

Logoi

Pistoi

Faithful Words

Volume 3

Logoi Pisto Published by Australian College of Christian Studies

PO Box 1015 Miranda NSW 1490 Australia

www.ccs.edu.au

© Copyright 2017

Version 3.0 Published in December 2017

The views expressed in these articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of Australian College of Christian Studies.

For permission to reprint articles please contact Australian College of Christian Studies, Sydney
email: info@ccs.edu.au

Logoi Pistoi

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

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

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

The Journal's editorial team was coordinated by Dr Xavier Lakshmanan.

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

Editorial

It gives me great pleasure to present the third edition of *Logoi Pistoi* (Faithful Words). The articles published illustrate a range of interests demonstrating the great diversity within Australian College of Christian Studies.

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

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

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

Dr Xavier Lakshmanan

Contents

Calvin's Metaphor of Salvation	1
Filioque Controversy.....	13
A Theology of the Ordinary	28
Sensus Plenior or Single Intent?	47
An Australian Contribution to NT Greek.....	55
Children's Ministry: An Analysis of Educational Theories.....	59
Reclaiming Moses' Call for India	68

Calvin's Metaphor of Salvation

Dr Xavier Lakshmanan

***Author:** Xavier Lakshmanan is a lecturer of systematic theology and hermeneutics. Currently he is the Faculty Head of Theology and Coordinator of Research at Australian College of Christian Studies. For the last 17 years he has been teaching in several theological institutions in India and Australia. Xavier has published a book, *Textual Linguistic Theology in Paul Ricoeur*, and several articles in theology. He has completed his Doctor of Philosophy in theology and hermeneutic philosophy through Charles Sturt University, Australia.*

Abstract: The key purpose of this paper is to engage with Calvin's terminology of predestination, analysing the way Calvin employed the word predestination within his theological schemata. Did Calvin use the word predestination as a cognitive theological proposition or as a metaphor of discourse to make God's eternal plan of salvation intelligible in the world? In this paper, the author argues that the term predestination in Calvin is a metaphor of salvation: it is an inclusive language of discourse that describes God's redemptive movement. The paper arrives at what it claims by making a detour in which, first, the nature of metaphor as a discourse of the real is demonstrated; second, the nature of Christian doctrines as a discourse of truth is established; finally, Calvin's theology of predestination as a discourse of salvation is substantiated.

Introduction

This article is a study in Calvin's theology of predestination. It engages with the way Calvin employed the expression predestination in his theological framework. It mainly analyses the issue whether Calvin used the word predestination as a cognitive theological proposition or as a metaphor of discourse to make the biblical story of salvation intelligible. In this paper, the author argues that the term predestination in Calvin is a metaphor of salvation. Calvin used it as an inclusive language of discourse to describe God's redemptive movement that originates and ends with God in eternity. This paper will not focus upon the content of Calvin's theology of predestination.

The paper consists of three stages of analysis. First, it will show that a metaphor is a discourse of reality. Second, it will establish that a Christian doctrine is a discourse of truth. Finally, the paper will demonstrate that Calvin's theology of predestination is a discourse of salvation; thus it is a metaphor of salvation.

1. Metaphor: A Discourse of Reality

One of the key issues to be raised here is what is a metaphor? What is the nature and function of a metaphor? The history of metaphor studies shows that theorists have challenged the cognitive value of metaphor in the discourse of reality.¹ It was at the rise of positivism that metaphors have been relegated to a place of little authority and value in discourse.² Thomas Hobbes maintained that metaphor is deceptive and its sense is misleading for it generates strange meanings in language and makes the original meaning of a text unstable.³ John Locke argued that metaphor is introduced in language to “insinuate wrong ideas” and thereby to “mislead judgement” in the discourse of truth.⁴ Bertrand Russell dismissed the cognitive value of metaphor in literature, art and poetry as meaningless, while affirming that it may have a legitimate value in communicating deepest human feelings and experiences that the prosaic language cannot adequately express.⁵

Nevertheless, in the latter half of the 20th century, metaphor gained a great deal of philosophical significance as it came to be recognised as a central feature of theories of language and hermeneutic philosophies.⁶ Current trends in metaphor studies are represented by linguists, literary critics, and philosophers of language.⁷ Linguists maintain a rhetorical theory of metaphor in which metaphor is a word that functions as ornamentation in a sentence. This is an approach of substitution.⁸ Literary critics affirm a semantic theory of metaphor in which metaphor operates as part of a sentence. Here, some part of the sentence is literal while the other part is metaphorical. This is a sentence theory of metaphor.⁹ Philosophy of language sustains a hermeneutic theory of metaphor in which metaphor functions as a discourse. As a discourse, it is a linguistic theory of meaning in which relations, dialogues, and reference points are creatively addressed. This is a narrative theory of metaphorical discourse.¹⁰ Paul Ricoeur's work on *The Rule of Metaphor*¹¹ along with the *Symbolism of Evil*¹² is a synthesis that creatively demonstrates that metaphor is a tool of

¹ Xavier Lakshmanan, *Textual Linguistic Theology in Paul Ricoeur* (New York: Peter Lang, 2016), 82.

² Eva Braunstein, “Words and the Word: Metaphors, Analogy and Dialogic Discourse as a Theology of Language,” *CRUX*, 47/2 (2011), 24.

³ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1958), 39.

⁴ John Locke, Hume (ed.), “An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,” *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 35 (Chicago: Encyclopedia of Britannica, 1952), 3, 10, 34.

⁵ Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 80.

⁶ Mark Johnson, “Introduction: Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition,” *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 3.

⁷ Craig Ott, “The Power of Biblical Metaphors for the Contextualized Communication of the Gospel,” *Missiology: An International Review*, 42/4 (2014), 360.

⁸ Tabney Townsend, Lewis Edwin Hann (ed.), “Metaphor, Hermeneutics, and Situation,” *The Library of Living Philosophers*, vol. XXII (Illinois: Open Court, 1996), 193.

⁹ Townsend, “Metaphor, Hermeneutics, and Situation,” 193-198.

¹⁰ Townsend, “Metaphor, Hermeneutics, and Situation,” 193-198.

¹¹ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 1-454.

¹² Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (New York: Beacon Press, 1967), 1-358.

narrative discourse.¹³ He maintains that metaphor is dynamic to function from an individual word to a level of language as a discourse. Here, a metaphorical utterance is a function of predication in which it operates between words and sentences by linking the lexical, semiotic, semantic and syntactic levels of a discourse.¹⁴ It “enables a movement from an abstract to a concrete image.”¹⁵ As a colorful tool of discourse, it can shape “what people believe, how they act, and how they speak about the world and their own experiences.”¹⁶ Thus, metaphor is a form of language that can both show an event and say a saying in which there is a speaker, a hearer, that which is spoken, that which is not spoken, and their implications to life. Accordingly, metaphor is a way of suggesting that “one object is like the other, even though they are from different domains.”¹⁷ Thus, the pathways laid out by a metaphor are representations of truth, as it is a discourse in language that consists of reference and innovation at once.¹⁸

In the *Symbolism of Evil*, Ricoeur maintains that without the presence of symbols in language, human experience would “remain mute, obscure, and shut up in its implicit contradictions”¹⁹ for “man remains language through and through”²⁰ while “language is figurative through and through”²¹ for not only the “origin of language is poetic and figurative”²² but also, the function of language is “the manifestations of things beyond themselves.”²³ Hence, for Ricoeur, symbol, metaphor, and narrative belong to the same category of creative language. Metaphor is a “linguistic literary phenomenon of discourse”²⁴ while “symbol is the foundation of that discourse”²⁵ where narrative is the “pair of metaphor” by which all the “heterogenous” elements of a narrative such as characters, time, temporality, and so on are unified in the discourse.²⁶ Thus, metaphor is “a single procedure of ... linguistic discourse”²⁷ where symbol is the cognitive basis of discourse,²⁸ narrative is the synthetic formation of discourse,²⁹ and metaphor is both the linguistic foundation of and interpretive trigger to

¹³ Lakshmanan, *Textual Linguistic Theology*, 64.

¹⁴ Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 125, 130, 133.

¹⁵ Ott, “The Power of Biblical Metaphors,” *Missiology*, 360.

¹⁶ Gibbs R W Jr., *Metaphors in Cognitive Linguistics* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1999), 154.

¹⁷ Congwen Shan, “Effects of Metaphor Advertising on Brand Extension Evaluation: Construal Level as Mediator,” *Social Behaviour and Personality*, 45/6 (2017), 968.

¹⁸ Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 125, 130, 133.

¹⁹ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 161.

²⁰ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 350.

²¹ Paul Ricoeur, Kathleen Blamey (tran.), *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 12.

²² Braunstein, “Words and the Word,” *CRUX*, 24.

²³ Braunstein, “Words and the Word,” *CRUX*, 19.

²⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 59.

²⁵ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 59.

²⁶ Lakshmanan, *Textual Linguistic Theology*, 76.

²⁷ Lakshmanan, *Textual Linguistic Theology*, 76.

²⁸ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 350.

²⁹ Paul Ricoeur, Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (trans.) *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), ix.

discourse.³⁰ As a discourse, the dynamism of metaphor consists in its nature of being an “intentional-category-mistake” in language. In other words, metaphor is a category mistake in which different and contrary forms of discourse are brought together in the copula of *is* and *is not* to innovate new meanings and directions in the discourse.³¹ The tension between the different forms of discourse that emerges in the copula of the metaphor is “key to the metaphorical truth.”³² In this way, “metaphor cannot be freed from ontology”³³ for as it is a discourse of reality, it is also a discourse of life.

Similarly, Eberhard Jungel's analysis of the nature of theological language represents one of the most rigorous accounts of metaphor in modern theology. He argues that “all language, in its essence, is metaphorical”³⁴ because the metaphor's capacity consists of creating new meanings and directions in the context of discourse.³⁵ He claims that “all theological language is ... metaphorical” in their deepest foundations and function.³⁶ Metaphor is a “linguistic context of discourse in which the objectivity of existential world meets the subjectivity of the interpreter.”³⁷ Thus, the ultimate nature and function of a metaphor is the discourse of reality in which “the signifying capacity of language ... is its being.”³⁸

2. Doctrine: A Discourse of Truth

The issue in this context is what is a doctrine? What is the nature and function of a doctrine? Are they formulated to operate as abstract theological propositions or to function as language expressions that describe the biblical narratives of truth? It was McGrath who argued in *The Genesis of Doctrine* that the doctrines of the church are functional in structure and nature. They operate as vehicles of truth. They are not the truth as such. For instance, the word “God” is not God in itself. Rather, it refers to a God who is real. Thus the word “God” is a metaphor that refers to a reality beyond itself, namely God.

McGrath argues that doctrines are originated for four possible reasons with definite operational goals.³⁹ First, he contends that Christian doctrines are originated as “social demarcation,”⁴⁰ that defines the boundaries of a particular community from another. Thus, they are the boundary markers.⁴¹ Second, doctrines are generated by Christian communities

³⁰ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 350 -352. Cf. Paul Ricoeur, Denis Savage (tran.), *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 8.

³¹ Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 221.

³² Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 248.

³³ Townsend, “Metaphor, Hermeneutics, and Situation,” 194.

³⁴ Eberhard Jungel, Darrel L Guder (tran.), *God as the Mystery of the World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 160.

³⁵ Lakshmanan, *Textual Linguistic Theology*, 72.

³⁶ Jungel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, 155.

³⁷ Lakshmanan, *Textual Linguistic Theology*, 74.

³⁸ Braunstein, “Words and the Word,” *CRUX*, 19.

³⁹ Alister E. McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 1-276.

⁴⁰ McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine*, 44.

⁴¹ Richard A Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 1-240.

as “interpretation of narrative,”⁴² that recount the story of the community or the biblical story that the community stands for. Third, a doctrine could be formed as an “interpretation of experience,”⁴³ that meaningfully expresses certain experiences of a particular social group. Finally, doctrines are made as “truth claims”⁴⁴ that make ontological reference to communal reality-sayings. Accordingly, McGrath claims that Christian doctrines are not reality in themselves but are structured and formed as methods or means through which the truth is captured, discoursed, experienced and made intelligible in language. Thus, they are the discourse of truth: the metaphors that discourse and represent truth.

Interestingly, McGrath was attracted to Lindbeck's criticisms of cognitive and experiential expressivist models of doctrines. In the *Genesis of Doctrine*, he responds to Lindbeck's proposal of the cultural linguistic model of doctrines. For Lindbeck, doctrines are generated as linguistic expressions of a community formed and shaped by the community's sacred texts for a functional purpose of regulating the faith-commitments of the community in meaningful ways.⁴⁵ The point of agreement in both Lindbeck's regulative theory of doctrine and McGrath's *Genesis of Doctrine* is that doctrines are formulated to operate as vehicles of faith. Thus, they are both methods and means of truth. In other words, doctrines are linguistic configurations that function as vehicles and metaphors to form a vision of reality, refer to it, describe it, and make sense of it in the world in human language. This is absolutely a Heideggerian and Wittgenstein lead in which reality is envisaged as a discourse in language. For instance, the expression “theology” does not carry a theological truth in it, rather it operates as a language expression to refer to a complete discipline of study: the discourse of God, his nature, being, work, and relations. In this way, the term “theology” is not a propositional truth but a metaphor of discourse that unfolds the whole theological project.

Consequently, it can be construed that doctrines and metaphors possess similar structural and operational value. In other words, the function of metaphor corresponds with the operation of a Christian doctrine for they both function as the language of reality. As a result, “Metaphor functions as the means of the disclosure of the real; it discovers the real; it brings the real; and it redescribes the very nature of the real.”⁴⁶ This is what Wittgenstein famously exclaimed: “our language determines our view of reality”⁴⁷ because human vision of reality is through language.⁴⁸ Ricoeur asserts that metaphor is the language of reality for it opens up a “dimension of reality”⁴⁹ by bringing the real as “actuality and potentiality into play.”⁵⁰

⁴² McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine*, 52.

⁴³ McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine*, 66.

⁴⁴ McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine*, 72.

⁴⁵ George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 1-142. Cf. George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 1-142.

⁴⁶ Lakshmanan, *Textual Linguistic Theology*, 81.

⁴⁷ C. D. Pears, *Wittgenstein* (London: Collins, 1971), 13.

⁴⁸ Pears, *Wittgenstein*, 13.

⁴⁹ Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 211.

⁵⁰ Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 307.

Here, the language of metaphor is the language of the real as it is the vehicle for the reality. Thus the function of metaphor is to capture and present what is real in human language. Metaphor not only “refers to reality and captures it” but also “it brings the reality and presents it before human eyes.”⁵¹ Most importantly, metaphor “describes the reality in relation to its actuality” and “it redescribes the reality in terms of its potentiality.”⁵² This is why Ebeling argues that “when God speaks, the whole of [God's] reality ... enters language anew.”⁵³ Thus for him, “language is the manifold echo” that brings the “whole of reality to intelligibility.”⁵⁴ Here the function of language is “sacramental in virtue of its sensorial evocation, in virtue of its manifestation of presence, and in virtue of its participation in or resemblance to its referent while still remaining infinitely distant from the object it denotes.”⁵⁵ Here, it is not only the reality of God that is discoursed and experienced in language, but also, the nature of language in which God's reality discoursed, is intensified. In this way, the vision of reality formed and presented through the language of metaphor is complete and total: “a coherent vision” of truth.⁵⁶ Thus, doctrines are the metaphors of truth as they are the metaphors of discourse. Predestination is no exception in the way in which Calvin used it within his theological framework.

3. Predestination: A Discourse of Salvation

Metaphor is a discourse of reality and Christian doctrine is a metaphor of truth. The most crucial issue of this paper emerges here: what is Calvin's concept of metaphor? Does he use the term predestination to function as a metaphor? Does his use of metaphor correspond with his use of the term predestination? This author claims that predestination is a metaphor of salvation in Calvin for he used it as a metaphor that discourses God's story of salvation. It can be clarified by examining Calvin's definition of predestination. The definition Calvin gives to the theme not only shows that it is double, but also, it is a language form that describes the reality of God's salvation plan. Calvin defines predestination thus: “Predestination is God's eternal decree, by which He compacted with Himself what He willed to become of each man ... Eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death.”⁵⁷ Calvin's definition of predestination once analysed, indicates that predestination for him is a metaphor of salvation by which he discourses the biblical narrative of salvation. The analysis involves several steps.

First, Calvin maintains that “Predestination is God's eternal decree.” Is this part of Calvin's definition of predestination a discourse of metaphor? If so, what then is a discourse? In the first section of this paper, the author demonstrated that the power of metaphorical discourse lies at

⁵¹ Lakshmanan, *Textual Linguistic Theology*, 86.

⁵² Lakshmanan, *Textual Linguistic Theology*, 86-87.

⁵³ Gerhard Ebeling, R. G. Smith (tran.), *The Nature of Faith* (London: Collins, 1966), 190.

⁵⁴ Ebeling, *The Nature of Faith*, 190.

⁵⁵ Braunstein, “Words and the Word,” *CRUX*, 19.

⁵⁶ Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2013), 1-34.

⁵⁷ John Calvin, John T. McNeill (ed.), *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol.2 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 3.25.5.

the category-mistake of the metaphor in which contrasting forms of discourse are brought together in the copula of *is* and *is not* to represent one object as other in a form of resemblance. This is precisely what Calvin has done here. The term predestination is irrelevant to God as God cannot have a past or future but only the eternal present. Calvin argues that “all things always were, and perpetually remain, under his eyes, so that to his knowledge, there is nothing future or past, but all things are present.”⁵⁸ What Calvin contends here is that *pre-destination* and *fore-knowledge* is a possibility to a person who exists under time and temporality, not to God. God lives in the eternal present in which he possesses only knowledge and destinations. Thus, God's knowledge is our foreknowledge and God's destinations are our predestinations in human language regulated by time. Consequently, the expression predestination in the definition is a human or temporal category of discourse, which is placed dialectically and paradoxically with the language expression “God's eternal decree,” which is a divine /eternal form of discourse. This is a context in which the temporal verses the eternal. Predestination stands in confrontation with God's eternal plan. In other words, the eternal is represented by or as the temporal. The copula *is* and *is not* is intensifying the tension that gives rise to the discourse. Here, predestination is not a theological truth in itself, rather a metaphor that resembles and represents the eternal mystery of God's plan of salvation. It is here the metaphorical discourse of salvation commences in the metaphor of predestination, representing the mystery of God's mind, which is inscrutable. Thus, like the word “theology,” the term “predestination” functions as the discourse of God's plan of salvation.

Second, Calvin claims in the definition that “predestination is God's eternal decree.” He is asserting that it is God's eternal plan whose origin is in God and whose nature does not have any logical-temporal sequences for it is eternal. This means that predestination is not only a “decree whose basis is hidden and inscrutable,”⁵⁹ but also, it is the “representation of the absolute and unconditional purpose of the divine will.”⁶⁰ What is also interesting is that this divine will is “independent of all creation”⁶¹ and “everything outside of God is enclosed by this decree.”⁶² Everything means “every raindrop and every snowflake, ... every insect, ... every plant, and every grain of dust in the air.”⁶³ This implies, as Christian orthodoxy has always affirmed, God's plan is eternal, *all-inclusive*, and single.⁶⁴ This is a paradox, for God's plan is one plan, which is not one but everything. Here, predestination as God's eternal inclusive plan is not only a mere abstract concept; rather, it is a language configuration that gives account of the whole reality that God has planned in eternity, executed in time, and will execute in the future for the salvation of human beings. As Barth exclaims, predestination is not a theological notion

⁵⁸Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.5.

⁵⁹ Karl Barth, G.W. Bromiley (tran.), *Church Dogmatics* vol. 2: Part 2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1976), 20.

⁶⁰ Barth, Bromiley (tran.), *Church Dogmatics* vol. 2: Part 2, 47.

⁶¹ Barth, Bromiley (tran.), *Church Dogmatics* vol. 2: Part 2, 47.

⁶² Barth, Bromiley (tran.), *Church Dogmatics* vol. 2: Part 2, 47.

⁶³ Barth, Bromiley (tran.), *Church Dogmatics* vol. 2: Part 2, 47.

⁶⁴ Karl Barth, G.W. Bromiley (tran.), *Church Dogmatics* vol. 1: Part 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1976), 519.

but an expression that does “denote the basis of all the relationships between God and man.”⁶⁵ Thus, predestination is a metaphor that captures everything that is salvific and presents through the discourse of language for humans to experience.

Third, predestination as a metaphor can be validated from Calvin's use of the word metaphor in his theological writings. He employs the word metaphor in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in the context of interpreting 1Corinthians chapter 3 as against his opponents who claimed to have established their doctrine of purgatory in this text. Calvin calls the whole text of 1Corinthians chapter 3 as “a metaphor” that consists of several “threads of metaphor” such as “wood, hay and stubble.”⁶⁶ Here for Calvin, metaphor is neither a word of ornamentation, nor a predicate of a sentence. Nevertheless, it is an extended portion of literature in which the Apostle Paul presents a discourse.⁶⁷ Calvin follows the same method of interpretation in his exposition of the chapter in his commentary on Corinthians by using a metaphor of “master-builder.”⁶⁸ The whole chapter is considered as a metaphor of discourse. Accordingly, for him, metaphor is a narrative text or language form which is inclusive to hold various components as part of the whole.

Moreover, it is important to note that Calvin not only used the term predestination as a discourse of truth, but also, he used several other metaphors creatively for the discourse of reality. For instance, Calvin used the “mirror metaphor” thirty-two times in the *Institutes* as a discourse.⁶⁹ Eric argues that Calvin employed this metaphor as “a form of dynamic accommodation” to “crystalise several constitutive elements of a religions epistemology.”⁷⁰ In other words, the “mirror metaphor” is not a propositional statement of truth but it discourses Calvin's entire epistemology.⁷¹ Another example of this can be found in Calvin's understanding of the doctrine of the church as “a metaphor of mother” to discourse the relationship between the church and the believers.⁷² Here, the metaphor of mother represents the whole of Calvin's ecclesiology. The best of all, which Calvin delighted in using, was the “metaphor of the potter and the clay,”⁷³ which he employed as an equivalent to predestination. He argues that this metaphor discourses “God's hidden predestination,”⁷⁴ for, “God determined, before the creation of the world, what he pleased respecting each individual; but his counsel is hid, and to

⁶⁵ Barth, Bromiley (tran.), *Church Dogmatics* vol. 2: Part 2, 52.

⁶⁶ John Calvin, John T. McNeill (ed.), *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol.1. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 3.5.9.

⁶⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, vol.1, 3.5.9.

⁶⁸ John Calvin, John Pringle (tran.), *Epistle to the Corinthians* vol.1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 77-95.

⁶⁹ Eric Kayayan, “The Mirror Metaphor in Calvin's *Institutes*: A Central Epistemological Notion,” *In Die Skriflig*, 30 /4 (1996), 419-441.

⁷⁰ Kayayan, “The Mirror Metaphor, 419.

⁷¹ Kayayan, “The Mirror Metaphor, 419.

⁷² Calvin, *Institutes*, vol.2, 4.1.1. Cf. John Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 87-88.

⁷³ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: Book of the Prophet Jeremiah*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 398.

⁷⁴ Calvin, *Book of the Prophet Jeremiah*, vol. 2, 398.

us incomprehensible.”⁷⁵ In this way, it is legitimate to assert that Calvin employed the expression predestination in the same way he used the terminology of metaphor. Thus, predestination could be maintained as the metaphor in which God's work of salvation is discoursed. This is why, in analysing Calvin's theology of predestination, Barth concludes that “predestination is no more than the application of ... the doctrine of the salvation of man.”⁷⁶ Undoubtedly, it was Barth who provided a consistent discourse of salvation in the metaphor of predestination in the 20th century theology though strikingly contrasting to Calvin's account.

