Logoi Pistoi

Faithful Words **Volume 4**

Published by Australian College of Christian Studies

Logoi Pistoi Published by Australian College of Christian Studies

Level 2, 29 George St, Burwood 2134 NSW Australia
www.ccs.edu.au

© Copyright 2019

Version 4.0 Published in December 2019

The views expressed in these articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or positons 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 fourth 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 consists of Dr Xavier Lakshmanan, Dr Paul Porta, and Mrs Merilyn Smith. The team is coordinated by Dr Xavier Lakshmanan.

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

Editorial

It gives me great pleasure to present the fourth 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

© Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Contents

Life: Time and Eternity 1

Racism and the Curse of Cannan 10

The Preaching Community 23

Pentateuch Criticism 37

Book Review 44

© Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Life: Time and Eternity

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 19 years he has been teaching in several theological institutions in India and Australia. Xavier has published a book, Textual Linguistic Theology in Paul Ricouer, and several articles in theology. He has completed his Doctor of Philosophy in theology and hermeneutic philosophy through Charles Sturt University, Australia.*

Abstract: This paper explores the Christian vision of life in conversation with the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur is a contemporary philosopher of hope whose notion of existence can inform Christian theological discourse to articulate a theological vision of existence meaningfully. Ricoeur holds that a sacred text shows a real life; thus, a possibility to live here and now and beyond. This life is an existential reality made intelligible through language. The language of life is metaphor and the reality of life is linguistic. Thus, his concept of language forms the basis for understanding his notion of existence and temporality. His notion of life, like Christian reality, is an eternal temporal composition. Thus, engaging with Ricoeur, I will argue that life is a reality composed of eternal-temporal dimensions.

Introduction

Ricoeur argues that human life is a reality composed of time and eternity. It is unique. It is existential. Time, space and mass constitute this life and its existence. Language is the essence of life. This means that human life is temporal, and it has a beginning, middle and an end. Nevertheless, life has a mortal wound - death.[1] It was Martin Heidegger who famously exclaimed that existence's mortal wound is death and it is a terminal disease of humanity. This is the ultimate limit of human existence.[2] This makes every human life terminal. Paradoxically, the Christian vision of life intensifies the nature of existence from here and now to eternity. It makes the reality of death a passage: from existential life to eternal life via death. Here existence is expanded eternally, and eternity is made existential, making the reality of life limitless and endless.

According to Ricoeur, the life that the text unfolds is able to redescribe and reorganise one's actual life. It also gives the person self-knowledge by showing the self's possibility, which

---

[1] Xavier Lakshmanan, *Textual Linguistic Theology in Paul Ricoeur* (New York: Peter Lang, 2016), 1-141.
[2] Martin Heidegger, John Macquarrie (tran.), *Being and Time* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 349-450.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

constitute self-identity.[3] Hope comprised of passion, imagination and time makes this redescription of life possible. Passion gives rise to temporality; creative imagination energises it; and the temporal features of time restructure and reorient it in the world.[4] Existence is seen as the form of this redescribed temporality, in which a being is a constant possibility; existence is a radical conflict; and mortality is a way to temporal-eternal circularity. Self-knowledge is grasped as the totality of reoriented temporality as the presence of the possible retrospectively, prospectively and introspectively. The eternal-temporal circularity is established by arguing that temporality possesses eternality and eternity possesses temporality. Thus, the totality of human life is temporal-eternal and eternal-temporal, which ultimately constitutes self-understanding and self-identity. In this way, human life is always discovered afresh, and such a life is a life of self-knowledge and identity.[5]

The sense of the impossibility of attaining a total understanding of existence here and now dissatisfies the theologian Paul Tillich. For him, God alone is the ultimate Being: the "Ground Being."[6] Tillich characterises existence as an absence of wholeness - "standing out of non-being."[7] Existence is existentially split for it is not identical with the being in totality. God alone, "Being itself" is God because nothing else is in the same way as God is.[8] Thus, existence is relatively dualistic in its being because God is in a state of totality and human is neither total nor perfect. So, the human existence becomes authentically complete only by participating in the wholeness of the total being, the "ground of being."[9]

This is where Ricoeur insists that human being and temporality must enter into the divine being and eternity, and divine being and eternity must break into human being and temporality by overcoming the terminal limit of mortality. Ricoeur argues that the "theme of distension and intention acquires ... the mediation on eternity and time as intensification"[10] of the mind. He affirms a temporal-eternal and eternal-temporal circularity, which is dynamic and functional: eternity may freely flow into temporality and temporality may enter eternity without obstruction. This will make life endless and limitless.

The Eternalness of Temporality

Ricoeur affirms that temporality contains eternality and it refers beyond itself to eternity. The argument that time "no longer refers to eternity" shows the "ontological deficiency characteristic of human time,"[11] which fundamentally is "afflicting the conception of time as

[3] Lakshmanan, *Textual Linguistic Theology*, 141.
[4] Heidegger, John Macquarrie (tran.), *Being and Time*, 349-450.
[5] Heidegger, John Macquarrie (tran.), *Being and Time*, 349-450.
[6] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* vol.2 (London: James Nisbet & Co. LTD, 1957), 23.
[7] Tillich, *Systematic Theology* vol.2, 23.
[8] Tillich, *Systematic Theology* vol.2, 23.
[9] Tillich, *Systematic Theology* vol.2, 23.
[10] Paul Ricoeur, Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (trans.), *Time and Narrative,* vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 30. This notion of mind receiving intensification as it stretches backward and forward in the process of mediating past time and future time to the present time as presence will be addressed in detail in the later part of this article.
[11] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative,* vol. 1, 5.

© Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

such."[12] But "temporality possessing eternality deepens time and temporality."[13] This makes temporality much more than temporal. Rather, it becomes temporally eternal. As a result, human temporality is no longer temporal alone but temporally eternal and eternally temporal.

It was Moltmann who argued that the human soul itself is an indication of eternalness in temporality. Christian hope leads humans to God's Kingdom that comes from God to be on earth. Both the Kingdom and the human soul are the "angels who belong to heaven"[14] but reside on earth. Humans have come from and belong to earth and "do so in both time and eternity."[15] As heaven is open for temporal beings, so also the temporal is open for the eternal. Thus, the Kingdom "lives with the earth, and it is only on earth that human beings can seek the Kingdom of God."[16] In short, eternality is contained by temporality. This is what Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, "God has set eternity in the human heart." This could be construed as God planting in human life here and now a "desire of eternity," which consists of "a sense of past and future" in the present.[17] In other words, human life contains eternity in it.

The prime example for this is the person of Jesus Christ: God in the form of a human being. As a divine being, he is God who inhabits eternity. He not only broke into humanity, which is part of temporality, but also accommodated himself to be contained by it, comprised by a human soul and a corporeal body. He continues in the same way forever. Thus, the temporal body-and-soul of Jesus contained the eternal *Logos* as the divine-human union of Jesus existed in temporality. This can be well understood in the Barthian analysis of time: eternity enters temporality in the incarnation of Christ. That which is eternal entering into that which is historical, leaving the history problematic.[18] This is what Kierkegaard famously exclaims, "We are to engage the eternal in the temporal. This is made possible because the eternal has entered the historical."[19] And it might be added that there is nothing under temporal conditions in which there is no eternality dwelling. Human existence is both eternally temporal and temporally eternal. So Moltmann exclaimed: "Then in all created beings, the fullness of the Deity dwells bodily."[20] Thus, eternity breaking in and residing in temporality makes temporality more than what it is into what it could be as Ricoeur claims that "temporality possessing eternality deepens temporality and time."[21]

---

[12] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative,* vol. 1, 5.
[13] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative,* vol. 1, 30.
[14] Jürgen Moltmann, Margaret Kohl (tran.), *In the End – The Beginning* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 160.
[15] Moltmann, *In the End – The Beginning,* 160.
[16] Moltmann, *In the End – The Beginning,* 160.
[17] Roland Murphy, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ecclesiastes* vol. 23A (Texas: Word Books, 1992), 34.
[18] Karl Barth, G. W. Bromiley (ed.,), *Church Dogmatics* vol.IV.1 (London: T&T Clark, 1988), 157-210.
[19] David Mercer, *Kierkegaard's Living-Room: The Relation Between Faith and History in Philosphical Fragments* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 152.
[20] Moltmann, *In the End – The Beginning,* 160.
[21] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative,* vol. 1, 30.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Temporalness of Eternity

Ricoeur also affirms that eternity possesses temporality. He shows this by providing an "intensification of the experience of time."[22] He argues that "time is in the soul" and the soul is everlasting. Therefore, time exists in eternity. Accordingly, "eternity possessing temporality deepens its status of being eternal."[23] Analysing the creation narratives, he argues that it was not in the universe that God created the universe for until the world was made there was no place called "universe." This is the sum of *creatio ex nihilo.* Here the "original nothingness," which is eternal, does not exclude God's being but "strikes time with an ontological deficiency" because creation begins and ends.[24] The God who is eternal begins and ends his act of creation. How could a God whose being is eternal, where no beginning and no ending is possible, have ever begun to create if temporality had not been present in him? God's capability of beginning and ending, which are constituents of temporality, indicates that temporality was intrinsic in God. This also explains how God could have had the temporal potential for temporal things that He created. As Ricoeur argues: "how can a temporal creature be made in and through the eternal word?"[25] This is impossible if the potential of temporality was not in the eternal Word. Hence, for Ricoeur, "Eternity, in this sense, is no less a source of enigmas than is time."[26]

Again, Ricoeur's view here is close to Moltmann's theological account of the possibility of temporality in eternity. Moltmann affirms the future of eternity. By holding the time of this world as chronological time and the time of the other world as "aeonic time,"[27] he argues that in the structure of the aeonic time, one can see the "cycles of time" - a "reflection of eternity."[28] This is a "circle" that has no beginning and end. This is a picture of "reversible time" that does not differentiate between past and future but "moves in a circular course."[29] In this way, eternal life means one continuously participating in the eternity of God,[30] which brings to human corporeal life "eternal livingness."[31] Thus, one can speak about a life that lasts forever, endless worlds, timeless time, a beginning without ending and a limitless possibility.[32]

Similarly, it can also be argued that the earthly and temporal human life, which is going to be raised to eternal life, also affirms the possibility of eternity accommodating temporality. Christ's temporal being was transformed into eternal when he ascended to glory in the same manner he was transformed from eternal to temporal. This can be well understood in the

[22] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 1, 5.
[23] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 1, 30.
[24] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 1, 24.
[25] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 1, 24.
[26] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 1, 24.
[27] Moltmann, *In the End – The Beginning,* 159.
[28] Moltmann, *In the End – The Beginning,* 159.
[29] Moltmann, *In the End – The Beginning,* 159.
[30] Moltmann, *In the End – The Beginning,* 160.
[31] Moltmann, *In the End – The Beginning,* 160.
[32] Moltmann, *In the End – The Beginning,* 160.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Augustinian analysis of time: temporality enters into eternity.[33] Here eternity is temporal, and temporality is eternal in a circular way. This is why Kevin Timpe argues that "eternal entity and temporal entity [are] each capable of entering into 'direct and immediate causal relations.'"[34] At the same time, eternity and temporality remain radically different: temporality is qualitatively eternal and quantitatively temporal, governed by a temporal pattern of time. Eternity is qualitatively temporal and quantitatively eternal, ruled by God's eternal time. As a result, human temporality is eternally temporal and temporally eternal. Here the circularity is dynamic and functional: eternity comes to temporality and temporality goes to eternity. The human possibility that gives rise to self-understanding is temporal-eternal and eternal-temporal. But, at this point, human self-understanding as the totality of life is not intelligible as a present reality because the temporal nature of time – time as past and future – is not yet eradicated.

