Systematic Theology*. Sandford:Reformed Trust Publishing, 2014.

Thiessen, Clarence. *Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Revised by Vernon Doerkson. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989.

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR TEACHERS AND SOCIAL WORKERS

Kevin Jones

Introduction

In this short write up, the reader will be reminded of a few things: First, the character, role, and power of the Holy Spirit. Second, how essential teachers and social workers are; and third, why the Holy Spirit is so important in the life and work of teachers and social workers. Often there is an emphasis placed on technical and academic learning. This emphasis can cause a believer to neglect thinking about and experiencing The Holy Spirit work. This essay will discuss the attribute, role, and importance of the Holy Spirit in the life of teachers and social workers.

As attested by Zuck, “Employing appropriate teaching techniques and using suitable instructional material can help make teaching more exciting.”¹ However, techniques are not all that are needed for effective teaching. In addition, excitement is not the final goal of education. Techniques can be good, but the Holy Spirit is important whether one is teaching at an elementary or university level or anything in between. There is a way to teach and serve in your power, but that is neither recommended nor safe for the Christian.

Better Understanding of the Holy Spirit

Who or what is The Holy Spirit? And what does the Holy Spirit do? As asserted by Mbewe, “The Holy Spirit is not just a person; He is God Himself.” That is vital. Unless we get to that

¹ Roy B. Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching: The Power of the Holy Spirit in Your Ministry* (Word Publishing 1980), 2.

stage where the truth of the Holy Spirit's deity is burnt into our beings, we shall have fallen short of the truth about the person of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the Holy Scripture."² The truth is essential in the life of Christians; and without truth, we are weak and powerless, strive in our own strength, fall for the lies of Satan, run to foolishness, and fight without the proper weapons. Truth is power, especially when the truth deals with the character and supremacy of God.

The Bible is the most effective tool for Christians because through it we get to hear from God. Isn't that fact amazing? We get to hear from the Creator of all things. Even more, He lives in each of us and is helping each of us be more like Him and do the things He wants us to do.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:1-2 [ESV]). In the beginning, the mention of the Holy Spirit is an introduction that the Spirit roams, is wise, is seeking work, seeking influence, and is seeking the will of the Father. These attributes and qualities are not of an unintelligible being, but a Being full of wisdom.

The Holy Spirit is God, not a feeling or force. The Holy Spirit has always existed and has no beginning and no ending. Again, the Holy Spirit is God, the third person of the Godhead. However, He is often least mentioned as related to the Trinity. Much attention rightly is given to God the Father, much attention to God the Son, and historically little attention has been given to the Holy Spirit. However, the Holy Spirit is who Jesus Christ said will be with us. In John 20:21 Jesus breathed on the disciples and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. He went on to tell them that

² Conrad Mbewe, *The Person, and Work of the Holy Spirit*. (Lusaka: Evergreen Publishers, 2022), 11.

the Holy Spirit would be with them, since He was leaving. Therefore, it should be no surprise when we see the same Holy Spirit in Acts 4 moving, landing, filling, and empowering.

The Multifaceted Roles of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has many roles. A role could also be understood as a function. This list with verses is not exhaustive but will give a glimpse into who the Holy Spirit is and what He does. Read this list and your heart will be set ablaze.

The Holy Spirit:

Creates - Genesis 1:2, John 1:1-3, Psalm 33:6

Inspires - 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:20-21

Illuminates - Ephesians 1:17-18, 2 Corinthians 2:10-13, John 16:13

Restrains - 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7

Convicts - John 16:8-11

Regenerates - Titus 3:5-7

Baptizes - 1 Corinthians 12:13, Luke 3:22, Acts 19:2-6

Seals - 2 Corinthians 1:20-22, Ephesians 1:13-14, Ephesians 4:30

Indwells - Romans 8:9-11, Luke 11:13

Fills - Acts 4:31, Acts 1:8, Acts 13:52

Empowers - John 14:25-26, Ezekiel 36:26-28, Ephesians 3:16

Commands - 2 Timothy 1:6-7, Romans 15:19

Sanctifies - Titus 3:5-7, Galatians 5:16-17

Assures - 1 Timothy 6:12-13, 1 Peter 3:9

Now is a really suitable time to stop and praise the Holy Spirit for who He is. Now that we know a few things about who He is, what He does, and how His power is displayed, let's turn our attention to how He assists in the worship of teaching and social work. For a servant of Christ, work is worship. The act of

teaching and doing the work in social agencies when done for Christ is worship. Let's explore for a moment the significance and importance of teachers and social workers and then return to why the Holy Spirit is so important for service.

The Significance of Gospel-Minded Servants

Teachers and social workers—both those who love God and those who do not love God—serve God through means of His common grace. As explained by MacArthur and Mayhue, Common grace is, “an expression of the universal goodness and benevolence of God (Ps. 145:9), common grace is experience by all people without exception, including those who will never receive salvation (cf. Ps 33:5; 52:1; 107:8; 119:68).³ Likewise, Grudem defines common grace as, “common grace is the grace of God by which he gives people immeasurable blessings that are not a part of salvation.”⁴ This means a teacher who does not love God can teach mathematics, reading, writing, how to play an instrument, or how to paint a beautiful work of art. However, the teacher who does this work for the sake of Christ is working for a reason connected to the eternal God and His will. Furthermore, the teacher and social worker that belongs to Christ can lead to both earthly and eternal satisfaction, with eternal satisfaction guaranteed, and earthly flourishing simply a by-product of the Lord's kindness. Let's explore just a few ways that teachers and social workers benefit society.

³ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of the Bible Truth*, (Crossway, 2017), 488.

⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, (Zondervan 1994), 657.

The Significance of Teachers

Teaching is both an art and science.⁵ A teacher is anyone who helps someone think critically, acquire knowledge, skills, dispositions, attitudes, or values about a subject, topic, or person. First, teachers meet the needs of a community by laying an educational foundation. They serve in ways that many people are either not qualified or have no desire to serve. At some point in everyone's life, they have been taught something. We are all in some way indebted to teachers. Who was your favorite teacher? What did they teach you? Second, teachers lay a moral and ethical foundation for children and teens. These ideas are broadly different but go hand in hand and teachers teach them both. Third, teachers serve as counselors. They are on hand hours upon hours throughout the week to be, in many cases, the first person to assist a student with an emotional or social concern or issue. Fourth, teachers prepare students for the future and instill in students the needed skills and insights to maintain a healthy society. Fifth, but certainly not the end of this list, teachers serve as mentors.

The Significance of Social Workers

Social workers care. "Social work is the profession of caring and intervening in the interactions between individuals, groups, and communities to enhance or restore well-being and to create societal conditions that help individuals, groups, and communities enhance their own well-being. Social workers select, use, and develop interventions based on the best available evidence."⁶ Social workers play a critical role in societies

⁵ William R. Yount, *Created to Learn: A Teacher's Introduction to Educational Psychology*. (B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 2.

⁶ Michael E. Sherr and M.J. Jones, *Introduction to Competence-Based Social Work: The Profession of Caring, Knowing, and Serving* (2nd ed.). (New York: Oxford, 2020), 29.

globally. They offer support and counseling to students, parents, and even their peers. They offer counseling in ways related to poverty, trauma, neglect, alcohol and drug abuse, mental and emotional health issues, and a host of other things that have impacted humanity since the fall. Social workers also offer intervention in these situations. When a family is often unable to function in a way that leads to flourishing, they can reach out to social workers, who can give strategies and techniques to move forward.

The uniqueness of the Christian social worker is that they also offer the Bible and the gospel, because we know that knowing Jesus is man's greatest need. Furthermore, social workers promote individual and family wellbeing. When individuals and families do well, communities and society can do well. Social workers serve in areas from public schools, hospitals, and community development organizations. Every social worker needs to be filled with equipment, with the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit in the Life of Teachers and Social Workers

Listed above are many of the attributes that are characteristics of the Holy Spirit: What He does and Who He is. Now let us tie together the person of the Holy Spirit with the work of teachers and social workers. The Holy Spirit's divine presence equips the teacher and social worker with cognitive awareness and sensitivity to things taking place moment by moment. The Holy Spirit never leaves us. This means that whether things are going extraordinarily well or extraordinarily horrible for a teacher or social worker, the power of the Spirit is at work. We must never forget the divine work of the Spirit.

In Haggai 2:4, the prophet says, "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the Lord. Be strong, O Joshua, son of

Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land declares the Lord. Work, for I am with you, declares the Lord of hosts,” To echo this very statement that the Lord our God has already spoken. Work, teachers, for the Lord our God is with you. Work, social workers, for the Lord our God is with you. There is no human power or spiritual power that could separate us from the Lord, our God, or stop the work that the Lord has for us.

At times, working as a teacher or social worker, the physical body gets extraordinarily tired. Often one can simply get a little extra sleep. But what do we do when our soul gets weak? What do we do when our spirit is so heavily laden that we do not know what to do? We turn to the ever-giving power source. His name is the Holy Spirit. Never forget the awesome power that is at hand for us. Yes, the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead and hovered over the face of the earth when nothing existed is the same Holy Spirit that equips us when we are tired. Turn to the Holy Spirit for strength.

Let’s go on, at times there is an educational gap in the information we know, and we know students need to acquire. For a lack of information, one can often turn to a search engine or book to acquire some needed knowledge. However, what does one do when the questions that lay heavy in the heart cannot be found with a quick educational search? The Christian must turn to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives insight and has answers for every question that could ponder our hearts. There are times when situations are so perplexing only counsel from godly people and the work of the Lord can give us insight. Continuously to go to the eternal source of wisdom and knowledge. His name is the Holy Spirit.

A Few Things Teachers and Social Workers Must Do

Pray. Read the scripture. Remember, your work is not in vain. First, we must pray. In Luke 11:1, Jesus' disciples asked

Jesus how to pray, and He gave them a model. Start with that model and then begin to pray for wisdom on how to teach and engage in community spaces, how to deal with each student and adult you engage, and how to have the greatest impact for Christ. Also, pray for your administrator and each family. Make a habit of getting a list of names of students in your class before the beginning of an academic semester. Take time to pray for each student at least once, name by name, before the start of my first class. Read the scripture. In Matthew 4:4, Jesus was being tempted by Satan; He reminds Satan and all of us that we cannot live on bread alone. Christians cannot think they can do the work and will of God on empty spiritual stomachs. If you are not well fed through the Bible daily, you will be spiritually malnourished and have very little to offer the people you were trying to lead.

Remember, your work is not in vain. The process of education and care is long and tedious. Nothing about teaching and working in social agencies is simple. So often, a teacher may take weeks to teach a student a word or reading strategy. Likewise, it could take a social worker weeks to get a young child to open up and have a conversation. Sometimes, in the most difficult times, it is easy for people in these areas to become discouraged and think that their work is in vain. Please remember that every conversation, every smile, every act of kindness, every joy-filled conversation, every handshake, or hug done in the name of Jesus will profit much.

No Confidence in the Flesh

In closing, friends, let us remember, “For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—” (Philippians 3:3 [ESV]). Our hearts have been circumcised. The ugliness is

clipped thrown away. Do not return to the old ways. The old way leads to death. The old way leads to pride. And, since work is worship, we worship through work, by the Spirit of God. Yes, the Holy Spirit of God.

***Dr. Kevin Jones** serves as a pastor at St. John Missionary Baptist Church, Brand Manager for Lifeways, The Gospel Project, and Dean of the School of Education and Social Work at Cedarville University, in Ohio USA.*

Bibliography

- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Zondervan, 1994.
- MacArthur, John and Mayhue, Richard. *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of the Bible Truth*, Crossway, 2017.
- Mbewe, Conrad. *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*. Lusaka: Evergreen Publishers, 2022.
- Sherr, M. E., & Jones, J. M. *Introduction to Competence-Based Social Work: The Profession of Caring, Knowing, and Serving* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford, 2020.
- Yount, William R. *Created to Learn: A Teacher's Introduction to Educational Psychology*. B&H Publishing Group, 2010.
- Zuck, Roy B. *Spirit-Filled Teaching: The Power of the Holy Spirit in Your Ministry*. Word Publishing, 1980.

THE LOGIC OF PENAL SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT FROM
THE LIGHT OF THE CREATION AND FALL ACCOUNT OF GENESIS 1
AND 3

Gwali Melton

Introduction

Since the inception of the church, Christians have tried to understand and make sense of how Christ’s death brought them salvation from sin. The Apostles and their contemporaries tried to make sense of Christ’s death from the Old Testament Scripture. The Church after them continued the same tradition, but unlike the New Testament writers themselves, who, though using different metaphors and themes to speak about atonement, treated it as a unified act of the Triune God that reconciles humanity back to Him, the Church over its history has tended to take each of those New Testament themes and develop them, sometimes independent of the rest, into what has come to be known as theories of atonement. Besides classifying these theories according to the Biblical themes each develops, they can also be classified according to how each explains Christ’s death—who Christ’s death acts upon, whether it is God, the devil, or man. Each theory “reflects a particular view of the nature of God and our plight in sin and of what is needed to bring us to God in the fellowship of acceptance on his side and faith and love on ours.”¹

Obviously, because all these various theories are built on certain Biblical themes, they will each have some merit, but one

¹ J.I. Packer “What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution” in J.I. Parker & Mark Dever *In My Place Condemned He Stood: Celebrating the Glory of the Atonement* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 71.

thing they cannot all be at the same time and in the same way is faithful articulations of the whole teaching of the Bible on atonement. Therefore, the test of the overall merit of a given theory is whether it makes sense of all the themes in the atonement found in the New Testament, and whether it reflects an accurate view of what the Bible reveals to be the nature of God, human plight in sin, and the remedy for that. But before we turn to look at which theory fares well in relation to the above criteria, let us first introduce them briefly.

Historical Development

The *Ransom Theory* dates back to the early Church Fathers.² It has been referred to as the “ransom-to-Satan theory”³ Its central proposal is that humanity was sold to the devil due to Adam and Eve’s disobedience to God, and that Christ’s life was given, by God, to Satan, as a ransom, to secure their freedom from his bondage.⁴ Jesus says, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mat. 20:28). However, this passage does not say who the ransom (λύτρον) was paid to. The metaphor seems to be used to emphasize the exchange taking place as Christ takes on the punishment due to His people so that they will go free. If “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23), and wages means that which is given in exchange for a work done; and a λύτρον is a *price* or a *ransom*, and a price is something given in exchange for value or goods, then it becomes clear how λύτρον can be used to describe Christ taking the sinners’ wages of death, so that the sinner will

² Ben Pugh notes that “Irenaeus, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine each developed the ransom-to-Satan theory in cruder and cruder forms.” See Ben Pugh in *Atonement Theories: A Way Through the Maze* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 5.

³ Pugh *Atonement Theories*, 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*

not die. It will be to overstretch and over-read meaning into New Testament terms like λύτρον or a related term like τιμῆς (1 Cor. 7:23) to begin asking, ‘To whom was the ransom or price paid?’

The ransom theory was espoused by the early church simultaneously with the *Recapitulation Theory*, which says that Christ, as the Second Adam, “retraced the steps of Adam, successfully resisting sin and evil in all the way that Adam failed to, culminating in the ultimate act of obedience: death on a cross.”⁵ However, this theory, as Ben Pugh rightly observes, “takes its bearings from the incarnation rather than the death of Christ.”⁶ And though based on a recurrent New Testament theme (1 Cor. 15: 21-22, 45-49; Rom. 5:12-15, 17) and clearly implying that Jesus undid what Adam did that placed humanity in its current state, recapitulation does not explain or tell us why obedience to the point of death was required of Christ or how that gives us life. In fact, as Pugh observed, the recapitulation theory “made the death of Jesus climactic but dispensable.”⁷

Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) rejected the ransom-to-Satan theory and proposed the *Satisfaction Theory*. The ransom theory failed in two places, notes Colin E. Gunton: First, “it made the mistake of taking too literally the allusion to ransom in Mark 10:45 (‘to give his life as a ransom for many’), treating the blood as an actual price and asking whether it was paid to God or to the devil. That is to go beyond anything licensed by the language of the New Testament.”⁸ Secondly, “the theory of ransom was

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 26.

⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁸ Colin E. Gunton *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality, and the Christian Tradition*. (London, UK: T&T Clark, 2003), 87.

too dualistic, giving the devil too much of an autonomous authority.”⁹ God owes Satan nothing to pay him back.