Finally, Calvin's definition of predestination stipulates that it is God's eternal plan *by which* “He compacted with Himself.” Here, predestination as God's plan functions as a method of God's planning action. Calvin affirms that God determined with himself to decide the destinies of human beings *by means of predestination*. Does predestination not then become God's method of eternal choice and action? It is ironic to maintain such a position in relation to God's eternal plan, for there is no sequence in eternity to use a method, neither is God dependent on a method for his actions. Nevertheless, it is a human way of discoursing what is inexpressible: God's plan as predestination. In other words, it is through the language of predestination, Calvin is narrating the story of salvation. Thus, “metaphors impose a structure on our discourse, a hermeneutic lens on our observations, that can radically alter our understanding of the reality.”⁷⁷ Moreover, in his first catechism in 1538, Calvin descriptively outlined his doctrine of predestination soteriologically: “For the seed of God's word takes root and bears fruit only in those whom the Lord has *by His eternal election* predestined as His children and heirs of the kingdom of heaven; for all the rest, who were condemned by this same plan of God before the foundation of the world the utterly clear preaching of truth can be nothing but the stench of death unto death.”⁷⁸ Both the definitions indicate that predestination for Calvin is not equivalent to God's providence but it is soteriological. Hence, Barth argues that Calvin's predestination is “identical with the reality of Jesus Christ”⁷⁹ as it is all about the “atoning work of Christ”⁸⁰ that began in the past eternity and will end in future eternity with God's identity. Thus, Barth exclaims, predestination is “the very sum of the Gospel.”⁸¹ Accordingly, it is a metaphor that represents the sum of the gospel of God that is centered on the biblical vision of the Christ-event, which is the all-encompassing story of God's eternal salvation for humanity.

⁷⁵ Calvin, *Book of the Prophet Jeremiah*, vol. 2, 398. Cf. Ott, “The Power of Biblical Metaphors,” *Missiology*, 358-374. Ott establishes that “Penal-Substitutionary” atonement, “Reconciliation,” “Sacrifice,” and “Power” are not conceptual and cognitive themes in Christian theology. Rather they are metaphors that function as “powerful communicative tools” that can “touch emotions and can shape cognitive functions.”

⁷⁶ Barth, Bromiley (tran.), *Church Dogmatics* vol. 2: Part 2, 47.

⁷⁷ Braunstein, “Words and the Word,” *CRUX*, 23.

⁷⁸ John Hesselink, *Calvin's First Catechism* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 17.

⁷⁹ Barth, Bromiley (tran.), *Church Dogmatics* vol. 2: Part 2, vii.

⁸⁰ Barth, Bromiley (tran.), *Church Dogmatics* vol. 2: Part 2, vii.

⁸¹ Barth, Bromiley (tran.), *Church Dogmatics* vol. 2: Part 2, vii.

Conclusion

Therefore, Calvin's theology of predestination is a metaphor of salvation discourse as metaphors and doctrines are the discourses of reality. It is a metaphor by which Calvin captures, brings, and presents the biblical vision of salvation in a meaningful and holistic way. It is Calvin's method of emplotment of the salvation story that consists of a beginning, middle, and an end. As a narrative, it includes episodes such as God's eternal plan, creation, temporality, fall, and redemption, while maintaining the unity of the story by incorporating heterogeneous characters such as God as protagonist, Satan as antagonist, and human beings as agonists. Interestingly, the narrative of salvation also gives an account of divine comedy, human-Satan tragedy, and divine-human triumph. In this way, Calvin's theology of predestination is an holistic story of salvation. It is a metaphor that describes the biblical narrative of salvation, a way of making God's sovereign work of salvation intelligible in the world.

Bibliography

Barth, Karl. G.W. Bromiley (tran.). 1976. *Church Dogmatics* vol. 1: part 1. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.

_____. G.W. Bromiley (tran.). 1976. *Church Dogmatics* vol. 2: part 2. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.

Braunstein, Eva. 2011. "Words and the Word: Metaphors, Analogy and Dialogic Discourse as a Theology of Language," *CRUX*, 47/2, 24.

Calvin, John. John T. McNeill (ed.). 1960. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol.1. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

_____. John T. McNeill (ed.). 1960. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol.2. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

_____. John Pringle (tran.). 1989. *Epistle to the Corinthians* vol.1. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

_____. 1974. *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

_____. 2009. *Calvin's Commentaries: Book of the Prophet Jeremiah*, vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

Ebeling, Gerhard. R. G. Smith (tran.). 1966. *The Nature of Faith*. London: Collins.

Gibbs, R W Jr. 1999. *Metaphors in Cognitive Linguistics*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Hesselink, John. 1997. *Calvin's First Catechism*. Louisville: John Knox Press.

- Hobbes, Thomas. 1958. *Leviathan*. New York: Liberal Arts Press.
- Johnson, Mark. 1981. "Introduction: Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition," *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Jungel, Eberhard. Darrel L Guder (tran.). 1983. *God as the Mystery of the World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Karkkainen, Veli-Matti. 2013. *Christ and Reconciliation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing.
- Kayayan, Eric. 1996. "The Mirror Metaphor in Calvin's *Institutes*: A Central Epistemological Notion," *In Die Skriflig*, 30 /4, 419-441.
- Lakshmanan, Xavier. 2016. *Textual Linguistic Theology in Paul Ricoeur*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Locke, John. Hume (ed.). 1952. "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding," *Great Books of the Western World*, vol, 35. Chicago: Encyclopedia of Britannica.
- Lindbeck, George. 1984. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- _____. 2009. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press.
- McGrath, Alister E. 1997. *The Genesis of Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Muller, Richard A. 2008. *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins*. Grand Rapids: Baker.
- Ott, Craig. 2014. "The Power of Biblical Metaphors for the Contextualized Communication of the Gospel," *Missiology: An International Review*, 42/4, 360.
- Pears, C. D. 1971. *Wittgenstein*. London: Collins.
- Ricoeur, Paul. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (trans.). 1984. *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- _____. 1978. *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- _____. 1967. *The Symbolism of Evil*. New York: Beacon Press.
- _____. Kathleen Blamey (tran.). 1992. *Oneself as Another*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- _____. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (trans.). 1984. *Time and Narrative*,

- vol. 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- _____. 1976. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*. Fort worth: Texas Christian University Press.
- _____. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (trans.). 1984. *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- _____. Denis Savage (tran.). 1970. *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Russell, Bertrand. 1997. *The Problems of Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shan, Congwen. 2017. "Effects of Metaphor Advertising on Brand Extension Evaluation: Construal Level as Mediator," *Social Behaviour and Personality*. 45/6, 968.
- Townsend, Tabney. Lewis Edwin Hann (ed.). 1996. "Metaphor, Hermeneutics, and Situation," *The Library of Living Philosophers*, vol. XXII. Illinois: Open Court.

Filioque Controversy

Kerry Aberline

Author: Kerry Aberline is currently completing her Master of Theology from Australian College of Christian Studies after completing a Bachelor of Ministry in 2015. Kerry is actively involved in NEWBeginnings Uniting Church at Cronulla, NSW. She is part of the worship team and assists the Lead Pastor in preaching, pastoral care, and the planning of ministries.

Abstract: This paper considers the historical development of the *filioque* controversy in the early church that led to the division between the East and the West. The Eastern view is considered in the work of John of Damascus, Photios and John Hopko while the Western view is considered in the works of Augustine, Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas. The differences between the two sides of the debate are considered in the light of some contemporary theology. The *filioque* is found to be an inadequate phrase to describe the relationship between the Son and the Spirit.

Introduction

The *filioque* controversy began in the early church and continues to be a source of division between the Eastern and Western churches. The issue relates to the origin of the Holy Spirit – does He proceed from the Father alone or does He proceed from the Father and the Son? This paper traces the history of the controversy, identifies three key proponents of each of the opposing views, considers contemporary views on the *filioque*, and evaluates the usefulness of *filioque* for understanding the Trinity today.

What is *filioque*?

Filioque is a Latin word which means ‘and the Son’. In the context of the ‘*filioque* controversy’, the word appeared in the Creed of Toledo (589) to describe the procession of the Holy Spirit as ‘*ex patre filioque*’ meaning ‘from the Father and the Son’. *Filioque* was an addition to the Nicene-Constantinople Creed (381), where the Holy Spirit was described as proceeding ‘*ex patre*’, meaning from the Father alone (and not from the Son).

Background

In order to appreciate the *filioque* controversy, it is necessary to trace the development of the 'Creeds'.¹ The first ecumenical Creed of the early church was at a Council of Nicea in 325 at the request of the then Emperor Constantine.² The Creed enabled people, the majority of whom could not read, to recite the basic principles of Christianity as part of worship services and particularly at baptisms as a confession of faith.³ The development of this Creed was also at a time when the Canon of the New Testament had not been formally endorsed by the church.⁴

The Emperor convened the Council to create consistency of Christian beliefs across his empire and particularly to resolve a controversy about the divinity of Jesus.⁵ Jewish scholars and pagan philosophers were accusing Christians of worshipping multiple gods, namely, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A priest named Arius (256-336) attempted to refute this claim by arguing that Jesus was created by God, as His Son, for the purpose of salvation. Jesus therefore did not exist with the Father from eternity and as a consequence, Christianity could be seen as being monotheistic.⁶

Other priests challenged this view on the basis that a created being could not be effective in achieving the salvation of humanity.⁷ The issue revolved around two Greek words to

¹ Statements of faith are part of Christianity, beginning with the Old Testament *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4). The Apostles Creed (120-250) was generated by early church as a succinct statement of Christian faith and future Creeds were enacted as the doctrines of the church developed.

² Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 5th ed. (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001) and Avery Dulles, "The Filioque: What Is at Stake?" in *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 59, 1-2, 1995 have good overviews of the history of the Creeds and the filioque controversy, while more detail is available in Edward Siecienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). All dates in the paper are A.D.

³ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lecture 5: On Faith*, n.d. [accessed January 2017]. Online. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310105.htm>, paragraph 12.

⁴ The books recognised as 'the Bible' were widely accepted at this time (Athanasius listed twenty-seven books of the "Canon" in 367) but the formal adoption of an agreed Canon developed over a number of years – from the 690's until the 1300's.

⁵ This was not the only controversy at the time (for example, the Donatists) but it was a key issue at the Council of Nicea.

⁶ Tim Dowley (ed.), *An Introduction to the History of Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 24, 45, 51, 81, 130, 592, 599; William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint (eds.), *Christian Apologetics Past and Present: A Primary Source Reader, Volume 1, to 1500*. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 173; E. Ferguson, "Athanasius" in Tim Dowley (ed.), *An Introduction to the History of Christianity* (2nd ed.), (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 121.

⁷ One of these people was Athanasius (296-373), the Bishop of Alexandria in Egypt. He argued that Jesus was a Supreme Being made by God before the beginning of time; Athanasius was exiled from the church at least five times for His beliefs, indicating that the resolution of the Creed did not settle the Arian debate but that it continued to be an issue for many years. Despite this, Athanasius successfully upheld the use of *homoousios* to describe the relationship between God the Father and God the Son, influencing the Creed of Nicaea (325) and subsequent theologians (Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus) that resulted in the Creeds from the Councils of Constantinople (381) and Chalcedon (451). See Dowley, *op. cit.*, 24, 45, 51, 81, 130, 592, 599; Edgar and Oliphint *op. cit.*, 173-

describe the relationship between the Father and the Son: *homoiousios* meaning ‘of like substance’ and *homoousios* meaning ‘of one substance’. Arius held that Jesus was ‘of a like substance’ but not one with God.⁸

The Council of Nicea affirmed the divinity of Jesus, stating that Jesus was the “Son of God, begotten from the Father ... from the substance of the Father”.⁹ The only reference to the Holy Spirit was, “We believe ... in the Holy Spirit” with no further details.¹⁰ This reflects the nature of the emerging understanding of the Trinity within the early church.¹¹

At a second ecumenical Council at Constantinople in 381, the Creed of Nicea was amended. The Council agreed to refine the statements about Jesus and to further describe the Holy Spirit.¹² The Nicene-Constantinople Creed stated, “We believe in ... the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, who proceeds from the Father, who is worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son, who spoke by the prophets.”¹³

Although the Creed became part of the practice of the church, East and West, the Arian view continued to be an ongoing issue, particularly in the West.¹⁴ At a Council in Toledo (589), the

174; McGrath, *op. cit.*, 11, 466; Bible Study Tools, *The Writings of Athanasius*, [accessed January 2017]. Online. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/early-church-fathers/post-nicene/vol-4-athanasius/athanasius/>

⁸ Dowley, *op. cit.*, 599.

⁹ Creed of Nicea, “The Creed of Nicaea – Agreed at the Council in 325” in *Early Church Texts*, n.d. [accessed January 2017]. Online. http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/creed_of_nicaea_325.htm. The fuller sentence is “Son of God, begotten from the Father, only begotten, that is, *from the substance of the Father ... begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being*” (*de substantia Patris ... natum non factum, unius substantiae cum Patre, quod graece dicunt homoousion*).

¹⁰ The main concern of the Creed was to resolve the Arian controversy and so the Creed goes on to say that, in order to save humanity, Jesus became Incarnate, suffered and died, rose again, ascended to the heavens and “will come to judge the living and the dead But for those who say there was when He was not, and before being born He was not and that He came into existence out of nothing or who assert that the Son of God is a different *hypostasis* or substance or created or is subject to alteration or change – these the Catholic and apostolic anathematizes”; see Creed of Nicea, *op.cit.*

¹¹ Kärkkäinen, *op. cit.*, 40, suggests that even up until the end of the 4th century, Christians were reticent in referring to the Holy Spirit as ‘God’.

¹² This was to confirm the deity of the Holy Spirit, which was unclear in the Creed of Nicea (The Nicene-Constantinople Creed is today often referred to as the ‘Nicene Creed’ which can cause some confusion). The Nicene-Constantinople Creed also deleted the phrase “from the substance (*ousia*) of the Father” in relation to the begetting of Jesus and retained the *homoousion* phrase (as Jesus being ‘consubstantial’ with the Father). Kärkkäinen, *op. cit.*, 40, notes that it is unclear why the changes were made in relation to the nature of Jesus. *Homoousion* is a Latin word used for the Greek word, *ὁμοούσιος*, which transliterates into English as *homoousios*, meaning “one in being”. It comes from two Greek words: *ὁμός*, (*homos*), meaning the “same” and *οὐσία*, (*ousia*), which means “being”. The Council of Nicea described Jesus as being *ὁμοούσιος* with God the Father, meaning that Jesus is “one in being” with the Father. In English, it is usually referred to as being “consubstantial with the Father”.

¹³ Nicene-Constantinople Creed, “The Nicene Creed – Agreed to at the Council of Constantinople in 381” in *Early Church Texts*, n.d. [accessed January 2017]. Online. http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/nicene_creed.htm.

¹⁴ This is not to give the impression that the Eastern Church was free of any issues. Arianism lingered in the East but was more widespread in the West. The Eastern Church changed its liturgy from

Nicene-Constantinople Creed was amended: the phrase stating that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father” was changed to “proceeds from the Father and the Son”. This change may have been a misinterpretation of the Nicene-Constantinople Creed but is more likely that the Creed was amended to address Arianism.¹⁵ The Council of Toledo sought to reinforce the divinity of Jesus by describing the Holy Spirit as proceeding from the Son as well as the Father (based upon John 20:22).¹⁶

In the following periods of history, there were political and ecclesial power struggles occurring throughout the church. These struggles contributed to the split between the Eastern and Western churches but the addition of the *filioque* clause is said to be the principle reason for the rift.¹⁷ This issue is still a source of tension between the Eastern and the Western churches today.

referring to Jesus as “Christ our Brother” to “Christ our God” to counter Arianism. The Eastern Church also confronted other factions, including the Nestorians and the Jacobites, which threatened church unity as well. See Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia- and How It Died*, (New York: Lion, 2008) ix-xii, 27-28. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 ratified the Nicene-Constantinople Creed again (without the inclusion of the *filioque* clause) but this still did not abate the Arian controversy.

¹⁵ The possible misinterpretation has been attributed to issues with language and translation, namely the issue of identifying (and understanding) words that faithfully align in meaning as well as with the culture associated with that word. Augustine, for example, has been criticised for not appreciating the subtleties of the Greek language; see Kärkkäinen, *op. cit.*, 45.

¹⁶ Father Thomas Hopko, “The Filioque: Fr. Thomas Hopko” in *Speaking the Truth in Love: Compelling Commentary on Christian Belief and Behaviour*, n.d., posted 2015 [accessed January 2017]. Online. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QE9PT6pjXMk>, suggests that *filioque* was added to address Arianism. Kärkkäinen, *op. cit.*, 58, notes that while the *filioque* had its origins in Augustine it was also aimed at “opposing Arianism. Mentioning the Son alongside the Father as the origin of the Spirit was seen as a way to defend consubstantiality” but notes that Richard Haugh suggests that the addition happened without any “conscious theological reason” [Richard Haugh, *Photios and the Carolingians: The Trinitarian Controversy* (Belmont, MA: Norland, 1975) 160-161]. Stephen Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 147, suggests that the *filioque* was added out of ignorance. He claims that the representatives at the council believed *filioque* was a part of the Nicene-Constantinople Creed. Subsequent church leaders, aware of the discrepancy, then sought ratification of the *filioque* at later Councils. The amendment of the Council of Toledo (598) remained part of the practice of the Western church with the *filioque* being ratified again by the Roman church 1014 and in 1274. There are various dates relating to the adoption of the *filioque*; see Kärkkäinen, *op. cit.*, 57, but the split in the church is generally identified as being in 1054 (even though attempts to resolve the issue were made, particularly at the Council of Florence (1431–1449)). It is clear that from the Council of Toledo, a change in the creeds used by the Eastern and Western churches occurred.

¹⁷ Sicienski, *op. cit.*, 31 attributes the *filioque* as the cause of the split between the Eastern and Western churches, although he acknowledges other tensions including the division of the Empire in the 9th century, 94; the use of unleavened bread by the Roman church in Holy Communion, 260, but ultimately settles on the failed attempt to resolve the *filioque* doctrine at the Council of Florence (1431–1449). At that Council, Mark of Ephesus sought to distinguish the temporal and eternal procession of the Holy Spirit, 156; Gregory of Cyprus and Gregory of Palamas allowed for the *filioque* as an eternal expression of the Spirit flowing through the Son without suggesting that the Son was the source of the Spirit, 134. These scholarly attempts at reconciliation demonstrate a dedication by the Eastern Church to attempt to resolve the issue. Fr. Hopko, *op. cit.*, credits the *filioque* with the

The Eastern View

The Eastern church objects to the *filioque* for three reasons: (1) the amendment was not an ecumenical decision; (2) the Creed could not be changed, as agreed at Constantinople; and (3) the *filioque* is not based on either proper exegesis of the Bible or correct theology.¹⁸ The first objection is well-founded; the second is related to the first but the author would suggest that all Creeds need to be reviewed and amended if necessary.¹⁹ The third objection is central to the debate, and will be explored in the work of St John of Damascus (676-749), Photios (c. 810-893), and Father Thomas Hopko (1939 – 2015).²⁰

John of Damascus attempted to describe the distinctive nature of the three persons of the Trinity *and* the unity of the Godhead by suggesting that the three mutually dwell within each other. He used the Greek word *perichoresis* to describe the relationship as an “indwelling” or a “co-inhering” of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that is suggestive of a “community of being”.²¹ John saw this mutuality as: (1) consistent with the Father as the source of the Son and the Spirit; (2) creating no subordination between the three persons; (3) the Spirit dwelling in the Son; and (4) that this is seen in the economy of salvation but reflects the eternal essence of the Trinity.²² John viewed the *filioque* as indicating that the Son received

division of the church in history and as a contemporary issue that had continued into the present today. Holmes, *op. cit.*, 147, suggests that the *filioque* contributed to the split but that it was the “primacy of Rome” that finally divided the church, although he also notes (161-162) that for some contemporary Orthodox theologians, the reason for the East/West split was not the *filioque* but rather the West’s rejection of the distinction made by Gregory of Palamas (1296-1359) between the “essence” and “energies” of God; the essence of God remains hidden but the energies of God flow to creation and creatures to experience God and share in the experience of divinity. The West rejected this largely on the basis that salvation became deification.

¹⁸ Kärkkäinen, *op. cit.*, 57; McGrath, *op. cit.*, 247; Fr. Hopko, *op. cit.*; Dulles, *op. cit.*, 44.

¹⁹ The author confesses that this is a very “low” Protestant viewpoint, where tradition is not as highly regarded as in other Christian denominations.

²⁰ The Russian Vladimir Lossky (1903-58) is another Eastern Orthodox theologian who criticised the *filioque* for depersonalising the Holy Spirit, for being overly Christological and because it “reduces the Godhead to an impersonal principle” (see McGrath, *op. cit.*, 249). Lossky’s work was not accessed for this paper. It is important to recognise that both Eastern and Western views developed based upon the Cappadocian Fathers’ [Basil the Great (330–379), Gregory of Nyssa (c.332–395) and Gregory of Nazianzus (329–389)] who described the Trinity as three persons sharing the one substance (*ousia*) but distinct persons (*hypostases*); the Son is begotten of the Father (*gennesis*); the Spirit proceeds from the Father (*ekporeusis*); the Father is the source but there is no subordination. See McGrath, *op. cit.*, 247 and 250.

²¹ Kärkkäinen, *op. cit.*, 41, suggests this is a ‘community of being’ although John of Damascus does not use those words. John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, n.d. [accessed January 2107]. Online. <http://www.orthodox.net/fathers/exactidx.html>, Book I, Chapter VI, says that God and the Word (the Son) “each subsisting in the other, for just as words come out of our mind”, the words are not identical to the mind but also are not “diverse” from it. God the Father and God the Son are differentiated by the Son deriving from the Father but having the same nature as God; Book I Chapter VII, applies the same principles to the Holy Spirit with the Word (the Son) possessing the Spirit and all that the Son and Spirit have is from the Father.

²² John of Damascus, *op. cit.*, Book I, Chapter VI, says that God possesses the Word and there was never a time when God was without the Word; Book I, Chapter VII suggests that at no time did the Son not exist – He always existed in eternity, even though He came from the source – the Father – with no

the Spirit from the Father and then imparts the Spirit to the world, but that this in no way suggests that the Son is the source of the Spirit.

Photios drew on the work of John of Damascus, but particularly objected to the *filioque* with vigour.²³ He did not accept that the Spirit proceeded through the Son in any eternal sense at all but only in the economy of salvation (contrary to John of Damascus). Photios argued that a two-fold source for the Holy Spirit was demeaning to the Spirit, resulting in the subordination of the Spirit to the Son.²⁴ He was adamant that the Father remained the only source of the Spirit and he held that the *filioque* compromised the monarchy of the Father as the source of divinity.²⁵

Father Thomas Hopko labels the *filioque* as heresy. He is particularly critical of Augustine's theology for using psychological analogies and misrepresenting the Spirit as the 'bond of love' between the Father and the Son. He suggests that Augustine makes the Son the origin of the Spirit in poor exegesis of John 20:22. Hopko argues that in God's mission to the world, Jesus sends the Holy Spirit because Jesus has received the Spirit from the Father (and so the Holy Spirit is called the "Spirit of Christ" because the Father has given everything to the

superiority of the Father over the Son except in "causation". Likewise, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and rests in the Son – co-essential and co-eternal – and that the begetting of the Son of God in all eternity and the procession of the Holy Spirit, are simultaneous acts, (although he noted that there is no time in God). "But the Son is derived from the Father after the manner of generation, and the Holy Spirit likewise is derived from the Father, yet not after the manner of generation, but after that of procession" and they are simultaneous. Further, that everything that the Son and the Spirit have is from the Father, even their very being "because of the Father having the qualities, the Son and the Spirit have all their qualities, those of being unbegotten, and of birth and of procession being excepted. For in these hypo-static or personal properties alone do the three holy subsistences differ from each other, being indivisibly divided not by essence but by the distinguishing mark of their proper and peculiar subsistence".