Temporal-Eternal Totality

Maintaining temporality as eternal and eternity as temporal, Ricoeur affirms self-understanding as a temporal-eternal totality of life, available here and now. As a contrast, Wolfhart Pannenberg affirms an eschatological understanding of totality by emphasising the primacy of the future. The totality is achieved at the end of all temporal processes and historical consummations. The true nature of human being and existence is disclosed and understood at the end.[35] Here totality as the human self-understanding and self-identity is possible only at the end of everything that exists – just as, for Heidegger the totality is possible only from the vantage point of death.[36]

---

[33] Augustine, Henry Chadwick (tran.), *Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), Book, II, IV, XI.

[34] Kevin Timpe, *Metaphysics and God* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 51.

[35]Wolfhart Pannenberg, Philip Clayton (tran.), *Metaphysics and the Idea of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

[36]It is in the second part of *Being and Time,* Heidegger addresses this issue of one's grasping of oneself as the unity of human being in terms of its "being-a-whole," which ultimately becomes the basis for Ricoeur to explore it into directions that are far more beyond Heidegger. Heidegger affirms that one gains the understanding of one's own most authentic possibilities as the individual grasps the totality of *Dasein's* existence. Here the existential interpretation of death provides a unifying notion of existence. He argues that death as a reality that stands before a human being is the ultimate and certain possibility of a being. It is the "possibility of no-longer being-able-to-be-there." One must appropriate this ultimate possibility of being as her own highest possibility. This signifies that *Dasein* must constantly anticipate mortality and recognize the intrinsic limit of mortality upon existence, which is an understanding of the "possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all." Accordingly, one's understanding of her own existence from its most authentic point is important for Heidegger for the notion of the wholeness of being emerges from this ultimate human possibility of mortality as the possibility of the impossibility of being. This implies that one can grasp her own existence in its totality only from the standpoint of its end. In this way, mortality is an inevitable possibility of being and this is a possibility that one cannot share with others. Thus, Heidegger's understanding of authentic existence, which provides a person with self-understanding and identity, must be grasped as a totality of being by seriously considering the beginning of a being from the most certain end of being and vice-versa. So, totality of existence stands marked by one's own birth and death. This expresses that Heidegger's notion of authentic existence of human being must be characterised by a sense of anticipation, which is "Being-toward-death" and a sense of "resoluteness." Here the totality of existence, which is the self-understanding and identity of oneself, emerges out of the "anticipatory resoluteness," in which resoluteness "projects itself not upon random possibilities" but upon the "uttermost possibility" of being, which is the finality of human existence. This sense of the importance of the totality of human existence as a way of understanding existence

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Pannenberg's notion is eschatological because he argues that the "totality of existence is possible only from the standpoint of its future."[37] The "future and possible wholeness belong together"[38] and the future of objects determines their true nature. Here, the future dimension of time has primacy over the past and the present. The past and the present make sense only because of the future. In this way, Pannenberg argues that the "present and the past can then be interpreted as participating in the future totality."[39] Accordingly, human self-understanding is "not yet completely present in the process of time."[40] Rather, "everything that exists is what it is only as the anticipation of its future" and "it is what it is always in anticipation of its end and from its end."[41] As a result, "the totality of our lives is hidden from us ... because our future is still ahead of us."[42] Here the totality, which is supposed to be a basis for a meaningful existence, lies in the unreachable future. The always anticipated future is characterised by the "eternity of God,"[43] in which humans participate by anticipating something beyond mortality. Thus, Pannenberg concludes that the total understanding of human existence is decided by the future of God's eternity, which is unattainable here and now because everything that exists receives from God "it's true and definitive identity" at the end of its existence.[44] This clearly indicates that human self-understanding as a totality cannot be attained in this temporal life. One must wait until the end of everything to truly understand herself and to form a genuine sense of identity. But self-understanding and self-identity are necessary components of the structure of meaningful life here and now rather than in the eternal world. It is in exactly this way that theology normally fails to function as a meaningful account of human existence here and now.

However, the advantage of Pannenberg's proposal is his attempt to connect temporality to God's eternity by eradicating the limit that mortality places upon human existence as maintained by Heidegger. By doing this, he provides a theological correction to the Heideggerian notion of mortality as the most authentic possibility from which humans must achieve self-understanding and identity. To this extent, Pannenberg and Ricoeur agree. Nevertheless, Pannenberg's theology of eschatological totality fails in two ways. First, his concept of totality seems to be moving in the same direction of Heidegger in the sense that it is future-oriented and anticipatory. Heidegger maintained that one must be in constant anticipation of mortality. As one exists here and now, one must stand at the end point

itself leads Heidegger to reinterpret the notion of human being as existence in terms of temporality in the later part of the *Being and Time.* He argues that *Dasein* can be "ahead of itself" because of its "ontological future;" it can "already be in the world" because of its "ontological past;" and it can be "alongside entities" because of its "ontological present." Martin Heidegger, John Macquarrie (tran.), *Being and Time* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978).

[37] Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God,* 78.

[38] Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God,* 86.

[39] Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God,* 87.

[40] Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God,* 104.

[41] Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God,* 88.

[42] Wolfhart Pannenberg, Geoffrey W. Bromiley (tran.), *Systematic Theology* vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 601.

[43] Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God,* 97.

[44] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* vol. 3, 603.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

(mortality) in order to understand oneself from that future point. But it must be noted that Pannenberg simply moved Heidegger's idea from mortality to God's eternity: he kept the Heideggerian system intact, but what Heidegger called "death" he called "eternal life." Second, by making totality an end-event, only attainable after all the temporal processes and consummations of history, Pannenberg's concept fails to address the issue of human self-understanding and identity as essential constituents of meaningful human existence and being. It is at this juncture that Ricoeur's notion of the temporal-eternal and eternal-temporal totality proves to be fruitful for theological reflection. For Ricoeur, the totality of life is not an inaccessible metaphysical postulate of future, but an ontological and linguistic means to self-understanding and identity here and now.

Maintaining eternal-temporal circularity, Ricoeur argues that in eternity, there is no past and future time but only the present, which determines both past and future.[45] Unlike Pannenberg's future-orientation, Ricoeur emphasises the primacy of the present over the past and the future. By way of analysing Augustine's view of time, he argues that eternity is "forever still" in contrast to things that are "never still." This stillness lies in the fact that "in eternity nothing moves into the past: all is present."[46] This is what Ricoeur's concept of a "threefold present," in which totality of life is a result of a convergence, which must be compared "neither with past nor future" but with a temporal-eternal present.[47] He contends that no action takes place in the past, neither in the future, but every action is performed in the present. Hence, the present is the only time of action, and so resembles the nature of eternity here and now.[48]

Ricoeur's phenomenological notion of time basically comes from Augustine's theory of time, which was also later developed by Husserl and Heidegger. He argues that time comprised of past, present and future does not exist because it cannot exist. The past does not exist because it is already gone, and it is not happing now. The future does not exist because it has not happened yet, and it is not yet here. The present does not exist because it does not last; it is a vanishing point that is always slipping away toward the past or arriving from the future. Most importantly, the present time lacks extension. The moment one expresses the term "now," it has already gone into the past. It is infinitely tiny. Thus, the present does not exist in the sense that something is. Hence, for Augustine, time never exists as in the sense of existence, but it does exist in a different way, even though neither the past, nor the present, nor the future exists as things are.[49]

Ricoeur offers his idea of the threefold present of time as a psychological-philosophical solution to the Augustinian paradox of time. He argues that time exists in the human mind. The past exists as human memory and history. The future exists as human anticipation and goals. The present exists as human attention and consciousness. Here the past and the future

[45] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 1, 30.
[46] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 1, 25.
[47] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 1, 25.
[48] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 1, 25.
[49] Augustine, Henry Chadwick (tran.), *Confessions*, Book XI.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

exist in the present; and only if the present exists, then the past and the future exist.[50] This is why Ricoeur mediated temporality to eternity through mortality. Death never stops the possibility of the present that contains in it the past and the future. The mind must constantly stretch in order to comprehend the past and the future within the domain of the present. The mind as it stands here and now constantly stretches itself retrospectively and prospectively. It is at this point that Ricoeur overcomes the Augustinian problem of the present lacking extension. Here memory is the record of what was possible in the past and anticipation is the expectation of what will be possible in the future. The present is the container of them all. As a result, Ricoeur can speak of the present of the past, the present of the future, and the present of the present.[51]

Ricoeur sees this as a "total mediation," a "network of inter-weaving of perspectives" in which the "expectation of the future," "the reception of the past," and "the experience of the present" are merged together into a totality[52] in the present, which is called human life. Here Ricoeur is pulling the past and the future to the present in which the "present reduces to presence."[53] So the present projects and reflects what was humanly possible and what is going to be humanly possible here and now. Here the present is not a mere time of action that lacks extension but the perpetual locus of the presence of the total: A screen where the picture of what is humanly possible is projected. It is the mirror on which the self sees its possibility. It is this total possibility that unfolds who and what a person totally is. In this way, the present is the presence of the past, of the future and of the present. Here Ricoeur is pushing the past to the future by organising it under the category of "becoming a being affected"[54] and pushing the future to the past by making the present a "time of initiative."[55]

Thus for Ricoeur, the past consists of future, the future consists of the past, and the present consists of both past and future. The present – by becoming not present but the presence of past and future – can have totality of being and life, not only in the sense of temporal totality but also in terms of the temporal-eternal and eternal-temporal totality. This presence of the totality is directly shown in the individual whose mental process of attention is the recipient and container of it all: the knower and the known of the totality. This means that the totality comes to the human being as the self-knowledge and that self-understanding gives rise to a person's self-identity as Ricoeur claims: "I attain self-understanding when I grasp the range of my possibilities."[56] Consequently, Ricoeur argues that the understanding of the present as the presence of the totality "bridges the abyss that opens up between eternal *verbum* and the temporal *vox.*"[57] Thus, crucially, the understanding of totality and the attainment of self-understanding are really a question of understanding the "relations between eternity and

[50] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative,* vol. 1, 60.
[51] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative,* vol. 1, 60.
[52] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 3, 207.
[53] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 3, 208.
[54] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 3, 207.
[55] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 3, 208.
[56] Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 37.
[57] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 1, 29.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

time."[58] Thus totality of lfie is a paradox of temporal-eternal and eternal-temporal self-understanding that ultimately shapes human life, temporality and identity.

Bibliography

Augustine. Henry Chadwick (tran.). *Confessions.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Barth, Karl. G. W. Bromiley (ed.,). *Church Dogmatics* vol.IV.1. London: T&T Clark, 1988.

Heidegger, Martin. John Macquarrie (tran.). *Being and Time.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978.

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

Mercer, David. *Kierkegaard's Living-Room: The Relation Between Faith and History in Philosphical Fragments.* London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001.

Moltmann, Jürgen. Margaret Kohl (tran.). *In the End – The Beginning.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.

Murphy, Roland. *Word Biblical Commentary: Ecclesiastes* vol. 23A. Texas: Word Books, 1992.

Pannenberg, Wolfhart. Philip Clayton (tran.). *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

__________. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (tran.). *Systematic Theology* Vol. 3. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

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

__________. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning.* Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976.

Tillich, Paul. *Systematic Theology* Vol.2. London: James Nisbet & Co. LTD, 1957.

Timpe, Kevin. *Metaphysics and God.* New York: Routledge, 2009.

[58] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 1, 5.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Racism and the Curse of Cannan Genesis 9:18-28

Dr Theron R Young

Author: *Theron Young, PhD, is a lecturer in Old Testament and Biblical Languages at ACCS. 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.*

Abstract: Genesis 9:18-28 has been mis-interpreted through the centuries in ways that have caused harm to major segments of the world population. The "Curse of Canaan" has been understood to be a permanent curse on dark-skinned people, spoken by the patriarch Noah but with the implication that it has divine sanction. This mis-interpretation has been used to justify the enslavement and mistreatment of dark-skinned people by Europeans and Americans since the time of the colonial period. The aim of the present essay is to bring to light exegetical information that will serve to lay to rest the bases of the mis-interpretation and to demonstrate what was the likely intention of Noah's declaration and how it was fulfilled in biblical history.