Anselm’s satisfaction theory, contrary to the ransom theory, proposed that Christ’s life was offered as satisfaction for God’s honour. The argument goes that humanity, as a result of sin, robbed God of the glory due to him. And as compensation, something greater than all creation must be offered to God. “Compensation must only be made by man. No one must pay it for him —that would be unjust. But only God has the power to make such a payment. Only he could offer something so valuable that is the equivalent to everything in creation.”¹⁰ And so, “God, who alone has the means to pay it... becomes man, and in man pays the debt.”¹¹ The major difference between Anselm’s model and penal substitution is that in the former, “Christ offers himself to God as an equivalent to the punishment of sinners. In the penal substitution model, Christ himself is punished for sinners.”¹² Anselm is so important for the development of the theories of atonement to the extent that led Pugh to conclude that, apart from the ransom and recapitulation theories, all the other theories have their roots in his book. They are “either developments of, or reactions against Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo*.”¹³

The satisfaction theory is not without its own weaknesses. While Anselm is right that sin ultimately violates God’s honour, the Bible will speak of sin as primarily violating God’s righteousness and justice first. Also, there is not any Biblical warrant for the claim that what must be offered to God to atone for human sin must be greater than all creation. If one of the

⁹ Ibid., 87.

¹⁰ Pugh, *Atonement Theories*, 55.

¹¹ Ibid., 55.

¹² Ibid., 57.

¹³ Ibid., 45.

Christological truths affirmed in Chalcedon is the fact that Christ's human nature does not become divine or something in-between the divine and creature,¹⁴ as a result of it being assumed by the second Person of the Trinity; and we know it was so that He could offer that sacrifice that He took on human form,¹⁵ then that very fact means what was worthy to be offered needed not to be ontologically superior—quantitatively or qualitatively—to the whole of creation.

The efficacy of Christ's work does not consist in the ontological quality of the body that He offered but in the fact that it was God Himself, the Creator, working to right a relationship that has gone wrong. Christ took on a body so that He may die. For, the divine nature does not itself die. The efficacy of His work lies in the fact that it is God doing it, not in the metaphysical quality of the body he offers. Yes, there may be something to say about the fact that Christ's body was never used to commit sin, but that difference is not primarily ontological, but moral. Christ's sacrifice was acceptable because He never sinned with His body, but He never sinned with His body because it is the body of Christ. This being the case, it cannot be said that the sacrifice that was needed to reconcile humans back to God must be something more valuable than all of creation, as Anselm claims. There is no way the fall as a moral offence could create a metaphysical need for a "thing," except if we are denying the fact that it was a moral offense. Here, Anselm is getting the whole picture upside down. The problem is that of a severed relationship, not that of a lack of some "thing" on the side of humanity. If the latter was the case, then Christ's offering would not have truly addressed human sin but only served as

¹⁴ Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims On the Way* (Grand Rapids IL: Zondervan, 2011), 474.

¹⁵ See St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, Ch. 2 & 3.

something to distract God from our sin. The punishment might have been averted by the sacrifice of a thing,¹⁶ but the problem of sin would still remain. If sin must be punished because God is just, but then God instead took a great gift of life from the Son and abandoned the demand of His justice, then God would be denying Himself. And what Anselm thought ought not to be would have happened. God would have violated His character by taking such a gift and foregoing His justice. Also, because the body Christ offered is 100 percent a human body and not some third thing superior to human body, it would have failed to measure up to the demand for some “thing” more valuable than the whole of creation, as Anselm would have it.

The *Penal Substitution Theory* espoused by reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin is the most widely held theory of atonement among evangelicals. It says that Jesus Christ bore the penalty of our sins and died in our place¹⁷ which is why it is termed, penal substitution. It means that on the cross Jesus suffered the punishment we deserved, so that we will not be punished. He is our substitute. There is a debate about terms here that the scope of our work will not allow us to discuss. Penal substitution is largely a modification of Anselm’s satisfaction theory. But to say that is not to suggest that the latter is identical with the former. They have substantial and important differences. Also, it must be admitted that while penal substitution is the best articulation of the Biblical teaching on atonement, our articulation of it can be honed based on more careful exegesis and Biblical theological inquiry. Because the rest of the discussion in this paper will focus on discussing penal substitutionary theory as the one that does justice to all the themes the New Testament uses in speaking about the

¹⁶ Pugh *Atonement Theories*, 45.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

atonement, we will not spend so much time discussing it here. It suffices to introduce it only briefly for now.

For the purposes of classification, we will discuss the two major subjective models of Peter Abelard (1079–1142), Anselm’s contemporary, and Faustus Socinus (1539–1604) under the same heading. What the two models have in common is the view that Christ’s death acts upon humans, not God or the devil. The model espoused by these two people is referred to as the *moral example/influence model*. Abelard is associated with the view that Christ died to demonstrate to us how to live a life of total commitment and dedication to God. Abelard found the idea that a loving God will demand the death of any innocent person, more especially that of His own Son, as a means to reconciliation, reprehensible.¹⁸ Socinus on the other hand, was an ardent critic of the penal substitutionary theory. He held to the moral influence theory. His modification of Abelard is not really our concern here, but rather what he thought of the penal substitutionary model. Socinus argued that “if sin is punished, then it is not forgiven. Likewise, if it is forgiven, then there is no need for punishment.”¹⁹ So for him, both the ideas that Christ bore our punishment or died to avert our punishment are unacceptable. That idea was, for him, “irrational, incoherent, immoral, and impossible.”²⁰

The final theory we will briefly summarise is the *Christus Victor theory*, proposed by Gustaf Aulen (1879–1977). Aulen, in his book *Christus Victor*, argued that this was the most consistently held theory from the early Church to the twelfth century, before Anselm’s satisfaction theory rose to prominence. He called it the

¹⁸ Ibid., 129.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ J.I. Packer “What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution” in Parker & Dever *In My Place Condemned, He Stood: Celebrating the Glory of the Atonement*, 51.

classic theory of atonement.²¹ The theory says that Christ died to conquer, defeat, and free humanity from the powers of the devil, sin, and death. The cross is not a payment of ransom to anyone but an instrument of the defeat of the powers of evil confronting humanity.²²

Questions and Objections to Penal Substitution

The doctrine of penal substitution is undermined on two fronts. The first is the work of its critics. From Socinus to Greg Boyd, every generation of Reformed and Evangelical Christians who hold on to penal substitutionary theory have had to deal with attacks on this important doctrine. The second factor that undermines the doctrine, though unlike the first one, it does indirectly, is the failure of Evangelicals who hold on to this doctrine to improve on its exegetical and theological foundation that was bequeathed to us by the Reformers. Some of the best works on the topic out there are merely summaries of what has already been done by the Reformers. So far, there is hardly any fresh, systematic treatment of penal substitution that may be said to be an improvement on the work of the Reformers. This conclusion does not lack the corroborative testimony of better scholars than the author of this paper.

In an article titled "Atonement," R.W. Yarbrough notes that, "It is obvious through Scripture that God atones for sin via sacrifice." But he adds that, "the problem with the theory lies in explaining *how* sacrifice saves."²³ According to J.D. Linnell, the answers to the question of why atonement is necessary and why

²¹ Pugh, *Atonement Theories*, 8–13.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ R.W. Yarbrough, "Atonement," in *The New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D.A. Carson, Graeme Goldsworthy eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 392.

God does not forgive simply out of goodwill without a demand for sacrifice “today remains frustrating.”²⁴ J.I. Packer seems to concur with the conclusions of the two scholars cited above. In an article titled “What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution,” Packer writes, “The significance of penal substitution is not always stated as exactly as is desirable.”²⁵ William Lane Craig observed that even though the Reformed doctrine of penal substitution faces “formidable objections,” there are not many Christian philosophers taking up the challenge to provide a defence of it like they have done the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation.²⁶

Greg Boyd, in an online popular-level article, expanded on some of the objections raised by Faustus Socinus against penal substitutionary atonement theory. Among the most serious questions he raised are questions such as “Does God really need to appease his wrath with a blood sacrifice in order to forgive us?” He wonders if this will not imply that God’s character is essentially retributive, which will contradict Christ’s law of love and go against Biblical instances where God forgave without demanding sacrifice. He also asks, “If Jesus’ death allows God the Father to accept us, wouldn’t it be more accurate to say that Jesus reconciles *God to us* than it is to say Jesus reconciles *us to God*,” as it is found in 2 Corinthians 5:18–20? He wondered how we should “understand one member of the Trinity (the Father) being wrathful towards another member of the Trinity (the

²⁴ J.D. Linnell, “Atonement,” in Campbell Campbell-Jack and Gavin J. McGrath eds. *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 98.

²⁵ J.I. Packer, “What Did the Cross Achieve?: The Logic of Penal Substitution,” 53.

²⁶ William Lane Craig, *The Atonement* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 2. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms>. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108558020> (accessed 04/20/2021)

Son)” when they are one. Like Socinus before him, he asks whether, on the terms of penal substitution, God truly forgives sin, if a price must be paid before He does. Could the guilt of sin “be literally transferred from one party to another?” Is there any way we can justify the Father punishing His Son for our own wrongs—wronges He did not commit? How can “Jesus’ several hours of suffering and his short time in the grave” pay for the eternal sin that we deserve? If Jesus came just to die, why did He have to wait until He is thirty-three to do so? Was the significance of His ministry merely to prepare for Calvary? Doesn’t the sacrifice of Jesus mean that God approves the pagan practice of child-sacrifice? If the “real issue in need of resolution is a legal matter in the heavenly realms,” as penal substitution makes it look like, “What is the intrinsic connection between what Jesus did on the cross and how we actually live?” How does “Christ’s death changes us?”²⁷ This article will not respond to all of the above questions but will look at the Biblical background to penal substitutionary atonement, which we believe will prepare us to make sense of the teaching of the New Testament on the topic.

Why do the Objections to Penal Substitution seem Formidable?

Without losing sight of Packer’s reminder that the “atonement is a mystery” in the Biblical sense of the term mystery,²⁸ we must point out that the above questions are not as formidable as they look if we situate our discussion of the atonement (penal substitution) within the context of Biblical

²⁷ Greg Boyd, “10 Problems with the Penal Substitution View of the Atonement” *Re/Knew* December 10, 2015, <https://reknew.org/2015/12/10-problems-with-the-penal-substitution-view-of-the-atonement/>

²⁸ J.I. Packer, “What Did the Cross Achieve?: The Logic of Penal Substitution,” 58.

theology. A lot of the attempts to address objections to penal substitution hardly even take note of, say, Genesis chapters 1–3. But Genesis 1–3 is crucial for understanding the work of Christ. We can never rightly understand the New Testament without taking into cognizance what Genesis tells us about sin, its nature, and punishment. It is a little surprising that even J.I. Parker’s attempt to present the logic of penal substitution lacks a reference to that important Genesis background. If we begin from Genesis, we find that the logic of penal substitution is weaved into the very order of creation itself. If we begin from Genesis, we find not only that the theory of atonement held by the Reformers does justice to all the Biblical themes of the atonement that gave rise to the various theories out there, but also that it makes sense of other related Biblical subjects.

The Logic of the Atonement from the Light of Genesis

Was substitution necessary? The essence of the fall is that humanity set its eyes on God’s glory and craved equality with God; in their position as creatures, they wanted to be able to live independent of Him—something that is impossible for the creature to do. But going for equality with God in that sense means death for them. Why? Because they can never be equal with God. That will violate the very principle of their existence as created beings. They are part of the wider creation of God, which was brought into existence and ordered by the Word. They owe their existence to the Word. The process that brought them into existence was set rolling by God speaking His Word to Himself, and the result of that is that their subsistence was also directly attached to the Word. By the Word, they were told what to eat and not to eat in the garden. Therefore, to remove themselves from the position in which God had ordered their lives to flourish by violating God’s Word, is to forfeit the sort of life they had as creatures. Sadly, Adam and Eve attempted just

that. They went headlong against God's order. And He has told them clearly that the day they eat from the tree, they shall surely die, and that is exactly what happened. 'Die' highlights the hopelessness of the state of living in disobedience to God. Before the fall, they could do something to stay alive; after the fall, they could do nothing to return to life. This is a situation they cannot be salvaged from without God acting on their behalf to undo the evil they have done and to say no to their evil desire for equality with God. And that is what God promised He would do to them.

God acting on behalf of humanity in redemption is not something outside of the very order of things. God, in creating Adam, has also acted for him. He was the One that breathed into Adam's nostrils—the breath that made him a living soul. In doing that, God was not simply doing something to Adam; He was also doing something for and through Adam—He was breathing Adam's first breath for him. That signals that God was creating Adam in a special covenantal relationship with Himself. This shows that God was not only ready to bring Adam to life but also to act in special ways for him! That was not how other living creatures were made. Their creation lacks such intimacy with God. God did not act as Adam's substitute only by breathing his first breath for him; He also planted a garden for Adam. It was Adam and Eve alone that the Bible tells us God took and placed in the garden He planted for them. The language used here is different from that employed in God's fiats, which brought the trees into existence. God planting a garden in which he placed Adam, suggests that God was now acting within creation according to the patterns He has assigned for things to work in creation—the garden was not commanded to appear; it was planted—that is Adam's work done for Him by God. The creation of man in God's image and likeness is also another important

ground for the incarnation. It means that human nature is capable of being taken up and used by God, or, put differently, God both acts for humans and, at the same time, in and through them.

We have seen that the very order of creation involves God substituting humanity in some way. God substituted Adam in both the first act that brought him into existence (by breathing into him) and, secondly, in providing for his subsistence (by planning a garden for him). Those two acts, while started by God, will be continued by Adam in some way. At this juncture, the critic may point out that both actions have nothing to do with penal substitution. Well, in some way, yes, but they have something to do with substitution. It means that God can do something on man's behalf as man's substitute. Sin threatened the very areas where God specifically did something for man. It threatens his life and his continued existence. Sin therefore renders it not only necessary that anything that may salvage humanity's situation be done on their behalf, but also that it must take away the result of their disobedience—death, the penalty of their sin. Therefore, the act that can save them must be substitutionary and penal, and it can be taken only by the same Agent of their creation—the Word, who Himself is God.

There is also another clear hint to penal substitution in God's verdict over Adam and Eve's disobedience and the serpent's deceit. The *protoevangelion* was announced not in God's speech to Adam or Eve but in His speech to the serpent. God said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Gen. 3:15). Note that while the enmity is put between Eve and the serpent and between Eve's seed and the serpent's seed, it does not follow, as we would have expected that it is Eve's heel that the serpent will strike but the heel of her Seed. It is the Seed of the Woman that absorbs the venom of the

serpent, not the woman herself. And when He (Eve's Seed) fights back, He will not go for the head of the seed of the serpent, as we may ordinarily expect, but the head (the authority and power) of the serpent himself. Obviously, Eve's fight is taken up by her Seed who will both take the serpent's blow and, at the same time, deliver the decisive final victory that crushes the serpent's head. The serpent has no such substitute. We find then that two of the major themes dealing with the atonement that the New Testament will use to describe the work of Jesus Christ are clearly interwoven here—victory and (penal) substitution. Eve's seed will deliver victory over the serpent as her substitute, whose heel will be struck as a result of Eve's disobedience. Clearly then, penal substitutionary atonement is not simply something extraneous to Scripture imposed on it by the Reformers; on the contrary, it is at the very heart of the creation order that Adam and Eve violated, and so we find it at the centre of the redemptive death of Jesus Christ.

Having shown that God had acted for humanity in breathing His breath into them and for them in making a special provision for their subsistence by planting a garden, and finally that the proto-evangelion announces an event that will be penal substitutionary, we must still answer the question of why God, in redemption, did not simply act for humanity like He did in Genesis 1 and 2 but had to take on human flesh. We have seen that the ground was set for penal substitution since the beginning, but now we must explain why the action itself had to take place. God's original plan was not that the serpent would be head over Eve, but that, in some complementarian sense, though ontologically equal, Adam would be Eve's head and God would be the head of both of them. Authority was meant to flow from God to Adam, with Eve as his helper, and then the beasts. Sadly, that whole order of things was attacked by the devil. Adam and Eve

went for equality with God while submitting to the serpent. Their eating from the tree was an all-out attack on the core of God's ordering of things. It was Adam and Eve that ate from the tree; it was them that came under God's judgement. They had a death sentence from the moment they ate from the tree. God made it clear that, "in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17). The serpent incited Eve to go through that clear promise, "You will not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). So, going against God's clear instruction brought death to humanity as a whole, which was consistent with His instruction to Adam and with everything God's character as the Evaluator of Creation is. They are responsible before God for their act of disobedience, yet they cannot take a single step to salvage themselves from their predicament. God had already given them the sentence they deserved. The universe will resist them as long as they keep resisting God.²⁹ God alone can act on their behalf to save them.