²³ Photios, *Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*. n.d. [accessed January 2017]. Online. <http://www.myriobiblos.gr/texts/english/photiosmystagogy.html>, Part 1, paragraphs 2 and 9, is quite fervent: "Would you propagate the fable that the Spirit proceeds from the Son? If you do not cower when seizing the dogmas of our common Saviour, Creator, and Lawgiver with a violence that yields only to your insanity, then what other things could one find by which utterly to confute your impious zeal?"; "if the Spirit proceeds from the Father and proceeds also from the Son — O deceiving drunkenness of impiety!" In Part 2, paragraphs 20-23, 29, he interprets John 14:16 as Jesus imparting the Spirit that He has received from the Father, following the thinking of John of Damascus. Holmes, *op. cit.*, 159, suggests that there were personal reasons for Photios to so vehemently oppose the *filioque* (he was excommunicated by Pope Nicholas).

²⁴ Photios, *op. cit.*, Part 1, paragraphs 3, 8, further suggests that this places the Son on the same level as the Father as the one who generates the Son and thereby confuses the *hypostases*. In Part 2, paragraphs 33-34, he suggests that the Spirit is excluded from kinship with the Father and in Part 3, paragraph 43, concludes that the *filioque* divides the Spirit into two.

²⁵ Photios, *op. cit.*, Part 1, paragraphs 6, 11 and in paragraph 14, he suggests that this idea means there is no source at all in the Godhead; Edward Siecienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 61; Kärkkäinen, *op. cit.*, 57-58 also notes that Photios criticised the addition of the *filioque* for being unilateral and compromising church unity.

Son).²⁶ For Hopko, *filioque* should be interpreted as *per filium*, or *through* or *by the agency* of the Son but never as a source of the Holy Spirit.²⁷

The Western View

The Western view will be considered in the writings of Augustine of Hippo (354-430), Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033-1109) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).²⁸ Augustine noted in his work, *On the Trinity*, that the Cappadocian Fathers understood the Father as the origin of the Son and the Spirit (one begotten and the other proceeding). However, based upon John 20:22 (“... and with that [Jesus] breathed on them and said ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ ...”), he argued that while the Holy Spirit ‘principally’ proceeds from the Father it is also evident that the Spirit proceeds from Jesus as well.²⁹ Augustine retains the source of the Godhead as the Father because he reasons that the Son received the Spirit in the process of being begotten.³⁰ To the author, this seems to align with the views of John of Damascus, suggesting that Augustine did not intend to subvert the monarchy of the Father.

Anselm saw the *filioque* as both justifiable and essential for understanding the Trinity. He uses Scriptures to establish that the Father and the Son are unified in sending the Spirit namely, that: (1) the Father sends the Spirit in the name of the Son (John 14:26); (2) the Son sends the Spirit from the Father (John 15:26); and (3) the Son breathes the Spirit on the disciples (John 20:22). For Anselm, these Scriptures reveal the eternal relationship of the Trinity as well as the economy of salvation.³¹

²⁶ Hopko, *op. cit.*, suggests that the wording of the Nicene-Constantinople Creed (namely, “the Spirit proceeding from the Father”) was a direct quotation from John 14:26 and that the addition of *filioque* changed the meaning of Scripture. He also notes that the Nicene-Constantinople Creed reflected the Athanasius Creed of the 4th and 5th Century, adding further weight to the need to reject the *filioque*.

²⁷ Hopko, *op. cit.* Further, Hopko suggests that all of the Fathers of the East and the West recognised the Father alone is the *archē* of divinity, the cause, the source of the Son and the Spirit, before Augustine introduced his theology.

²⁸ Note that the Western view also used the foundation of the Cappadocian Fathers, as in footnote 19.

²⁹ Augustine of Hippo, *On the Trinity*, n.d. [cited December 2016]. Online. <http://www.thefishersofmenministries.com/Augustine%20of%20Hippo-On%20the%20Trinity.pdf>; Book II, chapter 5, paragraph 7; Book III, Preface, paragraph 3; Book IV, chapter 20, paragraph 29.

³⁰ Augustine, *op. cit.*, Book XV, chapter 17, paragraph 29; Augustine can seem to be self-contradictory if sentences are taken outside of the flow of his argument. In Book XV, chapter 17, paragraph 27, he says “And the Holy Spirit, according to the Holy Scriptures, is neither of the Father alone, nor of the Son alone, but of both” which appears to be suggesting a dual procession of origin. However, he goes on to explain that the origin of the Spirit (in paragraph 29) is from God alone. “God the Father alone is He from whom the Word is born, and from whom the Holy Spirit principally proceeds. And therefore I have added the word principally, because we find that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son also. But the Father gave Him this too, not as to one already existing, and not yet having it; but whatever He gave to the only-begotten Word, He gave by begetting Him. Therefore He so begat Him as that the common Gift should proceed from Him also, and the Holy Spirit should be the Spirit of both”. Similar references to the Father being the source are at Book XV, chapter 23, paragraph 43 as well as Book 5, chapter 14.

³¹ Dennis K. P. Ngien, “The Filioque Clause in the Teaching of Anselm of Canterbury — Part 2” in *Churchman*, 118, 3 (2004), 219-221; Holmes, *op. cit.*, 148-149.

Anselm also argued that in order for the Son and the Spirit to be individuated, the origin needed to be distinguished, ontologically.³² Anselm maintained that the Father was the ultimate source of the Godhead (consistent with an Eastern view) but that there was a procession from the Father, to the Son, to the Spirit in a causal way and not just *per filium*. He recognised that the Son had the Spirit by virtue of the Father, but suggested that the Spirit then proceeded from the Son alone (contrary to Augustine).³³

Aquinas in *Summa Theologia* defended the *filioque* on the basis of a number of Scriptures, reasoning that the economy of salvation reveals the eternal relations.³⁴ The internal processions from God were identical to the source, but he distinguished the Son as being “generated” and the Spirit as “proceeding.”³⁵ He suggested that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as an expression of their mutual love, arguing that the Son and the Spirit would not be distinct if they both proceeded from the Father.³⁶

For Aquinas, these different processions create relationships within the Trinity, which then distinguish the three persons of the Trinity (but not their intrinsic nature).³⁷ He reasoned that there are four “relations” within God: the Father’s relationship to the Son; the Son’s relationship to the Father; the shared relationship between the Father and the Son to the Spirit (“spiration”) and the Spirit’s relationship to the Father and the Son (“procession”).³⁸ This way of describing the relationship within the Trinity is dependent on the *filioque*.³⁹

The Differences between the East and the West

As with many controversial issues, multiple dynamics are often at play and it is easy to miss the fine distinctions that are made on either side. Both use the same Scriptures to support their argument, but with different understandings of the implications of the “Spirit

³² Holmes, *op. cit.*, 151, comments that Anselm seemed not to adopt the classic Trinitarian distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* and viewed the relations of origin as being substantial.

³³ Dennis K. P. Ngien, “The Filioque Clause in the Teaching of Anselm of Canterbury — Part 1” in *Churchman*, 118, 2 (2004), 110, 113-115; also Part 2, 118, 3 (2004), 222; Holmes, *op. cit.*, 150-151 phrases it as “the Son is begotten of the Father’s deity, and the Spirit proceeds from the shared deity of Father and the Son”.

³⁴ Thomas Aquinas, “Summa Theologia, First Part, Question 27: The Processions of the Divine Persons”. 2016 [accessed January 2017]. Online. <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1036.htm>, article, 1. Holmes, *op. cit.*, 157, notes that this is a quote from the Latin Vulgate, *ego ex Deo processi*, and the word *processi* may well convey an idea that is possibly not evident in the original Greek. Dulles, *op. cit.*, 44, notes that the Greek word *ekporeusis* conveys the idea of proceeding from an original source whereas the Latin word does not convey this same meaning. In the NIV, this part of the verse reads, “I have come here from God”.

³⁵ Aquinas, *op. cit.*, article 4, although he does also identify “will” as a divine force, with the Holy Spirit being the divine will.

³⁶ Aquinas, *op. cit.*, articles 3-5; Kärkkäinen, *op. cit.*, 51-52, notes that this “blurs the role and personality of the Spirit in the Trinity”.

³⁷ Thomas Aquinas, “Summa Theologia, First Part, Question 28: The Divine Relations”. 2016 [accessed January 2017]. Online. <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1028.htm>, article 3.

³⁸ Aquinas, *op. cit.*, article 4.

³⁹ Holmes, *op. cit.*, 158 notes that the Aquinas’ logic of relations can only lead to *filioque* but it appears to the author that the *filioque* was a basis for his understanding of the relations in the Trinity and therefore is self-fulfilling.

proceeding from the Son.” While there are “hard line” adherents on both sides of the debate, the use of “East/West” to describe the divide is somewhat misleading as there is not unilateral agreement on the *filioque* within the Western church.⁴⁰

Kärkkäinen notes that Leonard Boff, Karl Barth and C. Nyamiti support the retention of the *filioque* while Moltmann, Pannenberg and Torrance support the removal of the *filioque*.⁴¹ Barth supported the *filioque* because of his emphasis on Christ as the one who reveals God; the knowledge of God is only through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.⁴² Avery Dulles also supports the *filioque* because it relates to an “intimate connection between the immanent and economic Trinity – between processions and the missions.”⁴³ He suggests that the East and West should tolerate the different expressions of the same faith.⁴⁴

Conversely, Moltmann proposes that *filioque* should be removed from the Creed in order to heal the rift between the Eastern and Western churches.⁴⁵ He suggests that *filioque* is misleading; John 15:26 establishes that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and, consequently, a more appropriate wording would be *per filium*.⁴⁶ However, Moltmann also stresses the procession of the Spirit from the Father is relative to “his divine existence” and to relationships within the Trinity, particularly as the “Father” is the “Father of the Son” from all eternity.⁴⁷ Moltmann makes an important distinction here; the citation of the Trinity, as

⁴⁰ Some theologians in the East accept *filioque*. Maximus the Confessor (580-662) said that it did not contradict the Cappadocian Fathers: the Father remained the source of the Godhead; the Son mediated the Spirit in the economy of salvation and in imparting the Spirit to the world. See Siecienski, *op. cit.*, 61 and Maximus the Confessor. 134-136. “Ad Domnum Marinum Cypri Presbyterum (Letter to the Priest Marinus of Cyprus)” in *St. Maximus on the Filioque*. [Posted 2008, accessed January 2017]. Online. <https://bekkos.wordpress.com/2008/01/21/st-maximus-on-the-filioque/>, writes that the “Romans ... have not made the Son the cause of the Spirit” and noted a difference in the use of the word “procession” between the Greeks and the Romans. He further suggested that there were confusions and potential heresies on both sides of the argument. A contemporary Eastern writer, Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, (Revised edition; London: Penguin Books, 1997) also follows Maximus.

⁴¹ These are all ‘western’ theologians; Kärkkäinen, *op. cit.*, 58, 70, 284, 364; Luther and Calvin also supported the *filioque*, see Declan Marmion and Rik Van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to the Trinity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 133, 139. Myk Habets, (ed.). *Ecumenical Perspectives on the Filioque for the 21st Century*. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014) has a good range of theologians views on the *filioque*.

⁴² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G.W Bromley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956) I/1: 119, 477- 484. “The one God reveals Himself according to Scripture as the Redeemer, i.e., as the Lord who sets us free. As such He is the Holy Spirit, by receiving whom we become the children of God, because, as the Spirit of the love of God the Father and the Son, He is so antecedently in Himself”, 448. Barth also refers to God as the revealer, Christ as the revelation and the Spirit as the “revealedness” with “unimpaired differentiation within Himself this threefold mode of being”, 299. See also, Marmion and Nieuwenhove, *op. cit.*, 159.

⁴³ Dulles, *op. cit.*, 43.

⁴⁴ Dulles, *op. cit.*, 42.

⁴⁵ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981, Fortress Press Edition, 1993), 181-182.

⁴⁶ Moltmann, *op. cit.*, 182.

⁴⁷ Moltmann, *op. cit.*, 183; he develops this argument as the procession of the Holy Spirit presupposes the generation of the Son but the Son is not the origin of the Spirit – the origin is distinguished yet

‘Father, Son and Holy Spirit’ is a reference to the internal relationships within the Trinity but these relationships are then used to identify the origins of the persons of the Trinity. Identifying the “Father” as the “Father of the Son” might seem pedantic but it clearly establishes the monarchy of the Father and it also distinguishes the Spirit from the Son.

This raises another issue in the *filioque* debate; the idea of determining the origin of persons within the Trinity. Although both sides recognise that all persons of the Trinity are co-eternal, divine and of the same substance, the debate is over the *source* of the Holy Spirit. This preoccupation appears to be related to establishing the divinity of each person of the Trinity but it is at the expense of the mutuality, co-existence and interdependence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.⁴⁸ The Cappadocian fathers saw the three *hypostases* being intimately connected with every divine attribute being shared in being and in action.⁴⁹ In the same way, a reference to the Spirit being the ‘Spirit of Christ’ or the ‘Spirit of the Son’ indicates the mutuality of the Trinity and not necessarily a source.

The deletion of the *filioque* from the Western Creeds is unlikely to heal the divide between the Eastern and Western churches as many other issues relating to practice and church authority would remain unresolved.⁵⁰ In addition, there appears to be some lingering resentment relating to the history of the *filioque* that cannot be addressed by a theological debate but only by repentance and forgiveness. Further, the *filioque* is a somewhat abstract theological concept with little relevance to everyday Christian life and practice.⁵¹ However, there remains a paradox in the language of the Scriptures that presses for a deeper understanding of the Trinity.

connected by relationship. He suggests that an alternative interpretation of the Creed is “*The Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father of the Son and who receives his form from the Father of the Son*” (italics in the original), 187.

⁴⁸ Kärkkäinen, *op. cit.*, 59, states that he agrees with Pannenberg (*Systematic Theology*, 1:319) in this regard and that this “blurs the idea of Athanasius – the importance of which he himself hardly noticed – that relations are based on mutuality rather than origin”.

⁴⁹ The Cappadocian Fathers based this on Scriptures in John: 10:30 (I and the Father are one); 10:38 (... the Father is in me and I am in the Father); 14:11 (Believe when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me); and 17:21 (that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you). See Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordination: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 42, where he considers the issue of subordination in the Trinity.

⁵⁰ In this regard, it is interesting to observe that in 1979 the World Council of Churches recommended the deletion of *filioque* and a return to the Nicene-Constantinople Creed; however, this has not happened across the Western church; see World Council of Churches, “The Filioque Clause in Ecumenical Perspective,” in *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ: Ecumenical Reflections on the Filioque Controversy; Faith and Order Paper 103*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981).

⁵¹ Kärkkäinen, *op. cit.*, 53 suggests that most contemporary theologians agree that “if it can be shown that the Christian doctrine of God is best expressed in the form of one God, then the Trinity is a secondary addition, at best a helpful appendix to the doctrine but not necessary for presenting the God of the Bible”. However, the author believes that it is important that we attempt to appreciate the Trinitarian nature of the God we worship.

The Future of *Filioque*

One of the difficulties in discussing the Trinity is to hold the idea of the in-dwelling of each person of the Trinity with the others, while accepting that each person is distinct and not able to be substituted by any other, in both the economic and immanent Trinity.⁵² The two extremes of tritheism and modalism need to be avoided whilst attempting to describe the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in their nature and in their interrelationships, and the *filioque* does little to add to this understanding.

The *filioque* is an unrefined addition to the Creed that points to a relationship between the Son and the Spirit; and that relationship warrants a holistic Biblical approach from creation to the eschaton.⁵³ A much fuller description of this relationship would be of value to reflect the power of the Spirit of Christ working in the world today. The shared dynamics of each person of the Trinity and the interwoven nature of the revelation of the Trinity throughout the Bible proves the divinity of the Son and the Spirit without the need to fixate on the source of the persons within the Godhead. The *filioque* is not necessarily heresy but it is not helpful for church unity or for Trinitarian theology.

Conclusion

The *filioque* is a Latin word that means “from the Son.” In the context of the *filioque* controversy, it refers to the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son, as stated in John 20:22. This phrase was added to the Nicene-Constantinople Creed in 589 without the agreement of the Eastern church, creating a division between the East and the West.

There are considerable areas of agreement on both sides: God is one in three persons; each person shares the same divine substance, equally and eternally; and the three persons are distinguished by their relationships to each other. There is no argument that the Son is generated from the Father or that the Spirit proceeds from the Father, or even that the Spirit proceeds from the Son. The issue lies in the interpretation of the consequences of the “Spirit proceeding from the Son.” For the East, it subordinates the Holy Spirit and undermines the monarchy of the Father; for the West, it reflects the role of Christ in mediating the Spirit.

The *filioque* is an unrefined addition that does not adequately describe the relationship between the Son and the Spirit. A new addition is needed that preserves the distinction between the persons of the Trinity (as in an Eastern view) and acknowledges the role of

⁵² Kärkkäinen, *op. cit.*, 41, notes that the Eastern view maintains this distinctiveness.

⁵³ For example, T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988; 1993 edition), 4, stresses the importance of the New Testament as the testimony to the Spirit and the Son giving access to the Father. Further, much of the debate is centred on New Testament verses, and particularly the Gospel of John, when Jesus says *He* will send the Spirit (16:7) who *proceeds from the Father* (15:26); that *He* will pray for *the Father to send the Spirit* (14:16) and that the Father will send the Spirit *in His name* (14:26; see Kärkkäinen, *op. cit.*, 56-67). However, the relevance of the Old Testament is not completely unheeded; for example, Sang Hoon Lee, *Trinitarian Ontology and Israel in Robert W. Jenson's Theology* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2016), considers Old Testament issues (covenant, law, election and monotheism) and the links to Christian Trinitarian theology in Jenson's works.

Christ as mediating the Spirit (the Western view) while clearly recognising the mutuality of the Trinity, the Father is revealed in the Son through the Holy Spirit, all acting in concert with each other, in unity.

Bibliography

Anselm of Canterbury. 1102. “The Procession of the Holy Spirit (De Processione Spiritus Sancti)” in Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (trans), 2000, *The Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*. Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press. <<http://jasper-hopkins.info/DeProcessione.pdf>> (accessed January 2017).

Athanasius. 2009. “The Incarnation of God” in William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint (eds.), *Christian Apologetics Past and Present: A Primary Source Reader, Volume 1, to 1500*. Wheaton: Crossway, pp. 175- 188.

Aquinas, Thomas. n.d. *Summa Theologia, First Part, Question 27: The Processions of the Divine Persons*. <<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1027.htm>> 2016 (accessed January 2017).

_____. n.d. *Summa Theologia, First Part, Question 28: The Divine Relations Persons*. <<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1028.htm>> 2016 (accessed January 2017).

_____. n.d. *Summa Theologia, First Part, Question 36: The Person of the Holy Ghost*. <<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1036.htm>> 2016 (accessed January 2017).

_____. n.d. *Summa Theologia, First Part, Question 37: The Name of the Holy Ghost - Love*. 2016 <<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1037.htm>> 2016 (accessed January 2017).

Augustine of Hippo. n.d. *On Christian Doctrine*. <<http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/augustine/ddc.html>> (accessed December and January, 2016/17).

Augustine of Hippo. n.d. *On the Trinity (Book I, II)*. <<http://www.thefishersofmenministries.com/Augustine%20of%20Hippo-On%20the%20Trinity.pdf>> (accessed January, 2017).

Augustine. 419. “On the Trinity [De Trinitate, Libro XV]”, trans. Arthur West Hadden. Revised by William G. T. Shedd (1887) in Philip Schaff, (ed.). 1993 (reprint). *A Selected Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of Christian Church, Volume III, St Augustine: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark; pp. 17-228.

Barth, Karl. 1956. *Church Dogmatics*. G.W Bromley and T. F. Torrance (eds.). Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

- Bible Study Tools. 2017. *The Writings of Athanasius*.
<<http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/early-church-fathers/post-nicene/vol-4-athanasius/athanasius/>> (accessed January 2017).
- Cohen, Will T. 2013. "The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy" in *Pro Ecclesia*, 22, 1, pp. 109-113.
- Creed of Nicea. 325. "The Creed of Nicaea – Agreed at the Council in 325" in *Early Church Texts*. <http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/creed_of_nicaea_325.htm> (accessed January 2017).
- Cyril of Jerusalem. n.d. *Catechetical Lecture 5: On Faith*.
<<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310105.htm>> (accessed January 2017), Philip Schaff & Henry Wace (eds.), trans. by Edwin Hamilton Gifford. 1894. *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 7*. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, 2009.
- Dowley, Tim. (ed.). 2013. *An Introduction to the History of Christianity* (2nd Ed.). Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Dulles, Avery. 1995. "The Filioque: What Is at Stake?" in *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 59, 1-2, pp. 31-48.
- Ferguson, E. 2013. Athanasius. In T. Dowley (Ed.), *An introduction to the history of Christianity* (2nd Ed.) (p. 121). Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Giles, Kevin. 2002. *The Trinity and Subordination: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.
- Grenz, Stanley J. 2004. *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Habets, Myk (ed.). 2014. *Ecumenical Perspectives on the Filioque for the 21st Century*. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark.
- Haugh Richard. 1975. *Photios and the Carolingians: The Trinitarian Controversy*. Belmont, MA: Norland.
- Holmes, Stephen R. 2012. *The Quest for the Trinity: Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic.
- Hopko, Thomas, Fr. n.d. "The Filioque: Fr. Thomas Hopko" in *Speaking the Truth in Love: Compelling Commentary on Christian Belief and Behaviour*. Posted 2015.
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QE9PT6pjXMk>> (accessed January 2017).
- Jenkins, Philip. 2008. *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia- and How It Died*. New York: Lion.
- John of Damascus. n.d. *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*.

<http://www.orthodox.net/fathers/exacti.html#BOOK_I_CHAPTER_I> (accessed January 2017).

Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. 2007. *The Trinity: Global Perspectives*. London: Westminster John Knox Press.

_____. 2014. *Trinity and Revelation: A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Lee, Sang Hoon. 2016. *Trinitarian Ontology and Israel in Robert W. Jenson's Theology*. Eugene: Pickwick Publications.

Marmion, Declan & Rik Van Nieuwenhove. 2011. *An Introduction to the Trinity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Maximus the Confessor. 134-136. "Ad Domnum Marinum Cypri Presbyterum (Letter to the Priest Marinus of Cyprus)" in *St. Maximus on the Filioque*. Posted January 21, 2008. <<https://bekkos.wordpress.com/2008/01/21/st-maximus-on-the-filioque/>> (accessed January 2017).

McGrath, Alister E. 2011. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 5th Ed. London: Wiley-Blackwell.

_____. 2011. *The Christian Theology Reader*, 4th ed. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Moltmann, Jürgen. 1981. *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl. San Francisco: Harper & Row (Fortress Press Edition, 1993).

Nicene-Constantinople Creed. 381. "The Nicene Creed – Agreed to at the Council of Constantinople in 381" in *Early Church Texts*, at <http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/nicene_creed.htm> (accessed January 2017).

Ngien, Dennis K. P. 2004. "The Filioque Clause in the Teaching of Anselm of Canterbury — Part 1" in *Churchman*, 118, 2, pp. 105-122.

_____. 2004. "The Filioque Clause in the Teaching of Anselm of Canterbury — Part 2" in *Churchman*, 118, 3, pp. 219-234.

Pannenberg, Wolfhart. 1991. *Systematic Theology: Volume 1*. Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Photios. n.d. *Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*. <http://www.myriobiblos.gr/texts/english/photios_mystagogy.html> (accessed January 2017).

Siecienski Edward A. 2010. *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Thompson, Geoff & Christiaan Mostert, eds. 2000. *Karl Barth: A Future for Postmodern Theology?* Hindmarsh: Australian Theological Forum.

Torrance, T. F. 1988. *The Trinitarian Faith*. (1993 edition). Edinburgh: T & T Clark.

Van de Beek, Abraham. 2010. “The Relevance of Athanasius in Dogmatics” in *Church History & Religious Culture*, 90(2/3), pp. 287-309.