Introduction

Genesis 9:18-28, among other things, deals with the curse of Canaan, grandson of Noah. Through the centuries this text has been interpreted in various ways and frequently in a way that is not only incorrect but also tendentious and even harmful. The present study has the goal of presenting a valid interpretation and of exposing what we shall term a "long-held misinterpretation" as incorrect, with important implications for relationships between people of different races in the church and in society. If we are to faithfully follow the model of Christ, we must eliminate "interpretations" that do not dignify the Savior, who purchased with his blood "men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Revelation 5:9).

The King James Version (KJV) allows for a certain ambiguity in the understanding of the curse, which some (not all) of the more recent translations have attempted to resolve. The KJV text of the passage is presented here for the benefit of the reader.[1]

18 And the sons of Noah, that went forth of [i.e., from] the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and

[1] Other citations in this article are from the NIV.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan. 19 These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread. 20 And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: 21 And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.

22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. 23 And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. 24 And Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his younger son had done unto him.

25 And he said,
Cursed be Canaan;
a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.
26 And he said,
Blessed be the LORD God of Shem;
and Canaan shall be his servant.
27 God shall enlarge Japheth,
and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem;
and Canaan shall be his servant.
28 And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years.

A Common Mis-interpretation

A certain interpretation that is frequently encountered should be identified from the beginning as incorrect. This interpretation is reflected in the following quote from *The Pentateuch*, written by L. Thomas Holdcroft (but other authors promote the same idea): "Because of Ham's disrespectful attitude on this occasion, his posterity (represented by Canaan), suffered Noah's curse. The descendants of Canaan became the *black races* who for long centuries furnished the world's supply of slaves, and who suffered persistent hardship and bitterness."[2]

This interpretation, explicitly or implicitly, promotes three false ideas: (1) that the descendants of Ham, including Canaan, are the black races of the world, (2) that in the world there exist only three races (i.e., white, black and yellow), each race descending from one of the three sons of Noah, and (3) that the slavery of the black races during many centuries is the fulfillment of this curse of Canaan. Following this interpretation, the Hamitic race includes Egyptians, and the peoples of Cush, Put (possibly Libya) and Canaan; in other words,

[2] L. Thomas Holdcroft, *The Pentateuch* (Western Book Company, 1966), 18. Reprinted in 2004 by CeeTeC Publishing, Abbotsford, BC.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

races considered by some to be black-skin races.[3] The race of Shem (Semites) includes the Israelites and neighboring peoples of Israel in biblical times, such as the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Assyrians, Babylonians and others. The Japhetic peoples are considered to be the gentiles of the world, especially European peoples and others; races considered by some to have white skin.

Difficulties in the Interpretation of Genesis 9:18-28

It is important to consider certain exegetical questions in order to understand the purpose of the blessing-curse.

First, who is the subject of the verb "dwell" in verse 27b? Identification of the subject of the verb is ambiguous in the English translation, "let him dwell in the tents of Shem." There are two interpretive possibilities: Japheth, the nearest antecedent, and God, the subject of the preceding sentence (27a). Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.[4] deals with this question in a concise way in his book, *Toward a Theology of the Old Testament.*[5]

Now the key issue is this: Who is the subject of the verb "he will dwell" in Genesis 9:27? We concur with the judgement of the Targum of Onkelos, Philo, Maimonides, Rashi, Aben Ezra, Theodoret, Baumgarten, and Delitzsch that the subject is "God." Our reasons are these: (1) the subject of the previous clause is presumed to continue into the next clause where the subject is unexpressed; (2) the use of the indirect object of the previous line as subject ("Japhet") would require strong contextual reasons for doing so; (3) the context of the next several chapters designates Shem as the first in honor of blessings; and (4) the Hebrew phrase *wəyishkôn bə'oholê shem*, "and he will dwell in the tents of Shem," hardly makes sense if attributed to Japhet, for Japhet had already been granted the blessing of expansion.

Hamilton opposes Kaiser's solution, citing a passage of similar syntactic construction in Genesis 15:6,

> "Abraham believed in Yahweh and he [Abraham? God?] reckoned it to him [God? Abraham?] as righteousness."[6] However, Kaiser's point is still valid and Hamilton's example does not result in a disqualification of God as the subject of the verb "dwell" here. The context of Genesis 15 makes it clear the the "it" that was reckoned as righteousness was Abraham's belief, just as the apostle Paul understood the passage when he cited it in Romans 4:3. Certainly it is more reasonable to think that God reckoned Abraham as righteous than that Abraham reckoned God as righteous. On general syntactic principles,

---

[3] C. F. Keil demonstrated a similar view in his statement, "The Phoenicians … shared the same fate, or still sigh, like the <u>negroes</u>, for example, and other African tribes, beneath the yoke of the most crushing slavery." (underlining added). *The Pentateuch* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1866/rep1996), 158.
[4] Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. is a well-known evangelical leader, Old Testament scholar and recent past president of Gordon-Conwell Seminary.
[5] Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward a Theology of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 82.
[6] Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17* [NICOT] (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 326.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

God is at least as likely to be the subject as Japhet in Genesis 9:27. Other contextual factors support Kaiser's view.

The plan of the whole prophecy appears to devote the first strophe only to Canaan, the second to Shem and Canaan, and the third to all three brothers. On balance, then, the best option is to regard God as promising to Shem a special blessing. He would dwell with the Semitic peoples as descendants of Shem. The Hebrew verb for "to dwell" (*shakan*) is etymologically related to the desert dwelling of the Lord among his people Israel; i.e., the tabernacle (*mishkan*). It is also related to the later concept of Mosaic theology of the Shekinah glory of God wherein the presence of God over the tabernacle was evidenced by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Hence, the man Shem would be the one through whom the "seed" promised earlier would now come. Had God not said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem" (Gen 9:26)? And why did He use this distinctive form of address? Could it be that the blessing and indwelling were linked? And could it be that they were God's next provision to earth's latest crisis?

Second, what exactly was the sin of Ham? There are a number of suggestions about this question: Ham had homosexual relations with his father, Noah; Ham violated the wife of Noah; Ham uncovered the nakedness of Noah, and still other suggestions. It is expected that the curse corresponds, in one way or another, to the act of Ham. We should note that the biblical text does not explicitly say that Ham had sexual contact with anyone. If we take into consideration the contemporary culture of Noah and his sons, the question of honoring parents becomes very important in the solution of the difficulty. Fleming comments, "It is much more likely that Ham held some kind of resentment against his father and, when he saw his father naked, he rejoiced and tried to get his brothers to join him in dishonoring their father with scorn and merriment. Ham enjoyed his father's failure. It was a flagrant violation of filial honor..."[7]

The sinful tendencies of Ham sprouted and flourished among his descendants until they became a permanent part of Canaanite cultic rituals. The blessings of Shem and Japheth look beyond the time of Noah and his immediate children and it is reasonable to think that Ham's (and Canaan's) curse does so as well. Wenham points out that the Canaanites are notorious in the Old Testament for their aberrant sexual practices.[8] This is not to say that Ham's sin involved him in some type of sexual intercourse, but in that he sought to share his viewing experience with his brothers it did manifest in him a prurient interest in inappropriate behavior involving human nakedness. He notes also, "Noah's curse on Canaan thus represents God's sentence on the sins of the Canaanites, which their forefather Ham had exemplified."[9] A tendency in Ham blossomed into something habitual among Ham's

[7] Kenneth Fleming, *Genesis: From Creation to a Nation* (Dubuque, IA: Emmaus College Press, 2005), 116. Gordon J. Wenham agrees that it is right "to see the chief thrust of the story as blaming Ham for his improper, quite unfilial behavior." *Genesis 1-15* [WBC] (Waco, TX: Word Publishers, 1987), 199.
[8] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 201.
[9] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 201.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

descendants.

There is evidence of this in the later laws of Moses, where the Lord maintained a firm separation between the forms of worship of the Israelites and the Canaanites, as John Sailhamer affirms,

> Since some scholars have interpreted Exodus 20:24-26 as a prohibition of Canaanite forms of worship, there may be an intended link between Ham and the Canaanites in the notion of 'nakedness.' The sons of Noah are here shown to belong to two groups of mankind, those who like Adam and Eve hide the shame of their nakedness, and those who like Ham, or rather the Canaanites, have no sense of their shame before God. To the one group, the line of Shem, there will be blessing (v.26), but to the other, the Canaanites (not the Hamitics), there can only be curse (v. 25).[10]

Nakedness is considered a serious disgrace in the Old Testament. We can see this idea reflected in the dialogue between Adam and Eve and the Lord God in Genesis, chapter three and also in Exodus 32:25, "Aaron had made them (the Israelites) naked unto their shame..." Two laws deal with the question of nudity in Israelite worship. Exodus 20:26 says, "And do not go up to my altar on steps, lest your nakedness be exposed on it." Exodus 28:42-43 states "Make linen undergarments as a covering for the body, reaching from the waist to the thigh. Aaron and his sons must wear them whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting or approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place, so that they will not incur guilt and die. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants."

Rather than showing proper respect and keeping secret his father's condition, Ham chose to dishonor his father by making the condition public. This is what motivated Noah's response. Sailhamer notes, "The sons of Noah are here shown to belong to two groups of mankind, those who like Adam and Eve hide the shame of their nakedness, and those who like Ham, or rather the Canaanites, have no sense of their shame before God."[11]

Third, why was the grandson Canaan cursed (and not the son of Noah)? Does it make sense to curse Canaan for the sin of his father? In fact, the curse corresponds perfectly to the sin in the sense suggested by Waltke who noted, "As the youngest son wrongs his father, so the curse will fall on his youngest son, who presumably inherits his father's moral decadence (see Lev. 18:3; Deut. 9:3). The ancestors reproduce their own kind."[12] Prophetically the curse indicates that, following the model of Ham, Canaan and his descendants would also disrespect the father's family.[13]

---

[10] John Sailhamer, *Genesis, Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 96.
[11] Sailhamer, *Genesis,* 96.
[12] Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 150.
[13] See Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1967), 103-104.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Finally, does the curse apply to all the Hamitic descendants? There is no evidence in the text that the curse applies to all the descendants of Ham. Rather, it was limited to the Canaanite branch - the descendants of Canaan. Other peoples, whose origin comes from Ham, such as the Egyptians, Phoenicians,[14] and the Cushites,[15] did not share in the negative effects, neither biblically, nor historically speaking. The Egyptians (Hamitics) suffered the wrath of the Lord by means of the plagues of Egypt in the days just prior to the exodus. This is made clear in Psalm 78:51, "He (the Lord) struck down all the firstborn of Egypt, the first-fruits of manhood in the tents of Ham." However, nothing in the Exodus story indicates that those plagues were a fulfillment of the declaration in Genesis 9. Therefore, it is wrong to conclude that the Hamitic peoples were all "condemned to inferiority." It is important to note that most African peoples would be considered Hamites, but not descendants of Canaan.

Historic Fulfillment of the Curse

There is an obvious connection between the name of Noah's grandson, Canaan, and the name "land of Canaan" where the Canaanite peoples lived.[16] These peoples were reduced to servitude in Old Testament times. In the days of Joshua, when Israel took possession of the Promised Land (i.e., the land of Canaan), the subjugation of the Canaanite peoples sufficiently fulfilled the oracle of Noah.[17] Other aspects of the fulfillment took place sometime later.