We have seen that God acted for man from within the order of creation in both breathing into His nostrils and planting a garden for him. The fact that He created them in His image and likeness shows that they can bear His presence in a unique way as His own reflection. The serpent seemed to want to play God by creating a different order of authority when he took on the form of a serpent and entered God's order with the aim of turning it over its head. The very nature of the problem hints at what the nature of the solution will have to be. The devil did not corrupt the order of creation from without or above it; he cannot even act from without creation or above creation, because he is a creature, but while He might have thought He has done something that God cannot undo without repudiating

²⁹ John Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, PA: P & R Publishing Company, 2003), 283.

the very order of creation that He has formed, God, at the fullness of time, entered creation as one of us and undid sin and its consequences from within. He did this so that Adam and Eve's attempts to play God might be repudiated while at the same time affirming His original plan for them to live. If the action needed to save humanity could be performed by them, then humanity's attempt to play God would be affirmed. And yet, if it were not performed on their behalf, then the order of creation would have been violated. God, in His wisdom, stepped in a manner that both affirms creation order and repudiates their evil attempt to play God.

Conclusion

If we return to Genesis through the lens of any other theory of atonement, which is not penal substitution, we will leave out so much of the Biblical data unexplained. For example, if we go with the *Christus Victor* theory, we can make sense of the Seed of the woman crushing the head of the serpent, but we cannot explain the fact that He is her own Seed or why it is His heel, not hers, that will be struck by the serpent, etc. But go back to Genesis with the lens of penal substitution, and it becomes clear that humanity's sin and its consequences require a substitute, that it is as a substitute of them that the One who succeeds where Adam failed—the Christ will deliver victory over the serpent. It is as their substitute that His life will become an example for humans to learn from. Reject the penal substitutionary theory, and sin will only be dealt with in a way that affirms rather than repudiates Adam and Eve's wrong choice to play God. For it is only in acting as their substitute that humanity is not affirmed in its choice to play God, but God is affirmed as God—the source of everything that Adam and Eve are and have.

Gwali Melton holds a Master of Arts in Theological Studies from Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, USA, and a Bachelor of Arts in Systematics from ECWA Theological Seminary Kagoro, Kaduna State, Nigeria. He currently works with the Scripture Engagement Department of the Summer Institute of Linguistics Nigeria.

Bibliography

- Boyd, Greg, "10 Problems with the Penal Substitution View of the Atonement," *Re/Knew* December 10, 2015, <https://reknew.org/2015/12/10-problems-with-the-penal-substitution-view-of-the-atonement>.
- Craig, William Lane. *The Atonement*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms>. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108558020> (accessed 04/20/2021)
- Frame, John. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*. Phillipsburg, PA: P & R Publishing Company, 2003.
- Gunton, Colin E. *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality, and the Christian Tradition*. London, UK: T&T Clark, 2003.
- Horton, Michael, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims On the Way*. Grand Rapids, IL: Zondervan, 2011.
- Linnell, J.D. "Atonement," in W. C. Campbell-Jack and Gavin J. McGrath, eds. *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006.
- Packer, J.I., "What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution" in J.I. Parker & Mark Dever, *In My Place Condemned He Stood: Celebrating the Glory of the Atonement*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007.
- Pugh, Ben. in *Atonement Theories: A Way Through the Maze*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014.
- Yarbrough, R.W. "Atonement" in *The New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, D.A. Carson, Graeme Goldsworthy eds. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000.

SACRIFICE AND ATONEMENT: AN AFRICAN CHRISTIAN
PERSPECTIVE

Isaac Boaheng, Clement Amoako, and Samuel Boahen

Introduction

The strength of Christian faith is drawn from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christians all over the world believe that, the sacrifice Christ made on the cross through the shedding of his blood atoned for both their “Imputed Sin” (Guilt imputed by Adam to all of his descendants, Rom. 5:12), “Inherent Sin” (Sinful nature that every human being inherits from his/her parents, Jn. 3:6) and “Personal Sin” (External proof that everyone has a sinful nature, which is the result of the decisions we make on earth, Rom. 3:23). Christianity, therefore, hinges on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Sacrifice and atonement also foster reconciliation between believers and God, since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

Since every theological formulation is contextually informed, it is important to consider ways in which the Christian message can be more meaningful and relevant to any given context. Christian scholars across the globe have theologized and contextualized the subject of sacrifice and atonement in view of Christian faith. In the African context, different Christian scholars have interpreted atonement in the light of traditional sacrifices. In the realm of African Christian theology, the concepts of sacrifice and atonement hold profound significance, intertwining cultural heritage with religious beliefs, communal values, ancestral veneration, and the transformative message of Christianity. Christianity finds its centre of gravity in Africa, nonetheless, it still seems to experience a decline in its qualitative growth within the continent. This may be due partly

to syncretic tendencies that are often associated with the contextualization of the Christian faith. Rooted in diverse traditions and practices, this perspective offers a unique lens through which one can examine the redemptive narrative of Christ's sacrifice and its resonance within African societies.

As a contribution to the discourse, this research was conducted to explore "the concept of sacrifice and atonement from an African Christian perspective." It delved into how sacrifice and atonement within the context of African culture, values, and spirituality could be used to interpret the significance of the death of Christ Jesus (sentence was restructured). The paper examined the role of sacrifice in traditional African practices, and its transformation within the framework of Christianity. It highlighted such benefits of atonement as communal harmony, forgiveness, and reconciliation for the African community. The paper used literature-based research approach based on data obtained from books, theses/dissertations, and journal articles to analyzing the subject matter.

Sacrifice and Atonement in the Biblical Context Old Testament Atoning Traditions

From the Jewish context, sacrifice is derived from the primary Hebrew term "qorban" which denotes "offering/gift/sacrifice" or "something brought forward."¹ The term "sacrifice" is as old as religious life of humanity. Its origin can be traced to the first family in the Bible (Gen. 4:1-7), beyond the period which primitive religions developed.

¹ Roy E. Gane, "Sacrifice and the Old Testament," *St Andrews Encyclopedia of Theology*, (2022): 1-57, 6, accessed August 30, 2023, <https://www.saet.ac.uk/Christianity/SacrificeandtheOldTestament>.

The sacrifice offered by Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:1-13, as the first sacrifice which is offered to God by man in the Bible, serves as an example of appropriate way of worship. In the course of time, they thought it wise to offer some of their produce to God without him requesting for it. The sacrifice was a thanksgiving offering, performed to demonstrate their appreciation. Cain's sacrifice was a meal offering while Abel's sacrifice was an animal offering which involved shedding of blood. In both cases, what mattered most from the story is the heart of the giver rather than the type offering.² Sacrifice was instituted as the means of having covenant with God, demonstrating faith in him, sanctifying one's self from sins, maintaining God's presence and regaining purity.³

The Sacrifice Noah offered to God can also be considered as an offering of thanksgiving and appreciation to God, for fulfilling his covenant and keeping them safe after the flood (Gen. 8:18-22). Noah's sacrifice was a burnt offering whereby, he used clean animals among the lot of animals to indicate that, sacrifices offered to God must be holy. God received this holy sacrifice of appreciation from Noah and articulated that never again will he destroy the earth with flood and curse the earth (Gen. 8:21).

Abraham also stood up to the test in attempt of sacrificing his son to God as commanded (Gen. 22:1ff). He really explored the essence of burnt offering when instructed to sacrifice his son, exhibiting tremendous faith in God who gave him the child.⁴ The demeanor of Abraham, expresses an unprecedented attitude of obedience and submissiveness to God. (four lines constituting a paragraph, is it okay?)

² F. D. Kidner, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, (London: Tyndale Press, 1958), 7.

³ Gane, "Sacrifice and the Old Testament," 4.

⁴ Kidner, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, 7.

The Hebrew Bible distinguishes between different types of sacrifices, including burnt offering, sin offerings, guilt offerings and peace offerings, each with specific rituals and symbolism (Lev. 1:1-7:38). However, these sacrifices consist of two kinds, namely, animal (bloody sacrifices: Lev. 1:5) and vegetable (non-bloody sacrifices: Lev. 2:1ff). The Jews consider the animal sacrifice as the most important, since it is used as sin offering, guilt offering, burnt offering, and peace offering. These sacrifices were offered purposely to represent the principle that, without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins (Lev. 17:11). Yet, it was not just the killing of an animal and the shedding of blood alone that is important, but the act of worship. Sacrifices usually serves as a symbol that intend to remove the disruption that perfidies to God have caused, in order to enhance cordiality with God. In the biblical context, burnt offering executes the fulfilment of biblical sacrifice as a means of communication with God.⁵ The main ingredient of sacrifice is obedience, as it is written “obedience is better than sacrifice and to listen is better than the fat of a ram.” (1 Sam. 15:22). It is suggested that, the basic purpose of sacrifice, was to channel man’s attention to a complete understanding of Christ’s ultimate sacrifice.⁶

Atonement on the other hand, holds immense importance in many religious traditions, it is derived from the word “atone,” from the phrase “at one.” It implies being “at one” with

⁵ Schadrack Mvunabandi, “The Communicative Power of Blood Sacrifices: A Predominantly South African Perspective with Special Reference to the Epistle to the Hebrews,” (2008): 1-374, 152, accessed August 29, 2023.

⁶ Theo Emory McKean, “The Origin and Original Meaning of Sacrificial Blood Offerings as Revealed in the Bible and Modern Scriptures,” *Theses and Dissertations*, no. 4929 (1964): 1-120, 1. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/4929>.

someone, which infer coherent relationship. The primary meaning of atonement in the Old Testament was through animal sacrifices, such as the sin offering in the Day of Atonement (Hebrew: *Yom Kippur*). The high priest would enter the Holy of Holies on *Yom Kippur* to make atonement for the sins of the people, through the sprinkling of animal blood (Lev. 16:1ff). Atonement is therefore, accomplished through a sacrifice offered to God on behalf of a person.⁷ Another meaning of atonement is derived from Arabic root word “kipper” which means “to cover.”⁸ It therefore implies a process of covering up sins, to avert God’s vengeance (Ex. 29:36). It was believed that the shedding of blood served as a way to purify and make amends for transgressions, allowing individuals and the community to maintain a right relationship with God. The only way for a Jew to make amends with God, was to sacrifice an animal as an act of atonement (Lev. 1:1-4). In that case, God only sees the atoning sacrifice rather than the sins of the person, thus, life taken for a life to be spared. Atonement rituals emphasized the importance of repentance, acknowledgment of wrongdoing, and seeking forgiveness from God. Generally, atonement involves reconciling with oneself, others or higher power to restore harmony and balance.⁹

From the biblical analysis given above, sacrifice from the Latin word “*sac*” from which we find the word “*sacer*” meaning “holy,” another word is “*facere*” meaning “to make” which is combined with “*sacer*” to mean “to make holy” or “something

⁷ Braydon Pape, “The Accomplishment of Biblical Theology on Atonement,” *Spring*, Vol. 2, no. 2 (2018): 2.

⁸ M. V. Vilakati, “Leviticus 16 – Day of Atonement: A comparison between biblical and African concepts of atonement and reconciliation,” *University of Pretoria etd*, (2007): 17, accessed August 29, 2023.

⁹ *Ibid.*

made holy, can generally be understood as a detectable gift.”¹⁰ It is, therefore, considered as a gift offered to a deity as an outward demonstration for appreciation and veneration for the deity, with the aim of receiving favor and enhancing intimate relationship.¹¹ Hermann Schultz simply defines sacrifice as “the performances and gifts rendered in honor of the deity,” and precisely states that “sacrifice is religion.”¹² Another definition of sacrifice observed is that, it is an act that involves the death of a victim for atonement and sustenance of relationship between man and his/her sacred object or deity.¹³ This form of sacrifice could be with blood or without blood depending on the object used for the sacrifice. Again, sacrifice is a medium through which one approaches God to mark an occasion, thank God for his benevolence, ask for forgiveness and protection. Since God is holy, anyone who approaches him must be clean from sin, and sacrifice is one of the mediums through which one receives forgiveness in order not to attract the wrath of God. Sacrifice, can therefore, be deduced from the above as offering an unblemished gift with or without blood to a holy being, for sanctification and intimacy.

The Atonement of Christ

Atonement was an important concept in ancient Jewish religious practices, as a form of purgation that sanctifies

¹⁰ McKean, “The Origin and Original Meaning of Sacrificial Blood Offerings as Revealed in the Bible and Modern Scriptures,” 29.

¹¹ Paddy Musana, “The Judeo-Christian Concept of ‘Sacrifice’ and Interpretation of Human Sacrifice in Uganda,” *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, Vol. 41 (2014): 39.

¹² Hermann Schultz, “The Significance of Sacrifice in the Old Testament,” Vol. 5, no. 2 (1900): 257.

¹³ Charles S. Allison, “The Significance of Blood Sacrifice in the Old Testament,” *An International Multidisciplinary Journal, Ethiopia*, Vol. 10(1), no. 40 (2016): 47, Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrev.v10i1.5>.

individuals from uncleanness induced by sinful acts, or expiatory acts performed to avert divine wrath and establish reconciliation.¹⁴ Christ's death in the New Testament, perhaps brought an end to the Old Testament blood sacrifice system, thus, Christ is the perfect lamb without blemish or spot.¹⁵ John the Baptist attested to this fact and concluded that; "..... Look, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn. 1:29). The New Testament sacrifice represents a potentially significant shift from the Old Testament sacrificial system. It introduces the idea of a new and final sacrifice in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ offering himself as a one-time offering on the cross did not only abolish the Old Testament system of sacrifices, but also sacrifices for all religions, because he died to redeem the entire world.¹⁶

In Hebrews 10:4-10, the writer stressed that the blood of animals lack the potency and the efficacy to wipe away the sins of humanity, and therefore, not necessary because of Christ's perfect sacrifice. While in the Old Testament, sin offering was used as a sacrifice to atone for one's sins, in the New Testament, the death of Jesus Christ is the sacrifice that atones for the sins of man. In various forms of sacrificial rituals, atonement is evidenced through ritual specialists to offenders, in order to address inequities or wrongs.¹⁷

In all doctrines of sin, the love of God for humanity, the coming of Jesus Christ and the promise of eternal life are in

¹⁴ Wurzburger as cited in Vilakati, "Leviticus 16 – Day of Atonement," 18.

¹⁵ Hall, "The Death of Christ," 1.

¹⁶ Ivan Platovnjak, "Sacrifice in Christian spirituality," *Nova prsutnost*, no. 16 (2018): 21. DOI:10.31192/np.16.1.2.

¹⁷ Ehisienmen Charles and Edosa Hope, "Biblical and Benin Traditional Perspectives for Atonement of Sin," *Icheke Journal of the Faculty of Humanities*, Vol.19. no. 1 (2021): 146.

relation to atonement. It is therefore, implied that without atonement, Christianity becomes inane and irrelevant as a vehicle without engine. Jesus Christ's sacrifice is seen as the ultimate atonement, providing eternal forgiveness for sins, and reconciling humanity with God in the new covenant. The animal sacrifice is described as "canal ordinance" which only removed physical taints and atoned for outward sins, without containing any substance of spiritual virtue. But Christ's death is able to remove sins and atone for the whole being, inward and outward, physically and spiritually.¹⁸ Again, the animal sacrifices covered sin, brushing it under the rug, but Christ's death removed it forever, thus the death of Christ accomplished what animal sacrifice could only anticipate. It can therefore be emphasized that, the problem of man's sins and the inescapable reaction of a holy God toward that sin has been resolved by Christ's death and crucifixion which is seen as the ultimate act of atonement. This act is often referred to as "substitutionary atonement" where Jesus took the punishment that humanity deserved, providing a way for people to be reconciled with God. Atonement, however, is regarded as a propitiation; Christ is made sin for us; Christ has been made curse for us; his blood has obtained redemption, forgiveness, peace and justification.¹⁹ Through faith in Christ Jesus, believers are granted forgiveness, and their sins are washed away (1Jn. 1:6-9). The death of Christ did not only provide forgiveness, but also a new life in the soul of man.²⁰ According to 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, atonement leads to reconciliation with God, by restoring the broken relationship

¹⁸ Pearlman as cited in Hall, "The Death of Christ," 3.

¹⁹ William F. Bromley, "A Study of the Historic Theories of the Atonement," *Graduate Thesis Collection* (1956): 19.

²⁰ Robert Mackintosh, *Historic Theories of Atonement* (Manchester: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, 1920), 8.

between humanity and God caused by sin. Through faith in Christ, individuals can have assurance of salvation and the hope of eternal life.