Ware, Timothy. 1997. *The Orthodox Church*. (Revised edition). London: Penguin Books.

A Theology of the Ordinary

Paul Francis Porta

Author: *Paul Porta has been involved in theological education and ministry training since 1984. He served as a missionary/educationist for twenty years in Brazil with the Brazilian Advanced School of Theology and in Portugal with the National Bible Institute of the Assemblies of God. Paul joined Australian College of Christian Studies as a sessional lecturer in 2006 and then as Academic Dean. Paul currently works as the Dean of Studies at ACCS. He is completing his Doctor of Ministry with Charles Sturt University. His passion is to see the students and lecturers of ACCS actively engaged in the theological journey and fulfilling their God given calling in diverse Christian ministries.*

Abstract: Contemporary studies in Practical Theology reflect a growing interest in qualitative research related to Christian faith and practice. Though often not recognised as such, this type of research aligns very much with the underlying principles of ordinary theology. The application of empirical research to Christian faith and practice alludes to an ordinary theology approach that hears and responds to the stories of the ordinary experiences of God expressed in faith and practice. This essay will engage with the emerging subdiscipline in Practical Theology in which diverse God stories of believers may be recognised as forms of disciplined theological reflection.

Defining the Ordinary

Ordinary theology is defined as “the theology and theologizing of Christians who have received little or no theological education of a scholarly, academic or systematic kind” (Astley, 2002a, p. 25). Astley is not dismissive of the essential nature of “scholarly theological education.” He does, however, propose that ordinary theology has a depth and breadth that an academic theology may define but not replicate. Ordinary theology expresses the context of God experience, a spirituality of encounter with the divine majesty and mystery.

In fact, ordinary theology has a religious or better, a *spiritual* priority. It is our first theology, which arises directly from our faith, our experience and our relationship with God in worship and prayer (Astley, 2014, p. 3).

Ordinary theology does not imply inferiority to academic theology, as a theology of a lesser God. There is, after all, an element of the “ordinary” in the academic articulation of theological proposition. The seed of individual Christian faith begins in the environment of

ordinary theology¹ A theology of the ordinary, even the seemingly mundane,² is still very much in the full sense of the term, a theology.³

Attention is drawn to a theology that permeates the ordinary, the everyday life. In this sense, individuals live out their lives making theologically oriented, though often covert, decisions and choices. Such an ordinary theology is a product of a faith narrative that is shaped and formed within the context of the reality of God's immanent presence. It may be that a cognitive approach to understanding God is as much formed against the backdrop of the faith narrative as it is through the propositional understanding of God.

Astley contends that “the ultimate object of theology (God), and its proximate object (faith), are not necessarily better known by the experts than by those who do their theology outside academia” (Astley, 2002b, p. 52). His statement may be well intended toward the academic theologian. However, an application to the academically trained and the untrained is a valid one. Academic theology is tried and tested in the arena of daily life. The academic and the non-academic demonstrate a lived theology. While recognising the interplay between ordinary and academic theologies it is conceded that the relevance of ordinary theology is not limited to such interplay. Other significant elements are involved.

Ordinary theology finds expression at four interlinked levels; primal, vernacular, autobiographical and embedded. It has been suggested that these four elements share a common construct “based on an opposing other” (Ward & Campbell, 2011, p. 227). Consequently, a vernacular or contextual theology is framed within a Marxist dialectic approach to “a powerful or formal or privileged or colonial construction of faith.” Ward and Campbell identify Astley's contrast between ordinary and educated/academic theologies as a case in point. They criticise practical theology for the way in which it apparently lags other theological disciplines that have moved to a more revisionist approach to the idea of contrasts. Their criticism, in fact, takes Astley's idea of contrasts between ordinary and academic theologies beyond his intention. For Astley, the distinctions are of degree, not of kind.⁴

... the differences between these two ‘ideal types’ are often best characterized by differences of (sometimes marked) degree rather than as a difference of kind. It is not true to say that all ordinary theology is always thoroughly spiritual or personal; nor that every example of academic theology is irredeemably impersonal or theoretical (Astley, 2002a, p. 28).

¹ “Even academics normally begin by doing theology in an ordinary way, and this ordinary theology often continues to underlie their more academic theological expressions” (Astley, 2013, p. 1).

² Astley 2002:47-48.

³ Ward and Campbell observe that “the contemporary interest in the ordinary emphasizes the extent to which the expression of Christian communities is already theological” (Ward & Campbell, 2011, p. 226).

⁴ Astley's comments speak also to Pentecostalism's historical suspicion that academic theology serves to stifle spirituality and an immanent experience of God.

Ordinary theology is complex with risks involved. Debate continues around what constitutes a contextual theology and a systematic theology. As will be seen, the boundaries between the ordinary and the systematic are not as clearly defined as may be thought.

Take Bevans' reflection on the Trinity for example (Bevans, 2002). Here we have a core Christian doctrine and yet it is not generally a component or part of the Christian ordinary conversation. Bevans refers to the Trinity as itself "a dynamic in Christianity that calls for contextualization" (Bevans, 2002, p. 15). He explains that,

Contemporary understandings⁵ of God as Trinity speak of God as a dynamic, relational community of persons whose very nature it is to be present and active in the world, calling it and persuading it toward the fullness of relationship that Christian tradition calls salvation (Bevans, 2002, p. 15).

Two essential elements come into focus. First is the doctrine of the Trinity as the outcome of a systematic approach to an understanding of the ontological reality of the Triune God. Second is the dynamic relationality that directs attention to the presence and activity of the Triune God in the affairs of humanity. Here is a contextuality of experience of ontological divine reality. Without this synergy, a contextual theology may succumb to the vagaries of human consciousness and ambition. Likewise, a systematic theology may succumb to a seemingly irrelevant academic isolationism. Astley's ordinary theology is itself an exploration of how this synergy may be maintained, even enhanced in Christian faith and practice.

A Primal Knowing

Ordinary theology pre-dates and yet co-exists with a systematized knowing through a continuum of formation/information.⁶ Primal perceptions interact, accepting or rejecting, the cognitive knowledge of a systematized theology. Experiential pragmatism identifies with a priority of the primal. Accordingly, perceptual knowledge, not propositional knowledge is historically the primal.

Ordinary theology is what we start with, a kind of primal knowing that co-exists with the more technical and systematized knowing that is learnt through processes of education (Ward & Campbell, 2011, p. 226).

A learned faith devoid of an historical referent or beginning leads to a truncated understanding of the fullness of theology. Origins are essential to knowledge and understanding, a point recognised by McGrath.

The recognition that human thought - whether sociology, theology, ethics or metaphysics - arises in a specific social context is of fundamental importance to the sociology of knowledge (McGrath, 1990, p. 89).

⁵ The plural is significant.

⁶ Perhaps the process should be extended: formation – information – reformation – formation - indicating the interactive development between the ordinary and the academic.

A Vernacular God Talk

Language is a verbal or non-verbal key to and expression of understanding. A direct linguistic transfer of propositional understanding, particularly transcendent propositions, may be insufficient within the context of belief and practice. A nuanced misunderstanding, even misinterpretation, may yet remain.

Ordinary theology requires an ordinary language (Lees-Smith, 2013, pp. 25-26). Complex language specific explanation of faith and practice, in isolation from an ordinary lived context, runs the risk of eluding the ordinary practitioner of Christian faith. An ordinary language expresses, in the terminology of the speaker, the internalised and formative perception of the what, who and why of God's personal and immanent interventions. God is experienced in the ordinary and that experience is, in turn, expressed in the language of the ordinary, the vernacular (Astley, 2002b; 2010, pp. 44-62; 2014, pp. 69-83).

In broad terms religious language comprises of a “primary language of living faith” and a “second order talk about God” (Astley, 2010, pp. 44-46). A spectrum of God-talk exists with at one end the poetic and story language of Scripture, piety and worship, expressed in autobiographical and anecdotal discourses of ordinary theology and, at the other end, the didactic language of systematic and consistent expressions of propositional truth (Astley, 2010, p. 45). God-talk, then, moves across the spectrum. Rather than an either/or conflict, as suggested by Ward and Campbell, between the ordinary and academic interactions occur at various stages between the extremities.⁷ Two caveats are essential.

The first caveat is the priority of an existential connection with a living and lived Christian faith expressed through the vernacular of ordinary theology. The reverse, a priority of an academic language may obscure theology's “spiritual and practical religious roots” (Astley, 2010, p. 46). The existential priority ensures the relevancy of the interaction of the ordinary and the academic in connective terms of practice and proposition.

The second caveat recognises the essential contribution of an academic or doctrinal language as a necessary verity and cohesion test of existentially expressed faith and practice. Creedal statements,⁸ for example, express an academic and linguistic precision that may lack clarity and meaning to the “unlearned” but for all that are essential backdrops to Christian faith and practice. It is here that Vanhoozer and Strachan's (Kevin J. Vanhoozer & Strachan, 2015) suggestion is relevant to the interchange of the ordinary and the academic. The authors promote a decisive role for the local church pastor as the interpreter of the essentials of an academic theology in the vernacular. In such a presentation, the essentials of theological accuracy and application may be grasped and actioned by the academically untrained, i.e., ordinary theologians.

⁷ Points of interaction across the spectrum may be a consequence of the dynamics of variance of contextuality.

⁸ Christie and Cartledge employ such a theological caveat in their research.

Gender and the Vernacular

Anthony Lees-Smith (Lees-Smith, 2013, pp. 23-31) examined Astley's suggestion that ordinary theology is "a theology of the mother tongue" in contrast to an academic or authoritative father tongue (Astley, 2002b, pp. 77-82). Taking a decidedly patriarchal stand the "father tongue" is defined as the objective "language of power and politics" and objectivity, whereas the "mother tongue" is defined as the subjective language of relationship, of communication and exchange.

The mother tongue looks back to the origin of ideas, the idea of ordinary theology being expressed in the primal vernacular. Ordinary theology is "acquired 'at our mother's knee'⁹, learnt through engagement with our environment and therefore inextricably bound up with autobiographical details and personal story" (Lees-Smith, 2013, p. 24). Initial and progressively acquired life experience develops comprehensible meaning within the context of cultural traditions and perceived expectations (Lees-Smith, 2013, p. 26).

... our ordinary theology may be the result of a complex interaction of cultural inheritance, contextual demands and an attempt to interpret our experiences of God: just as our native language appears to develop as the combination of innate capacity and creativity together with immersion in a particular linguistic tradition (Lees-Smith, 2013, p. 29).

The suggestion of a vernacular theological "mother-tongue" introduces the complex world of vernacular language, the language of the "other," a feature of the research project's multiple vernaculars. The linguistic goal is to arrive at the closest approximations of both word, and the meaning of those words within the vernacular context. The shadow of that which is lost in translation is a constant presence. The task may be prolonged, but not without its rewards in an understanding of the "other," particularly in the context of a culturally conceived ordinary theology (Graham, Walton, & Ward, 2007, pp. 370-372).

The vernacular richness of the Day of Pentecost¹⁰ contrasted with a singular official language provides a vehicle for understanding the movement of the Spirit on that day (Graham, Walton, & Ward, 2005; Graham et al., 2007). Here is "a biblical mandate for taking ordinary theology as 'mother tongue' more seriously" (Lees-Smith, 2013, p. 29). The presence of the Holy Spirit within the specific cultural contexts at Pentecost exemplifies the spiritual dimension that gives expression and validity to an ordinary theology (Lees-Smith, 2013, p. 28).

The application of terms such as vernacular and mother-father language are not intended to identify gender issues, though these may occur in the context of a genderized analogy (Astley, 2002b, pp. 78-79). Vernacular and mother language stress the ordinariness of the theological language in its primal expressions (Lees-Smith, 2013, pp. 23-31) out of which a

⁹ 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:14-15.

¹⁰ Acts 2:6.

“conceptual language of doctrine and theology” is derived (Christie, 2012, p. 149). Ward and Graham conclude,

Local theologians believe that God is present and active in generating ... insights. They possess the potential to review Christian understanding and enable us to discover and claim previously unrecognized or unregarded aspects of God’s embodied revelation in Christ (Graham et al., 2007, p. 371).

Autobiographical Narrative

Ordinary theology recognises the continued influence of primal personal religious awareness. Again, there is potential here to bridge ordinary conception and academic cognition (Phan, 2003, 1999). Amos Yong follows a similar approach (Yong, 2014, pp. 17-27). He inculcates the contributions of his culturally plural formations in the sense of his country of origin and his integration into the American church’s expressions of Christian faith and practice, into his academic expertise within a unified understanding of theology. The “ordinary” theologian has a story to tell.

Cartledge identified testimony as the critical element in understanding the theological concepts held by members of a British Pentecostal church. He employed testimony as an expression of ordinary faith and practice in order to hear the varied stories of the participants (Cartledge, 2006, 2008; Cartledge, 2010a, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2015; Cartledge & Cheetham, 2011). He suggested a direct/indirect model based on research of belief and practice as a way in which perceptions of God may be effectively measured.

God is not the direct object of enquiry, since theology is a reflection on faith expressed in belief and practice. God cannot be researched directly because he is a transcendent reality. God is the direct object of faith, whereas the beliefs and practices of religious people are the direct object of theology and thus God as a transcendent reality is the indirect object of theology. This means that the reception of God’s self-revelation by a person can become the object of research, “especially in the religious experience in which he ... experiences reality as religious” (Cartledge, 2015, p. 25).

Cartledge focused his research on “the turn to testimony as a form of legitimate theological discourse” (Cartledge, 2015, p. 29) considered a legitimate partner in the formulation of an ordinary theology. He adds,

It can be argued that the concept of testimony, the telling of one’s personal story of God’s activity, is central to the ordinary expression of faith. This is because Pentecostalism is rooted in oral culture, rather than literary culture, and oral culture is shaped by narrativity (Cartledge, 2010b, p. 17).

Cartledge further considered the pragmatic function of the personal narrative.

The kind of rationality employed within Pentecostalism is more likely to be narrative in shape, a story about what happened and its consequences, rather than a set of abstract propositions (Cartledge, 2010b, p. 17).

An academic or cognitive theology of God by its very nature is prone to the limitations of human rationality in the face of divine transcendence,¹¹ a point expressed by Cartledge. More is needed if there is to be an understanding of God as object, perhaps as alluded to by the apostle Paul (Philippians 3:10). The personal narrative provides the immanent context of the ineffable character of divine transcendence. Cartledge allows for a valid approach to research of God as both transcendent objectivity and personified subjectivity. Academic theology answers to the object and ordinary theology answers to the subject. A forfeiture of either the objective or the subjective will result in a truncated divine transcendence or an anchorless divine immanence.

Embedded Theology

The elements of primal, vernacular and autobiographical, describe ordinary theology as a theology of origins. The final element in our consideration of ordinary theology, embedded theology, though not directly identified with ordinary theology (Stone & Duke, 2006) expresses the continuing impact of elemental theological contributors within individual faith and practice.

Embedded theology is defined as that which “Christians live out in their daily lives” (Stone & Duke, 2006, p. 13). Elements of Christian faith such as prayer, preaching, worship, liturgy, social action and “virtually everything else people say and do in the name of their Christian faith fall into this category” (Stone & Duke, 2006, p. 13). Here is a theology of practice and experience. An embedded theology is lived out in daily experience.

Embedded theology may present itself as either covert or overt. Covert embedded theology integrates with the individual’s life context. It is simply assumed and taken for granted. Indeed, an embedded theology in this situation is identified as the norm or the expected. Overt embedded theology, on the other, is that embedded theology that reacts to an altered life context. There is an absence of normalcy, the presence of the unexpected. Such may occur with the research project’s participants.

Faith here is practised in the language and customs of origin. The immigrant may be more comfortable expressing formal or informal worship in the vernacular or mother tongue. Church members of culturally and ethnically diverse origins may demonstrate varying degrees of preference for embedded culturally articulated expressions of faith and practice. Though the church they attend may conduct services in English, members of ethnic specific communities may prefer to conduct meetings in their language of origin. In this way,

¹¹ Recognising rational limitations does not diminish the vitality of the rational investigation of the divine mystery. Alister E. McGrath, for example, made a significant contribution to a rational theology in his three volume work on a scientific theology. (McGrath, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c).

ordinary theology is expressed in, what is to these church members, their very ordinary practices of their faith. There is a distinct element of longevity within an embedded theology.

... the engine that drives our current attitudes, virtues and even cognitions is powered by the memories, images and emotional aftertastes of their learning origination that still lie deep within us (Astley, 2002a, p. 23).

And yet, change comes to challenge or even threaten embedded theology. Embedded culturally formed theological experiences encounter alternative, even competing, expressions of faith and practice. Fidelity to an embedded belief and practice may confront the embedded beliefs and practices of the “other.” Change may be peacefully accepted or forcefully rejected. It is at this point that embedded theology requires a level of reflection and direction. Not for this reason alone, an embedded theology requires a dialogical referent.

The Essential Dialogue

While a theology from below contributes to an understanding of Christian faith and practice, the analysis of such understandings requires a common cognitive theological referent. Without a cognitive theological referent there is nothing against which the qualitative may be compared or measured, thus denying the theology verifiability and validity. Such an ordinary theology is descriptive but lacks analytical integrity. Both academic and ordinary, or better cognitive and conceptual theologies respond to core systematic claims. Cartledge’s research of ordinary theology was measured against a denominational statement of beliefs and practices (Cartledge, 2006; Cartledge, 2010b, 2013a). Cherrie’s research in ordinary Christology (Christie, 2007, 2012, 2013) and Soteriology (Christie & Astley, 2009) was processed through comparisons with orthodox creedal confessions.

This dialogue- or to use more informal language, this conversation – is between the ‘interpolations,’ the implicit or explicit questions and answers of Christian faith, on the one hand, and those of our human experience and life on the other (Astley, 2002b, p. 3).

A dialogical approach ensures a consistent and cohesive articulation of Christian truth and practice as the lived and the learned come together, a position supported by Christie (Christie, 2013, pp. 41-42) and Astley (Astley, 2002a, pp. 154-162).

Allowing the ordinary people of God to be a criterion of the church’s teaching is rooted in the conviction that ordinary believers can, at least sometimes, be a source of theological wisdom and a medium for divine revelation (Christie, 2013, p. 42).

A theology that is effectual in reflecting and regulating Christian belief and practice derives from the dialogue between a propositional cognitive theology and a primal conceptual theology. The resultant theology reaches to the core elements of perception and

understanding of the human and the divine encounter; the lived faith¹² and the learned faith¹³ come together as transformative theology.¹⁴

Uncovering Ordinary Stories

Research in ordinary theology is best expressed within an environment of diverse research participants (Bevans, 2002, p. 18). Contextual and ordinary theologies are necessary partners in the quest to hear the narratives of individual and community experience of divine transcendent and immanence. Empirical research in ordinary theology (Ward & Campbell, 2011, p. 226) uncovers varied levels of localised perceptions of transcendence and immanence by analysing transformative experiences of the divine encounter. Astley recognises the partnership as; “a proposition of inclusion, not direction ... used to express the sense that theology needs to be done from inside a particular framework of interest and concern” (Astley, 2002b, p. 1).

Bevan cites the Filipino theologian, Hernandes Mercedo: “The people are the best contextualizers: and the role of the theologian is to function as a midwife to the people as they give birth to a theology that is truly rooted in a culture and movement of history” (Bevans, 2002, p. 18).

The question is how to uncover the ordinary within the elemental complexities of a primal, vernacular, autobiographical and embedded theology. Cartledge and Christie each found the way. They listened to the ordinary theologians.

Cartledge’s research was carried out with an Assemblies of God church in England.¹⁵ The narrative of individual experience of the transcendent God answers to the contextual nature of Astley’s ordinary theology (Astley, 2002b).¹⁶ For Cartledge, the purpose of ordinary theology research is to arrive at the “grassroots¹⁷ level of theological discourse” (Cartledge, 2015, p. 25). To accomplish his purpose, Cartledge, first, recognised the specific contextual¹⁸ foundations of British Pentecostalism. The spiritual foundations for British Pentecostalism may be identified with the Welsh revival of 1904-1905 as well as the revival meetings held

¹² As first order theology.

¹³ As second order theology.

¹⁴ As the coalescence of first order theology and second order theology.

¹⁵ Hockley Pentecostal Church, Birmingham. Renamed Life Community Church in 2009. www.life-cc.co.uk

¹⁶ As Cartledge noted; “the definition of theology and theologizing that Astley refers to as ‘ordinary theology’ appears appropriate to Pentecostal and Charismatic studies... it allows us to start with the people in the pew” (Cartledge, 2015, p. 16).

¹⁷ Cartledge’s grassroots approach is mirrored somewhat in Simon Chan’s work on Asian Pentecostal theology in which he engaged in a dialogue between various expressions of primal Pentecostal theology and the broader context of Christian theology (Chan, 2014).

¹⁸ The British context differs to a large extent from the American context which is very much evaluated from the tensions of racial issues inherent in America at the time. There are, however, similar timelines in the foundations of Pentecostalism that warrant further historical and theological considerations.

by Alexander Boddy¹⁹ at All Saints Church, Sunderland between 1908 and 1917 (Cartledge, 2015, p. 3; Wakefield, 2007).

The participants reflect a Pentecostal pragmatic approach to theological understanding. This is not to say that they are theologically unaware. Indeed, as Cartledge noted (Cartledge, 2013b, p. 16) a level of theological reflection is generally encouraged in Pentecostal churches. Such personal and group reflection occurs in Bible study groups, Connect Groups and conferences. Variations may occur in type, but the intention remains the same; to understand the Christian faith and its implications in Christian practice. The result is what he calls an “ordinary expertise” (Cartledge, 2010b, p. 16).

As discussed previously, there are limitations in such research if there is not a third party referent that acts as an instrument of evaluation and critical analysis. Research that neglects the referent runs the risk of limiting itself to description. Devoid of an instrument of critical analysis the research fails to provide satisfactory conclusions. Armstrong cautions the empirical researcher,

What ordinary believers say about their faith is of value and potentially important for the wider faith community only if such talk about God is the result of some critical reflection, and not simply idle thoughts or unreflective opinion (Armstrong, 2013, p. 65).

Cartledge avoided the risk. The British Assemblies of God Statement of Faith acted as his third party referent in conjunction with accepted broader Christian statements. Research was carried out in the style of a triadic analysis. First, the ordinary theological narrative was heard. Second, that narrative was subjected to a critical analysis based on the denominational Statement of Faith. Third, the outcomes of that analysis were subjected to a critical comparison with accepted theological statements of the broader Christian community. The triadic analysis concluded with what Cartledge termed a rescriptive analysis. The three analytical elements came together in a fresh approach or articulation within the specific topics. A “rescripting of ordinary theology” thus occurred (Cartledge, 2010b, pp. 16-18).

Rescription in this practical-theological orientation aims to be careful in its representation, sensitive towards the denominational tradition, sympathetic towards Pentecostal spirituality, yet also critical in its analysis and constructive in its proposals (Cartledge, 2010b, p. 18).

Participant responses were analysed as to how they relate to the British Assemblies of God Statement of Faith within the context of the spectrum of an official theology as expressed in the Statement of Faith and an ordinary theology experienced in faith and practice (Cartledge, 2013a, p. 109). Cartledge concluded that the denomination’s doctrine was “embedded in the

¹⁹ The global expansion of Pentecostalism is somewhat reflected in Boddy’s approach to the Pentecostal experience and doctrine.

conversion-initiation process” (Cartledge, 2013a, p. 112) with continued affirmation throughout church life.

Christie followed a similar pattern in her research (Christie, 2007, 2012). Her interest was in uncovering what ordinary Christians thought about whom Jesus is and what he did. Her approach was very much in line with Astley’s definition of ordinary theology. Research was carried out in four rural Anglican churches.