Frist, who were the Canaanites? The Bible lists the names of the Canaanite peoples many times, with some variation in the number of names and in the specific names listed. However, the core list of 6 or 7 names is maintained almost everywhere, which helps us to understand that the Canaanites were divided into tribes, sub-tribes, clans and families, separated geographically into regions and cities. A good example of this list is found in Genesis 10:15-18 "15 And Canaan begat Sidon his firstborn, and Heth, 16 And the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgasite, 17 And the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite, 18 And the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite: and afterward were the families of the Canaanites spread abroad." Satterthwaite and Baker note that "'Canaanites' and 'Amorites' were sometimes used by the biblical writers as shorthand for all peoples of the land."[18] But,

---

[14] From an Old Testament perspective, the Phoenicians are represented by the people of Tyre, Sidon and a few other coastal cities of the same general region. See W. D. Mounce, "Phoenicia, Phoenicians," 853-862 in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 3 Revised Edition. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, editor (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 1986).

[15] The Old Testament most frequently refers to an area in Africa later identified as Ethiopia, though this is not necessarily identical to modern Ethiopia. See W. S. LaSor's article, "Cush," 838-839 in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 Revised Edition. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, editor (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 1986). LaSor, in the same article, notes that, "There is no evidence, either in the Bible or in extrabiblical materials, to support the view that Ham or any of his descendants was negroid." 839.

[16] Here in chapter 9 of Genesis, the name Canaan is mentioned for the first time in the Bible. But Canaan became a common and significant name in the history of God's program, both in reference to the land and to its local population. The name Canaan appears 80 times in the Hebrew Bible, mostly (i.e., 64 times) in the construction "land of Canaan." Forms of the word Canaanite appear 73 times in the Hebrew Bible.

[17] Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1967), 104.

[18] P. E. Satterthwaite and D. W. Baker, "Nations of Canaan," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, editors (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 598.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

in addition to Genesis 10:15-18 there are seventeen other lists of the Canaanite peoples in Genesis to Kings. A core list of six of these peoples appears in ten of the eighteen lists: Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.[19]

Second, the expulsion of the Canaanites was part of the Lord's program for Israel to take possession of the Promised Land. Joshua encouraged the Israelites with the promise of divine help in Joshua 3:10, "This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites." Note the correspondence between the list of Canaanite names in Genesis 10 and this list from Joshua 3.

Third, the Gibeonites were a Canaanite people who deceived the Israelites, resulting in an alliance, a pact of mutual aid prohibited by the law of Moses. As a consequence of this ruse, the Gibeonites were condemned to serve in the annual feasts of worship to the Lord, as we see in Joshua 9:23 "You are now under a curse: You will never cease to serve as woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God."

Finally, the Canaanite peoples were not completely expelled in the time of Joshua, nor later in the period of the judges. Joshua 16:10 indicates that they were, at least in some regions and some periods, pressed into service of the Israelite tribes. "However, they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites have lived in the midst of Ephraim to this day but have been made to do forced labor." Eventually, they were assimilated by the Israelite population, but not before the time of Solomon. Solomon put them to hard forced labor for the construction of his storage cities throughout the Promised Land, just as the Egyptians had done with the Israelites in the construction of Pithom and Ramses. 1 Kings 9:17-22 relates how this took place.

> And Solomon rebuilt Gezer. He built up Lower Beth Horon, Baalath, and Tadmor in the desert, within his land, as well as all his store cities and the towns for his chariots and for his horses — whatever he desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon and throughout all the territory he ruled. All the people left from the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (these peoples were not Israelites), that is, their descendants remaining in the land, whom the Israelites could not exterminate — these Solomon conscripted for his slave labor force, as it is to this day. But Solomon did not make slaves of any of the Israelites; they were his fighting men, his government officials, his officers, his captains, and the commanders of his chariots and charioteers.

Other Aspects of the Long-held Misinterpretation

We return here to the long-held misinterpretation in order to respond to other questions

[19] For a more detailed analysis of the lists, see Satterthwaite and Baker, "Nations of Canaan, §3.1, Lists from Genesis – Kings," 598-599.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

and to discuss some other ideas implicit in this interpretation.

First, is Ham the progenitor of the black races? There is no biblical evidence to suggest a connection between the curse of Ham and the black-skinned races. Not all Hamites were black-skinned peoples: not the Canaanites, nor the Egyptians, nor the Phoenicians. The text of Genesis 9 says nothing about the origin of the human races, nor does it discuss the skin colors of the sons of Noah. In fact, the Bible does not speak of how there came to be people of different races (or skin colors) in the world. This question is developed more below. It might lead into an explanation of how the world eventually came to have different languages but does not speak to the question of the origin of races.

Second, are there three races in the world that correspond to the three sons of Noah? Scientifically speaking, it is difficult to find a satisfactory definition for the word "race." The definition of this word is ambiguous because the criteria that are used to distinguish one race from another are arbitrary. If it is a question of skin color, there exist at least six distinct colors in the world - and not three. If it is a question of genetic code, we must determine how many genes must be different in order to constitute a distinct race. In terms of what can be seen in the world today, to speak of "a constellation of genetic factors" does not resolve the question, because the number of possible constellations could be limitless, as a result making useless the notion of 'race.'[20] Even more important is that the word "race" is not used in the Bible. In a treatment of the divisions among human beings, E. A. Speiser wrote about the ethnic terminology that the Bible uses.[21] "The Biblical terminology uses 'people' (*'am*) primarily for a genetically related group, and 'nation' (*goi*) largely for a political entity centered in a given locality. [In the] Table of Nations (Gen 10) the subdivision of a nation is the 'clan, family' (*mispacha*), but the main criteria are 'language' (*lashone*) and 'land' (*'erets*)."

Taking these facts into consideration, one quickly arrives at the conclusion that skin color does not have anything to do with the curse of Canaan. It then must be asked how this interpretation gained such an important place in the history of the western world.

Black Slavery in World History

In an interesting and careful study, Edwin Yamauchi, demonstrates how this interpretation came about as the result of the business of slave trafficking.[22] The interpretation has served as a justification for the evil of enslaving people of Africa since the seventh and eighth centuries B.C. Several paragraphs of Yamauchi's book are cited here for the purpose of exploring the origin and use of the long-held misinterpretation.

[20] According to anthropologist Stephen Molnar in *Human variation: races, types, and ethnic groups*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. 1992. see *Wikipedia*, Nov. 24, 2006 - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_races. Molnar's volume was not available to the present author.
[21] E. A. Speiser, "Ethnic Divisions of Man," in the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3. G. A. Buttrick, editor (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 235-236.
[22] Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Africa and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004). See especially chapter 1, "The Curse of Ham."

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

First, Jewish Interpretation. Yamauchi first treats the allegation that this interpretation originated within Jewish thought. "It has been alleged that the so-called curse of Ham, which holds that God cursed the descendants of Ham with a black skin and destined them to slavery, originated first in Jewish circles."[23] The implication would seem to be that this interpretation originated close to the time of the origin of the Genesis 9 material, perhaps originating with the biblical author himself. Yamauchi, having researched the rabbinic literature, demonstrates that it is not plausible that this interpretation originated among the Jews.[24] The rabbis always maintained a distinction between Canaan, progenitor of the Canaanites, and Cush, progenitor of the black-skinned people.

Second, Muslim Interpretation. The first time in history that the long-held misinterpretation is seen is in Islamic literature of the seventh and eighth centuries B.C. After the death of Muhammad (632 B.C.), the Muslim expansion brought the Arabs into contact with black peoples of Africa.[25] Muslim Arabs became involved in the trading of slaves and so began to transport them beyond the Red Sea to the east and beyond the Sahara Desert to the west.

Finally, European Interpretation. In more recent times (from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century), nations of Europe approved the same interpretation in order to justify the practice of slavery. Yamauchi affirms the following (p. 27): "But slavery continued in the Iberian Peninsula: in Spain the slaves were Moors from North Africa; in Portugal Negroes were imported from Africa after 1441. A garbled version of the curse of Ham was reported by a mid-fifteenth-century Portuguese chronicler of Prince Henry... 'Here you must note that these blacks were Moors like the others, though their slaves, in accordance with the Deluge, Noah laid upon his son Cain [*sic*], cursing him in this way -- that this race should be subject to all the other races of the world.'"[26] Although the chronicler of Prince Henry has confused grandson for son, Cain for Ham, it is clear that he had the passage from Genesis 9 in mind. Yamauchi continues:

> In 1521, Johan Boemus, a German scholar of Hebrew, argued that all civilized peoples were descended from Shem and Japheth, while all barbarous peoples were descended from Ham. A Lutheran writer named Hanneman from Kiel for the first time in Europe declared in 1677 that all peoples with black skins, including Africans, Indians, and Malays, were children of Ham and were condemned to slavery for a thousand generations. From 1562 British seamen took part in the slave trade that supplied the Spanish colonies. Between 1680 and 1700, more than 300,000 African slaves were imported into the British colonies.[27]

---

[23] Yamauchi, *Africa and the Bible*, 22.

[24] Yamauchi, *Africa and the Bible*, 24. Yamauchi's affirmation is based on the study of J. R. Willis, editor, *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, vol 1: *Islam and the Ideology of Enslavement* (London: Cass, 1985). Willis' volume was not available to the present author.

[25] Yamauchi, *Africa and the Bible*, 26.

[26] As cited by Yamauchi from an article written by W. M. Evans, "From the Land of Canaan to the Land of Guinea": The Strange Odyssey of the Sons of Ham" (*American Historical Review* 85, 1980), 15-23.

[27] Yamauchi, *Africa and the Bible*, 27-28.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Yamauchi's research further indicates that among southern inhabitants of the USA, "Stephen Haynes identifies at least fifty primary documents from the Antebellum era that cite Noah's curse as the central justification for slavery."[28]

In summary, the responsibility for this long-held and tendentious interpretation falls upon Muslims, Europeans and Americans. It is highly likely that the interpretation developed, in part, to rationalize the practice of enslavement.

Children Punished for the Sin of the Father?

Does the Bible hold a child responsible for the sin of the father? One passage in particular leads us to believe that the children do not suffer punishment for the sin of the father: Ezekiel 18:2-4; 20-21.

> *2 "What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: 'The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'?*
> *3 "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. [4] For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son—both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die."*
> *20 "The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him."*
> *21 "But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die."*

Various commentators affirm that in the Bible, both the curse and the blessing are general. In other words, the curse does not obligatorily fall upon anyone, nor is it automatic in its application. Umberto Cassuto wrote that "The Canaanites were to suffer the curse and the bondage not because of the sins of Ham, but because they themselves acted like Ham, because of their own transgressions."[29] And Bruce Waltke wrote: "... the difference between the future prospects of the ancestral brothers pertains to their morality, not to their ethnicity as such."[30] We present here some biblical evidence that people receive the damage of a curse or the benefit of a blessing on the basis of their *own* conduct.

First, the Canaanite woman, Rahab, entered into the blessing of the Israelites because of her own faith in the God of Shem (Joshua 2:14; 6:17, 22-25; Matt. 1:5; Heb. 11:31). She and her entire family were saved from destruction with the other Canaanite inhabitants of Jericho by their act of faith. Rahab even married an Israelite man and was assimilated into the tribes of Israel.

[28] Yamauchi, *Africa and the Bible*, 27-28.
[29] Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. Part 2* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1964), 155.
[30] Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 150.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Second, Achan (Joshua 7) did not automatically receive any benefit for having been born into an Israelite family. He died as a result of judgement for his sin. It is presumed that the members of his family also died because of their participation in the same sin.

Third, it is more than likely that Canaan was already following in the footsteps of his father, Ham, and demonstrating in his life the same tendencies to sin. The descendants of Canaan chose to follow his model of wickedness, rather than Shem and Japheth's model of righteous behavior. The wickedness of the Canaanites reached its zenith in the time of Joshua, increasing to the point that God decided to judge them, as prophesied in the time of Abraham (Gen 15:16).

Finally, Historically, Israel behaved as badly as the Canaanites and as a consequence, eventually the land vomited them out (2 Kings 17:20).