Sacrifice and Atonement in selected African Communities

Sacrifice and atonement in the African context are a diverse complex cultural and religious practice, that varies widely across the continent's numerous ethnic groups and belief systems. They often involve the offering of objects, animals, or even human life to appease deities, spirits, or ancestors, seeking their blessings, protection, or guidance. These rituals, play a significant role in maintaining harmony between the spiritual and physical worlds. It fosters communal cohesion, and addresses various social, spiritual, and practical needs within African societies. Even though this section is broadly African, attention will be paid to the Akan ethnic group of Ghana as well as the Okun and Yoruba tribes of Nigeria.

The specific forms and meanings of sacrifice and atonement can differ greatly, reflecting the rich tapestry of African cultures and traditions. In the Akan society and many other African communities, sacrifice serves as the soul of traditional worship. It is impossible for the Akan to worship traditionally without offering sacrifices. Mbiti posits that, "Sacrifices and offerings constitute one of the commonest acts of worship among African people and examples of them are overwhelmingly many."²¹ Sacrifice, therefore becomes a staunch and mainstay ingredient in African worship.²² These scholarly assertions are true for most Africans but more so for the Akan community.

²¹ Mbiti cited in Owete, "A Literary Survey of the Phenomenology of Sacrifice," 4.

²² Paul-Kolade Tubi, "Anthropo-Ontology of Sacrifice in Traditional African Religion, its Relevance and Challenges," *An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol. 6. No. 3. (2020): 73.

Atonement in the African context is a concept deeply rooted in the continent's diverse cultures and beliefs systems. It encompasses a wide range of rituals, practices, and traditions aimed at reconciling individuals or communities with the spiritual world, their ancestors, or fellow humans. The process of atonement therefore, aims to restore oneness between two parties whose relationship have been annihilated by sin, or an offence and also ensure healing for wounds caused.²³ In the Akan community, atonement is characterized by blood sacrifice or shedding of blood, mediated by priests, kings, chiefs and other spiritual leaders of the land. Atonement rituals often involve purification and cleansing, both physically and spiritually. These ceremonies are seen as a means to remove impurities or negative energies that may have disrupted harmony or cause harm. The reason is that it is believed that sin (or wrongdoing) affected the cosmic balance and can only be dealt with when sacrifices are made to appease supernatural forces.

In the *Okun* Traditional Religion, it is required that, things offered for sacrifices must be clean and unblemished; it is only a priest who is allowed to offer the sacrifices; the process of sacrifice must follow a prescribed rites and must be offered at the right place.²⁴ These requirements for sacrifices by the *Okun* Traditional Religion, coincide with God's prescription for the Jews in reference to offering sacrifices. Whatever the Hebrews were to offer as a sacrifice was to be clean, without blemish, and be offered by the priests (Lev. 3:1ff). Sacrifice in the African context is integral in many rites of passage such as, birth, marriage, and death ceremonies. They mark important life

²³ Charles and Hope, "Biblical and Benin Traditional Perspectives for Atonement of Sin," 145.

²⁴ Tubi, "Anthropo-Ontology of Sacrifice in Traditional African Religion, its Relevance and Challenges," 74.

transitions, and ensure blessings or protection for individuals embarking on new phases of life.

When a traditional ruler of the Akan dies, tradition demands that the head of another person, mostly a slave should be buried with the chief/king. The Akan believe that the king has to be served in the ancestral world, and for that reason a slave is offered for such duties.²⁵ It was not only slaves who were offered as human sacrifice in the Akan tradition. At times, one of the beloved wives of the deceased king/chief is sacrificed to accompany and perform her duties as a wife in the in the ancestral world. There was an instance where the chief fetish priest of the Ashanti people (Okomfo Anokye), needed a royal person's blood as a sacrifice for stability and permanence of the Ashanti state.²⁶ For the progress of the Ashanti people, it is believed that Tweneboah Kodua a royal dedicated himself to be sacrificed.²⁷ This self-offering of Tweneboah Kodua for the progress of the Ashanti kingdom, can be likened to the sacrifice Christ offered on the cross for the salvation of humanity. All these sacrifices in the Akan traditional worship demands faithfulness, sanctity, humble gestures and routine formulae. Any omission or deviation caused may render the sacrifice futile, and abominable by the gods and punishment may incur.

According to oral tradition, the Abura-Fante people faced famine and a devastating epidemic in the distant past. In response to an oracle's decree that demanded human sacrifice to

²⁵ Frimpong Wiafe, Benjamin Anson, and Deborah Sogbey Enam, "The Biblical Concept of Sacrifice and the Ghanaian Worldview: Relevance for the Modern Ghanaian Christianity," *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention*, vol. 3, issue 8, (2016): 2521.

²⁶ Wiafe, Anson, and Enam, "The Biblical Concept of Sacrifice and the Ghanaian Worldview," 2521-2522.

²⁷ Ibid.

appease the situation, Egya Ahor, a revered traditional chief priest of the Fante deity Akyen, willingly offered himself for the community's sake. His self-sacrifice aimed to halt the plagues that endangered the Fante populace. Following his sacrifice, Egya Ahor's blood was combined with water and sprinkled over the people to bring about healing and purification.

The above examples underscore that people may be subjected to the anger of supernatural beings for some reasons. This concept permeates almost all traditional African societies that believe in the idea of cause and effect. This is expressive in the way parents sacrifice chicken or goat by slaughtering, dressing with oil and burying afterwards with the hope of exchanging the animal's life with that of the child in reaction to noticing their child's poor health status.²⁸ As a result, substitution ritual is made to overturn the wrath of the deities.

Aside from sacrifices made to atone for sin and attract the blessings of the supernatural, sacrifices are also made for other purposes. Sacrifices are made as a fulfillment of people's vows to the gods after their requests have been granted. Again, sacrifices are made to solicit or plead for favor, healing, children, protection, and wealth. More so, sacrifices can be made to express their bodacious gratitude and thanksgiving to the gods. The Yoruba have a saying that "*eni ti a se lore ti ko dupe, o da bi eni ti olosa ko leru lo*, (the one who refuses to be thankful after receiving a favor is worse than a thief) and *eni ba dupe ore ana a ri omiran gba* (the one who is thankful will always receive more)."²⁹ Further still, Africans offer sacrifices in order to purge themselves from all forms of abominations committed. Finally,

²⁸ Cornelius Olowola, "Sacrifice in African Tradmon and Biblical Perspective," *AJET*, Vol. (10) (Issue 1) (1991): 6.

²⁹ Tubi, "Anthropo-Ontology of Sacrifice in Traditional African Religion, its Relevance and Challenges," 75.

sacrifices are made to appease the gods in order to keep them safe from all evil and calamities, such as famine, drought, barrenness, suicide, premature death, and for fellowship and communion.³⁰

Atonement in Selected African Traditional Festivals

Atonement can take various forms, such as apologies, restitution, acts of kindness, or personal transformation. Different cultures and belief systems have distinct rituals and practices associated with atonement. The African traditional festivals involve atoning rituals. In the Ghanaian Akan tradition, Odwira festival is one of the key examples of the process of atonement. During this festival, the Akuapem people perform a ritual sacrifice of *odwan-kokoo* (red sheep), for the purposes of both renewing their covenant with *Odosu* (their protector) and purification.³¹ The Akuapem people believe that, they might have committed many sins throughout the year, and these sins might have jeopardized their relationship and covenant with *Odosu*. Bediako, perfectly related Hebrews 1:3b to *Odwira* (a festival of purification celebrated by the Akan in Ghana), and argues that; Jesus offered an eternal redemption for all who do not rely on their own personal deeds of righteousness or purification, but trust in Jesus as their perfect *Odwira*.³² It was

³⁰ Tubi, “Anthropo-Ontology of Sacrifice in Traditional African Religion, its Relevance and Challenges,” 75.

³¹ Afriyie as cited in Boaheng, “Exploring the Nexus between Akan and Christian Perspectives on Atonement,” 6.

³² Bediako as cited in Isaac Boaheng, “Afɔdepreko Christology: An Akan Christian Theology of Jesus' Once-For All Sacrifice,” *Journal of Religion and Theology*, Volume 4, Issue 3, (2020): 38.

therefore, necessary to observe the Odwira festival in order to atone for their sins and reconcile with their protector.³³

In the Akan tradition, sacrifices are led by fetish priest (Bono-Twi: *kɔmfɔ*), chiefs and kings who are custodians of the land and ministers to the gods. One of the popular festivals in the Akan society is the *Akwasi* which is celebrated on a Sunday, once every six weeks. On this day, different kinds of rituals are made both openly and secretly. In one of the rituals, the *Asumankwahene* (the chief fetish priest for the stool occupant) slaughters a sheep as a sacrifice. The blood collected from the sacrificed sheep is sprinkled on some amulets and objects in the palace, and the remaining blood is sprinkled on the king. By doing this, it is believed that both the king and his amulets are cleansed to attract aid and help from the gods.³⁴

It is commonly found in the socio-cultural custom of the Akan tradition that, when one offends the other especially among marriage couples, the offender is supposed to plead for forgiveness with the help of a delegation of elders from both families. After the victim has accepted the apology, a compensation known as *mpata* such as money, sheep, fowl, or crates of egg is given to the victim to calm tempers, ensure peace and reconcile the couple.

Again, when someone offends a chief or a king in the Akan tradition, by disobeying his commands. The person is brought to the palace to be charged by the chief/king (this is known as *daduakyee* in Akan), such charges may include money, sheep, fowl, or a cow. The offender has to pay the charge as a compensation, or a price for the sins committed before he/she is

³³ Afriyie as cited in Boaheng, "Exploring the Nexus between Akan and Christian Perspectives on Atonement," 6.

³⁴ Wiawe, Anson and Enam, "The Biblical Concept of Sacrifice and the Ghanaian Worldview," 2521.

set free. The *mpata* (price) paid to console the victim, or the item used to settle the *dadua* (the king's charge) corresponds to the price Christ paid by giving up his body, to pay the price for the sins of the world.

Furthermore, if a person or a community commits sin or an abomination against the gods, an atonement is made through a substitutionary sacrifice, where a sacrificial blood is shed to remit the sins and penalties of the offender. The anger of the gods is removed, as the sacrificial victim's blood becomes a propitiation through the sacrifice, and saves the offender from impending consequences.³⁵ The sacrificial victim used in this sacrifice is mostly sheep, the carcass of the sheep is not eaten but treated like a corpse and buried.³⁶ Just as the Hebrews performed sin offering, by shedding the blood of an animal for the remission of one's sin as discussed above. In the Akan tradition, when one's sins attract the wrath of the gods, a blood sacrifice of a sheep is made to remit the sins of the offender or else the wrath of the evil spirits will continuously hunt him/her until he/she dies.

According to Edo, atonement among Benin people is the same as the Old Testament pattern of using animals as objects of atonement. As well as in the New Testament, where the blood of Jesus is shed for the salvation of humanity. It is believed that the people of Benin in ancient times, used humans as sacrifice for atonement, specially to bring peace and prosperity.³⁷

Female adultery is an abominable act in Bini kingdom (Benin), this act provokes the gods of a family. To conciliate the

³⁵ Boaheng, "Exploring the Nexus between Akan and Christian Perspectives on Atonement," 5.

³⁶ Quarcoopome as cited in Boaheng, "Exploring the Nexus between Akan and Christian Perspectives on Atonement," 5.

³⁷ Obasuyi as cited in Charles, "Biblical and Benin Traditional Perspectives for Atonement of Sin," 152.

gods, elements like drinks, cola-nuts, and goat are presented in *Aruorha* (the deity of the family especially in the house of the most senior man). If a goat is presented, it is killed and the blood spilled to atone for the sins of the offender. If the woman fails to confess early in order for the rituals to be done immediately, the consequences would be that, either the husband will die or her children will start dying.³⁸

Theological Reflections Atonement and The Communal Nature Of African Societies

In many African cultures, community is paramount. One of the ways through which the African communal worldview develops, is through teachings and exercising community-based virtues such as; hospitality, friendliness, caring, solidarity, conformity and unity.³⁹ The individual's hometown is sometimes identified through the lifestyle of the person. The African concept of morality infused in the community is about increasing the life force in oneself, and particularly in that of others. Just as in some African traditional religion human beings are sometimes sacrificed as a representative for the community to appease the gods, in order to overturn a calamity. The death of Christ is however, understood as one that increases the life force of humanity, because he sacrificed his own life force in order to promote the life force of others.⁴⁰ It is no surprise, then, that the Christian understanding of atonement as a means of redemption resonates deeply with some African practices such as pacification during traditional festivals. The Christian

³⁸ Obasuyi as cited in Charles, "Biblical and Benin Traditional Perspectives for Atonement of Sin," 154.

³⁹ Kirk Loughheed, "Toward an African Theory of the Atonement," *Journal of Analytic Theology*, Vol. 10 (2002): 201.

⁴⁰ Loughheed, "Toward an African Theory of the Atonement," 201.

message of Christ's sacrifice as an act of redemption for humanity, for reconciling humanity with God speaks to the communal nature of African societies. Atonement, in the African context, is not only about individual salvation but also about the restoration and redemption of the entire community (the world). The life and work of Christ demonstrates God's love for humanity, and therefore demands that men repent and love fellow humans just as Christ did.

It must be emphasized that, the African culture and the gospel are not enemies, rather the gospel is like a compass to culture; without it the African culture is devastated and loses its relevance.⁴¹ African Christians often grapple with the tension between their Christian faith and the veneration of ancestors. However, atonement rituals can be seen as an opportunity to bridge the gap between Christian theology and the strong ancestral ties present in many African societies. It is a way to acknowledge the spiritual heritage of ancestors while placing ultimate faith in Christ's redemptive sacrifice.

Atonement, Healing, and Restoration

Atonement in the African Christian perspective also encompasses healing and restoration. Holistic healing in the African perspective involves; physical healing, spiritual healing and healing in respect to pain through offenses. Atonement, therefore, is not limited to forgiveness of sins but extends to the holistic well-being of individuals and the communities. In healing pains emanated from conflict, healing rituals are sometimes employed to heal the individuals or society after

⁴¹ K. J. Pali, "Christ as Once for All Sacrifice: A Cultural Reading of Hebrew," *Acta Theologica* (34.1, 2014): 148.

conflict.⁴² This exercise is often led by the elders in the Community to ensure peace, unity and harmony. In relation to this exercise, Christ conceivably gave up himself as a ransom to ensure that the annihilated unity, peace, harmony and relationship between God and humanity is rejuvenated.

The African traditional religion has the view that, chronic disease or pandemics befall an individual or a community as a result of an offence committed against the gods or the ancestors. The custodians of the land therefore, consults the gods and ancestors through the priest to discover the remedy for such tragedy. In the course of trying to find solution to the problem, a lot of sacrifices are made to attract the sympathy of the gods for healing. On the other hand, it should be emphasized that, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross has the power to heal both physical and spiritual sickness, as the scripture says; “... for by his stripes, we are healed” (1Pet. 2:24). Healing by divine means is an inseparable component of the gospel, and one of the benefits of atonement is the deliverance from sickness which is bestowed upon all believers.⁴³ In Alexander McLaren’s exposition of Isaiah 53:4, he emphasized that; “It is to be kept in view, that the griefs, which the Servant {Christ} is here described as bearing, are literally sicknesses, and that similarly, the sorrows may be diseases.”⁴⁴ The author of the gospel according to Matthew in chapter 8:17, also quoted Isaiah 53:4 in affirming the fulfilment of the prophecy about Jesus’ ability to bear our illness

⁴² Babet Rampke, “Interconnectedness, Healing & Harmony: The Application of Ubuntu in Peace Research and in Namibian-German Postcolonial Disputes Emerging from the Return of Human Remains,” *School of Social Sciences and Humanities Master’s Thesis*, (2016): 22.

⁴³ David W. Cloud, *Is Healing in the Atonement?* (Port Huron: Way of Life Literature, 2012), 6.

⁴⁴ McLaren as Cited in T. J. McCrossan, “Bodily Healing and the atonement,” *Reason 1* (1930): 9, accessed 30 September, 2023.

and diseases. The healing Christ gives is holistic, such that, it has the ability not to heal only physical infirmities but also spiritual illness which include uncontrolled sin and lustful desires (Mk. 2:17). Jesus carried both the pains and sickness of humanity on the cross and by abiding in him, humanity is delivered from pains and sicknesses. Africans have long sought spiritual and physical healing through rituals, but Christianity offers a path to this through the redemptive work of Christ.

African Christians carry the dual identity of their cultural heritage and Christian faith. Hence, the adaptability of African Christianity, which incorporates traditional elements while upholding Christian values, demonstrates the resilience of faith in a changing world.