The Question of Who Jesus is

Christie utilised the creedal statements of Nicea and Chalcedon as “the doctrinal norms against which ordinary Christology must be tested” (Christie, 2007, p. 182). A Christological rule of speech was extracted from the two creeds. Christological speech recognises that “Jesus is one person who is properly spoken of both as God and as a human being” (Christie, 2007, p. 182). To speak of Jesus, then, in the context of the creeds is to speak of Jesus as both God and man. Christie posed the question; “Does the sample talk about Jesus in this way? Do they consider him to be both God and man?” (Christie, 2007, p. 182).

To answer the question, a semi-structured methodology was applied (Christie, 2012, p. 21). Each interview began with an opening question. The response then guided the remainder of the interview. Christie meticulously recorded and transcribed each interview. Her intention was to hear and preserve the vernacular speech of primal theology. The responses were then subjected to critical reflection based on theologies surrounding the person and work of Christ.

Three types of Christologies were identified; the sceptical, ontological and functional. The six sceptics expressed doubt as to the divinity of Jesus. However, doubts as to his divinity did not preclude the participants from identifying themselves as Christians (Christie, 2007, p. 190). It did, however, indicate unbelief in miracles.

Those identified as ontological hold to the “orthodox doctrine that Jesus is God” (Christie, 2007, p. 187). The confession that “Jesus is God” is “synonymous with being a Christian” (Christie, 2007, p. 187). Christie pointedly observed that if such an expectation was indeed obligatory two thirds of the research participants could not be classified as Christians. The responses from the ontological group contrast with those of the functional group in that

... they have an image of Jesus as the pre-existent eternal Son present with God at creation. Jesus is thought of as Son of God, not merely from his resurrection, or baptism or virginal conception, but from eternity (Christie, 2007, p. 188).

Surprisingly, to Christie, the majority of participants indicated a functional rather than an ontological Christology. An unexpected pragmatic approach seemed to have precedence over a propositional one. Hesitancy, even implied refusal, to consider ontological reality was noted (Christie, 2007, p. 185). The functional group’s recognition of the Trinitarian naming of God does not imply, according to Christie, a doctrine of the Trinity. Rather, “what this group has is a *story*, which has a Trinitarian structure” (Christie, 2007, p. 182).

Christie concluded that her research participants

do not abstract from the story of God's action to God's being. This is what academic theologians do. Ordinary theologians are content with story and tend not to engage in speculative thinking (Christie, 2007, p. 183).

The inevitable question was asked; is there a hint of Arianism here? She concludes that the interviewees were, at least, "effectively Arian" (Christie, 2012, p. 57). The contrasts between the ontological and the functional may best be explained in terms of the spectrum between an academic and an ordinary theology.

Academic theology ... is always pressing towards conceptual clarification and ontological explication. Ordinary Christology, by contrast, is not concerned with metaphysical conceptualization and speculation; it is content with the story and is untroubled by these metaphysical issues (Christie, 2012, p. 151).

The Question of What Jesus did

Christie's research of ways in which Jesus was identified utilised the historical Christological creeds as theological referents. She was unable to do the same for her research into the significance given to what Jesus did (Christie & Astley, 2009, p. 180). Instead, she looked to substitutionary atonement as the expression of theological understanding of salvation through the Cross (Christie & Astley, 2009, p. 181).

The same methodology was employed in this research with, again, a meticulous recording of participant responses. Consider, for example the response cited (Christie & Astley, 2009, p. 182). Three groups of responses were identified.

The exemplarists identify Jesus' death as something that illustrates but not achieves something special for humanity (Christie & Astley, 2009, p. 181). Devoid of an objective meaning, an exemplarist soteriology identifies with a subjective impact. Respondents recognized the exemplary love of God in the cross but not in a salvific sense (Christie & Astley, 2009, p. 183).

The traditionalists, on the other hand, identify with and accept the traditional understanding of the cross but are unable to express why they do so (Christie & Astley, 2009, p. 184). Belief was expressed, as it were, through a given theological formula. Here is the language of the learned, not the vernacular or primal. Without explaining why it does so, for the traditionalist what is essential is that Christianity works for them (Christie & Astley, 2009, p. 185).

Unlike the other two groups the evangelicals responded with belief in a substitutionary atonement (Christie & Astley, 2009, p. 187). As Christie explained "the evangelicals have *explicitly* learned substitutionary atonement theology during their socialisation into evangelical Christianity" (Christie & Astley, 2009, p. 188). This is not to say that the evangelicals have engaged in a greater level of theological reflection than the other two groups.

The idea of a personal relationship was also a significant addition to the evangelical response as “evangelical piety depends on knowing Jesus personally, directly, and intimately in one’s heart rather than one’s head” (Christie & Astley, 2009, p. 189).

Christie recommends that urgent work be done to better interpret the meaning of the Cross for those who are puzzled or offended by the idea of substitutionary atonement (Christie & Astley, 2009, p. 193). In much the same way as she calls for a re-telling of Christology in a contemporary idiom, “the church needs to tell new stories of how Jesus saves-stories that address the religious needs of our contemporary world and that are credible and believable for modern minds” (Christie & Astley, 2009, pp. 193-194).

The research in ordinary theology carried out by Cartledge and Christie recognises the essential interplay between ordinary and academic theology. While Healy places a limitation on the role of ordinary theology in the official formulations of Church theology (Healy, 2013, p. 20), Cartledge and Christie opt for a dialogical approach. The significance of ordinary theology research is not only for an academic audience but also, and perhaps more so, for the academically untrained to understand their ordinary theology and, where necessary, to correct or enhance that understanding. Within the dialogical framework the resulting theology is one that expresses a lived and learned process of seeking to understand the ineffable mystery of God in immanent relationship with his creation.

... how can we help people grow in their faith if we do not understand something about what they believe and why they hold the belief they do? (Christie, 2013, p. 39).

Likewise, Cartledge proposes that a contemporary vocalisation of God experience be heard once more in the church. The way this is to be accomplished is a rigorous application of empirical research within a conceptual framework of ordinary theology.

Ordinary Stories: A New Testament Story

It is important that the incursion in ordinary theology resonates with a biblical approach. The Apostle Paul’s God narrative is tested as a potential catalyst for the application of Astley’s ordinary theology to an understanding of perceptions of God.

The New Testament contains a narrative²⁰ with multiple subnarratives. That is, it is historical drama with plot, subplots and players. The players reflect their cultural situation. Political and religious elite mingle, often disdainfully (Luke 16:19-31; 18:9-14) with the common folk, fishermen, farmers and yes, carpenters. The ordinary folk questioned and feared religious and political authority (John 9:22-34). The religious elite guarded their positions of authority to the point of hostility toward a “popular” messianic figure (Murphy-O’Connor, 2004, p. 22). Out of this milieu, the Church was formed but not, as a community of

²⁰ The hermeneutical complexity of this term is recognised (Frei, 1973). However, the position taken is a conservative one which aligns the biblical story with biblical inspiration (2Timothy 3:16; 2Peter 1:21). The analogy borrows Vanhoozer’s analogy of the doctrinal drama (Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 2005; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 2014).

the poor disenfranchised from a community of rank and status. Rather, the New Testament church exemplified the complex social structures of its narrative background (Scholer, 2008, p. 141). The early disciples may have been thought by some as “uneducated and untrained” (Acts 4:33). But this was not necessarily the case. A case may be well made for an interaction of rich and poor, educated and uneducated within the first years of the Church’s narrative. Hence, multiple socio/economic and cultural layers of religious formation are to be anticipated as the New Testament story of the transcendent God in immanent encounter with humanity.

Schnelle (Schnelle, 2007) formatted his New Testament theology through a narrative approach of meaning-formation effectively arguing that “such constructions provide the sense-making capacity that facilitates the individual’s orientation within the framework of life” (Schnelle, 2007, p. 25). Furthermore,

Meaning is an inherent aspect of human existence as such. It emerges from events, experience, insights, thought processes, and hermeneutical accomplishments and it comes together in concepts. These concepts then can provide perspective on the central issues of life, bridging temporal gaps. They can generate normative statements and cultural models (Schnelle, 2007, p. 26).

Schnelle’s comments, while directed to a narrative approach to a theology of the New Testament are also appropriate to a meaning-formation within the personal story of the individual involved with the quest for identity and meaning. The historical narrative is made up of ordinary stories encountering significant movements and processes of meaning-formation. Identity is formed within the story (Schnelle, 2007, pp. 33-39). No less is this relevant in the story of Saul the Pharisee, the apostle Paul.

A discussion of the life of the apostle Paul immediately enters into a world of historical²¹ and theological²² complexities. Twelftree goes so far as to identify the “tension between the Paul of history and the apostle of faith ... already apparent in the New Testament” (Twelftree, 2013, p. 3). Eastman outlines contrasting approaches of the New Testament interpreters in their quest for a biblically centred life of the apostle (Eastman, 2013, p. 34). And yet, Paul’s story inevitably begins with the New Testament narrative, specifically within his post conversion with sporadic allusions to his pre-Christian story.

The question, therefore, is whether an ordinary story of Paul may even be considered. Arguing from silence presents far too many pitfalls to be applied. Yet the traces of a primal embedded narrative of Paul the Jewish Pharisee and Roman citizen within the New Testament narrative identify with a covert ordinary theology.

²¹ Murphy-O’Connor’s approach to Paul’s early years, for example, utilises appropriate conjectures and assumptions based on the paucity of details of Paul’s early life (Murphy-O’Connor, 2004).

²² Wright pointedly argues for a narrative/story approach to a study of Paul, but not in distinction to a doctrinal approach. Story and theology work together in the mapping of Christian belief and practice (Wright, 2005, pp. 7-10).

His understanding of God did not permit him to declare the abrogation of the first covenant. He could not accept and did not want to accept, that God made or had to make a second attempt in order to bring deliverance and salvation to the world. (Schnelle, 2007, p. 360).

It may be that an ordinary story of the apostle is an elusive quest given the complexity of Second Temple Judaism (Longenecker, 2015, p. 19) coupled with the multiple facets of diasporic Judaism (Longenecker, 2015, p. 23). And yet, it is recognised that Paul was very much a man of his time. To appreciate the depth of his theology, one must consider the man, his story. Story and theology run parallel but at decisive moments coalesce to create significant life changing events through which fresh and new perceptions are attained. Paul in this case was no exception (Schnelle, 2005, p. 32). Schnelle explains,

Of the ten New Testament documents whose authors are known, seven come from Paul. His letters from ca. 50-61 CE, provide insight into his theological thought but also illuminate his personal feelings. Extensive sections are charged with emotion and let Paul the human being come before our mind's eye with all his strength and weaknesses (Schnelle, 2005, p. 32).

Locating Paul's pre-Christian experience narrative is a difficult one. That he held, at times tenaciously to his Jewish theological foundations (Galatians 1:14, Philippians 3:5) to the point of hostility and physical persecution of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 7:58; 8:1-3; 9:1-2, Galatians 1:13, 1 Timothy 1:13²³) is clear. To an extent similar to the general Jewish population, Paul's initial theological understanding was developed within the family (Philippians 3:5). Interestingly, Paul alluded to the idea of a maternal language in regard to the primal origins of Timothy's Christian faith (2 Timothy 1:5, 3:14-15).²⁴

While details remain elusive, Paul's primal embedded understanding of God provides an impetus to research on the influence of origins in an individual's narrative of their God experience. In the case of the early church, such narratives were located within the ethnic diversity of the church community (Ephesians 2:11-22). The common narrative of Christian faith and practice was vocalised within specific perceptual and unique personal contexts.

Significance of Ordinary Theology

Practical theology is a contributing partner with academic theology in the continuing development of contemporary theological understanding (Astley, 2010, 2014). Current trends in reflective theological practice (Thompson, Pattison, & Thompson, 2008; Walton,

²³ Critical analysis of Paul's New Testament literary contribution questions his authorship of a number of letters traditionally identified with him. However, the brief biographical inserts in the letters in question provide a reliable summation of Paul's personal God experience both prior to and especially subsequent to his recognition narrative (Acts 9:3-8, Galatians 1:12). (Murphy-O'Connor, 2004, pp. 21-25).

²⁴ Is there an allusion here to Paul's own experience? Ben Witherington III concludes that "nurture played a far larger role than we have ever imagined in the construction of ancient personality" (Witherington, 1998, p. 23). Witherington's comments are indicative of a primal or vernacular approach to an ordinary theology discussed in this chapter.

2014) focus attention on the idea of ordinary theology and its synonyms, as valid tools in empirical research and, importantly, as “central to the hermeneutic understanding of practical theology” (Ward & Campbell, 2011, p. 226).

Ordinary theology is a valid and invaluable assist in qualitative research. The scope of that significance continues through the application of qualitative methodology to the articulation of the research findings contributing to the understanding of Christian faith and practice. The contributions of the ordinary theology of the ordinary Christian provides practitioners of practical and scholastic theologies with an understanding of Christian theology within the praxis of the common (ordinary) life. Christie is correct to conclude that ordinary theology raises “issues of considerable significance for those involved in the Church’s educational ministry as well as those engaged in apologetics and evangelism” (Christie, 2013, p. 39). Astley further defends ordinary theology:

There is an uncontroversial, pragmatic justification for its study in that the church needs to know the beliefs, and patterns of processes of believing of those who receive its communicative and pastoral ministries. The wider significance of ordinary theology, however, and the theological justification for its study is that ordinary theology in some sense “works” for those who own it. It fits their life experience and gives meaning to, and expresses the meaning they find within their own lives (Astley & Francis, 2013, p. 2).

Percy takes Astley’s ecclesial position a step further. He asserts what is an essential element of ordinary theology; that is, power and empowerment in the local church. Charismatic giftings and God encounters based on grace and orally testified give credence to and empowerment for the ordinary stories of experiences of God. The ordinary narratives that work give or retain the power of the congregation, mentored, monitored and when necessary modified, but designed not to be obscured or nullified (Percy, 2013, pp. 55-63).

Ordinary theology, as discussed in this essay, provides an essential means whereby the common or lived theology of the believer and the cognitive or learned Christian theology may enter into a conversation of equals in which the understanding of both are mutually enhanced. Here indeed is “faith seeking understanding” in which the lived and learned come together in what is a transforming theology.

Bibliography

- Armstrong, M. (2013). Ordinary theologians as signal procesors of the Spirit. In J. Astley & L. J. Francis (Eds.), *Exploring ordinary theology*: Ashgate.
- Astley, J. (2002a). In defence of 'ordinary theology'. *British Journal of Theological Education*, 13(1), 21-35.
- Astley, J. (2002b). *Ordinary theology: Looking, listening and learning theology*: Ashgate.
- Astley, J. (2010). *SCM study guide to Christian Doctrine*: SCM Press.

- Astley, J. (2013). The analysis, investigation and application of ordinary theology. In J. Astley & L. J. Francis (Eds.), *Exploring ordinary theology: Everyday Christian believing and the Church*: Ashgate.
- Astley, J. (2014). *Studying God: Doing theology*: SCM Press.
- Astley, J., & Francis, L. J. (Eds.). (2013). *Exploring ordinary theology: Everyday Christian believing and the Church*: Ashgate.
- Bevans, S. B. (2002). *Models of Contextual Theology*. MaryKnoll NY: Orbis Books.
- Cartledge, M. J. (2006). Empirical-Theological Models of the Trinity: Exploring the Beliefs of Theology Students in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Empirical Theology*, 19(2), 137-162.
- Cartledge, M. J. (2008). Pentecostal Theological Method and Intercultural Theology. *Transformation*, 25.2(3), 92-102.
- Cartledge, M. J. (2010a). Practical theology. In A. Anderson, M. Bergunder, A. Droogers, & C. v. d. Laan (Eds.), *Studying global Pentecostalism* (pp. 268-285). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cartledge, M. J. (2010b). *Testimony in the Spirit: Rescripting ordinary Pentecostal theology*: Ashgate.
- Cartledge, M. J. (2012). *Practical theology: Charismatic and empirical perspectives*. Eugene: Oregon: Wipf & Stock.
- Cartledge, M. J. (2013a). *Ordinary theology and the British Assemblies of God doctrinal tradition: A qualitative study*. Surrey: England: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Cartledge, M. J. (2013b). *Testimony in the Spirit: Rescripting ordinary Pentecostal theology (Explorations in practical, pastoral and empirical theology)*: Ashgate.
- Cartledge, M. J. (2015). *The mediation of the Spirit: Interventions in practical theology*. Grand Rapids: Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Cartledge, M. J., & Cheetham, D. (2011). *Intercultural Theology*: SCM Press.
- Chan, S. (2014). *Grassroots Asian theology: Thinking the faith from the ground up*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic.
- Christie, A. (2007). Who do you say I am? Answers from the pews. *The Journal of Adult Theological Education*, 4(2), 181-194.
- Christie, A. (2012). *Ordinary Christology: Who do you say I am? Answers from the pews*: Ashgate.
- Christie, A. (2013). Responding to ordinary Christology: Issues and challenges for theological education. *Journal of Adult Theological Education*, 10(1), 38-49.

- Christie, A., & Astley, J. (2009). Ordinary soteriology: A qualitative study. In L. J. Francis, J. Astley, & M. Robbins (Eds.), *Empirical Theology in Texts and Tables: Qualitative, Quantitative and Comparative Perspectives*. Netherlands: Brill.
- Eastman, D. L. (2013). Paul: An outline of his life. In M. Harding & A. Nobbs (Eds.), *All things to all cultures: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* (pp. 34-56). Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Frei, H. W. (1973). *The eclipse of biblical narrative: A study in eighteenth and nineteenth century hermeneutics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Graham, E., Walton, H., & Ward, F. (Eds.). (2005). *Theological reflection: Method*. London: SCM Press.
- Graham, E., Walton, H., & Ward, F. (Eds.). (2007). *Theological reflection: Sources*. London: SM Press.
- Healy, N. M. (2013). Ordinary theology, theological method and constructive ecclesiology. In J. Astley & L. J. Francis (Eds.), *Exploring ordinary theology: Everyday Christian believing and the Church* (pp. 13-21): Ashgate.
- Lees-Smith, A. (2013). Ordinary theology as 'Mother tongue'. In J. Sstley & L. J. Francis (Eds.), *Exploring ordinary theology: Everyday Christian believing and the Church*: Ashgate.
- Longenecker, R. (2015). *Paul, apostle of liberty*. Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- McGrath, A. E. (1990). *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundation of Doctrinal Criticism*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- McGrath, A. E. (2006a). *A Scientific Theology: nature*: T&T Clark.
- McGrath, A. E. (2006b). *A Scientific Theology: Reality*: T&T Clarck.
- McGrath, A. E. (2006c). *A Scientific Theology: Theory* (Vol. 3). London: T&T Clark.
- Murphy-O'Connor, J. (2004). *Paul: His story*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Percy, M. (2013). Power in the local church: Locating the implicit. In J. Astley & L. J. Francis (Eds.), *Exploring ordinary theology*: Ashgate.
- Phan, P. C. (2003). *In our own tongues: Perspectives from Asia on mission and inculturation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Phan, P. C. (Ed.) (1999). *Journeys at the margin: Toward an autobiographical theology in American-Asian perspective*. Collegeville: Minn.: Liturgical Press.
- Schnelle, U. (2005). *Apostle Paul: His life and theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Schnelle, U. (2007). *Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

- Scholer, D. M. (Ed.) (2008). *Social distinctives of the Christians in the first century: Pivotal essay by E.A. Judge*: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Stone, H. W., & Duke, J. O. (2006). *How to think theologically*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Thompson, J., Pattison, S., & Thompson, R. (2008). *SCM study guide to theological reflection*: SCM Press.
- Twelftree, G. H. (2013). *Paul and the Miraculous*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Vanhoozer, K. J. (2005). *The Drama of Doctrine: A canonical linguistic approach to Christian Doctrine*: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Vanhoozer, K. J. (2014). *Faith speaking understanding: Performing the drama of doctrine*. Louisville: Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Vanhoozer, K. J., & Strachan, O. (2015). *The pastor as public theologian: Redeeming a lost vision*. Grand Rapids: Michigan: Baker Academic.
- Wakefield, G. (2007). *Alexander Boddy, Pentecostal Anglican pioneer*. London: Paternoster Press.
- Walton, H. (2014). *Writing methods in theological reflection*: SCM Press.
- Ward, P., & Campbell, H. (2011). Ordinary theology as narratives: An empirical study of young people's charismatic worship in Scotland. *IJPT*, 15, 226-242.
- Witherington, B. I. (1998). *The Paul quest: The renewed search for the Jew of Tarsus*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.
- Wright, N. T. (2005). *Paul*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Yong, A. (2014). *The future of evangelical theology: Soundings from the Asian American diaspora*. Downers Grove: Illinois: IVP Academic.

Sensus Plenior or Single Intent?

Johnathan Hughes

Author: Johnathan Hughes is an elder at Kings Park Community Church in Western Sydney. He is studying for a Masters of Divinity at Australian College of Christian Studies. His research interests include biblical studies, biblical languages, theology and the History of the Christian Church. He is passionate about seeing people take a theoretical understanding of God and use it to inform practical changes to their behaviour.

Abstract: The use of Hebrew Bible quotations in the New Testament often appears to lack context, leading some scholars to postulate the existence of a deeper sense of scripture, or “*Sensus Plenior*,” understood by the later writer but not by the earlier. In this article I will examine the two main views surrounding this interpretive concept, analysing their viability. I will then propose an alternative to the two main views which may possess a greater ability to make sense of the use of Hebrew Bible material in the New Testament.

Introduction

Evangelical scholars generally advocate attention to context when interpreting biblical texts and applying them to contemporary situations. Yet when we look at the New Testament there are many places where the authors do not appear to have considered the context of the Old Testament text when interpreting it to suit their own situations. What should we make of this? Is our understanding of the NT quotation of such passages faulty? Did the NT writers understand the original context better than we do? Or is there some kind of alternative meaning placed in the text by God – a deeper sense, or *sensus plenior*? If this exists, how might it affect the way that we read scripture ourselves? In this article, the author will define and evaluate the concept of *sensus plenior* and examine the alternative view, which is known as the single intent view.

The term *sensus plenior* was derived from the Latin for “fuller sense” by Andre Fernandez in 1927¹ and more fully explored by F. Raymond Brown in the 1950s. According to *sensus plenior*, sometimes a NT writer quoted an OT text perceiving a meaning unrelated to the original intent of the OT author. *Sensus plenior* is defined as “That additional, deeper meaning, intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, which is seen to

¹ Walter Kaiser C. Jr, “Single Meaning, Unified Referents: Accurate and Authoritative Citations of the Old Testament by the New Testament,” In *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, by Kenneth Berding, & Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 102.

exist in the words of a biblical text (or group of texts, or even a whole book) when they are studied in the light of further revelation or development in the understanding of revelation.”² William LaSor adds the corollary that if a passage truly has a *sensus plenior*, we will not be able to interpret this by using grammatico-historical exegetical methods.³ Although the term is recent, *sensus plenior* is far from new. Douglas Moo draws parallels between this reading of the OT and schools of thought such as the Antiochenes in the Patristic period and after, noting that it was only with the Reformation that more literal interpretations became popular, at least amongst protestant christians.⁴

An important implication of the *sensus plenior* concept is that the fuller meaning may be beyond the knowledge of the human writer. For example, a prophet expected fulfilment of the prophecy, but not only were they ignorant of the nature of the fulfilment, they would not have been aware of later fulfilments of the same words. For instance, in Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah predicted that a young woman would conceive and bear a son, and the king’s enemies would be destroyed before this child was of age. In context, it appears that Isaiah was indicating imminent fulfilment, yet Matthew 1:23 quotes this verse as a messianic prophecy regarding Jesus being born of a virgin. An interpreter who sees these passages through the lens of *sensus plenior* may argue that whatever the intention of Isaiah at the time, the “true” fulfilment of this prophecy (or perhaps a true fulfilment) came in Christ. This underlines one important feature of such passages. “Fuller meaning” is a result of the NT writers seeing Christ as the one in which all things, including the Scriptures, find fulfilment.⁵

The *sensus plenior* concept is potentially useful, because it solves an obvious problem with the NT, specifically, why do its writers appear to use verses of the OT out of context? *Sensus plenior* ideas provide a partial answer to this question. In Christ, NT writers saw a meaning in the OT that its original authors could never have foreseen. Douglas Oss points out that a biblically-based *sensus plenior*, in which deeper meanings are taken from other biblical texts, and not merely read into the passage by the interpreter, can give fuller and deeper meaning to texts that are conceptually related.⁶

Oss suggests a further benefit of *sensus plenior* interpretation that rather than expanding the meaning it can narrow certain texts as God’s complete revelation becomes clearer over time.⁷ Passages like Genesis 3:15 whose meaning was originally obscure can be clarified. If this passage is a veiled reference to the coming of Messiah Jesus, then the verse makes more sense.