Racism is Sin

The long-held misinterpretation of Genesis 9 discussed herein is sinful. The Bible does not support the racism of humans. Recognizing that we are all descendants of Adam and Eve, and also of Noah and his wife, we should conclude that, in a certain sense, we are all "brothers." Thus, what the apostle John stated about this subject (in 1 John 4:20-21) should be read and put into practice. "If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother." This assertion leads us to conclude that racism, which is a form of hatred toward one's neighbor, is nothing less than sinful activity.

However, racism between "whites" and "blacks" is not the only form of this sin that exists. The world knows many forms of hatred: racism between Jews and Samaritans in the time of Jesus; racism between Palestinians and Jews in modern Israel; hatred between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland; racism between indigenous peoples and "whites" in America, in Australia and in Brazil. Some people think that the hatred is justified by a history of conflict between the groups, but there really can be no justification. The followers of Jesus Christ must conform to a challenging principle: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44) and "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." (Luke 6:27).

It is also sinful to (mis)treat people on the basis of prejudice based on someone's race. Some people think, *People of the race X have certain characteristics.* Even if this were generally true, it would be wrong to automatically discriminate against an individual of that group. There is no justification for mistreating an individual simply because some persons of the person's race have acted badly in the past. All races have persons who are rude, dishonest, violent and wicked. But it is also true that all races have persons who are polite, honest, kind and righteous. Each person deserves to be treated as a unique individual and not as a

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

member of a favored or disfavored race.

For many, it is not natural to deal with people of a different race in a fair manner. We must train ourselves to interact with people without prejudice. It is important to have a conviction that racism is sin and to make every effort to abstain from its practice. Our duty is to strive to treat other people in accordance with their individual characteristics and to not mistreat anyone for any reason – especially, to abstain from unfair treatment of someone because others of the same race acted in a way to create a sense of prejudice in us.

Even though this can be difficult, Jesus left us with a model of behavior. To answer the question, "Who is my neighbor?" he responded with a parable (Luke 10:29-37) in which the "good neighbor" proved to be a Samaritan, from a despised people group with whom the Jews would normally have no dealings (John 4:9). Also, on another occasion he treated a Samaritan woman with consideration and without prejudice (John 4:4-26). He treated her as he might have treated any Jewish woman or man. He understood that she needed to enter into a relationship with God, just as any other human being. For this very reason, the Savior purchased, "for God men (i.e., persons) from every tribe and language and people and nation." (Rev. 5:9).

Bibliography

Cassuto, Umberto. *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. Part 2*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1964.

Evans, W. M. "From the Land of Canaan to the Land of Guinea: The Strange Odyssey of the Sons of Ham." *American Historical Review* 85 (1980):15-23.

Fleming, Kenneth. *Genesis: From Creation to a Nation.* Dubuque, IA: Emmaus College Press, 2005.

Hamilton, Victor P. *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17.* [NICOT] Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990.

Holdcroft, L. Thomas. reprint. *The Pentateuch*, Western Book Company, reprint by CeeTeC Publishing, Abbotsford, BC, 1966/2004.

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *Toward a Theology of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978.

Keil, C. F. *The Pentateuch*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1866/1996 reprint.

Kidner, Derek. *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1967.

LaSor, W. S. "Cush," pp. 838-839 in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1 Revised Edition. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, editor. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986.

Molnar, Stephen. *Human variation: races, types, and ethnic groups*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992. (see also *Wikipedia*, Nov. 24, 2006 - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_races).

Mounce, W. D. "Phoenicia, Phoenicians," pp. 853-862 in *The International Standard Bible*

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Encyclopedia, Vol. 3 Revised Edition. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, editor. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986.

Sailhamer, John. *Genesis, Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990.

Satterthwaite, P. E. and D. W. Baker. "Nations of Canaan," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, editors. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003.

Speiser, E. A. "Ethnic Divisions of Man," in the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3. G. A. Buttrick, editor. New York: Abingdon Press, 1962.

Waltke, Bruce K. *Genesis: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.

Wenham, Gordon J. *Genesis 1-15* [WBC] Waco, TX: Word Publishers, 1987.

Willis, J. R., ed. *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, vol 1: *Islam and the Ideology of Enslavement.* London: Cass, 1985.

Yamauchi, Edwin M. *Africa and the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

The Preaching Community

Dr David Smith

Author: *David, the Academic Dean of Australian College of Christian Studies, has a background in a variety of business, pastoral, mission and teaching roles. He is involved in leadership training, preaching and overseas mission, having a heart for people to be gripped by God's grace and equipped for a life of passionate service. David lectures in the fields of Pastoral Ministry, Leadership, Preaching, Theology and Hermeneutics. Cross culturally, he has been involved in leading International Mission Teams (IMT) to Cambodia and Africa since 2008. He is the Chair of the National Board of the Christian Community Churches of Australia.*

David completed his masters' studies in the area of preaching, his work is entitled "The Preaching Community." David has also recently completed his doctoral studies. His thesis, and book is entitled "Practical theological ecclesiology," it focusses on developing an understanding of the church that incorporates the essence, expression and goal dimensions of the church.

David together his wife Judy have three children and attend Duncraig Christian Community Church, Perth, Western Australia, where David has a teaching role and also serves as an elder.

Abstract: This article considers the role of preaching from a practical theological perspective. It commences by setting up a practical theological theory that draws from both revelatory and anthropological models to develop a preaching model that considers preaching as a Revelatory Covenantal Conversation involving divine revelation, community dialogue and intended response, and has ecclesiological focus and impact. It proposes a theological theory on the role of preaching in the church which asserts - Preaching stands, in the line of the self-revelation of God, as his continuing action to both reveal himself, and be present with his covenant people of promise. Therefore, preaching within the church must conform to this revelation in: event – the covenantal conversation itself; message – the content of the preaching; interpretation/response – the preacher's intended response by the hearers; the intention - the intended shaping of the community of faith through the preaching event. Preaching is a continuing Revelatory Covenantal Conversation between God and his people to create, transform, and continue his community of faith – the preaching community.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Introduction

The problems within the arena of preaching in the local church are considerable. Most of these problems however, stem from local churches employing the action of preaching: without a solid, definite theological theory; having either an inadequate or undeveloped practical theological theory of preaching; or operating out of consideration for praxis only and ignoring the underlying theory out of which they operate.

Preachers who place priority on revelation alone and "believe that the divine revelation is given in propositional form, will of course develop sermons that correspond to that view. Inspiration would consist of 'being given the right propositions' for use in the preaching occasion… you will not be greatly interested in homiletical acts of evocation. You will simply repeat what you believe God said and that's the end of the matter. Mystery no more; it is swallowed up by absolute knowledge" (Lowry 1997: 41).

Others choose to emphasise the human side over the necessary biblical and revelatory components, believing preaching is more about the experience of God or the elevation or renewal of self in a mystical way. Such preachers who tend to "engage only with their hearts, focusing on feeling and reducing everything to tidy applications, are in danger of becoming vacuously emotional" (Quicke 2003: 39). Finding and maintaining the revelatory and anthropological bi-polar tension is imperative. Revelatory, propositional preaching is often full of substance but lacks sustenance, like the desert, being substantial but dry and lacking in life. Emotive, human focused preaching on the other hand connects and inspires but lacks substance, like a mirage which promises life, but on closer reflection, disappoints. The task is to find the balance, an oasis that brings the reality of life in an otherwise hostile environment.

Many churches also act without an adequate consideration of the role and purpose of preaching within the praxis. Some sacrifice community subscribing to the buffet style of preaching which affirms the diversity and individuality of the congregation. "Each pew sitter listens isolated and alone. The congregation is an aggregate of religious consumers, just another voluntaristic association. In many denominations this option has become dominant. But this is not church. Such preaching is not an ecclesial act" (Van Seters 1991: 269). Viewing the congregation as religious consumers locates the preacher and the sermon, and thus God's Word and God himself, as the supplier, responsible for meeting the needs and expectations of the people. We, and not God's Word, is made central. These needs and expectations must be considered but should they drive the preaching agenda?

With such a diverse range of opinions and approaches, there exists a definite practical theological problem concerning the role preaching should play in the church.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Preaching & Practical Theology

Firet defines practical theology as the study of human "communicative action in the service of the gospel" (Immink 2005: 24). This locates practical theology as the study of human action which advances the gospel. However, Heyns and Pieterse seek to move the focus from merely a consideration of human action to include "communicative actions which mediate God's coming to people in the world through God's Word" (Heyns 1990: 51). The focus on 'mediate' here, places human action within the context of divine action, presenting a God-human communicative interaction. This shifts our perspective on the constitution of action entirely. Communicative actions within a faith praxis cannot be considered as solely human actions. Nor can the meaning, purpose and intention of the actions remain locked within a human context. As actions which mediate the work of God, Heyns and Pieterse conclude that the "meaning of our communicative actions lies in the fact that God continues to speak through his Word and remains alive in the church through his Spirit. To this end God makes use of our actions" (Heyns 1990: 51).

The instrumental concept of "makes use," can imply that we are only caught up in God's movement at his discretion, ignoring the possibility of human free involvement in God's action. Since God never moves to enforce us to comply with his will, we should instead say that God in his freedom and by his grace invites people to be involved in his actions. At this point practical theology should be understood as follows:

Practical theology is the study concerning the improvement of human-divine interactive communicative actions involved in the service of the gospel. This revision then places preaching as the human-divine interactive action of communicating God's Word within a particular praxis.

As with the confused praxis, our challenge in developing a practical theological theory of preaching is to determine the weight to be given to the three spheres that require our attention, namely, the divine (revelation), the human (anthropology) and the intented action upon the praxis (ecclesiology).

Revelatory Focus

Barth places a priority away from any anthropological reference point at all, believing that the initiative of God, his movement toward humanity as the initiator, provides the best point of departure for practical theology to follow. For Barth it is only through God's movement toward us, his revelatory action, through which we may know God. This line of thinking elevates the work of revelation over any existential involvement, and moves preaching toward a reiteration only of the Word of God excluding the significance of engagement with the Word by the receivers.

The benefit and attraction of a purely revelatory approach is that the *a priori* of God's Word over man's word is maintained. Being taken up with God's Word and speech, one will refrain from putting "an equal sign between our speaking of God and God's Words" (Immink 2005:

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

213). Therefore, God and not man remain at the centre of the process. However, as Hübner notes, an approach which concentrates predominantly "on a theological ideal of the church" (Stadelmann 1998: 230), poses a number of problems:

1. This position creates an either or approach with regard to whether a particular sermon is God's Word or only a human word. One needs to pursue the possibility that God's Words and human words can coexist in the same sermon.
2. The impact of context, and the response of the hearers upon the message is minimised due to the one directional flow of the message. Does this reflect the dynamic relationship between God and humankind that is evident in Scripture? Can the sermon take these aspects into consideration while remaining the Word of God?
3. There is a one sided emphasis of the Christological and Pneumatological dimensions of preaching. The aspects of Christ as the incarnation of God's Word, and the Spirit as the one who makes Christ present through the Word receive attention. However, "the creaturely relationship between God and humans, where the human being (as creature) is the image of God – and thus was created and made suitable for communion… [and the] pneumatological relationship, in which humanity comes to a community of renewal through the Spirit" (Immink 2005: 214), receive little attention.

Anthropological Focus

For those who begin practical theology with an anthropological point of departure "the speaker must not stop when he has read Scripture and provided a theological exegesis, but must shape the lives of his hearers" (Immink 2005: 223) also. For Buttrick preaching "confers identity…transforms identity… [and] renames the human world as a space for new humanity related to God" (Buttrick 1987: 17). This implies that the preacher is not merely a herald of a message, as Barth suggests, but is also involved in the intentional transformation of the hearers and their view of reality.