Atonement and Reconciliation

Conflicts, in the African cultural perspective does not affect only individuals but the entire community. It is therefore treated similarly to diseases or any other social illness, and a sole prerogative of the elders in the society to ensure reconciliation.⁴⁵ In a community's conflict transformation, the members of the society also play an important role; politically, spiritually, and in social guidance to foster reconciliation. In the process of reconciliation, the offenders rehabilitate themselves by repairing the damages done to restore harmony.⁴⁶ At this stage, the offenders are required to accept their guilt and the consequences of their offences, as Christ accepted the quilt of man's sins and faced the consequences by dying on the cross. Sinners are encouraged to accept their sinful state and ask for forgiveness (1 Jn. 1:9) in order not to pay for the penalty of sins which Christ has already paid for humanity. Boaheng, asserts

⁴⁵ Rampke, "Interconnectedness, Healing & Harmony," 22.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

that; “The ultimate sacrifice of Christ was the act through which he received the punishment that humanity deserves, met the divine demand that sin must necessarily be punished, and used his blood to efface the impurity that hindered access to God (Heb. 9:22; 10:22).”⁴⁷

Atonement underscores the importance of reconciliation in African Christian theology. Just as conflicts within African communities are resolved through reconciliation where intermediaries such as; elders, chiefs/kings are involved. The Christian message of reconciliation with God and fellow human with Christ being the intermediary, resonates deeply. Atonement, therefore, becomes a powerful reminder of the need for unity, forgiveness, and the restoration of broken relationships.

Finality and Superiority of Christ’s Atonement

One of the main purposes of this article is to support the idea of the superiority and finality of Christ’s sacrifice and to encourage African believers to improve their commitment to Christ, the Lord. As noted previously, in African societies, sacrificial rituals and offerings have long been integral aspects of traditional religious practices. However, the arrival of Christianity and the message of Christ's sacrifice ushered in a transformative paradigm shift, offering a new understanding of redemption and salvation. Christ's sacrifice is ultimate and final atonement for sin, surpassing any other offering or ritual. Christ's sacrifice is superior to traditional African sacrificial practices in its universality and inclusivity. While traditional rituals often required specific offerings or ceremonies for different purposes or individuals, Christ's sacrifice is all-

⁴⁷ Isaac Boaheng, “A Contextual Theology of Atonement for The Akan Community of Ghana,” *Thesis*, (2021): 236.

encompassing, offering redemption to people of all nations, tribes, and backgrounds. This universality speaks directly to the diverse and multicultural nature of the African continent, transcending cultural and ethnic boundaries to offer salvation to all who believe. Furthermore, Christ's sacrifice is understood to bring not only spiritual redemption but also liberation from the bondage of sin, suffering, and oppression. In many African societies, where poverty, injustice, and social inequality are prevalent, the message of Christ's sacrifice offers hope for a better future and a promise of ultimate deliverance. Therefore, there is no need to make any sacrifice of blood or without blood to any being.⁴⁸

Conclusion

The African Christian perspective on sacrifice and atonement is a testament to the dynamic interplay of faith, culture, and tradition. It highlights the communal nature of redemption, the significance of ancestral connections, and the profound symbolism of sacrifice. The message of sacrifice and atonement of Christ continues to bring hope, healing, and reconciliation in resemblance to that of Africans which reconcile them with their ancestors. Through this theological exploration, we have attempted to glimpse into the heart of an African Christian perspective that harmonizes the redemptive message of Christ with rich cultural and spiritual heritage of the continent. Sacrifice, whether symbolized through offerings or acts of devotion, becomes a powerful reminder of the need to give wholeheartedly. Christ therefore, gave himself as a ransom for many given his life as perfect sacrifice above all other sacrifices. His sacrifice extends beyond the forgiveness of sins, encompassing holistic healing and restoration in a manner

⁴⁸ Boaheng, "Afodepreko Christology," 39.

deeply in resonance with and even beyond the African spirit. The African Christians are, therefore, encouraged to believe and accept the selfless sacrifice of Christ which is superior to all sacrifices one could offer, and appreciate the atonement that his blood offers since that is the only perfect blood to bring remission of sins. In the light of Christ's sacrificial offering, all other sacrifices are rendered obsolete and unnecessary. The efficacy of Christ's sacrifice lies not only in its finality but also in its universality, offering redemption to all who come to him in faith. Through the crucifixion of Christ, humanity finds true healing, restoration, and ultimate salvation.

***Isaac Boaheng** holds a PhD in Theology from the University of the Free State, South Africa. He is a Senior Lecturer in Theology and Christian Ethics at the Christian Service University College, Ghana, and a Research Fellow at the Department of Biblical and Religion Studies, University of the Free State, South Africa.*

***Clement Amoako** is a final-year undergraduate student at the Christian Service University College, Ghana, where he is studying Theology with Administration. He is a steward at the Methodist Church Ghana (Bremam), Ebenezer Society.*

***Samuel Boahen** is a postgraduate student at the All Nations University, Ghana where he is pursuing a program in African Christian Theology. He is a minister-in-training through Theological Education by Extension (TEE) at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon-Accra.*

Bibliography

- Allison, S. Charles “The Significance of Blood Sacrifice in the Old Testament.” *An International Multidisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 10(1), no. 40 (2016): 46-60.
- Bromley, F. William. “A Study of the Historic Theories of the Atonement.” *Graduate Thesis Collection* (1956): 1-119.
- Boaheng, Isaac. “Exploring the Nexus between Akan and Christian Perspectives on Atonement.” *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review*, Vol. 5, Issue 6 (2022): 1-11.
- Boaheng, Isaac. “*Afɔdepreko* Christology: An Akan Christian Theology of Jesus' Once-For All Sacrifice.” *Journal of Religion and Theology*, Volume 4, Issue 3, (2020): 34-41.
- Boaheng, “A Contextual Theology of Atonement for The Akan Community of Ghana.” *Thesis*, (2021): 1 -321.
- Charles, Ehisienmen. and Edosa Hope. “Biblical and Benin Traditional Perspectives for Atonement of Sin.” *Icheke Journal of the Faculty of Humanities*, Vol.19. no. 1 (2021): 145-157.
- Cloud, W. David. *Is Healing in the Atonement?* Port Huron: Way of Life Literature, 2012.
- Gane, E. Roy. “Sacrifice and the Old Testament.” *St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*, (2022): 1-57, accessed August 30, 2023.
- Hall, Shawn. “The Death of Christ: Fulfilment of the Old Testament Sacrifice.” *Quodlibet Journal*, vol. 4, no. 4 (2002): 1-5.
- Kidner, F. D. *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*. London: Tyndale Press, 1958.
- Lougheed, Kirk. “Toward an African Theory of the Atonement.” *Journal of Analytic Theology*, Vol. 10 (2002): 201-209.

- Mackintosh, Robert. *Historic Theories of Atonement*. Manchester: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, 1920.
- McCrossan, T. J. "Bodily Healing and the Atonement," *Reason 1* (1930): 1-53.
- McKean, Theo Emory. "The Origin and Original Meaning of Sacrificial Blood Offerings as Revealed in the Bible and Modern Scriptures." *Theses and Dissertations*, no. 4929 (1964): 1-120.
- Musana, Paddy. "The Judeo-Christian Concept of 'Sacrifice' and Interpretation of Human Sacrifice in Uganda." *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, Vol. 41 (2014): 39-51.
- Mvunabandi, Schadrack. "The Communicative Power of Blood Sacrifices: A Predominantly South African Perspective with Special Reference to the Epistle to the Hebrews." (2008): 1-374, accessed August 29, 2023.
- Olowola, Cornelius. "Sacrifice in African Tradition and Biblical Perspective," *AJET*, Vol. (10) (Issue 1) (1991):3-9.
- Owete, I. Kingsley. "A Literary Survey of the Phenomenology of Sacrifice." *An International Peer-reviewed Journal*, Vol.10, (2015): 1-5.
- Pape, Braydon. "The Accomplishment of Biblical Theology on Atonement." *Spring*, Vol. 2, no. 2 (2018): 1-11.
- Pali, K. J. "Christ as Once for All Sacrifice: A Cultural Reading of Hebrew." *Acta Theologica*, 34(1), (2014): 145-172
- Platovnjak, Ivan. "Sacrifice in Christian Spirituality." *Nova prisutnost*, no. 16 (2018): 21-38.
- Rampke, Babet. "Interconnectedness, Healing & Harmony: The Application of Ubuntu in Peace Research and in Namibian-German Postcolonial Disputes Emerging from the Return of Human Remains," *School of Social Sciences and Humanities Master's Thesis*, (2016): 1-112.

- Schultz, Hermann. "The Significance of Sacrifice in the Old Testament." Vol. 5, no. 2(1900): 257-313.
- Tubi, Paul-Kolade. "Anthropo-Ontology of Sacrifice in Traditional African Religion, its Relevance and Challenges: An Anthropological Perspective." *An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol. 6. No. 3. (2020): 70-81.
- Vilakati, M. V. "Leviticus 16 – Day of Atonement: a comparison between biblical and African concepts of atonement and reconciliation." *University of Pretoria etd*, (2007): 1-69.
- Wiafe, Frimpong, Benjamin Anson, and Deborah Sogbey Enam. "The Biblical Concept of Sacrifice and the Ghanaian Worldview: Relevance for the Modern Ghanaian Christianity." *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention*, vol. 3, issue 8, (2016): 2519-2526.

COULD JESUS SIN?

Isaac Dzimbiri

Introduction

The incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ is one of the Christological doctrines taught by the New Testament authors, and one's full understanding relies heavy on a full explanation while appealing to the supernatural workings of God, as well as a heart of faith. This is a doctrine that has received a lot of attention in the New Testament, partly because of the erroneous teachings that emerged during the apostolic era. Both apostles Paul and John apologetically withstood Christological heresies of their own days by refuting those who taught it, and by stating clearly the doctrine of Christ's humanity and His deity. This paper duly affirms that our Lord Jesus has two natures: that of a man, and that which is divine in one person. These two natures are without being confused in anyway both operating distinctly from each other, without one fusing into the other.¹

When talking about the doctrine of incarnation, there is already an assumption that, a pre-existing, second Person of the Trinity took a human nature and became both God and Man at the same time (Phil. 2:6-7). This was necessary for the Father to save humanity from both the guilt of Adam, and its consequences. Furthermore, redeeming the whole creation from the pains and futility to which it was subjected because of the fall. The biblical writers, countless times do affirm the humanity of Jesus Christ. They do so by stating all human experiences that are common to all men, which Jesus went through during His earthly life. As they make these assertions about the life of Jesus Christ, it is also vivid enough to observe that though Jesus lived

¹ As it was formulated by the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451.

like any other human with all human limitations, His lifestyle was different from everyone else —namely a sinless lifestyle.² This thought alone begs a question the paper is seeking to answer, and that is: was there any possibility that Jesus could have sinned? From several passages in the scriptures, it is clear that Jesus never sinned. Salvation demands a life of a sinless substitute to bore the righteous wrath of God for the sins of the sinners to be canceled (1 Pet. 2:22; 1 Jn. 3:5; Heb. 4:15). So, it is unequivocally affirmed and proven that Jesus withstood all the temptations and all human weaknesses that man has and will ever face, while maintaining His righteous standing before God in all areas of life. Yet the question remains whether it was possible for Jesus to sin. If it was impossible for Jesus to sin, what could be the reasons and vice-versa. The paper will attempt to answer the question by examining the relationship of the two natures of Christ while considering Hebrews 4:15, so that the reader appreciates wherever Jesus was impeccable or peccable to sin. In as much as one might think that this is unfruitful quest, yet the beauty of a matchless savior we have in Jesus is breath taking and astoundingly glorious. And this quest magnifies that magnificence of Christ in His work of salvation.

Two Natures the Basis of Christ's Impeccability

As it has already been mentioned, Jesus has two natures, both the divine nature as well as the human nature yet one person. According to John 1:1-3 which reads, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, Jesus was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was

² Heb. 4:15, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (ESV).

made.” The apostle John opens his gospel in the first verse by certifying the pre-existence, the fellowship that exist between the Father and the Son, and finally the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. The pre-existing Word was in perfect fellowship with God the Father before the creation, and the Word is God the creator through whom the whole world was created. It is in the third affirmation that John states that the Word is God, yet this conclusion has not been left without challenges. Because the Greek word *theos* has no definite article, as a result others have concluded that this noun is an indefinite, meaning that it should be translated as a god (Arianism). I deny this way of thinking because Jesus does not belong to the class of gods as the New World translation suggests. Since this is not the only use of anarthrous Greek noun, the second function for anarthrous noun is when it has the force that is qualitative. In John 1:1 the construction is that of a predicate nominative that precedes the verb, and such nouns fall into “qualitative-definite” function as it has been noted by Wallace, “the fact that anarthrous *pre-verbal* predicate nominatives usually fall within the qualitative-*definite* range, while anarthrous *post-verbal* predicate nominatives usually fall within the qualitative-*indefinite* range. The presumption, therefore, when one faces an anarthrous pre-verbal PN is that it will be qualitative unless there are contextual or other considerations suggesting that it is definite or less likely, indefinite.”³ Therefore, the ‘anarthrous *theos*’ in John 1:1 is a pre-verbal predicate nominative that and according to the context, this nominative does not have a definite force since that will land us into a heresy called Sabellianism, rather it has qualitative force. In other words, John is affirming that the Word has qualities, or the essence that is God. Whatever God is, the

³Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. (Zondervan, 1996), 263.

Word was (Colossians. 2:9; Philippians 2:6). John makes a fourth affirmation about the Word in verse 14, stating that the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. As this point, John appeals to the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. The eternal Word took the second nature, which is humanity and dwelt among us. He was born as a human being through Mary, with all human weaknesses. He never just appeared like human, as if He was an illusion, rather He was indeed physical in every aspect according to 1 John (cf. Phil. 2:6-7; Heb. 2:14-15; Lk. 2:6-7; Heb. 2:17-18; 5:7-8). When we read the Gospels, Jesus was a human being, since he was subject to human limitations like, thirst, hunger, fatigue, sleep, crying, temptations, and death, which are true of human beings. Therefore, Jesus has two natures from the time of incarnation.

In this regard, though these natures are not mixed in anyway, they are united in one person, which also means that they are inseparable. In a sense the sentence that says, “God died” on the cross is true even though the divine essence can never die. Paul, in Acts 20:28, states that God purchased the church with His own blood. This can only be true if Jesus is both God and Man at the same time. Furthermore, because Jesus is a single undivided person, what is true of his human nature can be rightly spoken about while calling Him as a divine person, even though it is the human nature that is been referred to. Jesus is what the theologians called, the theanthropic person⁴. The second person of the trinity has always existed with the divine being for eternity just as the Father has. The second person of

⁴ “Jesus was the theanthropic person in which the human and divine natures were inseparably united in this union, the divine Logos always controls the human nature, and not the other way round.” A *Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity* (Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary: United States of America, 2009).

the trinity during incarnation took upon Himself a second essence that is human, making Him to have both divine essence and human essence but still one person. It is very crucial to understand the relationship that exist between these two natures in the person of Christ to correctly answer the question posed in this paper. Logically, though these natures are not mixed in anyway, yet they are certain things Jesus cannot do in His human nature because of His divine nature. Because Jesus is God, His human nature cannot do things that will cause Him to cease being a divine person. In other words, His divine nature controls what His Human nature can do. So, was there a possible of Jesus sinning at all?

Many other theologians have suggested that there was a room that Jesus could have sinned. For example, Charles Hodge said concerning the impeccability of Christ, “This sinlessness of our Lord, however, does not amount to absolute impeccability... If He was a true man, He must have been capable of sinning.”⁵ for the similar position, J.S Whale and Erickson as well as Wayne Grudem maybe consulted as well⁶. The problem that comes to surface with this view is that, there is an indication that the two natures of Christ were not united in one person. Since, any possibility of Christ’s peccability implies that God is capable of sinning if the two natures of Christ are united in a single person. Therefore, the possibility of a peccable Christ demands a Christ whose natures are not inseparable. The theologians advocating for the peccable Christ have good intentions, and in their

⁵ “Temptation implies the possibility of sin. If from the constitution of his person it was impossible for Christ to sin, then his temptation was unreal and without effect, and He cannot sympathise with his people” (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols, reprint of 1887 ed., London: James Clarke, 1960, 2:457).