² Raymond Brown E, *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1954), 92.

³ William LaSor, “Prophecy, Inspiration and Sensus Plenior,” *Tyndale Bulletin* (1978), 54.

⁴ Douglas J Moo, “The Problem of Sensus Plenior,” In *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon*, by D. A. Carson, & John D. Woodbridge (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 182-183.

⁵ Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 35.

⁶ Douglas Oss, “Canon as Context: The Function of Sensus Plenior in Evangelical Hermeneutics,” *Grace Theological Journal* (1988), 106.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

There is strong opposition to the *sensus plenior* interpretation, particularly amongst conservative evangelical scholars. The concept that interpreters may understand texts better than their original authors is unattractive. Walter Kaiser dismisses the idea out of hand, saying that “It is not a case of writing better than they knew or even of writing what they were not conscious of saying.”⁸ Similarly the idea that God may be prompting the human author to write something beyond their understanding would be described by some as “Hermeneutical Docetism,” a denial of the full humanity of the text.⁹

Perhaps a more serious problem with the concept is its limited usefulness in solving hermeneutical problems. Brent Parker notes that *sensus plenior* is seldom actually invoked, even by its most vocal proponents. For example, Isaiah 7:14 is one of the most frequently cited examples of a potential *sensus plenior*, which is most often interpreted either prophetically or using typology, without reference to any *sensus plenior*.¹⁰ If a fuller meaning of the passage is not a useful interpretational tool, why postulate it?

A third problem with *sensus plenior* is that it arguably violates what R. Bruce Compton calls “the univocal nature of language.”¹¹ Communication depends on one phrase having one meaning in a given context. Ironically to argue against this principle, one must depend on it, or else one’s own words will not be understood! There is a danger therefore that an interpreter may read into the Old Testament whatever meaning he or she desires.

The primary alternative to the *sensus plenior* interpretation is the “Single-Intent” view, which is also known as the “literal meaning.” In this context, “literal meaning” refers to understanding the text as its writer originally intended. This is not to say that God is incapable of imposing other meanings onto an existing text, but Kevin Vanhoozer suggests that this would occur at the level of the complete canon rather than a specific passage. Inspiration is “an emergent property of the Old and New Testaments.”¹²

This concept is championed by Kaiser, describing his view as “Single intent, unified referents.” He deals with the difference between the intent of the original author and the interpretation of the NT writer by denying that one exists. If a discrepancy appears between the two, we have not correctly understood the text. To interpret the passage as having a deeper meaning when the author is not thinking in such terms is in Kaiser’s thinking eisegesis rather than exegesis. Kaiser does not dispute that principles can be drawn from teaching passages (for example, he accepts that the rule against muzzling oxen whilst they tread grain in Deut 25:4 is a perfectly valid source for the principle that a worker deserves their wages), or that a limited amount of recontextualisation of prophecy can occur;

⁸ Kaiser *op. cit.*, 56.

⁹ Jared M. Compton, “Shared Intentions? Reflections on Inspiration and Interpretation in the Light of Scripture’s Dual Authorship,” *Themelios* (2008), 23.

¹⁰ Brent Parker, “The Roman Catholic Debate over Sensus Plenior,” *Credo Magazine*. 24 (2011). <http://www.credomag.com/2011/09/24/the-roman-catholic-debate-over-sensus-plenior/> (accessed September 4, 2017).

¹¹ R. Bruce Compton, “The Immanuel Prophecy in Isaiah 7:14-16 and its use in Matthew 1:23: Harmonizing Historical Context and Single Meaning,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* (2007), 11.

¹² Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning In This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 265.

nevertheless, he argues that the NT writers “argued most carefully” when citing the OT, and that we would do well to follow in their footsteps.¹³ For the most part, he argues that each OT passage referred to in the NT has a single, consistent meaning, and that those who refer to them, whether NT writers or twenty first century commentators, should ideally attempt to determine this meaning before using the passage.

Raju Kunjummen challenges the intellectual honesty of the Single-Intent view. He suggests that rather than being drawn from biblical evidence, this concept arises from attempts to accommodate the phenomena of biblical revelation within constructs of evangelical scholastic philosophy.¹⁴ To Kunjummen it is pointless to deny the existence of discrepancies between OT and NT writers; they exist, and need to be accounted for. Peter Enns agrees, arguing that it is important to recognise that there are genuine difficulties in understanding how the New Testament writers use the Old Testament. To him this is the very reason that the *sensus plenior* concept was first proposed.¹⁵

Another argument against the Single Intent idea is that it may not take into account Jewish Scriptural interpretation methods of the Second Temple period, during which Christianity began. Karin Zetterholm argues that Jewish rabbis of the period considered part of their role to be “developing the meaning of the Torah, exposing what was hidden.”¹⁶ We should not therefore expect early Christian writers to use the strict methods of interpretation we favour in the twenty first century; if we do, we risk “assuming universal normativity of our own culturally embedded hermeneutic expectations.”¹⁷ The differences between current and Second-Temple Judaism methods of scriptural exegesis can make it difficult to definitively determine a “Single-Intent” for a given passage.

Third, in counterpoint to the “Hermeneutical Docetism” argument described above, the Single Intent concept can ignore the implications of divine inspiration. If God truly inspires a writer there may be layers of meaning to their writing of which they are not aware. Jason Motte argues that to attempt to confine inspiration to a single “mathematical formula” fails to account for the fact that human and divine understandings of meaning may not necessarily be the same.¹⁸ It may not be possible for a human to fully understand God’s action in their lives, so it is logical that God could build an additional meaning into scripture on top of the meaning it already possessed.

¹³ Kaiser, *op. cit.*, 88.

¹⁴Raju D. Kunjummen, “The Single Intent of Scripture - Critical Examination of a Theological Construct,” *Grace Theological Journal* (1986), 100.

¹⁵ Enns, Peter, In response to Kaiser *op. cit.*, 97.

¹⁶Karin Hedner Zetterholm, *Jewish Interpretation of the Bible: Ancient and Contemporary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 22.

¹⁷ Peter Enns, “Fuller Meaning, Single Goal: A Christotelic Approach to the New Testament Use of the Old in its First-Century Interpretive Environment,” In *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, by Kenneth Berding, & Jonathan Lunde, 167-232 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 171.

¹⁸ Jason Alan Motte, *A Survey and Analysis of Contemporary Evangelical Hermeneutical Approaches to Understanding Messiah in the Old Testament*. PhD Dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (2015), 126.

We shall now consider the relationship between these two views. Most of its proponents argue that there is a great difference between the *sensus plenior* view and the “Single-Intent” position.¹⁹ A *sensus plenior* concept of scriptural interpretation could have a significant impact on the way that one reads scripture. If the interpreter sees a passage as having a single intent, they will put much of their energy into determining the meaning the author intended in context, taking into consideration linguistic, social, historical and other factors. If one accepts the *sensus plenior* idea, then the context may not be as important.²⁰ God will communicate the ideas that he wishes to communicate through Scripture, regardless of the context.

Alternatively it is possible that the disagreement between these views may be a false dichotomy. Vanhoozer suggests that “The fuller sense of scripture is in fact the literal sense taken at its thickest description.”²¹ Thomas Bulick agrees, suggesting that *Sensus Plenior* should more properly be considered “*References Plenior* of the single meaning of scripture.”²²

Darrell Bock describes a similar scheme to those of Vanhoozer and Bulick which he calls “Single meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents.” He argues that when an OT passage was written, it had a particular meaning which does not change when it is quoted. But NT writers have applied the OT in new contexts and with new referents, and this gives the OT passages greater meaning than their writers could ever have anticipated. Although Bock notes that there is no single way that OT texts are handled in the NT, he states that the use of the texts is not random. The key premise is that God works in both words and in revelatory acts, which combine to display what God is doing in history.²³

An important distinction between Bock and Kaiser is that to Bock, a limited *Sensus Plenior* exists. However, he sees it as a mere label that may sometimes be used to avoid analysis of how the relationship between OT and NT texts works. Bock proposes that the sense of the passage (that is, the literal meaning of its words), is unaltered. A *sensus plenior* exists when this same passage, using the same sense, operates in a new context and with a new set of referents.²⁴ The passage remains true and correct in its original context; the young woman in Isaiah 7:14 will conceive the child Immanuel. But in the new context, 1st Century Bethlehem, a new referent exists (Mary) and the prophecy is also true here. All things find their fulfilment in Christ.

¹⁹ Julius Muthengi, “A Critical Analysis of Sensus Plenior,” *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* (1984), 66.

²⁰It must be noted here that proponents of the *sensus plenior* concept do not appear to be significantly less aware of contextual issues than their Single-Intent-advocating counterparts.

²¹ Vanhoozer *op. cit.*, 313.

²² Thomas F. Bulick, *A History of Views on Determining Biblical Applicability with a Case Study in Philemon* (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1997), 169.

²³ Darrell L. Bock, “Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents: The New Testament's Legitimate, Accurate and Multifaceted Use of the Old,” In *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, by Kenneth Berding, & Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 106.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 111.

The Single Meaning, Multiple Referents and Contexts interpretation is not perfect. The concept is challenged by “Single-Intent” adherents, who argue that those using it may not be as rigorous as they should be in their exegesis.²⁵ Alternatively it may be opposed by those who favour the freer use of *sensus plenior*, who suggest that this idea is more about defending an evangelical hermeneutic than giving an accurate understanding of the interplay between NT and OT writers.²⁶ Nevertheless, Bock’s analysis strikes a good balance between showing the NT writers’ respect for the Scriptures, whilst understanding God’s new revelation in a new context. It combines the strengths of the two extreme approaches with a few of the weaknesses, and would seem to provide a sensible way forward.

The Sensus Plenior view and the Single Intent view, in common with middle-ground approaches such as Bock’s, have their advantages and disadvantages. One common thread through all these ideas, however, is the centrality of God’s work in revealing himself in scripture. It is non-negotiable that Christ’s life and work change everything, and it is through him that the Old Testament is fulfilled. There are disagreements between scholars regarding the exact details of this fulfilment, and those disagreements are important; yet it should be noted that in none of these views are the central features of the Christian gospel in any way altered.

Bibliography

Barthes, Roland. “Death of the Author.” *Aspen*, 1967.

Berding, Kenneth, and Jonathan Lunde. *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

Bock, Darrell L. “Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents: The New Testament’s Legitimate, Accurate and Multifaceted Use of the Old.” In *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, by Kenneth Berding, & Jonathan Lunde, 105-164. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

Brown, Raymond E. “The History and Development of the Theory of a Sensus Plenior.” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 15, 1953: 141-162.

_____. *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1954.

Bulick, Thomas F. *A History of Views on Determining Biblical Applicability with a Case Study in Philemon*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1997.

Carson, Don. “Review: Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament.” *Themelios* 33 (3), 2008: 78-80.

²⁵ Kaiser, in response to Bock, *op. cit.*, 154.

²⁶ Enns, in response to Bock, *op. cit.*, 164.

- Compton, Jared M. "Shared Intentions? Reflections on Inspiration and Interpretation in the Light of Scripture's Dual Authorship." *Themelios* 33 (3), 2008: 23-33.
- Compton, R. Bruce. "The Immanuel Prophecy in Isaiah 7:14-16 and its use in Matthew 1:23: Harmonizing Historical Context and Single Meaning." *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 12:1, 2007: 3-15.
- Dunn, Matthew W. I. "Raymond Brown and the Sensus Plenior Interpretation of the Bible." *Studies in Religion* 36 (3-4), 2007: 531-551.
- Enns, Peter. "Fuller Meaning, Single Goal: A Christotelic Approach to the New Testament Use of the Old in its First-Century Interpretive Environment." In *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, by Kenneth Berding, & Jonathan Lunde, 167-232. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.
- Fabiny, Tibor. "The Literal Sense and the "Sensus Plenior" Revisited." *Hermathena* 151, 1991: 9-23.
- Glenny, W. Edward. "The Divine Meaning of Scripture: Explanations and Limitations." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38 (4), 1995: 481-500.
- Kaiser, Walter C. Jr. "Single Meaning, Unified Referents: Accurate and Authoritative Citations of the Old Testament by the New Testament." In *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, by Kenneth Berding, & Jonathan Lunde, 45-102. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.
- Kunjummen, Raju D. "The Single Intent of Scripture - Critical Examination of a Theological Construct." *Grace Theological Journal* 7 (1), 1986: 81-110.
- LaSor, William. "Prophecy, Inspiration and Sensus Plenior." *Tyndale Bulletin* 29, 1978: 49-60.
- Moo, Douglas J. "The Problem of Sensus Plenior." In *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon*, by D. A. Carson, & John D. Woodbridge, 179-211. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2005.
- Motte, Jason Alan. *A Survey and Analysis of Contemporary Evangelical Hermeneutical Approaches to Understanding Messiah in the Old Testament*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015.
- Muthengi, Julius. "A Critical Analysis of Sensus Plenior." *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 3, 1984: 63-73.
- Naselli, Andrew. "Three Views on the NT use of the OT." *Andy Naselli: Thoughts on Theology*. 18 October 2008. <http://andynaselli.com/three-views-on-the-nt-use-of-the-ot> (accessed September 2, 2017).
- Oss, Douglas. "Canon as Context: The Function of Sensus Plenior in Evangelical Hermeneutics." *Grace Theological Journal* 9 (1), 1988: 105-127.

- Parker, Brent. "The Roman Catholic Debate over Sensus Plenior." *Credo Magazine*. 24 September 2011. <http://www.credomag.com/2011/09/24/the-roman-catholic-debate-over-sensus-plenior/> (accessed September 4, 2017).
- Pickup, Martin. "New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament: The Theological Rationale of Midrashic Exegesis." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51 (2), 2008: 353-381.
- Prince, David Edward. *The necessity of a Christocentric Kingdom-Focused Model of Expository Preaching*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011.
- Thiselton, Anthony C. *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2009.
- Thomas, Robert L. "The Principle of Single Meaning." *The Master's Seminary Journal* 12 (1), 2001: 33-47.
- Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *Is There a Meaning In This Text?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. *Recovering the Unity of the Bible: One Continuous Story, Plan and Purpose*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
- Wukasch, Benjamin Joel. *Centred Fuller Communication: Sensus Plenior, Relevance Theory and a Balanced Hermeneutic*. Unpublished Masters Thesis, Trinity Western University, 2014.
- Zetterholm, Karin Hedner. *Jewish Interpretation of the Bible: Ancient and Contemporary*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012.

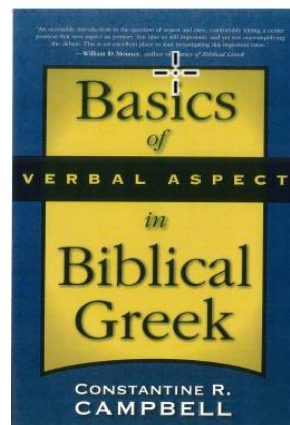
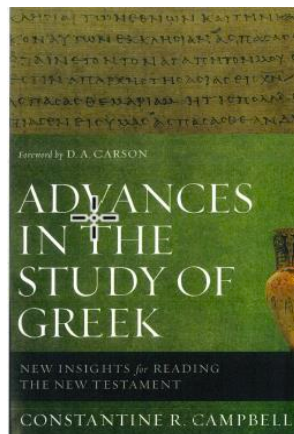
An Australian Contribution to NT Greek

Dr Theron R Young

Author: Dr Theron Young, PhD, is a lecturer in Old Testament and Biblical Languages at ACCS and also serves as Dean of Academics. He has served as a missionary lecturer in Portugal (15 years) and has done itinerant lecturing in Brazil, Latvia, the Ukraine and the USA. He served with the Portuguese Bible Society in the production of a modern Portuguese language version of the Bible (*A Boa Nova em Linguagem Corrente*) and is a contributor to the NIV Archaeology Study Bible.

Constantine R. Campbell. 2015. *Advances in the Study of Greek: New Insights for Reading the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 1-253.

Constantine R. Campbell. 2008. *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 1-159.



Two excellent contributions to the study of New Testament Greek have been produced in recent years by Constantine R. Campbell, who presently serves as an associate professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Formerly he lectured at Moore Theological College (Newtown NSW) and completed a Doctor of Philosophy degree at Macquarie University. He is the author of nearly a dozen books, including other contributions to Greek study, such as *Verbal Aspect and Non-Indicative Verbs* (Peter Lang, 2008) and *Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative* (Peter Lang, 2007).

The present review considers the two titles presented above (i.e., *Advances in the Study of Greek* and *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek*). Both are available in ebook format (www.zondervan.com/ebooks).

In *Advances in the Study of Greek*, Campell does not attempt to cover all areas of the study of NT Greek but rather discusses only those areas in which the author believes that advances are being made, as D. A. Carson notes in the Foreword. However, the range of topics covered in the book's ten chapters is considerable. It includes a short history of Greek studies and linguistic theories that are currently being employed in Greek language studies. Lexical semantics, deponency, the middle voice, verbal aspect, *aktionsart* and discourse analysis are some of the topics covered chapter by chapter in the book. While beginning students of NT Greek are not the target audience of the book, the discussion of each of the topics includes basic information that will orient the neophyte to the more technical and detailed discussions that follow. Each chapter ends with a list of bibliographic materials under the title "Further Reading."

The chapter on "Verbal Aspect and *Aktionsart*" gives a good introduction to the topic, which Campbell discusses at length in the second title of the review, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek*. He defines verbal aspect as "viewpoint" or "... the way in which a verb is used to view an action, either from *outside* the action or from *inside* it" (p. 106). He then explains the distinction between aspect, tense (i.e., the time orientation of the action expressed by the verb) and *aktionsart* (i.e., the type of action expressed by the verb). This chapter will be very helpful for beginning students in order to clarify these terms and the subsidiary topics related to the analysis of verbal elements.

The chapter on "Deponency and the Middle Voice" is also quite helpful, not only for the beginning student but also for a more advanced learner. Campbell begins with a brief history of the study of Greek deponent verbs. These are verbs that are "middle or passive [voice] in form but active in meaning" (p. 148 in *Basics of Biblical Greek*, William D. Mounce, Zondervan, 1993). The term "deponent" derives from the Latin verb *deponere*, meaning "to lay aside." That is, the verb has "laid aside" the middle or passive sense of the form, replacing it with an active sense. This would seem to fall under the age-old question, "What determines meaning: form or function?" If the middle form embraces a number of voice senses, in the same way that the present tense can function in a number of time orientations, then perhaps adding a label such as "deponent" is not really necessary and can be potentially confusing. Campbell suggests doing away with the term "deponent" in Greek language instruction in favor of giving more instruction regarding the range of usages of the middle voice. His arguments are convincing and well worth reading.

"Discourse Analysis" is the subject of two chapters (7 and 8) in the book, beginning with a review of the linguistic schools of discourse analysis. Few scholars would disagree with Campbell that discourse analysis is "... one of the most exciting new areas of research related to Greek exegesis" (p. 148). Discourse analysis looks at a text on levels higher and wider than the sentence to explain how units create the themes, messages and structure of an extended text. Campbell demonstrates and explains how each of four different discourse methodologies have been applied to the study of NT Greek with beneficial results. Within the field of Biblical Hebrew studies, Robert Longacre (*Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48*, 2003, Eisenbrauns), Robert

Bergen (*Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, 1994, SIL), Walter Bodine (*Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*) and a host of other scholars have employed discourse analysis to resolve centuries-long questions of the use of the verb in Hebrew, among other questions. If more of this type of analysis is applied to Greek grammar and syntax, then similar fruitful results should appear. One interesting title in this regard appears in the “Further Reading” for both chapters: *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek* (Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson, edd. JSNTSS 133, 1995, Sheffield).

In chapter 9, “Pronunciation,” Campbell argues that the Erasmian system of pronunciation that has been traditionally taught and used in instruction should be replaced with Modern Greek pronunciation of the Koine Greek NT. This reviewer does not find the conclusion compelling for two reasons. First, students of the Greek NT do not have conversation or even recitation as a goal of their study. Pronunciation only serves them to facilitate instruction in the classroom. Second, Modern Greek pronunciation includes some combinations in which, for example, two consonants merge into one consonantal sound that would make the learning of Koine Greek less clear for the beginner.

In *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek*, Campbell develops at length the argument that “... an understanding of verbal aspect is even more important than verb tense (past, present, etc)” (back cover blurb). The *raison d’être* of this short volume is that “... there have been no accessible textbooks on the subject, both in terms of level and price” (back cover blurb). This is certainly true. The costs of Campbell’s other two volumes on verbal aspect, published by Peter Lang Publishers, are prohibitive for the beginning or even advanced student: *Verbal Aspect and Non-Indicative Verbs* (2008, \$109 USD) and *Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative* (2007, \$45 USD). The present reviewer is aware that *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* is already being used for seminary level courses as a supplementary volume. It is likely that aspect will more and more become a topic of instruction for basic level courses in NT Greek at both graduate and undergraduate levels.

Part 1 of the book discusses “Verbal Aspect Theory” in five chapters. Explanations are clear and not overly technical. Verbal aspect deals with the *viewpoint* of the verbal action. Campbell states, “The view of an action, event, or state from the outside is called *perfective aspect*, while the view from the inside is called *imperfective aspect*” (p. 19). This viewpoint, according to Campbell, is “encoded in the verb form of the verbal network” (p. 20) and represents a choice on the part of the author in relating the events of a story. Since aspect is encoded in the system as a semantic value it does not change for a given verb tense. “An aorist will always be perfective in aspect” (p. 23). Chapter 3 discusses the “Perfective Aspect” of the aorist and future tenses; chapter 4 discusses the “Imperfective Aspect” of the present and imperfect tenses. “The Problem of the Perfect” (and pluperfect tenses) is taken up in chapter 5 as being imperfective in aspect, though the author notes that debate continues on the subject.

Part 2 of the book discusses “Verbal Aspect and New Testament Text” in another five chapters. Chapter 6 deals with decisions in the analysis of a verbal element according to the lexical categories of transitive, intransitive and ambi-transitive. Chapter 7 presents a model for analysis of verbs in the text according to four categories: semantics, lexeme, context and

aktionsart. Campbell shows, with numerous clear examples, how these categories are applied to various syntactic categories and non-indicative moods. This model is followed in chapters 7 (“Present and Imperfect Tense-Forms”), 8 (“Aorist and Future Tense-Forms”) and 9 (“Perfect and Pluperfect Tense-Forms”). Each of these three chapters ends with exercises for readers to work with answers given at the end of the book (in “Answers to Exercises”). Chapter 10 gives more detailed attention to participles.

The evaluation of D. A. Carson (“Series Editor Preface,” p. xiii, *Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative*. (Studies in Biblical Greek 13) 2007 Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang) is certainly accurate regarding the two works of Campbell reviewed here: “One of the great strengths of his research is the limpid clarity of his prose.” Campbell’s explanations are quite helpful for the uninitiated, especially due to the avoidance of technical jargon. However, few suggestions for a future revision merit consideration. First, it would be helpful to readers to trace a single lexical verb root through a number of passages where different tense-forms and different moods (and voices) of the same lexeme appear. This would serve to illustrate and highlight the differences of aspect in a variety of contexts. Second, it would be helpful to more show systematically how an improved understanding of aspect would make a difference in the exegesis or translation of texts. It is not adequate to only show what is incorrect in the translations of others. Readers will continually ask what a correct translation might be in the light of the improved understanding of the aspect of the verb.