Schleiermacher's approach to practical theology arises out of human experience. He focuses on the ordering of response and experience. For Schleiermacher "The task of practical theology is to bring the emotions arising in response to events in the church into the order called for by deliberative activity" (Heitink 1993: 27). This model leads one to take seriously the involvement of the preacher and the hearers as social beings and includes the intention/response aspect of preaching which the revelatory model ignores. However, while the revelatory method has its problems as described above the anthropological model poses its own set of concerns:

1. The foundational reference point is "concentrated on the empirical church and the natural religiosity of man" (Stadelmann 1998: 230), rather than God and his self-revelation. This means that what is significant for us is "the meaning of religion and not so much the truth of God's salvation" (Immink 2005: 236). Without God as an absolute referent, preaching from this approach moves one toward seeking a transcendence of self and an experience of God.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

2. The emphasis on humanity inverts the communication process from God as initiator to humans as initiators, seeking, reaching out through our experience to find God. The preacher is therefore charged with the task of leading people in a search for God, rather than making God present with his people.

Such an approach leads to the locating of the source of faith within humanity. Therefore the preacher's role is to lead the hearers to discover God within the psychosocial life of the church, where "God" experiences become the determinants of true reality rather than God himself.

An either/or approach to the praxis which allows revelation, text, and institutional tradition to suffocate, or where practice, experience and context are allowed to dominate, needs to be replaced. "The ideological temptation of institutional discourse is called 'traditionalism' and may be defined as the shrouding of experience. On the other hand, the ideological temptation of experiential discourse is what one might call 'now-ism' and may be defined as the shrouding of tradition" (Viau 1999: xii). The goal is to place preaching within a faith praxis that allows priority to the initiating work of God through his words and action, and also takes seriously the covenantal community of faith as the receivers and responders to God, within God's will and purpose for his people.

Ecclesiological Focus

Communicative actions, such as preaching, involved in the service of the gospel, are never undertaken outside of purpose. The action is always intentional, designed to achieve a goal within the praxis. The concept of praxis itself suggests a dynamic that consists of "communicative actions in practical life with a view to change…" (Heyns 1990: 50).

Heyns & Pieterse suggest that the communicative actions undertaken within the praxis are designed to create a change "to a state of faith in Christ, and to the realisation and concretisation of the promises of the kingdom... in our personal lives, our church and our society…. This entails constant change in an attempt to hone our present reality… to the ideal of God's kingdom as understood by our theological tradition" (Heyns 1990: 50). The creation of a new reality of promise, the community of faith, in Christ, in God's kingdom "provides the goal of our communicative actions in that we act with a view to change in the direction of the situation of the kingdom" (Heyns 1990: 55). The task then is to bring the existing world of the community of faith into alignment with the world proclaimed - the Kingdom of God.

Summary

The above discussion highlights three primary domains that require attention within a practical theology enquiry. These domains are shown in the diagram below:

In considering the role of preaching the following domains and their interrelationships must be addressed:

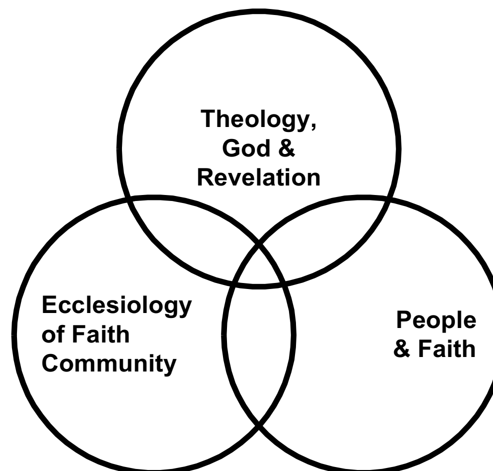
- The Theological Domain: The initiative and *a priori* of God and revelation.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

- The Anthropological Domain: The importance of the faith relationship and the response of people.
- The Ecclesiological Domain: The intentional shaping and transforming of the faith community.

Reflecting on the enquiry at hand in terms of the previous discussion and the above domains, leads to the following preliminary statement regarding practical theology, preaching and the concepts which need addressing:

Practical theology is the study concerning the improvement of human-divine interactive communicative actions involved in the service of the gospel. Preaching then is the human-divine interactive action of communicating God's Word within a communal faith praxis that gives priority to the initiating work of God through his words and actions, and also takes seriously the covenantal community of faith as the receivers and responders to God - with the purpose of creating, changing, and continuing the community of faith within the new reality of promise in Christ.



Revelatory Covenantal Conversation

We commence by setting up a practical theological theory that draws from both the revelatory and the anthropological models to develop a preaching model that considers preaching as a Revelatory Covenantal Conversation, involving divine revelation and intended community response. The conversational practical theological theory seeks to conform preaching to a revelational model which diverges from Barth by also including the dynamic of personal and community interpretation and reaction, in an ongoing conversation of initiation and response.

We therefore propose a theological theory on the role of preaching in the church. Preaching stands, in the line of the self revelation of God, as his continuing action to both reveal himself, and be present with his covenant people of promise. Therefore preaching within the church must conform to this revelation in: event – the covenantal conversation itself; message – the content of the preaching; interpretation/response – the preacher's intended response by the hearers; the intention - the intended shaping of the community of faith through the

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

preaching event. Preaching is a continuing Revelatory Covenantal Conversation between God and his people to create, transform, and continue his community of faith. The message proclaimed is the words and actions of God, and the intended response is a faith relationship that we call communion with God, carried on within a continuing covenantal conversation between God and his people. Thus we are considering 'The Preaching Community'.

A previously stated, preaching must stand in line with the self-revelation of God being part of the continuing divine "Revelatory Covenantal Conversation" of God with his people. Preaching is revelatory because it seeks to reveal God through the proclamation of the Word, and by the Spirit encounter the people with the very presence of the Word, Christ. Preaching is covenantal because it is an including Word of promise and fulfilment, a Word of the covenant that creates, sustains and continues the covenantal community of God. Preaching is also a conversation, because it is a movement between two parties, a dialogue between God and his people, moments of initiation and response, on a journey toward the fulfilment of God's purposes. As we continue our investigation of preaching through the lens of God's self revelation we commence from the stand point that preaching participates in the divine movement of God with his people that can be best seen as a divine Revelatory Covenantal Conversation.

The preaching event now is the contextualised revelation of God to human kind, today - the continuation of this conversation. As Craddock asserts, preaching is "understood as making present and appropriate to the hearers the revelation of God. … In other words, from the transaction we call revelation we understand and implement the transaction we call preaching. That is the way of God's Word in the world is the way of the sermon in the world" (Craddock 1985: 52). Similarly Barth emphatically announces "Preaching must conform to revelation" (Barth 1991: 47). This being so, our task is to trace the way of God in and through revelation so as to understand what the current role and purpose of preaching in the world should be. Therefore our starting point in the development of an ideal theological preaching theory is the construction of a meta-theoretical understanding of God and his Word as a model for preaching. In this regard we consider the dynamic of God's self revelation toward his people to be the basis for our understanding of the preaching event today.

This preaching event, the Revelatory Covenantal Conversation has a number of embedded elements that need our consideration. First, we say, the content or message of the preaching event, the revelation of God takes place, or is given within the context of the covenant relationship of promise. That is to say that God's Word to us creates relationship - his "revelation is relational" (Metzger 2005: 21). God has promised to be a covenant keeping God with the ultimate fulfilment found in intimate communion with him. In keeping with his promise God has always revealed to constitute relationship, shape the relationship or to in some way serve the continuing purposes and promises of that relationship. The message of

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

the Revelatory Covenantal Conversation then follows this theme of relationship creation and movement within and toward God's relational goal.

Second, flowing from the triune dynamic of desire for relationship and the context of promise which anticipates fulfilment, God entered into a free dialogue, a covenantal relationship and conversation in which God encounters his people with purpose. The Revelatory Covenantal Conversation has intent. The conversation is focused on the people of God being created, changed and continuing on toward the fulfilment goal of the initiating God.

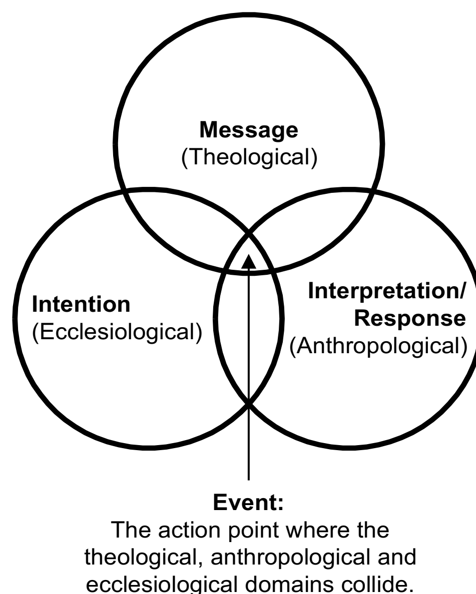
Third, this purpose, although made in strict covenantal terms, was not merely a matter of God revealing himself and his purposes and forcing compliance upon his people – it was a dialogue. God's purpose committed God to journey with his people, in a dialogue which encompassed and addressed the culture, context, situation, and the varying responses and reactions of the people. The dynamic that is salvation history records this divine drama. The drama of a God who initiates and a people who respond, creating a divine covenantal conversation. "God addresses people and people turn toward God" (Immink 2005: 239). Scripture is intent on recording both the acting and the responding. The Bible records God's self revelation not as a monologue - a God administering from afar, but as a conversation, with God encountering his people through a dynamic covenantal relationship, conversing with them where they are, seeking communion with himself, and moving them on toward the future goal. God is the initiator and the subject of the conversation in which his Word moves to reveal and encounter his people in grace. Humans are the receivers of this divine initiative the free interpreters and faith responders to the divine Word, of which God himself is the ever present subject in this covenantal communion.

"The revelation model assigns logical priority to God: God makes himself known; God initiates the encounter and realises the communion" (Immink 2005: 238). There is first an intentional initiatory movement of God toward relationship with his people. But precisely because communication takes place in relationship, and precisely because the members of the community of God are called to stand in a certain, particular, relationship with God and each other, there exists not only a revelatory aspect but also an anthropological, faith response aspect to the praxis. And because people are called to stand together as a people, there exists an ecclesial dimension which calls the people to be a peculiar, holy, faith community of God. Our practical theology cannot therefore be restricted to one model or departure point alone but must allow the dimensions of theology and revelation, anthropology and faith, and the ecclesiology of the faith community to inform the aspects of the praxis and the resultant formulation of a praxis theory. "This means that, as we pursue practical theological reflection, we must consider both the human and the divine subject in our analysis of the praxis…"(Immink 2005: 10), of preaching within the church, together with the ecclesiological will of God. Therefore divine revelation, human reception, response, and the form of our relationship together with God, constitute important focal points in the praxis of faith. We concur with Immink and Barth that the *a priori* in this conversation is

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

always with the initiation of God. However, it finds substance through the Word of God "in our intellectual functions and in our praxis of life" (Immink 2005: 271).