⁶ Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994. Pp. 536.

reasoning, as it has already been noted by Charles Hodge, they state that the only way Christ's temptations would have been true and justifiably necessary for Him to be a true mediator of men, is if He faced those temptations as a human being without any influence or control from the divine nature. There is no way, Christ could have been tempted just as we are all tempted even more if He was incapable of sinning. Yet, as I have already mentioned and rightly noted by other theologians⁷, that it is impossible to separate the two natures of Christ in a single person. Secondly, to assume that any control of the divine nature of Jesus on His human nature diminished the humanness of Christ is a failure to understand the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. If Jesus' human nature is left on its own, then Jesus is just like Adam, but in as much as He is like Adam, at the same time He is different from Adam, because Jesus is a theanthropic person. Then there is a need for an alternative solution to this quest.

The second approach in answering this question is to understand Christ as incapable of sinning. The basis for this reasoning, is on the inseparableness of the two natures of Christ. because of that several truths about Jesus should be affirmed: firstly, because Jesus exists as both human and God at the same time, that meant that it was impossible for Him to sin, since He cannot go against His own Holy nature and divine hatred towards sin. God is absolute separate from the desires and the nature of sin (1 Jn. 1:5). Though this is the case, if Jesus had only the human nature without the divine nature, we could have been just like pre-fall Adam, capable of sinning. But because of His divine nature, there was absolutely no possibility of Him sinning, thus the impeccability of Christ. To advocate for peccability of Christ is to subject the divine nature to the control

⁷ See McCune. 2:151

of the finite nature, and to do so is to cause God to cease being God. If this is the case, let's consider Christ's temptations: In Hebrews 4:15, the phrase "without sin" is a prepositional Genitive that is rightly understood as "*separated from, far from,*" this same construction is found in Eph. 2:12, where Paul says that unbelievers are in the world *separated from God* (emphasis mine)⁸. The idea is that God is out of the unbelievers' reach. Another way of expressing this is that they are dead to God because they are not His Children. His in not in them and they are not in Him. So, it is with Christ when it comes to sin itself, says the author of Hebrews. Though Jesus was tempted in every way with full intensity of the temptations, Jesus was separated from sin, that it was impossible for Him to bend towards sin. Those temptations could not entice His from within because He did not have a sinful nature to begin with, thereby, such temptations could only be from outside Him. The Devil had no hold of Him because there was no lust that could have been used. Jesus in His human nature had only the desire to please God. This is very different from us, since we do have competing desires in us, one from the new man in Christ and another from Adam. But if this is the only explanations offered, then Jesus is no different from Adam who was peccable. It is the argument of this paper, that it was because of the divine nature of Jesus Christ that made his to be impeccable of sinning.

It is the inseparableness of His divine nature from His human nature that constitute the personhood of Christ, therefore making Christ impeccable. For example, Jesus is not only holy because of the lack of a sinful nature as Adam was, rather, His holiness derives from His divine nature as infinitely Holy God. Thereby, for Jesus to be capable of sinning, it is

⁸ Bauer, Walter; Danker, Frederick William. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed

tantamount to God's changeableness. But if Jesus is the great "I am", then there is no room for the possibility that He could have sinned⁹. Secondly, James in 1:13 of his book, vehemently argues that God cannot be tempted to sin and does not tempt anyone. Then when we evaluate the impeccability of Jesus considering this truth, it is certainly true that Jesus could not have sinned in any possible way. It is more probable for the divine nature to influence the human nature and voluntarily the human nature be subjected to its divine influence. In John 10:18 Jesus claims the power to both lay His life and take it as well. In this text, it is clear, that his human nature depended on the will of His divine nature regarding life and death. If that is so true, then there is no way the divine nature could have permitted the human nature to sin at all cost. Paul in speaking of his unconverted lifestyle, he said that his sinning was done because of unbelief and ignorance of the heart, so it is with all sinners (1 Tim 1:13; Eph. 4:18). Thereby, the possibility that Jesus could have sinned implied that he was capable of being deceived, and his heart being ignorant of what was to happen if he could have sinned. This thought alone is incompatible to what the scriptures claim Jesus to be. Jesus knew all things and that He needed no one to teach Him for He even knew what was in man's heart. As a result, there was no way He could have been deceived or being ignorant of the aftermath of his sinning (Jn. 2:25; Matt. 11:21). With strong affirmation, it is right to say that Jesus could have not sinned in any way, because his divine essence can never be subjected to any form of limitations and inferiority from his

⁹ Refer to Jn. 9:58; Heb. 13:8; 1:11-12; "Christ is unchangeable and therefore could not sin. If Christ could have sinned while on earth, then He could sin now because of His immutability. If He could have sinned on earth, what assurance is there that He will not sin now?" William Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, pp. 659-671. (Paul Enns. *The Moody Handbook of Theology* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1989], Pp. 248-249).

human nature. Jesus was one person that was constituted by two natures that were inseparable.

The Glorious Impeccable Saviour

The impeccableness of Jesus is grounded in His divine nature. Hebrews says that He was tempted in every way possible yet without sin, the author's desire is to help the reader to understand the gravity and the forcefulness of Jesus' temptations. He was tempted in full measure while filling the full force of the temptations that He went through, yet without giving in. Resistance towards temptations is not the easier part, rather it is the hardest of all. Imagine how hard it was for Jesus to conceive of the thought of denying His Father's will to die on the cross in his human will. Imagine how He battled that thought in the garden of Gethsemane, yet He did not give in to the temptation. This is the more reason only Jesus qualifies to be the savior of the world. There is not even a slightest possibility that He might sin and fail to be the lamb that is without blemish or spot. As the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29), it was necessary that He is impeccable of sinning. By living impeccable life on earth, His perfect obedience has infinite value able to satisfy God's righteous demands on behalf of man with assurance. Furthermore, living an impeccable life on earth, provides a savior who will not fail to satisfy God's holy indignation against man's sin. Lastly, living an impeccable life assures every believer of a transformed life upon salvation. In other words, the doctrine of sanctification is grounded in the impeccability of Christ. The wonders of salvation rely heavily on the personhood of Christ Jesus, and His divine nature necessitated and maintained His sinlessness, so that He might offer an acceptable sacrifice that has infinite value before God to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, If Jesus could have not sinned, then why was He tempted? Another might say that His temptation was not true and genuine if He was incapable of sinning. In Matthews 4, the author is so clear to affirm that it was the Holy Spirit that took Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted and if God does not tempt anyone and the Holy Spirit is God, then, the possibility of Jesus sinning was never on the table at any time Jesus was tempted. The impeccability of Jesus Christ is one attribute that qualified Jesus a perfecter and author of salvation. God designed salvation to be carried by a unique Being that is both God and man, who cannot sin intrinsically because it is contrary to His very nature. This is the more reason; salvation is only by and through Jesus Christ alone. Man could have never been saved by a man that was only sinless, but by a man who was incapable of sinning itself, and to have such a man, He better be God at the same time. The incarnation necessitated the impeccableness of the human nature of Jesus Christ. The temptations of Christ were not to prove that Jesus was capable of sinning, rather that He was incapable to sinning. Salvation is the work of God that is possible only be God Himself. This should leave man perplexed and amazed at the level of extent God was willing to go to secure the salvation of the elect in Christ. What a great salvation that we have in Christ.

Conclusion

Jesus Christ is by far unique, and the only prototype of what God intended humanity to be. A day is coming when all believers will be clothed in a glorified bodies that will be impeccable of sinning as well, for we are being made into His image. Until then, believers are to look to the author and finisher of their faith Jesus the impeccable. Amen!

***Isaac Dzimbiri** is a Bible instructor of Gospellife Baptist Mission in Malawi, where he is involved in pastoral training. He holds Bachelor's degree in Bible from CABU and Masters of Art in Ministry.*

Bibliography

- Bauer, Walter and Frederick William Danker. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. n.d.
- Enns, Paul. *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1989.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1994.
- Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology*. Vol. 2. 3 vols. London : James Clarke , 1960.
- McCune, Rolland. *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity*. Vol. 2. 3 vols. United States of America : Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009.
- Shedd, William. *Dogmatic Theology* . n.d.
- Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. Zondervan , 1996.

BAPTIST IDENTITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR PERSONAL MINISTRY

Mulenga Chileshe

Baptist Identity

Defining what it means to be a Baptist involves understanding a diverse array of theological beliefs and contested historical origins. While Baptists have traditionally embraced their label for its representation of cherished teachings, there is often a lack of deep understanding of these core beliefs today.¹ At the heart of Baptist identity are several key principles: the supremacy of the Bible as the ultimate authority, a church composed of regenerated and baptised believers, an autonomous local church structure, and a commitment to religious liberty for all. These foundational beliefs form the bedrock of Baptist identity across diverse contexts, shaping their worldview and practices, even as debates continue over Baptist distinctives and the precise origins of the movement.

Definition of Baptist Identity

Baptist identity is defined by the Baptist's characteristics and beliefs, taken together as Baptist distinctives. These distinctives set Baptists apart from other Christians. Therefore, no belief held universally by Christians can qualify as a Baptist distinctive.² Besides, this does not restrict or imply that Baptists

¹ Mukosha Funga Njenga, "Lungu Donates K100, 000 to Mpongwe Church," *News Diggers*, November 5, 2017 also refer to Annie Zulu. "President Lungu Donates K100 000 to Church." *Daily Nation*, November 6, 2017.

² Kevin T. Bauder, *Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order* (Schaumburg, Ill.: Regular Baptist Books, 2012) 12.

do not adhere to the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith; they do, as those beliefs are what defines a Christian.

Historically and Theologically

Baptists are a part of the historical Protestant Reformation movement and form the largest Protestant denomination worldwide. They have made significant contributions to biblical scholarship, missiology, and practical theology.³ These individuals, through English Separatists, have historically demonstrated the significance of upholding fast to Christian identity as highlighted in Titus 1:9. Their rich history can be traced back to a particular branch of the English Separatist tradition, with influences from Bucer, and Bullinger on the English Reformation.⁴

The history of the Reformation in England was marked by complex dynamics, with efforts by figures like Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell to assert state control over the English church. Although some reforms were made under Edward VI, persecution of proto-Baptist groups persisted during this period, exacerbated by Mary's return to Catholicism. Elizabeth's reign saw the rise of Separatist congregations, culminating in the formation of the Baptist movement in 1609 by John Smyth and Thomas Helwys in Amsterdam.⁵ Drawing on continental Anabaptist influences, Baptists rejected infant baptism and grew amidst the religious and political turbulence of the English Civil War. Despite periods of persecution, Baptists flourished, with both Arminian and Calvinist congregations emerging, reflecting broader tensions between church and state and highlighting the

³ Stephen R. Holmes, *Baptist Theology* (London: T&T Clark International, 2012) 1.

⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

⁵ See Stephen R. Holmes, *Baptist Theology* (London: T&T Clark International, 2012), pages 11-22.

importance of ecclesiology. By the early 18th century, the movement had amassed significant membership, underlining its enduring impact amid England's tumultuous religious landscape.⁶

The Baptists' decisive rejection of any union between church leadership and state authority stems from their historical background. Throughout history, Baptists have radically stood apart to point out certain practices they deemed unbiblical, and they have made a stance to remain unique. However, in Zambia, some Baptist churches have compromised this stance. This compromise has manifested in various ways, such as aligning too closely with political agendas, seeking government funding or endorsement, or allowing political influence to shape church doctrine or leadership decisions. During the election period of 2016, Mwale observed that "Religion was increasingly used and abused in the 2016 election campaigns for political mileage by using religious songs, Bible verses, names and prayers"⁷ and churches as Sunday company platforms through donation making.

Besides, an online newspaper article reported that the former President of Zambia, Edgar Lungu, donated 100,000 Kwacha towards the completion of a Mpongwe Baptist Union

⁶ For a more comprehensive exploration, see Stephen R. Holmes, *Baptist Theology* (London: T&T Clark International, 2012), pages 11-22, and Kevin T. Bauder and Robert G. Delnay, *One in Hope and Doctrine: Origins of Baptist Fundamentalism 1870-1950* (Schaumburg, Illinois: Regular Baptist Books, 2014), for insights into the development of Baptist fundamentalism in North America.

⁷ Nelly Mwale, "Religion and Politics in Zambia: Investigating the Religious Discourse in the 2016 Electoral Campaigns," *Zango* 32 (2016): 17-42, 17.

church building, fulfilling a pledge he had previously made.⁸ While this act appeared to be a Christian gesture of generosity, it was arguably a political manoeuvre by the politicians to campaign for the upcoming 2021 election and gain support from voters. Ndaou also observes that the Church has long been politically engaged with the Zambian government across various aspects of human life, including governance, elections, peace, and justice.⁹

Nonetheless, the decisive position to reject any union between church leadership and state authority is meant to avoid the potential antithetical influence that state authority and other belief practices could have on the authority of Jesus Christ and His mediated Word on the life of the church. Baptists have taken this firm stance to keep the tradition of the church of Jesus Christ pure and distinct, especially in the face of the rapid growth and diversification of the modern church landscape. This stance has shaped the Baptist theology known as identity or distinctives. Bauder phrases the Baptist belief system as emphasizing the Authority of the New Testament, Believer's Baptism, Regenerate Church Membership, Individual Christian Responsibility, Congregational Government, and Separation of Church and State.¹⁰ Furthermore, others have articulated these beliefs as follows: emphasizing Biblical Authority, Regenerate Church Membership, Believer's Baptism by Immersion, and Soul Competency, as Chute explains, acknowledges that every

⁸ Mukosha Funga Njenga, "Lungu Donates K100, 000 to Mpongwe Church," *News Diggers*, November 5, 2017. See Annie Zulu. "President Lungu Donates K100 000 to Church." *Daily Nation*, November 6, 2017. ⁹Jufellow Bwali Ndaou, "The Role of the Church in Political Conflict Resolution in Zambia, 1990-2018" (thesis, The University of Zambia, 2022), 3.

¹⁰ Bauder, *Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order*, 18 – 129.

Christian has direct access to God through Jesus, without any intermediary, and the Priesthood of All Believers, Religious Liberty for All People, and Local Church Autonomy.¹¹

Regarding the latter, Baptists believe local churches have authority over their membership and affairs. This belief reflects Christ's teaching in Matthew 18:15-17, which outlines the steps for resolving differences among believers. They practice congregational polity, giving church members the final say in governance instead of any higher governing body. Emerson alludes that:

As Baptists, we prize local church autonomy and the priesthood of believers, yet we also value unity in Christ's body. Though individualistic, we collaborate on endeavors like church planting, missions, and aid. Our unity is theological, rooted in our union with Christ and one another, compelling love, cross-difference listening, and joint service. This biblical unity is vital for cohesive local and global church functioning. While affirming autonomy, we recognize our fundamental unity in Christ as the basis for authentic cooperation.¹²

Another distinctive that defines Baptists and sets them apart from many other Christian groups is their consistent affirmation of the absolute authority of the New Testament in all matters of church faith and order. It is important to realize that Baptists fully acknowledge the authority of the entire Bible, a cornerstone belief shared by all true Christians, distinguishing them from non-Christians. Besides, this prioritizing of the New

¹¹ Anthony L Chute, "Baptist Theology," The Gospel Coalition, accessed April 19, 2024, par. 6 - 12.

¹² Matthew Y. Emerson et al., *Baptists and the Christian Tradition: Towards an Evangelical Baptist Catholicity* Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2020, Introduction: Unity Matters, para. 1-3.

Testament does not mean that Baptists reject the authority of the Old Testament. Bauder highlights that they recognize both as inspired and profitable for doctrine. However, they assert that the present form of the church is uniquely a New Testament institution, marking a significant shift in God's dealings with humanity following the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ¹³ and, ultimately, his glorification (Eph. 1:20–23; Col. 3:1–4; Heb. 8:1–2). Besides, both the Old Testament and the New Testament serve as witnesses to the necessity of interpretation and explanation of God's Word. Throughout history, God has summoned individuals and collective entities to proclaim—not invent—His Word.¹⁴

Believer's baptism is another distinctive that sets Baptists apart from other denominations. Their approach to water baptism has three emphases. "They insist that valid, Scriptural baptism requires, first, proper subjects; second, a proper meaning; and third, a proper mode. To these three, some Baptists add a fourth emphasis, maintaining that valid baptism must occur under proper authority or a proper administrator."¹⁵

Church membership is another distinctive that defines Baptists. Baptists uphold the principle of regenerated church membership. To become members of a Baptist church, individuals must first demonstrate a sincere profession of faith in the gospel. Besides, this distinctive is argued by Baptists that only believers must be baptized and that only immersion qualifies as baptism.¹⁶ Those who have undergone this qualify for

¹³ Bauder, *Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order*, 20.

¹⁴ Emerson et al, *Baptists and the Christian Tradition: Towards an Evangelical Baptist Catholicity*, The Ongoing Role of Tradition in Baptist Life, para. 8.