Readers of one or both of these volumes will be stimulated to pursue the topics (especially verbal aspect) further in other publications of Campbell and of other contributors to the study of New Testament Greek.

Children's Ministry: An Analysis of Educational Theories

Beth Worley

***Author:** Beth Worley is a primary school teacher with almost twenty years experience leading children's ministry. She trains Special Religious Education teachers for the Christian Community Churches of Australia. Beth serves as a speaker, and editor and writer of Bible studies for Know Your Bible and Christian Women Communicating International. Having completed a Master of Arts (Biblical Studies), she is currently studying towards a Master of Theology through Australian College of Christian Studies.*

Abstract: Much energy is invested in children's ministry, with mixed results. This paper examines two current educational theories: Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of child development and Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence theory. Vygotsky's theory meshes well the church as an inherently social environment, while Gardner's theory recognises and values each individual child's learning strengths. This paper aims to demonstrate how, together, these two theories can help teachers to develop biblically sound educational experiences to maximise children's learning. These approaches can be employed to help children learn Bible stories or doctrines, and to help them to come to know God personally.

Introduction

Many Christians long for children's ministry that *works* (Fischer, 2008, p. 32; Beckwith, 2010, p. 12; Dawn, 1997, p. 62). This paper examines two current approaches to educational theory, with the aim of optimising the effectiveness of contemporary children's ministry. The theories considered are Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of child development, and Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence (MI) theory. The goal of children's ministry is to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20) who personally know and serve God. Both theories contribute to our understanding of children, as we seek, before God, to realise this goal.

The Biblical Context

Jesus' statement, "Let the little children come to me," (Luke 18:16) summarises the *purpose* of children's ministry. They need to know God personally (Ephesians 1:17) to "enjoy him forever" (Westminster Shorter Catechism, n.d.), loving him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30), as a whole person (English, 2005, p. 199), progressively conformed to Christ's image (2 Corinthians 3:18). Jesus singled children out as faith models

(Matthew 18:3), indicating real faith is achievable for children.

The biblical *practice* was correspondingly all-encompassing. Children were taught intentionally through instruction, involvement in festivals and rituals, and daily experiences (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, Joshua 8:35, Nehemiah 8:16-18, Exodus 12:26). This was a social process. Cooling's phrase, "transformational involvement" (2010, p. 28) neatly summarises the purpose and practice of children's ministry.

The Developmental Theories in Context

Significant faith-related theorists include Fowler and Westerhoff. Fowler's stages of faith development rely heavily on Erikson and Piaget (Fowler, 1995, pp. 39, 134). Research has undermined Piaget's stages (Berk, 2012, pp. 230, 260), weakening Fowler's approach. Fowler's "sequential, hierarchical stages" are too simplistic (Heywood, 2008, p. 270), and lack longitudinal supporting data (Parker, 2010, p. 240). For Fowler, 'faith' concerns personal meaning, not necessarily "religious commitment or belief" (1995, pp. 4, 14). It is "fundamentally different" to Christian 'faith' (Jones, 2004, p. 353), and therefore less helpful to this discussion.

Westerhoff rightly criticises the "schooling-instructional paradigm" (1976, p. 6), which promotes teaching "all *about* Christianity" (p. 22). He argues for a socialisation/incarnation model (pp. 12-15, 21), seeing children's faith as "directly related" to home and church experiences (Westerhoff, 1979, p. 121). This is all helpful; however, he largely overlooks children from 'unchurched' families. Also, he questions Scriptural authority (Westerhoff, 1976, pp. 31, 34), asserting "conversion" comes through doubting despair and intellectual struggle, usually not before late adolescence (1976, p. 39). This is at odds with Jesus' validation of children's faith (Matthew 18:3). Westerhoff's approach provides useful insights, but denies the sincerity of children's faith.

Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory of Child Development

Vygotsky emphasised the role of teaching in cognitive development (Berk, 2012, p. 272). Writing in the Soviet Union up to 1934 (p. 25), his work went largely unnoticed in the West until around 1978 (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2010, p. 51). Nonetheless, his theories are widely discussed (Berk, 2012, pp. 24-26, 266-272; May, Posterski, Stonehouse & Cannell, 2005, pp. 81-82; Kozulin, 2003, p. 17; Crawford, 2001, pp. 113-114; Wertsch, 1988, pp. 81-89), and "increasingly influential" (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2010, p. 51). They permeate contemporary Australian schools, for example in writing "scaffolding." Vygotsky is worthy of consideration since his influence is current, and because the church is an inherently socio-cultural environment (Balswick, King & Reimer, 2005, p. 284). There are four main facets of Vygotsky's theory.

Zone of proximal development (ZPD)

Children's tasks can be: i) performed independently; ii) performed with help; or iii) not performed even with assistance (Vygotsky, 1997, pp. 32-34). The ZPD refers to the difference between *independent* and *assisted* tasks; for example, young children might share **only** when

prompted by adults. ZPD is vital because it marks the area in which learning can occur; tasks are neither already learnt, nor too hard.

Imitation

Vygotsky valued imitation. He claimed that people “can imitate only that which is within [their] developmental level [ZPD]” (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 34); six-year-olds can copy simple addition, but not advanced calculus, outside their ZPD. Imitation helps children practice skills (Berk, 2012, p.269).

Language

Vygotsky saw learning as “fundamentally dialogic” (Tappan, cited in Crawford, 2001, p. 114). Through language, adults and more experienced peers use prompts, questions and suggested strategies as “scaffolding” (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2010, p. 55; Berk, 2012, p. 268). While Piaget saw children’s self-talk as egocentric, Vygotsky saw it as internalising adult teaching, leading to “silent *inner speech*,” thus enabling higher order reasoning (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2010, p. 54). Teachers and environmental tools, especially language, mediate children’s learning (p. 55).

Society

ZPD, imitation, language and scaffolding are inherently social. Vygotsky wrote that “children grow into the intellectual life of those around them” (1997, p. 34), and that learning through social interaction “awakens” the ZPD (p. 34); that is, learning often *precedes* development, an inversion of Piagetian theory (p. 30). Among Christians, we often observe that learning (‘head knowledge’) precedes spiritual development. Vygotsky admitted the complex, dynamic relationship between development and learning (p. 35).

Evaluation of Vygotsky’s Theory

Given Vygotsky’s socialist environment, his emphasis on society’s influence is unsurprising, however, his theory is still valid. In the daily practice of teaching, Vygotsky’s theory appears self-evident. From birth, children learn in a social context. Berk claims that Vygotsky’s language-based theory is less appropriate in cultures featuring observational/participational learning (2012, p. 272), however, this seems unfair since Vygotsky took imitation so seriously. He is also criticised for being vague in explaining cognitive change, and for largely ignoring the biological component of cognitive development (p. 272), reasonable criticisms perhaps, but his overarching developmental framework is nonetheless convincing and useful (Wertsch, 1988, p. 88).

Vygotsky’s Theory and Children’s Ministry

Somewhat ironically for a Soviet theorist, Vygotsky’s theory accords with the biblical model for teaching children: learning through social involvement, modelling/imitation, and numerous, more experienced mentors. Perhaps this is because community is central to both systems. His theory features cognitive development, whereas children’s ministry involves cognitive, spiritual, moral and relational aspects. However, Vygotsky’s key concepts help us

to understand children and the centrality of their socio-cultural learning environment.

Firstly, ZPD is particularly helpful. We often try to repeatedly ‘teach’ children Bible stories they already know (Fischer, 2008, p. 31). Cries of, “Not the story of Noah again!” should alert us to the need for ascertaining children’s ZPD. Children’s questions pinpoint their ZPD on a particular issue; they also allow us to share our own questions, modelling “critical openness” (Buckland, 2001, p. 145).

Secondly, many Christians strive to be good examples for children. Scripture values imitation; Paul wrote, “Imitate me” (1 Corinthians 4:16), and Jesus urged adults to imitate children’s humility (Matthew 18:3), and to follow his example (John 13:14-15). We do not simply model morality. Children imitate our spiritual lives. To communicate a deep, personal relationship with God, we must first have it ourselves, taking time to know God, and allowing children time to meet him too (May et al, 2005, p. 251).

Thirdly, language—spoken, preached, written and sung—is, of course, vital in the Christian community. It helps to form children’s thinking about God. This writer has heard one leader repeatedly mention “learning about God” as if this were our ultimate goal. It *is* important—as a means to *knowing* him. By scaffolding, we can help children become aware of God acting in their lives, protecting, providing, and teaching (Acts 2:39, John 16:13)—their *experience* of him.

Fourthly, children’s social environment includes God himself as teacher (John 14:26), with a “divine-human encounter as the source of personal formation and growth” (Williams, 2011, pp. 57, 62). Williams stresses the necessity for reflection (p. 62); and Scripture encourages meditation on God’s love, actions and law (Psalms 48:9, 77:12, 119:23). Children can do this simply, with assistance: at this writer’s church, a children’s group enthusiastically keeps simple faith journals; reflection on circumstances and learning deepens their awareness of God’s activity in their lives, while the group affirms and corrects “individual truth” (Williams, 2011, p.58). Reflection facilitates Beckwith’s goal of “capturing children’s imaginations, and then souls” (2010, p. 15).

Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence Theory

Gardner approaches development differently. He believes the traditional view of general intelligence is inadequate; individuals are neurologically sensitive to certain forms of input (p. 294). He proposes eight “relatively autonomous” intelligences (2011, pp. xii, xiv), allowing future research might modify this number (p. 313). He sees intelligence as intellectual strength or competence in “abilities valued by human cultures” (pp. 63, 66), and so includes competences that Western academics and standard intelligence tests might overlook (Berk, 2012, p. 326) — highly sophisticated navigational abilities (Gardner, 2011, p. 213), for example.

He proposes linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, intra- and inter-personal intelligences (Gardner, 2011, pp. vi-vii), and, more lately, ‘naturalist’ (p. xiv). Linguistic intelligence is the most widely shared among humans (Gardner, 2011, p. 82), and

is exemplified in poets' sensitivity to meaning, grammar, and language's sound and rhythm; it includes using language to convince, explain, and explain itself (meta-linguistics), and as a mnemonic tool (pp. 77, 82-83).

Musical intelligence is seen in skilled performers and especially composers (p. 108). It features the expressive effects of patterned sound elements (p. 134), pitch and rhythm (p. 322).

Logical-mathematical intelligence — interest (p. 141) — includes problem-solving through an awareness of patterns (p. 177), linking propositions (p. 145), and elaborate hierarchical classification systems, for example those used by Kalahari bushmen (p. 170).

Spatial intelligence can be visual or tactile (p. 196); it encompasses conjuring and manipulating elements mentally (p. 185). It is seen in chess masters (p. 202), keen visual memory (p. 211), and artists' sensitivity to colour, proportion, light, shadow (p. 206).

With bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence, the body is used to teach (p. 248), and communicate: "If I could tell you what it is, I would not have danced it" (Duncan, cited in Gardner, 2011, p. 237). Also expressed in acting and mime (Gardner, 2011, pp. 240, 218), it is often combined with spatial intelligence in tool-making (pp. 245-6). Imitation is thought to be central to this intelligence (p. 241).

Intra-personal intelligence involves "access to one's own feeling life," discriminating, labelling, symbolising and utilising one's feelings to understand and guide actions (p. 253). Inter-personal intelligence centres on distinguishing others' "moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions" (p. 253). These two mirror Goleman's emotional and social intelligences (2012, p. 1).

Evaluation of Gardner's Theory

Gardner delineates intelligences by arguing from neurobiology (2011, pp. 190-191), and extreme examples — child prodigies, autism, brain disorders and injuries (pp. 93, 128). Waterhouse protests that MI theory should not be used in education since Gardner offers "no validating evidence" (2006, p. 247). Perhaps his extensive evidence is insufficient or invalid for Waterhouse. One wonders whether Waterhouse has dealt more with "abstract children" represented by statistics (Buckland, 2001, p. 20) than actual children.

Others claim Gardner's 'intelligences' are simply talents or personality traits (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2010, p. 136). Only further research will decide this issue; however, Gardner's focus is helpful nonetheless.

While Gardner argues from extreme cases, he acknowledges that, in reality, for many people the distinctions between intelligences are less clear; they interact, and an individual may be strong in two or more areas (2011, pp. xxxiv-xxxv). Criticism that he stresses the independence of intelligences (Berk, 2012, p. 326), is therefore invalid. He could, however, have explored more thoroughly how MI theory applies to "average" people.

While less accepted by scientists (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2012, p. 136), many educators have embraced MI theory (Berk, 2012, p. 326). It takes individual differences seriously; it has led to a broad range of meaningful activities to facilitate effective learning and creative thinking, and to identifying strengths in children who might otherwise be overlooked (Berk, 2012, pp. 326, 355). This individualised approach can tap into children’s specific ZPD.

Gardner has succeeded in raising teachers’ awareness of presenting material in a multiplicity of ways, allowing children many “ways in.” Learning is reinforced by repeated exposure to the same concept, by different means: reasoned discussion (logical/linguistic), music, making objects (spatial/bodily-kinaesthetic), games (interpersonal).

Gardner’s Theory and Children’s Ministry

Gardner’s emphasis on the intelligences supports Scripture’s approach. Scripture indicates children learn in a multiplicity of ways: teaching, questions, rituals, songs, worship, social interaction, reflection, visual representation (on doorposts), and by example. These present faith linguistically, logically, bodily-kinesthetically, musically, inter- and intra-personally. When we simply repeat Bible stories and memory verses — however good — we do children a disservice. The mind is emphasised *at the expense* of the heart, soul and strength.

Gardner helps us find practical ways to make our ministry more educationally effective and more biblical. The intentional use of a variety of approaches — “pluralising” (Gardner, 2011, p. xvi) — in each lesson maximises children’s learning. Good questions “scaffold” spiritual reasoning and reflection. Games and craft, so often used as fun time-fillers, can be used intentionally to *practice* biblical teaching. Many children will learn more by sharing scissors and cooperating in a game (personal and kinaesthetic aspects) than in a formal lesson on loving others. Thoughtfully planned craft allows artistically (spatially) gifted children to access or express the lesson concept.

Vygotsky and Gardner Together

1. The Theories

Children’s ministry is both social and multi-dimensional, matching Vygotsky’s and Gardner’s views. The above discussion demonstrates that their theories are complementary rather than competing, since Vygotsky concentrates on external influences and Gardner on innate predisposition. Vygotsky’s emphasis on language, society and imitation overlaps with Gardner’s linguistic, inter-personal and bodily-kinaesthetic intelligences. For Gardner, a particular culture’s values impact the learning opportunities, and thereby children’s development (2011, pp. 50, 60). This harmonises with Vygotsky’s social theory.

The ZPD is relevant to any learning activity involving any intelligence. Gardner (2011, p. 302) points out that his “intelligences” are useless without motivation and focussed attention. Children will quickly lose attention and motivation with activities outside their ZPD, since they are too easy or too hard. Here, too, the theories blend.

Neither theory explores the detailed mechanism of cognitive development, like the information processing model does (Berk, 2012, p. 21). However, they both offer valuable, practical insights for children’s ministry.

2. *In Contemporary Practice*

The theories help us to take every opportunity to make learning meaningful and all-encompassing, following the biblical pattern. The example below shows how these theories meld, and can inform contemporary practice.

In a mixed group of churched and unchurched children, a lesson on creation can focus on the difference between “making” out of existing materials, and “creating” *ex nihilo*. In this writer’s experience, most children have not considered this difference, but are able to grasp it (ZPD). The “churched” children, who probably know “God created everything,” can, through questions and prompts (scaffolding), tell the creation story to the other children (peer teaching). Children are guided to think through how “creating” is qualitatively different to “making.” “Making” is illustrated by using a recipe and ingredients to make playdough. Children then make their own playdough to take home (imitation), providing further opportunity for adults and children to discuss “making” / “creating.” This approach uses verbal / linguistic, logical, bodily-kinaesthetic, and personal intelligences. Adding songs about creation helps musically-orientated children to access and remember the concept. This multi-faceted approach gives children the opportunity to explore the concept with their hearts, minds, and strength. Importantly, they can *reflect* on our astonishingly creative God, who is worthy of worship. This synthesised approach optimises the lesson’s effectiveness.

A Note of Caution

Developmental theories, however useful, are just that — *theories*. In 1983, Richards described Piaget’s theory as largely “proven” (p. 59); not so today. Should Vygotsky’s and Gardner’s theories be similarly overtaken, biblical principles remain the firm foundation of children’s ministry.

Is Technique Everything?

There is an apparently pervasive idea, in the literature and among Christians, that if only we find *the* “right” method, most children under our ministry will believe. It *is* important to use educationally sound methods, skilfully and conscientiously; skilled craftsmen are appreciated in Scripture (Exodus 26:1). But we are called to faithfulness, not success (Packer, 2010, p. 122). “There is no magic in methods, not even in theologically impeccable methods” (Packer, 2010, p.127), nor, we might add, in educationally impeccable methods. We sow, and another may reap (John 4:37). God’s sovereignty means he saves in his own time; we should be patient and prayerful (Packer, 2010, pp. 129, 131).

Conclusion

Too often, we have been content to simply teach Bible stories and facts. Scripture and current educational theory require that we treat children as the developing cognitive, physical,

social, emotional and spiritual beings they are. Vygotsky's and Gardner's theories provide understanding and tools for holistic, multi-dimensional children's ministry. Because God expects it, we should teach to children's hearts, souls, minds and strengths. By his grace, may they truly know him.

Bibliography

- Balswick, J. O., King, P. E. & Reimer, K. S. 2005. *The reciprocating self: Human development in theological perspective*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.
- Beckwith, I. 2010. *Formational Children's Ministry: Shaping Children Using Story, Ritual, and Relationship*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.
- Berk, L. E. 2012. *Child Development (9th ed.)*. Boston: Pearson.
- Buckland, R. 2001. *Perspectives on children and the gospel: Excellence in ministry with children and their families*. West Gosford: Scripture Union.
- Cooling, T. 2010. Transforming faith: Teaching as a Christian vocation in a secular, world-view diverse culture. *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 14(1), 19-32.
- Crawford, P. D. 2001. Educating for moral ability: Reflections on moral development based on Vygotsky's theory of concept formation. *Journal of Moral Education* 30 (2), 113-129. doi: 10.1080/03057240120061379.
- Dawn, M. J. 1997. *Is it a lost cause? Having the heart of God for the church's children*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans.
- English, D. 2005. *The message of Mark: The mystery of faith*. In J. Stott (Ser. Ed.), *The Bible Speaks Today Series*. Leicester: InterVarsity Press.
- Fischer, B. 2007. *Redefining Children's Ministry in the 21st century*. Bismarck, N.D: Kids in Ministry International.
- Fowler, J. W. 1995. *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco.
- Gardner, H. 2011. *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.
- Goleman, D. 2012. *Daniel Goleman: Emotional intelligence, social intelligence, ecological intelligence*. Retrieved from <http://danielgoleman.info/>
- Heywood, D. 2008. Faith development theory: A case for paradigm change. *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 29 (3), 263-272.
- Jones, T. P. 2004. The basis of James W. Fowler's understanding of faith in the research of Wilfred Cantwell Smith: An examination from an evangelical perspective. *Religious Education* 99(4), 345-357.

- Kozulin, A. 2003. Psychological tools & mediated learning. In A. Kozulin, B. Grindis, V. S. Ageyev & S. M. Miller (Eds.), *Vygotsky's educational theory in cultural context* (15-38). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available from <http://books.google.com.au/books?id=mfCHutwHT-cC&pg=PR1&lpg=PR1&dq=vygotsky+educational+theory+in+cultural+context+by+alex+kozulin&source=bl&ots=uftOrarTqv&sig=N59XbvGY3khB5oZSYiHRDophME&hl=en&sa=X&ei=Mh0eUc2aDI2PiAe92YDYDw&ved=0CEEQ6AEwAg>
- May, S. Posterski, B. Stonehouse, C. & Cannell, L. 2005. *Children matter: Celebrating their place in the church, family, and community*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Packer, J. I. 2010. *Evangelism and the sovereignty of God*. Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Parker, S. 2010. Research in Fowler's faith development theory: A review article. *Review of Religious Research* 51) 3, 233-252.
- Richards, L. A. 1983. *A theology of children's ministry*. Grand Rapids: Ministry Resources Library.
- Vygotsky, L. S. 1997. Interaction between learning and development. In M. Gauvain & M. Cole (Eds.), *Readings on the development of children* (pp. 29-36). New York: W. H. Freeman & Co. Retrieved from <http://www.psy.cmu.edu/~siegler/vygotsky78.pdf>
- Waterhouse, L. 2006. Inadequate evidence for multiple intelligences, Mozart effect, and emotional intelligence theories. *Educational Psychologist* 41(4), 247-255.
- Wertsch, J. V. 1988. L. S. Vygotsky's 'new' theory of mind. *American scholar* 57(1), 81-89.
- Westerhoff, J. H. III. 1976. *Will our children have faith?* East Malvern: Dove Communications.
- Westerhoff, J. H. III 1979. The faith of children. In J. H. Westerhoff III & G. K. Neville, *Generation to generation: Conversations on religious education and culture* (pp. 109-121). New York: The Pilgrim Press.
- Westminster Shorter Catechism (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.reformed.org/documents/WSC.html>
- Williams, J. A. 2011. The mirror of learning: Towards a theology of reflection in Christian education. *Journal of Education & Christian Belief*, 15(1), 53-64.
- Woolfolk, A. & Margetts, K. 2010. *Educational psychology* (2nd ed.). Frenchs Forest: Pearson Australia.

Reclaiming Moses' Call for India

Thomas Philip

***Author:** Thomas Philip is a lecturer in Theology at New India Biblical Seminary. He has completed his Bachelor and Master of Arts in Sociology; Bachelor of Divinity and Master of Theology in Christian Theology. Thomas worked with World Vision International as its Independent Project Facilitator to CC Directors in the Asia Pacific Region for three years and taught in several theological institutions. He has written several articles in the field of Theology and Missions.*

Abstract: In this paper, the author reflects on the call of Moses in Exodus chapters 3 & 4 and reclaims it for the missional context of India. He observes that Indian mission is in crisis. On the one hand, the paper observes that the mission agencies are hesitant to carry forward the mission of God as they are challenged by the complex context of religious pluralism and fundamental activism in India. On the other hand, the author shows that there is a rapid growth of threats against mission enterprises, which diminishes the possibility of people's receptivity of the gospel. Given, reclaiming Moses' call to ministry for the Indian context of mission seems fruitful to address some of the key challenges such as crises of identity, authority, faith, communication and obedience.

Introduction

Addressing contextual issues of India has always been a key challenge to Christian mission. A few of these pressing issues could be identified: the inappropriate context of India to the proper growth of the gospel and the diminishing receptivity to the gospel. A careful reflection on Moses' conversation with God concerning the mission of leading the Israelites out of Egypt throws some light upon the current trends in the Indian context. India "has always been a plurality of religions and cultures,"¹ co-existed with multi-religious and secular ideologies. However, the present situation is almost at the brink of the dangers of religious rivalries, communal tensions, religious fanaticisms and fundamentalism. These issues may cause reluctance within mission agencies in carrying out the mission of God and place great pressure upon the people not to receive Christ. It is here that a critical appropriation of Moses' call seems fruitful. George W. Peters rightly observes this mission as, "He (God) summoned Moses and sent him back to my people which are in Egypt."²

¹ M.M Thomas, *Risking Christ For Christ's Sake: Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Pluralism* (Geneva: WCC Publications, Indian Edition by CCS Tiruvalla, 1987), 1.

² George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 102.

This article limits its focus on Moses' call based upon selected verses from Ex. 3:11-4:17, where Moses had shown unwillingness five times before obeying God's command. Moses shows his unwillingness towards the Divine Command, which this paper claims as **crisis of identity** ("Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" Ex.3:11), **crisis of authority** ("What is his name? Then what shall I tell them?" Ex.3:13), **crisis of faith** ("What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The LORD did not appear to you?'" Ex. 4:1), **crisis of communication** ("I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue" Ex.4:10), and **crisis of obedience** ("Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else" Ex. 4:13).