Following Immink's lead we state that "Preaching today is a human form of address in which God himself continues his Revelatory Covenantal Conversation with us" (Immink 2005: 271). This statement regarding the communicative event of preaching, places us at the very intersection of the theological, anthropological, and ecclesiological domains, previously mentioned. Within this statement there are to be found the four distinct elements of operation which are also present in God's revelatory actions toward humankind. First, there is the "Event" of preaching, the Revelatory Covenantal Conversation itself, the definite address action, which presupposes the preacher, the hearers, and the context of the event and its participants. Second, there is the revelatory content of the address which is God speaking to us, which we will call the "Message". Third, there is the continuing covenantal communal, "with us" aspect of the address, the "Intention," which focuses on how the event is designed to shape the community of faith. Finally, there is the conversation element which contains the reaction from the hearers, which we will call the "Interpretation/Response", the engagement of the people with the preaching. These four preaching elements can broadly be associated with the domains that concern us as follows:



Revelatory Covenantal Conversation – Toward Christ

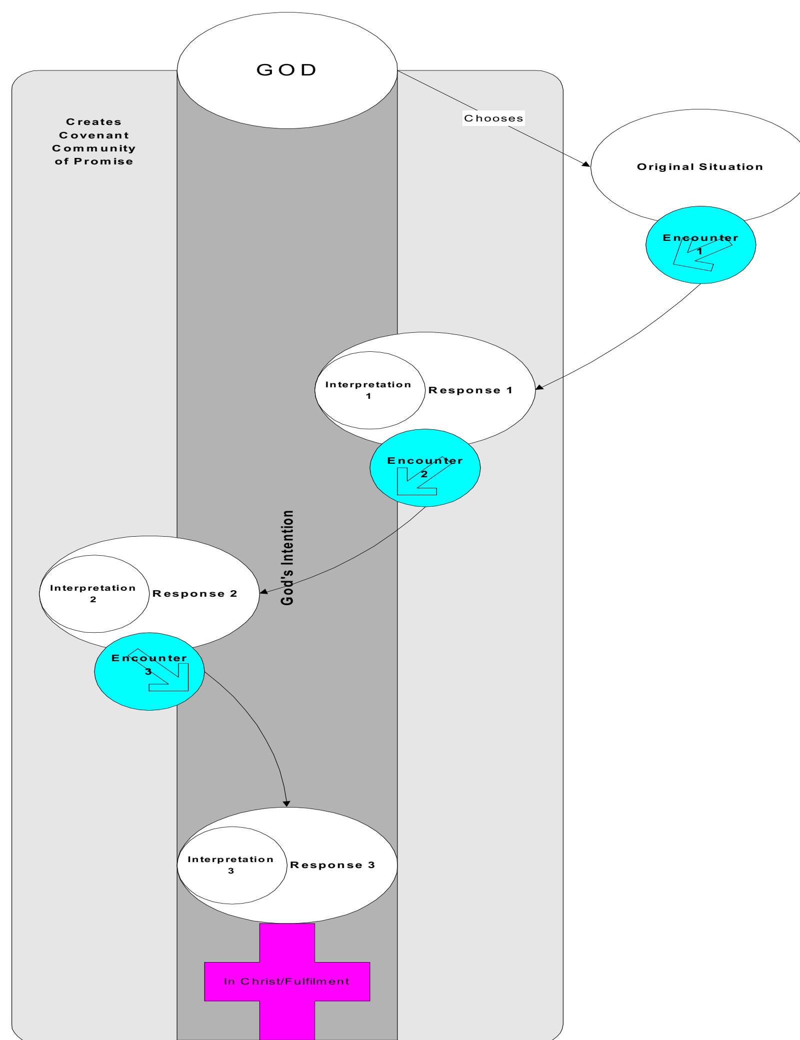
Following God's action with man toward Christ we find that God has acted in accordance with who he is and yet external to himself, to create, to enter into a covenant relationship, to pursue, to reconcile, to adopt, to transform, and to make complete his purposes with his people. His external actions do not originate from anything external to God, but find their source in the internal perfection of God himself. His actions are external because they are actions of a free God whose actions do not satisfy any internal need, but bring to life a

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

creation that thereby expresses the internal heart of a perfect and gracious God who acts in holy love.

God reveals himself in community. God's movement toward humanity, in Word and action, finds its origin in the trinitarian conversation, as an expression of the triune God of love. "Scripture portrays God as the grand orator... whose majesty and imagination speak creation into existence..." (Labberton 2000: 32), and whose love proclaims the covenant. God comes as the initiating, speaking, loving, shaping God.

Following is a diagram which depicts the Revelatory Covenantal Conversation between God and his people, throughout Old Testament history, culminating in Christ.



God initiates. God freely moves in grace to encounter a people who are outside his will and purposes (Original Situation). He chooses to enter into a covenant relationship of promise with his people. God encounters his people (Encounter 1) to be present with them, to reveal himself to them, and to shape his community in a particular direction. The encounter is intended to both create a people for himself and set them on a path toward intimate communion and holiness (God's Intention).

© Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

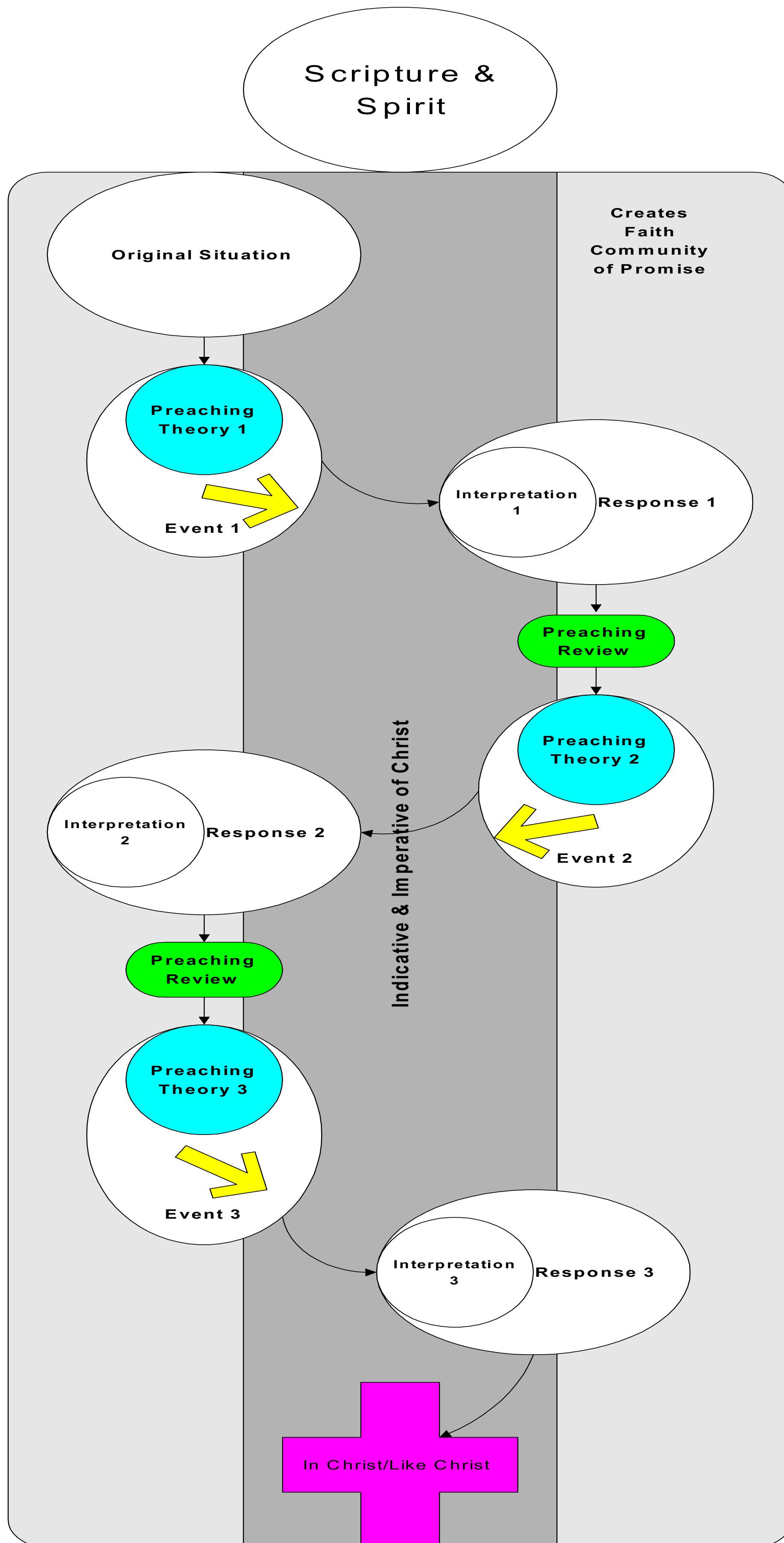
These God encounters are interpreted by the people of God and result in a response (Interpretation/Response 1) that is often at odds with the intention of the encounter. Or the interpretation/response doesn't go all the way to full alignment of the people with God's will. God then encounters his people again (Encounters 2 & 3) not from the original position, as if there had been no response at all, but from the new position of the people – the response position. God moves to meet his people where they are at and encounters them again there. The next encounter begins with where the people are, and is again designed to move them toward his goal. The people interpret and respond (Interpretation/Response 2 & 3), God encounters, and so it goes on with God pursuing his people toward his covenantal goal – to be his perfect holy people – which is fulfilled in Christ (In Christ/Fulfilment).

Revelatory Covenantal Conversation – From Christ

The conversation continues on from Christ. God's covenantal Word given to Abram gave the people of the covenant the unique identity of being the chosen people of God. It is the pursuit of God throughout history and finally through the Word of God in Christ that brings clarity to the continued calling of his people, both Jew and Gentile, to be one holy people belonging to God. The work of the Spirit to create, transform, and continue the people of God, through the proclamation of the apostles, and through the living and active Word of God, and the proclamation of it down through history, continues the Revelatory Covenantal Conversation of God with his community of faith, the church, today.

"God's revelation to humankind is presented in Scripture as a dialogue, in the sense that the biblical books originated in a dialogue situation between God and human beings. God's actions (praxis) in our time still occur dialogically through the Word and the Spirit" (Heyns 1990: 54-55). God encountered and initiated a revelatory covenantal dialogue with his people, and today the conversation continues by the work of the Spirit and through the proclamation of his Word. The model below illustrates the Revelatory Covenantal Conversation from Christ that continues today through preaching:

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies



 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Revelatory Covenantal Conversation - Today

In preaching we represent that which has been revealed to us by God and finally in Christ. We by the Spirit, preach from Scripture (Scripture & Spirit), representing God and Christ as revealed in the Bible in such a way that God is revealed and encounters us today through his presence and his Word. Through preaching (Event 1) we are to meet the people of God in their immediate situation and confront them with such a relevant contemporary inclusive encounter.

The community of God is called to respond to the indicative of being in Christ as his people - the community of faith (Creates faith community of promise). They are likewise called to the imperative of being who they are already in Christ – to be transformed to be like Christ, shaped by holy love (Indicative and Imperative of Christ). As his people they are also to live out of the call of hope - of being on the way to Christ. The community encounters God through the preaching event, interprets the event in their world of reality, with faith or rebellion and responds with worship or idolatry, obedience or disobedience (Interpretation/Response 1).

After the event and the interpretation/response of the people, the preacher must pause to review and evaluate the event (Preaching Review). Unlike God who has a holy and perfect will, having full knowledge, understanding fully the situation, the response, and the heart of his people, preachers need to pause and reflect. Each preaching event is theory laden. The preacher will deliver a message based on their underlying theory of preaching. In light of the encounter and the associated interpretation/response the preacher must evaluate such things as ones: preaching goals and intentions, theology of preaching, understanding of the faith community, sermon delivery, and content and style. In short, preachers must review their theories which underpin the message, event, intentions, and expected interpretation/response of the hearers to their preaching.

Following the review, the preacher, much like God must encounter the people again at the point of response – the place of the people. Successive encounters (Event 2 & 3) are made with the intention of evoking renewed responses (Interpretation/Response 2 & 3) that move the people toward alignment with the imperative and indicative of Christ. Thus like God who acted to reveal himself and to bring Christ to us that we might be finally like him, preaching seeks the same end (In Christ/Like Christ). For the "preaching of the gospel is nothing other than Christ coming to us or us being brought to Him" (Immink 2005: 243). When this takes place the eschatological goal of God and of preaching will be realised – when their world and God's world coincide, when promise gives way to reality, when God's people are brought into his very presence, standing perfect in Christ to participate in the triune covenantal love of God.