¹⁵ Bauder, *Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order*, 36.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 55.

church membership and church covenant. Bauder believes that “Church membership is a covenant relationship.”¹⁷

Another central emphasis for Baptists is the idea of individual Christian responsibility. This connects closely with their view of the priesthood of all believers. Baptists believe that Christ and the Holy Spirit grant each Christian certain privileges and duties to be lived out together in the church community. The concepts of the priesthood of the believer and soul freedom highlight the Baptist perspective on every believer’s role and obligations within the faith community. Bauder has argued that for Baptists, the priesthood of the believer means that Christians do not require a separate priesthood apart from the community of believers, as Christ alone serves as the mediator between humans and God. This grants each believer the privilege and responsibility of direct access to God, allowing them to intercede for fellow believers.¹⁸

On the issue of congregational government, Baptists take a different approach than some other churches when it comes to church governance and polity. Authentic Baptists emphasize congregational governance, plurality and parity of elders, believe that the ultimate authority under Christ for church decisions should reside with the congregation as a whole. However, this congregational model is not viewed merely as conforming to Western democratic norms. Instead, Baptists opine it aligns most closely with the pattern and teachings found in the New Testament.¹⁹ A key emphasis Baptists make is on the competence and authority of the congregation to make its own decisions under the guidance of Christ. The Church has the mind of Christ, so it is argued. It exemplifies a democratic structure

¹⁷ Ibid, 58.

¹⁸ Bauder, *Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order*, 75

¹⁹ Ibid, 91.

where the collective congregation of believers holds substantial decision-making authority within the church organization (Acts 6:1–6). In recent years, amongst Baptists in Zambia, several modes of Congregationalism have emerged but all of them aim at sharing centrality of congregational church polity. Besides, the rejection of women pastors exemplifies the New Testament teaching of church leadership, life, order and a reflection of God's nature (1 Tim. 2:12).

The last aspect, for our consideration, of Baptist belief is the separation of church and state. Baptists advocate for this separation because they believe that genuine worship must come from the heart. They view formal religious rituals as insincere and offensive to God, deserving only judgment. However, Baptists emphasize the separation of church and state while acknowledging the importance of respecting civil authority in matters of moral civil governance, as stated in Titus 3:1, 1 Timothy 2:1–4 and 1 Peter 2:13–17. Bauder suggests that Baptists promote the separation of church and state based on this belief, that is, Christians are called to submit to governments out of a desire to avoid judgment and maintain a clear conscience, paying taxes and showing respect to authorities. In matters of worship, their actions must align with Christ's laws, even if conflict with governmental mandates, requiring passive obedience and unwavering commitment to Christ.²⁰ The Baptist rejection of church-state union arises from their historical commitment to maintaining the purity and distinctiveness of the church, as they see it, in the face of external influences that could undermine the sole authority of Christ and His Word.

²⁰ Ibid, 132–137.

Implication for Personal Ministry

The core values of being Baptist are more than just ideas – they act as guiding lights that give purpose and conviction for ministry work. Beyond specific beliefs, the focus on the authority of the New Testament shows a dedication to basing teachings, sermons, and decisions on the lasting wisdom found in Scripture. This respect for biblical truth requires being both faithful and relevant, making sure actions stem from the eternal principles of God’s Word rather than just following temporary cultural trends or outside pressures.

In the diverse realm of ministry, the Baptist principles of church autonomy and congregational leadership will provide believers with valuable guidance. By involving the congregation in decision-making and respecting their authority under Christ’s leadership, a sense of togetherness and shared purpose develops. This approach also highlights the priesthood of all believers, emphasizing that ministry is not a solitary journey but a collaborative endeavour where every member contributes meaningfully to furthering God’s kingdom.

To pastors and pastoral students, embracing these Baptist distinctives offers more than just guidance; it provides a robust framework for understanding the church’s purpose, values, and methods. They cultivate a profound appreciation for the autonomy of the local church community and the valuable role each believer plays in ministry, nurturing a culture of collaboration and inclusiveness. Moreover, these distinctives equip you to navigate the complexities of contemporary challenges while staying grounded in the timeless truths of Scripture, fostering resilience and adaptability in an ever-evolving world. Ultimately, they will empower you to lead authentically, with discernment and an unwavering

commitment to advancing God's kingdom through humble service.

Conclusion

Embracing Baptist beliefs is about more than just following doctrine – it is about shaping a ministry that is deeply rooted in the Bible, united with the whole congregation, and focused on each person's spiritual growth. By basing our teaching, decisions, and leadership style on these core Baptist principles, we build a ministry that honours God, serves others, and stays strong despite changing times. This path allows us to cultivate a sense of purpose and conviction in our work, so the ministry can bear long-lasting fruit no matter what cultural shifts happen in society.

Gloria Deo Soli Ante Vultum Eius: Glory to God alone before His face

Mulenga Chileshe is a CABU Alumnus serving as lecturer in the School of Bible. He holds several credentials including the BA Bible, BBA, and is now pursuing an MDiv at Central Baptist Theological Seminary USA.

Bibliography

- Bauder, Kevin T. *Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order*. Schaumburg, Ill.: Regular Baptist Books, 2012.
- , and Robert G. Delnay. *One in Hope and Doctrine: Origins of Baptist Fundamentalism 1870-1950*. Schaumburg, Illinois: Regular Baptist Books, 2014.
- Chute, Anthony L. “Baptist Theology.” The Gospel Coalition. Accessed April 19, 2024. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/baptist-theology/>.
- Emerson, Matthew Y., Christopher W. Morgan, and R. Lucas Stamps. *Baptists and the Christian Tradition: Towards an Evangelical Baptist Catholicity*. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2020.
- Holmes, Stephen R. *Baptist Theology*. London: T&T Clark International, 2012.
- Mwale, Nelly. “Religion and Politics in Zambia: Investigating the Religious Discourse in the 2016 Electoral CAMPAIGNS.” *Zango* 32 (2016): 17–42.
- Ndau, Jufellow Bwali. “The Role of the Church in Political Conflict Resolution in Zambia, 1990-2018.” Thesis, The University of Zambia, 2022.
- Njenga, Mukosha Funga. “Lungu Donates K100,000 to Mpongwe Church.” *News Diggers*, November 5, 2017. <https://diggers.news/local/2017/11/05/lungu-donates-k100000-to-mpongwe-church/>
- Zulu, Annie. “President Lungu Donates K100 000 to Church.” *Daily Nation*, November 6, 2017. <https://dailynationzambia.com/2021/03/president-lungu-donates-k100-000-to-church/>

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

*Billy C. Sichone***Introduction and Background**

The Bible has generated a lot of dust over the centuries. It has been a source of unity for many discerning saints but also a battle ground of controversy for those rejecting its authority, let alone its inspiration.¹ Many people, wearing a theologian's garb have posed around claiming to be masters of interpreting the scriptures, even delving into the original languages to prove a point.² Some of these individuals eventually have out rightly rejected the Bible altogether as being an untrustworthy volume even to the point of abandoning the faith. Having begun on a sound evangelical footing and ended up on the path of subjective interpretation of scripture, these pundits veered by stages to another extreme; hurling over board their faith altogether.³ These are sad extreme cases but it equally must also be noted that there are many "Middle of the fence" sort of people that

¹ Refer to the following works for a comprehensive view on these matters: B.B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, (Howard-Severance Co., 1915); E.J. Young, *Thy Word is Truth*, (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980); G.A. Riplinger, *New Age Bible Versions*, (AV Publications 1994); J. Bright *The Authority of the Old Testament*, (Paternoster Press, 1997); Barrett (1999); C.E. Gunton (ed) *Christian Doctrine: The Cambridge Companion*, (Cambridge University Press, 1997); C.H. Dodd *The Authority of the Bible*, (Collins, 1986).

² Refer to several helpful books including: W.R. Downing, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Issues, History, and Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, (First Love, 2020); D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Baker Academic, 1996): 15 and William W Klein, Craig L Blomberg, Robert L Hubbard, Jr, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, (Thomas Nelson, 2004): 3-19.

³ D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Baker Academic, 2007); Downing 2020: 16-17,

claim to hold on to some serious aspects relating to the veracity and authority of the Scriptures once for all entrusted to the saints. This cohort makes bold claims about the general accuracy of scripture but deny the detailed veracity or accuracy of events as narrated in the holy scriptures. Of this group, it may be said that ‘they have a form of godliness but deny its power’, borrowing Paul’s words (II Timothy 3:5). For instance, they accept the miraculous idea of the virgin birth but vehemently reject the particular events of Mary giving birth to the saviour laid in a manger or claim to believe in original sin but deny the historicity of Adam, let alone the first 11 chapters of Genesis, among other orthodox truths. Furthermore, this latter group is increasingly extremely persuasive in the evangelical fraternity, possessing a lot of clout and influence when, in actual fact, they subtly reject of inspiration, authority, veracity and trustworthiness of the scriptures to the minutest detail. One needs a trained eye to detect these deceitful men and women. This paper sets out to examine the claims of scripture itself in relation to the thinking of the times. With the advent of liberal theology, post-modern thought and increasing rejection of scripture veracity, it is important to restate as well as redraw the boundary lines. This is not an exhaustive treatment of the subject matter but touches on pertinent issues affecting an increasingly pluralistic naturalistic world context.

A Proposed Right View of Scripture

Picking up from where we left off about different groups and views on scripture, we need to highlight the fact that there is yet another class of people that take the word of God to be what it claims to be⁴. In sync with I Thessalonians 2:13, they

⁴ B.B. Warfield, (1915); M. Vlach, *The Old in the New: Understanding How the New Testament Authors Quoted the Old Testament*, (Kress Biblical

allow scripture speak for itself and then obey its dictates. Scripture states facts which they investigate to establish authorial intent and exact meaning to decipher a teaching profitable for their lives. Such saints hold that the scriptures are inspired both plenary and verbally-The sense, idea, meaning as well as the actual words⁵. This valiant group, though relatively fewer in number, steadfastly hold that God's word is eternal, inerrant, unchanging, without contradiction, precise and can be fully trusted, every part of it from Genesis to Revelation⁶. Every word as originally given in Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic is inspired by God and therefore must be accepted and obeyed without question. This school of thought further holds that the scriptures intrinsically have authority and power in themselves as empowered by the Holy Spirit⁷. The Scriptures themselves speak and expect to be obeyed. Any one that comes to read the scriptures must take them as such because with a presuppositional mind set, the world is correctly interpreted, not outside. Another helpful source is the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith that has a whole chapter with attendant articles on the nature and authority of Holy scripture, worth perusing (Chapter 1).

So much then for the different groups, we now proceed to briefly examine what four different theological thought leaders, among others, and what they have said about the different

Resources 2021); EJ, Young (1980); O, Cullmann *The Christology of the New Testament*, (SCM Press, 1963).

⁵ E.J. Young (1980), has done some great work on the issue of inspiration and what it exactly means. I strongly recommend your reading his work.

⁶ E.J. Young (1980); B.B. Warfield, (1915).

⁷ Works by Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit: Contours of Christian Theology*, (Intervarsity Press, 1996) and Octavius Winslow, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1984) are helpful reads to appreciate a deeper grasp of this subject matter.

aspects of the word of God. The bulk of materials here synthesised, appeared in *The Master's Seminary Journal* of 2004. In our well-considered view, this is one of the clearest statements on the scriptures in recent years. Given the relative context where even Evangelicalism is in flux even on basic matters as the nature and authority of scripture, this set of write ups is akin to an oasis in a desert. Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1984) made similar bold sentiments about the authority and nature of scripture years ago but was clearly a lone voice in the wilderness. It is therefore exciting to know that some tread similar footsteps as late as 2004 and beyond. Machen and others steadfastly contended, in their day as well, holding off towering giants like David Strauss (1808-74)⁸ that wielded immense influence in their time. At many times, people holding on to the scriptures sincerely and in faith are accused of attempting to “prove too much” by those lingering on the fence. We commence our review of these four authorities namely John MacArthur,

⁸ As cited by Don Closson in his paper entitled ‘The Christian Canon’, states the following: “David Strauss (1808-74) completely breaks from the earlier high view of Scripture. He affirms a naturalistic worldview by denying the reality of a supernatural dimension. In his book, *Leben Jesu* ("The Life of Jesus"), he completely denies any supernatural events traditionally associated with Jesus and His apostles, and calls the Resurrection of Christ "nothing other than a myth" (Hannah, Notes, 4.5). Strauss goes on to claim that if Jesus had really spoken of Himself as the N.T. records, He must have been out of His mind. In the end, Strauss argues that the story we have of Christ is a fabrication constructed by the disciples who added to the life of Christ what they needed to in order for Him to become the Messiah. Strauss's work would be the foundation for numerous attacks on the accuracy and authenticity of the N.T. writers, and of the ongoing attempt, even today, to demythologize the text and find the so-called ‘real Jesus of history.’” Available at: <https://probe.org/the-christian-canon/?print=pdf>, Accessed on 19th June, 2024.

William D Barrick, Richard L Mayhue and Robert L Thomas, while consulting other equally potent kindred minds.

Scripture: Its Necessity

That scripture is necessary is beyond debate or argument⁹. It is the first and most important (and only) means to the knowledge of God. While general revelation is good and helpful to introduce the concept of God, God can only be truly known by special revelation as enshrined in the Holy scriptures¹⁰. Many have tried to rationalise hoping to arrive at the knowledge of God using wisdom but have later realised that they were building castles in the air. God must be revealed to a soul by His own revelation¹¹. Without scripture, God remains remote and unknowable in a saving sense but when one reads the scriptures, they soon realise that they are before the Ancient of Days that rules the world. He not only planned and created the world but sustains and provides for it, including its constituent creatures. Without scriptures, our minds remain in spiritual darkness¹². We must however state that scripture is God's inspired word and therefore inherently authoritative. Every soul must bow to its dictates or be lost forever. In a nutshell, the following may be claimed about the necessity of scripture:

- A. God is incomprehensible
- B. Man fell in the garden and needs revelation from God to recover.

⁹ E.J. Young (1980); Martyn Lloyd-Jones *Authority*, (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1984); Vlach, (2021).

¹⁰ Thomas Watson, (1958).

¹¹ D.W. Barrick 'The necessity of Scripture', *The Master's Seminary Journal* Volume 15 #2 (Fall, 2004): 151-164.

¹² Ephesians 2:1-3 attests to spiritual deadness and blindness of humanity unless the grace of God alters things in regeneration.

- C. Because of hind corruption, man needs repeated training in the ways of righteousness even after regeneration.
- D. The memory malfunctions and must be consistently updated and reminded by the transforming word of God.
- E. The scriptures are a testimony, a witness and reproof as well as proof of/from God.
- F. Our forgetfulness warrants the scripture presence.
- G. Because of the perversion and distortion tendencies inherent in human nature, God's word must objectively guide.
- H. God willed it so that without the scriptures, humans cannot know Him, given His nature.
- I. The scripture is perfect, reviving and converting the soul of a sinner or even a saint (Psalms 19:7).
- J. Reveals God in His essential nature which no other source can.

Sadly, very few ever discuss the necessity of the scriptures in these degenerate latter days. The scriptures are side-lined, relegated to the side, neglected or, at best, viewed as a mere guide only not exactly authoritative.¹³

Scripture: Its Sufficiency

Various leading minds have ploughed over this area, including the venerable John MacArthur. That the scriptures contain the word of God, no one among theologians denies but to state that the scriptures are the very immediate actual words of God and therefore, absolutely authoritative, very few deeply affirm with myriads overtly mummer or silently reject such a notion and view¹⁴. Opponents to this orthodox evangelical view

¹³ Barrick, 2004; Watson, 1958; Young, 1980

¹⁴ John MacArthur, 'The Sufficiency of Scripture', *The Master's Seminary Journal* Volume 15 #2 (Fall, 2004): 165-174.

claim that the Bible approximates to what God says but not the actual word of God from beginning to end. Robert Funk and his Jesus Seminar folks fit into this category. But scripture is both sufficient and authoritative for the genuine, authentic saint. It handles all matters related to their lives and practice here on the earth. Even those apparently obscure or relative issues are addressed and sorted out by proxy and principle. While certain matters are clearly addressed in scripture, principles from the word of God point the saint in the right direction to correctly handle obscure difficult unclear issues, if they use the right hermeneutic and exegesis. If readers arrive at scripture with an open evangelical mind bereft of any prejudices, they will definitely find instruction there from. It is fitting to surmise as follows in relation to scripture's sufficiency:

- A. Scripture is sufficient for life and godliness
- B. It is sufficient for counsel
- C. For training
- D. For conversion
- E. Making wise and
- F. For protection

One wishes that far more Christians trusted the Lord more than myriads presently do. The scriptures are a sure light to our path and will certainly lead us in paths of righteousness, no wonder the Psalmist would hide it in the most secure cabinets of their heart (Psalm 119:9).