Behind the mission mentioned in the Exodus liberation event, a clear picture of the heart of God is seen (Exo. 3:1-10). But Moses was doubtful of his ability to carry out the mission in a restricted context like Egypt; therefore, in his encounter with God, Moses absolutely shows his internal crisis. Steve Hawthorne rightly sums up the whole exodus event as, "God went global in the book of Exodus. Since then he has never ceased to deal with every people on earth according to the truths he revealed at that time."³ A holy invisible, eternal God at the ground level speaking to Moses! The suffering of Israel, their bondage, misery, exploitation, manipulation, violence and oppression brought him down to the ground. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. says, "Mission points to a central action; the act of being sent with a commission to carry out the will of a superior. It is God who commissions and sends."⁴ It was the heart-beat of God that compelled Moses to take up the mission.

Regardless of the understanding of the context to which he was called, Moses came up with certain excuses, each of which indicates a crisis in Moses for mission. When Moses brings these issues as obstacles in mission, God clears them one by one, and finally, he is left with none; only one option which was left that was to obey God and to be the core part of his great plan of liberation. God's mission is not a movement against any race or nation,⁵ rather it is to engage with people in search for the meaning of justice, peace, reconciliation, liberation, community building, love, dialogue and common-witnessing.⁶ Thus it is very clear that the mission does not originate with human sources but is rooted in the nature of God.⁷ Since mission belongs to God, it is also known as *Missio dei*, the mission of God.⁸ David J. Bosch says, "Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is the fountain of sending love. This is

³ Steve Hawthorne, "The Story of His Glory," *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader, Revised Edition*, edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1992), A-37.

⁴ Walter C. Kaiser Jr. *Mission in the Old Testament Israel As a Light to the Nations* (Secunderabad: Authentic Books, 2006), 11.

⁵ Lit Sen Chang, *Strategy of Mission in the Orient* (Hong Kong: World Outreach Publication, 1980), 53.

⁶ John Joshua Raj and Samson Prabhakar, eds., *Introduction to Communication and Media Studies: A Text Book for Theological Studies* (Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI Publication, 2006), 199.

⁷ Michael A. Grrisati, "The Missing Mandate: Missions in the Old Testament," in *Mission in a New Millennium: Change and Challenges in the World*, edited by W. Edwards Corlenny and William Hi Swallman (Grand Rapids: Karegel Publications, 2000), 43.

⁸ Roger Bowen, *So I send you: A Study Guide to Mission* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2004), 11.

the deepest source of mission."⁹ God was transferring this very heart to Moses in the book of Exodus Chapters 3 and 4; here the mission should be understood in terms of liberation.

1. The Crisis of Identity

The Christian identity is being questioned today in the pluralistic context of India where religions have coexisted from time immemorial. The Hindu, Jewish, Zoroastrian, Christian, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Muslim communities lived together as good neighbors in India for many years until the Hindu-Muslim conflict in the struggle for self-rule in the early 20th century.¹⁰ From there on, mission to other faiths was under threat. The Christians are persecuted just because they are Christians. The atrocities against Christians are increasing day by day compared to previous years. The Christian identity itself is an issue today. The term 'Christian' is misunderstood by many, even the concept of 'mission' is no longer a Christian word.¹¹ It is widely used by people of other faiths and the secular world alike. The circumstances are pointing to the fact of impossibility in going forward with the mission of God like that of Egypt in Moses' time.

There were times when the Hindu Renaissants used to interpret the Christian message within the Hindu context. Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya attempted a Christian interpretation of Hindu sacred texts and interpreted some of them accordingly.¹² Lazar Mathew says, "India is a land of peaceful co-existence of many religions. That is why India is regarded as a league of religions. In spite of the diversities in the religions, equal right is given to all religions in our constitution."¹³ But today the situation has changed. Mission to the Indian religious fundamentalists' context has become almost impossible. In such conditions, resistance to carry out the mission would increase. A similar situation could be traced from the book of Exodus when Moses was asked to take up the mission of bringing people from bondage. He raised a question "who am I?" (Ex.3:11). He appears to have had an answer already firm in his mind; "I am nobody!" Three aspects of Moses' background may have caused him to feel inadequate for the task. He identifies those as:

First, a cultural obstruction. he was a Hebrew by birth, and the Hebrews were slaves to the king of Egypt. It means his identity was that of no recognition. Furthermore, why should his people accept him now, when 40 years before they had rejected his help (Ex 2:11-14)? To identify with these people again would not be an easy task. It was too hard for him to go back to those people who had rejected him. But the Lord wanted him to identify with the culture of the Hebrews from whom he had distanced himself. After the separation from the Hebrews, he grew up in the center of his own world and from there he did not want to come out; in

⁹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Bangalore: Center for Contemporary Christianity, 2006), 492.

¹⁰ Roger Bowen, *So I send you: A Study Guide to Mission*. 82.

¹¹ K.C. Abraham, *Transforming Vision: Theological-Methodological Paradigm Shifts* (Tiruvalla: CSS, 2006), 250.

¹² Antony Mookenthottam, *Towards a Theology in the Indian Context* (Bangalore: Asia Trading Corporation, 1980), 11-12.

¹³ Prof. Lazar Mathew, *Let's Educate for a New Culture* (Tiruvalla: CSS, 2008), 101.

addition, he did not want to mingle with the previous culture, which was almost becoming foreign to him. He grew up in a culture and learned that its ways are the right ways to do things or he might have become ethnocentric, which means, the natural tendency to judge the behaviour of people in other cultures by the values and assumptions of one's own.¹⁴

The culture and society where Moses was born and brought up had become almost unfamiliar. Sherwood G. Lingenfelter says that, "Each one of us is born into a particular social context and family, it is within that context that we are socialized, or acquire what might be seen as our personal cultural heritage."¹⁵ In the case of Moses a vast cultural gap had been developed, therefore, cultural integration has become almost impracticable. Roger Bowen says, "Culture is both a bridge which links different generations of people to one another, and a wall which separates people from others who want to invade or change their culture."¹⁶ Whereas, Franklyn J. Balasundaram says, "cultures express the soul of a people. It is a point of entry into their personalities and societies."¹⁷ In India, culture is understood in terms of beliefs, values, customs, and institutions that bind a society together with a sense of identity, value, security and continuity. God was insisting Moses was to identify with his own culture, to reach out to them because cultural solidarity and identification are two great factors of mission. Similarly, to fit oneself in the present scenario of India has become almost impossible, yet God wants everyone to integrate with the context for an effective witness.

Second, a prejudice disposition. Moses was an Egyptian by upbringing, but he had left behind a reputation for murder and perhaps rebellion. He no longer had any influence among Egyptian royalty; hence, he arrives at a final judgment that he cannot influence them any longer. Premature judgments are always considered to be unhealthy, moreover, they close the door to future understanding and communication. The crisis of Moses is that he did not want to remember Egypt now. But God wanted him to have solidarity with the marginalized Israelites in Egypt. M. J. Joseph defines the marginalized as, "... the ones who sit on the margin or rather are pushed to the boundary. They are insignificant ones according to the worldly standards. They are the ones who are lost in the crowd."¹⁸ Living in a plural context of different races, faiths and atrocities in India has become very difficult for Christians to establish solidarity with people of other faiths as a caring community, consequently, a distance is being created and mission has been limited to amongst the Christian community.

Finally, the present vocation. The present background of Moses was not socially recognized because he is a Midianite shepherd by vocation, and the Egyptians despised shepherds (Gen. 46:34). The shepherds' social status was not accepted, in fact, they were treated as

¹⁴ Paul G. Hiebert, "Culture and Cross-Cultural Differences," *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader, Revised Edition*, edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1992), A-16.

¹⁵ Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic House, 2003), 19.

¹⁶ Roger Bowen, *So I send you: A Study Guide to Mission*, 82.

¹⁷ Franklyn J. Balasundaram, *Contemporary Asian Christian Theology* (Bangalore: UTC, 2009), 45.

¹⁸ Rev. Dr. M.J. Joseph, *One in Many Many in One* (Tiruvalla: CSS, 2005), 49.

downtrodden and marginalized. They did not have any importance in Egypt. For this reason, Moses identifies his profession or work as of no recognition; therefore, it is impossible to fit into that context, his work or professional contribution to building community seemed to be nothing. John Stott says, "Work is intended not only for the fulfillment of the worker, but also for the benefit of the community."¹⁹ This could be another reason to think, "Who am I? Nobody"! But God had a purpose, that is, to accomplish the three aspects of God's mission: to know him, to grow in him and to serve him in partnership in the community. Every work has something to contribute to the community, forgetting this very fact people always struggle for the recognition of their vocation especially in India, because the works sometimes are distributed according to the class or caste. But God loves and recognize all works as a means to the betterment of human beings. The vocation is not a matter for God to liberate people of Israel from the bondage of Egypt.

The minority consciousness of Christians and the society that Christians are representing force them to think of their identity. Perhaps Moses was like many people today who struggle to integrate their ethnic or cultural heritage into a larger society. Ajith Fernando rightly observes that, "ministering without the sense of identity, security, and significance that from God's acceptance of us can be very dangerous."²⁰ Hence, identity is the heart of carrying out the mission of God. Often this might lead people to go through self-doubt and crisis of identity. God's acceptance of Moses and people is visible when God reassured Moses by giving him two strong promises: that He would be present with him and that He would bring him back to the very spot where he was standing (Ex. 3:12). Similarly, God gives his people even today the same strong word of encouragement: "He will not leave us or desert us" (Dt. 31:6, Js. 1:5; Heb. 13:5, 6) even in the midst of all atrocities and chaotic situations. This word of God was helpful for Moses to avoid the sense of inadequacy especially in a pluralistic and multi-ideological milieu. In the multi-religious and cultural context, the identity as Christians is to be drawn from the insights as guidance from the Bible to relate with the people of other faiths.

2. The Crisis of Authority

The second concern was that Moses does not know what to tell his fellow Hebrews. He especially wondered how he ought to explain who had sent him: what was God's name? (Ex.3:13). To attend this crisis, God revealed his supremacy and connection with the history of humankind, "God says, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob and then promises to deliver the people from Egypt."²¹ Therefore, this could be considered as an issue of authority, which means identifying with his people seemed to be difficult. Sometimes people think of authority as nothing more than asking others what they should do. But in God's instruction to Moses (Exo. 6:13), it is reminded that authority can bring freedom to others when it is applied wisely and under Lord's direction.

¹⁹ John Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today* (Mumbai: GLS, 2010), 191.

²⁰ Ajith Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 57.

²¹ William Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 30.

Moses' concern was legitimate. Why should people believe someone coming out of the desert claiming to be sent by God? Jesus faced the same question by priests and elders when He entered the temple, 'By what authority are you doing these things?'²² To meet that concern, God gave Moses an outline of his identity and authority as the supreme Lord: first of all, God revealed His name (3:14), and it could be the first revelation of his very nature, the self-revelation of God, William Dyrness calls it as, "... one of the most striking and decisive moments in God's self-revelation."²³ God in his face-to-face encounter with Moses, to uplift Moses' spirit, He reminded Moses of His promises to the Hebrews (Ex 3:14, 16). He declared that He was more powerful than the Egyptians and their king (Ex 3:16, 19-20), as well as the Canaanites (Ex 3:17). And He reaffirmed His special role as the Lord God of the Hebrews (Ex 3:18). Thus, Moses received a lesson in theology, actually a lesson in authority that God is in control and rules over all the earth and its people.

God revealed himself to Moses and said, "I am that I am," by this he had the awareness of God's peculiar name. This revelation was so unique, that God is all-powerful, who has the power of self-existence, power of creation; he has the power to fashion and destroy, open and shut, overthrow and establish, pardon and condemn, give and withhold. God is giving Moses authority to speak on His behalf. The revelation further carries a weightage that a global attention needs to be brought to God by witnessing him in Egypt. He wanted everyone in Egypt and beyond to know that there was absolutely no god like the living God.²⁴

3. The Crisis of Faith

The third concern was that the people of Israel would neither believe him nor listen to him (Ex. 4:1). Perhaps this crisis of doubt was of his concerns about his own identity and God's authority. The unbelief that he anticipated was not unlike that of many people today who say, I cannot believe in a God that I cannot see or hear. How do I know he is real?

Here God reveals his identity as "I am that I am, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." The self-existent God, the God who brought cosmos out of chaos, the God who brought form out of formlessness, has come down to the level of Moses and talking to Moses.

It is a wonder that the objects that have no intellect, such as stars and planets, move in a constant pattern, cooperating ingeniously with one another. But it is evident that they achieve their movements not by accident but by a design. What gives direction and design to these inanimate objects? It is God. He is the underlying, motivating force of life. This God who has come down is talking to Moses. Moses must be happy because man in all his attempts

²² Israel Selvanayagam, *Relating to People of Other Faiths: Insights from the Bible* (Tiruvalla: CSS, 2004), 245.

²³ William Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament*, 30.

²⁴ Steve Hawthorne, "The Story of His Glory," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Moment: A Reader*, edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carry Library, 1992), A-34 & 35.

tried to find God but man was not able to find him anywhere. But here, God is coming down to Moses.

Moses' encounter with God resulted in a unique way that He gave Moses three miracles to perform (Ex 4:2-9). These supernatural acts would demonstrate God's presence and power. However, miracles alone do not always prove convincing. The skeptical minds and stubborn hearts may remain steadfast in their unbelief, no matter how powerful a miracle happens to be (Lk. 16:30, 31; Jn. 12:37). The encounter with God will entrust a person with the amazing power that will transform the lives of people, communities and nations. The essence of faith is the firm conviction received from the revelation.

On the other hand, the Lord's miracles can strengthen the faith of those who want to believe in him. That is a reason why scripture reports so many of God's supernatural acts. By reading about them, one who was not there to witness them can know and believe that the God who performed them and spoke to Moses is the same God who has spoken to us through Jesus the eternal son of the eternal father (Ex. 4:5, Jn.20:30, 31). Here God clears the third problem of Moses and now he cannot cling to his excuse. The revelation of God was enough to engage in a dialogue with Israel and the Egyptians and also to solicit the obedience of People since the dialogue is a platform to come together for a cause. S. Arun Gopal adds, "Dialogue is proposed as a humanization process, for one becomes human only through his/her involvement with other human beings."²⁵ God insists on Moses' involvement with others, moreover, this revelation of God would lead people to have educated community in the knowledge of God. The Sociologists might call it as 'socialization' whereby individuals acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, needs, motivation and patterns of life.²⁶ God wanted Moses to take up the challenge of transmitting this vision of God to people so that they may come to an ultimate deliverance.

4. The Crisis of Communication

God's mission comes to Moses as to be the spokesperson of God, that is to say, he is authorized to speak for God. A spokesperson is appointed particularly in a time of crises. The crises at this point is the bondage, therefore, the spokesperson needs the right skills, the right position and the right training to liberate them. But Moses acknowledges the lack of assurance for this very task (Ex.4:10). He speaks of his inability to interpret the revelation that he had received into that particular context. He says, "I am a man of stammering tongue;" which means, "I am a man with lots of impediments." Probably he knew that poor communication can undercut a leader's authority and make one ineffective spokesperson; therefore, the interpersonal or face to face communication is impractical.²⁷ More specifically, communicating the very core of mission seemed to be impossible at that context; similarly,

²⁵ S. Arun Gopal, *Christian Education for Social Change* (Tiruvalla: CSS and Bangalore: UTC, 2015), 172.

²⁶ Adynna Lim, "Socialization: A Model for Church Education," in *Education that Transforms: Perspectives on Christian Education for Asia* Edited by Edith Woods (Bangalore: TBT, 1995), 53.

²⁷ George David, *Communicating Christ Among Indian Peoples* (Chennai: CBMTM, 1998), 68.

communicating the mission in a multi-religious context with dominant religious militancy comes to a limited space.

In Exodus 4, Moses saw himself as “slow at speaking.” Yet whatever deficiencies Moses may have had as a speaker, God indicated that he is the Lord of communication. Athul Y Aghamkar says, “The God of the Bible is the God who communicates. Indeed the Bible is the record of his communication. God by nature is a communicator.”²⁸ Therefore, God promised to be with Moses in a way that his words would be understood (Ex. 4: 11, 12). This revelation of God is essential to carry out the mission in multisocial groups in India. David George says, “In India, every social group is also a religious group.”²⁹ To communicate with such groups, the conversation of God with Moses is to be understood in one’s own context because God’s communication takes place in the concrete context of human beings and situations. This would energize all who are called to represent Lord Jesus Christ to a multi-religious context like India (1 Pet. 3:15).

5. The Crisis of Obedience

Obedience to God’s mission is a progressive and ongoing process that involves on-going issues and challenges. It is an act with which one abandons oneself totally and freely with complete submission of one’s intellect and will to God who reveals himself. Moses’ final excuse showed unwillingness or reluctance to carry out the Lord’s mission. He asked if there was someone else God could send (Ex. 4:13). Moses’ question may seem incredible after all the promises and signs that God had given. God’s anger was provoked as a result of Moses’ statement (Ex 4:14). The text shows how God must feel when one resists his clearly revealed will, “... when God is pleased to send the chosen ones on a divine mission, He not only reveals to them their assigned task and gets it done by them, but also reveals Himself to them personally and carries out His own mission in them first and foremost.”³⁰ But Moses comes with reluctance to the mission of God and God had anticipated it from Moses. Knowing this, God had already prepared Aaron on the way to meet his brother Moses (4:14). God was totally involved in sending someone for a special purpose. For this, a complete obedience is required.

The call to this mission is not only civilizing the community, nor the socialization alone but a complete liberation of a multitude in Egypt. Keiran Beville rightly observes that, “Engaging in mission is being involved in the fulfillment of God’s will.”³¹ Therefore, the urgency is to be radically obedient to the will of God who revealed himself as a missionary God. So Moses was to maintain the uniqueness of his witness, and he was responsible to see that there was active witness. His obedience together with Aaron will result in the shaping of the lifestyle

²⁸ Atul Y. Aghamkar, “Christian Witness Among Secular Urbanists in India,” in *Among the People: Essays in Honor of Rev. Dr. P.G. Varghese*, Edited by V.D. John and Viju Wilson (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2012), 36.

²⁹ George David, *Communicating Christ Among Indian Peoples*, 72.

³⁰ A. Paul Dominic, S.J, *God of Mission* (Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 1998), 2.

³¹ Kieran Beville, “Rhythm of God’s Heartbeat: Biblical Perspectives on Mission Theology,” in *Emerging Challenges to Mission*, edited by Siga Arles (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2012), 56.

of the people of Israel, their distinct identity and purpose in the world.³² Both of them were privileged to know God who revealed himself, his plan and carry out his great mission. At this point the words of Roger E. Hedlund are striking, “the privilege of knowing God and being known by him is but the privilege of serving and glorifying him among the nations.”³³ The emancipation of a group of people is relied on the obedience of one man; by this obedience, God’s purpose is being fulfilled. His purpose is as defined by Walter C. Kaiser Jr, “the whole purpose of God was to bless one people so that they might be the channel through which all the nations on the earth might receive a blessing.”³⁴ The obedience of a nation to the mission of God would result in the blessing of the world.

Moses’ conversation with God points to an important truth: Doing God’s will and accomplishing his mission is ultimately a matter of obedience. People may have legitimate concerns as they consider God’s directives. But after all questions have been addressed, one remains: Are we going to take up His mission? Thankfully, Moses did obey God (7:6); hence, the Israelites were liberated. God cleared all his excuses one by one.

The crises were brought before the Lord because Moses was not confident to carry out the mission. At his encounter with the Lord, God removed all hindrances. When Moses obeyed, intrinsically the mission turned out to be the crucial part of the most significant historical liberation that has inspired many liberation movements and theologies. God wants everyone to become part of his program or mission without any reservations. In order to do so, allowing themselves to be fashioned and designed by God is imperative. Moreover, it is important to put full confidence in God to carry out his mission to any context like India. Moses was called to witness to a pluralistic context. God’s glory was to be seen in Moses as a chosen agent of liberation, and thus it would be through the people of Israel that the nations of earth were to hear the good news.

Bibliography

Abraham, K. C. 2006. *Transforming Vision: Theological-Methodological Paradigm Shifts*. Tiruvalla: CSS.

Aghamkar, Atul Y. 2012. “Christian Witness Among Secular Urbanists in India,” in *Among the People: Essays in Honor of Rev. Dr. P.G. Varghese*. Edited by V. D. John and Viju Wilson. New Delhi: ISPCK.

Balasundaram, Franklyn J. 2009. *Contemporary Asian Christian Theology*. Bangalore: UTC.

Beville, Kieran. 2012. “Rhythm of God’s Heartbeat: Biblical Perspectives on Mission Theology,” in *Emerging Challenges to Mission*. Edited by Siga Arles. New Delhi: ISPCK.

³² Roger E. Hedlund, *God and the Nations* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2008), 12.

³³ Roger E. Hedlund, *God and the Nations*, 27.

³⁴ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Secunderbad: Authentic Books, 2006), 20.

- Bosch, David J. 2006. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Bangalore: Center for Contemporary Christianity.
- Bowen, Roger. 1980. *So I send you: A Study Guide to Mission*. New Delhi: ISPCK.
- Chang, Lit Sen. 1980. *Strategy of Mission in the Orient*. Hong Kong: World Outreach Publication.
- David, George. 1998. *Communicating Christ Among Indian Peoples*. Chennai: CBMTM.
- Dominic, S.J. A. Paul. 1998. *God of Mission*. Bangalore: Claretian Publications.
- Dyrness, William. 1997. *Themes in Old Testament*. Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Fernando, Ajith. 2004. *Jesus Driven Ministry*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Gopal, S. Arun. 2015. *Christian Education for Social Change*. Tiruvalla: CSS and Bangalore: UTC.
- Grrisati, Michael A. 2000. "The Missing Mandate: Missions in the Old Testament," in *Mission in a New Millennium: Change and Challenges in the World*. Edited by W. Edwards Corlenny and William Hi Swallman. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications.
- Hawthorne, Steve. 1992. "The Story of His Glory," *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader, Revised Edition*. Edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne. Pasadena: William Carey Library.
- Hedlund, Roger E. 2008. *God and the Nations*. New Delhi: ISPCK.
- Hiebert, Paul G. 1992. "Culture and Cross-Cultural Differences," *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader, Revised Edition*. Edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne. Pasadena: William Carey Library.
- Joseph, M. J. 2005. *One in Many Many in One*. Tiruvalla: CSS.
- Kaiser Jr., Walter C. 2006. *Mission in the Old Testament Israel As a Light to the Nations*. Secunderabad: Authentic Books.
- Lim, Adynna. 1995. "Socialization: A Model for Church Education," in *Education that Transforms: Perspectives on Christian Education for Asia*. Edited by Edith Wood. Bangalore: TBT.
- Lingentelster, Sherwood G. and Marvin K Mayers. 2003. *Ministering Cross-Culturally*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic House.
- Mathew, Lazar. 2008. *Let's Educate for a New Culture*. Tiruvalla: CSS.
- Mookenthottam, Antony. 1980. *Towards a Theology in the Indian Context*. Bangalore: Asia Trading Corporation.
- Peters, George W. 1984. *A Biblical Theology of Missions*. Chicago: Moody Press.

Raj, John Joshua and Samson Prabhakar, eds. 2006. *Introduction to Communication and Media Studies: A Text Book for Theological Studies*. Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI Publication.

Selvanayagam, Israel. 2004. *Relating to People of Other Faiths: Insights from the Bible*. Tiruvalla: CSS.

Stott, John R. W. 2010. *New Issues Facing Christians Today*. Mumbai: GLS.

Thomas, M. M. 1987. *Risking Christ For Christ's Sake: Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Pluralism*. Geneva: WCC Publications, Indian Edition by CCS Tiruvalla.