The Reasonableness and Meaning of Scripture

The scriptures are intelligible, meaningful and make sense throughout¹⁵. The choice of words, etymology, intention, and wisdom is all encased in every word right across scripture. The scriptures are rational in the sense that they can be read with understanding, are realistic and make sense. While some sections of the so-called Christian community may appear to make the word appear irrational, this is not so. The scriptures are pure, righteous and point to the way of salvation for the soul. Additionally, the scriptures are meaningful in each and every word, both in the ideas, narrative and the choice of words. The grammar is superb demonstrating that our God is a good God, revealing what humans need to know, thus employing anthropomorphic¹⁶ language to communicate. Further, the scriptures are precise in what they communicate both in relation to the general ideas, concepts, and the details. Some claim to accept the general idea and not the details. Such pundits cannot be said to be evangelical or even saints for that matter. Some claim things not taught by scripture or major on vague/apparently contradicting portions of scripture. An example of this are the Preterists that claim that the resurrection is purely spiritual¹⁷ and has already passed. These, and other such related errors are to be rejected forth with and with the contempt they deserve.

¹⁵ L.R. Thomas, 'The rationality, meaningfulness, and precision of scripture', *The Master's Seminary Journal* Volume 15 #2 (Fall, 2004): 175-207.

¹⁶ By the word 'anthropomorphic' is meant human expressions of a concept. So, the word means God uses everyday human language and expressions to communicate and reveal his truth.

¹⁷ i.e. not literal or bodily.

Scripture Authority

Richard L Mayhue has written a very informative and insightful paper worth gleaning into. For this study, we harvested some helpful thoughts from him and thus include some of these in this final section. Although some elements in this section have already been alluded to earlier in this paper, it is no trouble to traverse the same terrain once again. The scriptures are the word of God from beginning to end. The ideas, concepts and the actual words are inspired of God, without error, sufficient and necessary for life and godliness. If this be the case, the scriptures possess an intrinsic authority for life and godliness. This extends to all parts of life, practice, thought and ideas. God has spoken and those that belong to Him must respond and accept His word without question, doubt, or carelessness. Those claiming to be saints but deny the inspiration or authority of the word of God are mere imposters and not children of God. They claim to be angels of light when in fact they are children of darkness, no matter how well versed in scripture or what public influence they wield. In short, we should accept and read the whole Bible, not parts of it as is very commonly evident in these latter degenerate days.

From the foregoing, this paper affirms the need to return to the rallying words of the Reformation '*Sola Scriptura*'. There is need to return to those ancient paths that once distinguished Protestants and Evangelicals from the rest. If we continue at this deathly rate, there will be no difference with other deviant and heretical movements making their rounds today. Scripture must be at the centre of the religion of the saints.

Conclusion

We conclude that God has spoken and we must obey His word without question or reserve. The ancient of Days must be

obeyed because He is the sovereign Lord of Heaven, omniscient, omnipotent and the great I AM!

Billy C. Sichone serves as Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Studies at CABU. He holds several credentials (MBA, ThD, PhD, DApol, DBS etc.) and has previously served as Vice President (Academics) and Head of University Research & Dean of Business School (2015-2019) at Northrise University and for 17 years served with World Vision.

Bibliography

- Barrett, M.P.V. *Beginning at Moses: A Guide to Finding Christ in the Old Testament*, Ambassador-Emerald International, 1999.
- Barrick, D. W. 'The necessity of Scripture', *The Master's Seminary Journal* Volume 15 #2 (Fall, 2004): 151-164.
- Breisch, F. A. *Christian Survey of the Old Testament*, Chapel Library, 2016.
- Bright, J. *The Authority of the Old Testament*, Paternoster Press, 1997.
- Carson, D.A. *Exegetical Fallacies*, Baker Academic, 2007.
- Clowney, E.P. *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, Crossway, 2003.
- Closson, D. 'The Christian Canon', Probe Ministries, available at: <https://probe.org/the-christian-canon/?print=pdf>, Accessed on 19th June, 2024.
- Cullmann, O. *The Christology of the New Testament*, SCM Press, 1963.
- Dodd, C.H. *The Authority of the Bible*, Collins, 1986.
- Downing, W.R. *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Issues, History, and Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, First Love, 2020.
- Ferguson, S.B. *The Holy Spirit: Contours of Christian Theology*, Intersarsity Press, 1996.
- Gunton, C.E. (ed). *Christian Doctrine: The Cambridge Companion*, Cambridge University Press. 1997.
- Klein, WW., Blomberg, CL., Hubbard, RL (Jr). *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Thomas Nelson, 2004.
- Lloyd-Jones, D.M. *Authority*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1984.
- MacArthur, J. 'The sufficiency of Scripture', *The Master's Seminary Journal* Volume 15 #2 (Fall, 2004): 165-174.
- Madeira, G. *The Purposes of Scripture in Your Life*, New Life Literature (pvt) Ltd, 2004.

- Masters, P. (ed). *The Baptist Confession of Faith 1689*, Metropolitan Tabernacle, 1990.
- Mayhue, R. L. 'The Authority of Scripture', *The Master's Seminary Journal* Volume 15 # 2 (Fall, 2004): 227-236.
- Riplinger, G.A. *New Age Bible Versions*, AV Publications, 1994.
- The Baptist Confession of Faith 1689, available at:
<https://www.grbc.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/The-1689-Baptist-Confession-of-Faith.pdf>, Accessed on 17th June, 2024.
- Thomas, L. R. 'The rationality, meaningfulness, and precision of scripture', *The Master's Seminary Journal* Volume 15 #2 (Fall, 2004): 175-207.
- Warfield, B.B. *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, Howard-Severance Co. 1915 Available at:
https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/warfield/The_Inspiration_and_Authority_o_-_B_B_Warfield.pdf, Accessed on 23rd May, 2023.
- Watson, T. A. *Body of Divinity*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1958.
- Winslow, O. *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1984.
- Vlach, M. *The Old in the New: Understanding How the New Testament Authors Quoted the Old Testament*, Kress Biblical Resources, 2021.
- Young, E.J. *Thy Word is Truth: Some thoughts on the Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980.

BOOK REVIEW: *Follow: A Simple and Profound Call to Live Like Jesus*

Mulenga Chileshe

Floyd McClung, *Follow: A Simple and Profound Call to Live Like Jesus*
Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010.

Floyd McClung is the author of the book *Follow: A Simple and Profound Call to Live Like Jesus*. In this book, McClung presents three simple yet profound truths about following Jesus, designed to challenge readers and transform their lives. He outlines these truths as follows: worship, which means loving and obeying Jesus as a lifestyle with passion and purpose; mission, which means loving those who do not follow Jesus with courage and decency; and community, which means loving other followers of Jesus with intentionality and transparency.

As followers of Christ, believers must pattern our lives after His. There is no other way to live but by embodying the life of Christ. This approach to following Jesus will shape and reform inert worldview and philosophy of life, placing Jesus Christ at the centre, rather than the self. The central theme of the book is about loving Jesus.

In the prologue of *God's Story*, McClung demonstrates how God began creation, what happened to it, the solution to the problem, the resurrection of Christ, and the commission of His followers. After this introduction, he explains the meaning of repentance. He discusses what it means to love Jesus, emphasizing that loving Jesus starts with understanding and realizing that He created us for intimacy and friendship with Him. McClung calls this the heart's response to His love for believers and a commitment to obey Jesus each day of their lives. Following this, McClung addresses the need to repent from religion. He describes religion as something that enslaves

people, making them think their lives are about powerful people controlling them rather than being set free from sin to love God devotionally. Once individuals repent from religion, they begin to experience God's love in their lives, the same love with which He has loved them. I appreciate how McClung emphasizes the importance of following Jesus alone and not being enslaved to religious traditions.

In Chapter Two, McClung discusses obedience. He states, "The greater our effort to recover the divine image and the prouder we become of that effort, the further we remove ourselves from our Creator. God is on a mission to love and restore His fallen world." Obedience to God and His love is the means by which we receive restoration from our fallen condition. This obedience calls believers to respond to God's love by yielding their lives to His will rather than their own. It is not about merely doing good deeds; rather, it is an act stemming from a heart that recognizes its sinful state and desires forgiveness and restoration. Recognizing the need to obey and practicing it involves submitting ourselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Our love for Jesus should lead us to welcome Him as the Lord of every aspect of our lives. McClung describes this act of submitting to Jesus' Lordship as repentance, a painful and radical recalibration of our lives.

In Chapter Four, McClung elaborates on the idea of repentance, stating that it "is the connecting point between our old way of life and the new; between following Jesus on our terms and following Him on His." Repentance should lead to a change of mind about the direction we are going, how we have been living, and what we have believed about God and the world. It represents a complete turnaround in our thinking and living. McClung further clarifies what repentance is not, distinguishing it from regret. He emphasizes that repentance is not merely a

feeling of remorse that unexpectedly sweeps over us, warning readers against developing a habit of wishing they hadn't done something just because it has backfired.

In Chapter Five, McClung delves into the topic of pride, identifying it as the greatest obstacle to loving others. He describes pride as an inflated sense of self-importance that blinds people to their true selves, leading them to live in pretense. Moving on to Chapter Six, he discusses faithfulness, using the acronym FAT to describe it: Faithful, Available, and Teachable. He emphasizes that being faithful entails being like a hinge on a door, a seemingly small but crucial element for opening doors of opportunity. In Chapter Seven, McClung explores prayer, highlighting the importance of learning from Jesus' example. He underscores the humility required in embracing prayer and urges followers to prioritize spending time with Jesus.

As followers of Christ, McClung stresses the importance of loving those who do not know Him and practising what we preach to authenticate the message. He emphasizes focusing on Jesus and making Him known, demonstrating obedience to His teachings rather than mere lip service. McClung advocates for creating discipleship groups, or D-Groups, that reflect Jesus's principles of accountability, transparency, humility, and outreach.

Additionally, McClung urges readers to join the quest for global awakening, which he attributes to passionate faith, commitment, contagious relationships, rapid mobilization, adaptive methodology, and multigenerational movements. He emphasizes the need for gut-level transparency and accountability among believers, warning against living a lie by hiding sins from one another.

Chapter Fourteen addresses the idea of starting a simple church, emphasizing the importance of avoiding a culture

focused solely on committees, programs, and traditions. Instead, McClung emphasizes adhering to the primary purpose of the church: obeying the Great Commission.

Critique: In the chapter where McClung discusses loving Jesus, he mentions the importance of allowing God's love capture our devotion fully. However, he does not provide clear guidance on how we can allow God's love to do this. This leaves the reader wondering if the author is suggesting that human salvation requires synergistic cooperation with God's plan, rather than solely relying on His grace. Additionally, the prologue seems incomplete in its theological explanation, perhaps rushed to get to the main argument.

Furthermore, McClung's use of the term "Great One" instead of God may be an attempt to connect with African readers, but it risks misrepresenting God, especially in diverse spiritual contexts where the phrase could refer to various spiritual figures. His narrative about a rebellion in the "Great One's" home lacks clarity and may confuse readers about the nature of God and His relationship with humanity.

Regarding religion, McClung discusses liberation from it without fully explaining his opposition. While his ideas about awakening to the cause of Christ and practical discipleship are commendable, I found his apparent Arminian perspective off-putting. He calls for radical repentance but seems to mix human effort alongside Christ's work, which conflicts with my reformed background. Nonetheless, the book offers valuable insights into discipleship and living out the Great Commission.

***Mulenga Chileshe** is a CABU Alumnus serving as lecturer in the School of Bible. He holds several credentials including the BA Bible, BBA, and is now pursuing an MDiv at Central Baptist Theological Seminary USA.*



**Central Africa
Baptist University**



Contact us today!



+260971507807

Higher Education:

- Diploma in Bible (3 yrs)
- Bachelor of Arts in Bible (4 yrs)
- Diploma in Primary Education (3 yrs)
- Master of Arts in Christian Studies (2 yrs)

Certificates:

- Genesis Gap Year (1 yr)
- Counselling (2 yrs)
- Chaplaincy Ministry (2 yrs)
- Sign Language & Deaf Studies (2 yrs)

ADMISSION OPEN FOR 2025

PREPARE FOR LIFE & MINISTRY!

Are you a born-again Christians wanting quality academics, theological reasources, and individual mentorship? CABU might just be the place for you!





Central Africa
Baptist University

Certificate in Sign Language and Deaf Studies



Who is this for?

Unable to communicate with the deaf person at church, the mall, or in your class? You can learn sign language and reach them with the gospel!

Programme Benefits

- reach foundational fluency in Zambian Sign Language
- understand key elements of deaf culture
- potential interpreting opportunities

01

Academic Requirements

Provide a grade 12 certificate with 5 O-levels recorded at 8 (satisfactory) or better including English.

02

Duration of Study

Attend seven evening classes over the course of 2 years. Classes are in person on CABU's campus.

03

Course Fees

Pay only K500 per class. Or, enrol full time in CABU's Bible or Primary Education programmes and take the Sign Language and Deaf Studies classes for FREE!

Contact Us :
+260971507807

admissions@cabuniversity.com
www.cabuniversity.com



Central Africa
Baptist University

Diploma in Bible and Bachelor of Arts in Bible



Who is this for?

If you desire to be trained for ministry, you can receive rich theological training. These programmes are available to both men and women.

Programme Benefits

- learn to study, apply, and teach God's Word
- select an emphasis track (counselling, expository preaching, missions, chaplaincy ministry, or sign language and deaf studies)
- earn an ACTEA accredited **degree** or a HEA accredited **diploma**

**Mature entry exemption available for those with ministry experience*

01 Academic Requirements

diploma: grade 12 certificate with 5 O-levels recorded at 8 (satisfactory) or better including English | **degree:** grade 12 certificate with 5 O-level credits or better including English

02 Duration of Study

diploma: in-person classes for 3 years | **degree:** in-person classes for 4 years

03 Course Fees

Pay only K9,500 per year. Zambian students receive a K1,750 discount. Inquire after other scholarships and work programmes.

Contact Us :
+260971507807

admissions@cabuniversity.com
www.cabuniversity.com



Central Africa
Baptist University

Master of Arts in Christian Studies



Who is this for?

This programme is for Christian men and women who want to deepen their ability to study and apply God's Word to their life and ministry.

Programme Benefits

- earn an HEA accredited degree
- enjoy a flexible programme offered online and in-person
- apply a Biblical principles to issues facing the African Church
- preparation for advanced theological or doctoral studies

01

Entry Requirements

Must have an accredited bachelor of arts degree. Provide salvation testimony, church and academic recommendation, and copy of NRC/passport.

02

Duration of Study

Attend 12 courses over the course of 2 years. Classes are offered both online and in person.

03

Course Fees

Pay only K2,500 per class after the K1,000 registration fee. Must pay the K3,000 graduation fee after completing the programme.

Contact Us :
+260971507807

admissions@cabuniversity.com
www.cabuniversity.com



Central Africa
Baptist University

Genesis Gap Year Certificate of Completion



Who is this for?

Have you finished Grade 12 and are wanting to prepare for your next step in life? Come enjoy a fun and challenging year at CABU!

Programme Benefits

- experience university and dorm life in a Christian environment
- receive excellent academic training
- grow in your love for God's Word
- build close friendships with likeminded peers

01

Academic Requirements

Provide grade 12 Mock Results.

02

Duration of Study

Attend classes full time for **1 year**. Classes are in person on CABU's campus.

03

Course Fees

Pay only K9,500 for the year. Zambian students receive a K1,750 discount. .

Contact Us :
+260971507807

admissions@cabuniversity.com
www.cabuniversity.com



Central Africa
Baptist University

Certificate in Counselling



Who is this for?

Life's trials raise tough questions. Are you able help yourself and others find comfort through God's Word in the hardest times? With this training, you can be prepared!

Programme Benefits

- practice counselling from a biblical perspective
- learn how to study Scripture
- help church members or friends in crisis situations

*Mature entry exemption available for those with ministry experience

01

Academic Requirements

Provide a grade 12 certificate with 5 O-levels recorded at 8 (satisfactory) or better including English.

02

Duration of Study

Attend seven evening classes over the course of 2 years. Classes are in person on CABU's campus.

03

Course Fees

Pay only K500 per class. Or, enrol full time in CABU's Bible or Primary Education programmes and take the counselling classes FREE!

Contact Us :
+260971507807

admissions@cabuniversity.com
www.cabuniversity.com