Conclusion

Preaching is to bring the revelation and presence of God in history close, so close that it touches our lives and shapes the faith community. God is present by his Spirit through the proclamation of his Word, to reveal God and the message of promise - the theological domain,

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

to bring about faith and holy life - the anthropological domain, with the intention to transform the community of God - the ecclesiological domain. In this way, the Revelatory Covenantal Conversation, which finds its source in the life of the triune God, continues through preaching to create, change and continue the church – the preaching community of God.

Preaching is to reveal God, to unveil him, in Christ, by the Spirit, through the continuing Revelational Covenantal Conversation, such that God's presence and his Word, his present Word, creates communities of faith and promise, changes them to be like Christ, and continues the community of faith toward fulfilment in the eschatological hope. Lowry states, "I see myself as a stagehand who holds back the curtain so that some might be able to catch a glimpse of the divine play – sometimes – perhaps – if I can get it open enough. If we could just get a better handle on how to pull back the curtain" (Lowry 1997: 52).

As we move on may we move toward gaining a better handle on the curtain, to unveil the one who has revealed himself and encountered us, the one who has gripped us and drawn us into his Revelatory Covenantal Conversation, and has called us to be his preaching community, to continue the conversation of hope until the culmination of the fulfilment of the promise in Christ.

Bibliography

Barth, K. *Homiletics*. Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1991.

Buttrick, D. *Homiletic*. Philadelphia, MA: Fortress, 1987.

Craddock, F. B. *Preaching*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1985.

Heitink, G. *Practical Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993.

Heyns, L. M., Pieterse, H. J. C. *A Primer in Practical Theology*. Pretoria, SA:Gnosis, 1990.

Immink, F. G. *Faith: A Practical Theological Reconstruction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005.

Labberton, M. "Glorious Foolishness." *Leadership* 21, no.1 (2000): 31-33.

Lowry, E. L. *The Sermon - Dancing the Edge of Mystery*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1997.

Metzger, P. L. "The Relational Dynamic of Revelation: A Trinitarian Perspective", in *Trinitarian Soundings in Systematic Theology*. P. L. E. Metzger. London, UK: T & T Clark, 2005.

Newton, K. *A History of the Brethren in Australia*. Gailes, QLD: Aberdeen Desktop, 1990.

Quicke, M. J. *360 Degree Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003.

Stadelmann, H. "The need for ecclesiological prolegomena in the pursuit of practical theology." *Trinity Journal* 19, no.2 (1998): 219-233.

Van Seters, A. "The Problematic of Preaching in the Third Millenium." *Interpretation* 45, no. 3 (1991): 267-280.

Viau, M. *Practical Theology - A new approach*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Pentateuch Criticism

Mr Stuart Blake

Author: *Stuart is a Masters' student at Australian College of Christian Studies. His research interests include Old Testament and biblical languages. He is passionate about furthering an understanding of the Hebrew Bible as understood by the original readers.*

Abstract: This paper will survey two main options available for the authorship of the canonical Pentateuch material. Ancient Jewish and Christian belief was Moses was the sole author of the books of Genesis through to Deuteronomy. However, scholarship in the last three hundred years has seriously challenged this position. This paper will argue that the current Documentary Hypothesis adequately explains the material found in the Pentateuch, rejecting sole Mosaic authorship. It will also be argued that viewing the authorship of the Pentateuch as purely a late invention that has no roots back to the historical events far exceeds the data available to scholars and is an unnecessary conclusion.

Introduction

This essay will analyse two general positions: the first which views the Pentateuch as having Moses as the author, while the second views the Pentateuch as a composite work containing multiple sources from multiple authors. The first view will be referred to as Mosaic authorship, while the second will be referred to as non-Mosaic authorship. These terms will be used while acknowledging that they do not represent the positions without exception. For example, those who hold to Mosaic authorship will no doubt concede that Moses would not have written about his death, and those who hold to non-Mosaic authorship would not all concede that Moses had nothing to do with the content of the Pentateuch. After a survey of the positions, an evaluation of the arguments will be provided, and a conclusion will be offered as to which position this author finds the most compelling.

History of Pentateuch Authorship

Prior to the 20th century, the oldest extant manuscripts on record of the complete Hebrew Bible was the Aleppo Codex, dated to the late 9th century,[1] which was a date quite removed from the original autographs. This gap was lessened significantly upon the discovery of the

[1] M. H Goshen-Gottstein, "The Aleppo Codex and the Rise of the Masoretic Bible Text," The Biblical Archaeologist 42, no. 3 (1979), 148.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Dead Sea Scrolls, which were dated to between the 2nd century BCE and 1st century CE[2]. While these now represent the oldest extant copies and have confirmed much in terms of reliability of the textual transmission of the Hebrew Bible, the discovery did not fundamentally change the problem of having the earliest known copies so far removed from the original writings. Thus, authorship of the Pentateuch should be ascertained on other grounds.

For the majority of both Jewish and Christian history, based on the Pentateuch's references to Moses writing laws and narratives (for example, Ex. 24:4 and Deut. 31:9), Mosaic authorship was the assumed position. As noted by Arnold, "a nearly uncontested tradition of Mosaic authorship for the whole Pentateuch in early Jewish and Christian sources" existed.[3] However, this theory was slowly challenged as readers of the Pentateuch pointed out anachronisms and narrative perspectives within the text that were not consistent with Moses being the author, namely the references of "to this day" during Moses' death (Deut. 34:6) and the mention of Canaanites being in the land "then" (Genesis 12:6),[4] indicating a time of composition at least after the conquest of Joshua.

The documentary hypothesis, which states that the Pentateuch is a composite work from multiple different sources and authors, is generally thought to have found its beginnings with Jean Astruc.[5] On the basis of differing names used of God throughout the Pentateuch, Astruc published a work in 1753 that theorised Moses used two distinct source documents to compile the final form of the books. Astruc named his sources A and B: the "A" source preferred to call God "*Elohim"* while the "B" source preferred the name "*Yahweh*". Building upon this foundation, subsequent scholars such as Eichhorn and de Wette posited additional sources present in the Pentateuch, as a two-source hypothesis did not account for all the material found.[6] All of this groundwork was furthered by Julius Wellhausen, who presented the documentary hypothesis in essentially its modern form in the late 1870s.[7] Wellhausen divided the text of the Pentateuch into four main sources: J, E, D and P. The J source represented the Yahwistic source, the E source represented the Elohistic source, the D source represented the Deuteronomistic source while P represented the Priestly source. According to Wellhausen, the books of Genesis, Exodus and Numbers were a composite work that comprised of the J, E and P sources. Leviticus was the sole work of the priestly source, while Deuteronomy was the sole work of the Deuteronomistic source. This theory found rapid acceptance amongst Biblical scholars worldwide, and although it has been modified and presents itself in differing forms, the basic premise of underlying source documents now forms a majority view in modern scholarship.[8]

---

[2] Goshen-Gottstein, "The Aleppo Codex," 148.
[3] B. T. Arnold, "Pentateuch Criticism, History of," *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 622.
[4] Arnold, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 622.
[5] Arnold, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch,* 623.
[6] Arnold, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch,* 623.
[7] Arnold, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch,* 625.
[8] Arnold, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch,* 625.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

The following outlines each position and discuss how each of these positions are reached.

Positive Arguments for Mosaic Authorship

Although against modern consensus, some scholars argue for Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, finding the source divisions of the documentary hypothesis to be circular in logic.[9] In *The Authorship of the Pentateuch,* Archer demonstrates that Mosaic authorship is attested to in three main sections of the Bible: the Pentateuch itself, the narrative books of the Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament. For Archer, these attestations provide ancient evidence that Moses was the author behind the vast majority of the Pentateuch. Archer's work will be presented in this paper as a sufficient account for the position of Mosaic authorship. After demonstrating plausible evidence from within the text itself, Archer moves on to provide seven additional pieces of information, of which three deemed to be the strongest are examined in this paper.

First, Archer notes that the Pentateuch overall shows a strong familiarity with Egyptian culture and language.[10] Where the text references practices and customs, they are generally stated with Egyptian overtones. For example, the measurement of an "ephah" is taken directly from Egyptian measuring systems, and not Canaanite measuring systems. Egyptian idioms and phrases also are present in the Pentateuch. Other scholars, such as Homan, have drawn strong parallel between the Israelite tabernacle recorded in the book of Exodus and the war tent of Ramesses II,[11] which additionally gives support to a thoroughly Egyptian setting to the composition of the Pentateuch.

Second, Archer states, the patriarchal narratives found in the book of Genesis demonstrate a composition time in the 2nd millennium BC, with practices named not exiting in the 1st millennium BC.[12] If these practices did not exist in the 1st millennium BC, then this places the *terminus ad quem* of Genesis before 1000 BC. Several practices are offered as evidence, such as the ancient practice of procuring legitimate children through a handmaiden (as Abraham did with Hagar in Gen. 16) and the relationship between *teraphim* ("household gods") and claiming inheritance rights.

Third, the language and grammar used in the Pentateuch is presented by Archer as archaic in nature, suggesting a more ancient time of composition than Wellhausen hypothesised.[13] A rare and early spelling of the Hebrew female pronoun "she" is used throughout the Pentateuch, as well as the Hebrew word for "young girl." These words more often have alternate spellings in writings agreed upon to be later.

[9] Archer Gleason L., *The Authorship of the Pentateuch* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 125.
[10] Gleason, *The Authorship of the Pentateuch,* 120-121.
[11] Michael M. Homan, "The Divine Warrior in His Tent, A Military Model for Yahweh's Tabernacle," Bible Review vol. 16 (2000), 23.
[12] Gleason, *The Authorship of the Pentateuch,* 123.
[13] Gleason, *The Authorship of the Pentateuch,* 124.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Archer concludes that these points all strongly support Mosaic authorship, and more importantly, they cannot be reconciled with Wellhausen's incremental model.[14] His concluding remarks focus on Moses' apparent availability to write, saying "it seems absolutely incredible that he (Moses) would have committed none of his records to writing."[15]

Positive Arguments for non-Mosaic Authorship

Conversely, scholars who argue for non-Mosaic authorship will generally reference the following peculiarities within the Pentateuch. As before, the following represents three arguments that this writer finds most persuasive, and will be detailed.

First, the existence of doublets within the text itself. These doublets are instances of two complete versions of the same story being present within the text.[16] Examples of these doublets range from two separate stories arranged sequentially (as is the case of the creation accounts of Gen. 1:1-2:3 and Gen. 2:4b-25) to where two versions of the story have been woven together to form one narrative with repeated details throughout (such as the flood account throughout Gen. 6:5 – 9:17).[17]

Second, the existence of the names of God in the Pentateuch seems to correspond to different narrative strands. If one uses the names of God used and uses this as a basis to extract separate texts and judges them individually, one still arrives at continuous narratives.[18] This coincides with a preference for certain terminology. Friedman lists 24 characteristics of the four sources, many of which are exclusive to that particular source. For example, the P source uses the phrase "gathered unto his people" as a euphemism for death, and this phrase is exclusive to P.[19] Also, characteristics and emphasises cluster around the different sources, according to the naming division. For example, there are no angels present in P, and the tabernacle is only mentioned three times outside of P.

Finally, the seeming presence of interpolations is characteristic of separate sources being used. For example, when Korah's rebellion from the book of Numbers is removed according to the standard source division on the criteria of the names of God, the story of Dathan's and Abiram continues uninterrupted through the book of Numbers.[20] This would be evidence for the story of Korah's rebellion being an interpolation by a later editor, combining two sources.

---

[14] Gleason, *The Authorship of the Pentateuch,* 125.
[15] Gleason, *The Authorship of the Pentateuch,* 125.
[16] Richard Elliott Friedman, "*Torah (Pentateuch),*" Anchor Bible Dictionary vol. 6 (Sydney: Doubleday, 1992), 609.
[17] Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible* (London: Cape, 1988), 54-59.
[18] Friedman, "*Torah (Pentateuch),*" 609.
[19] Friedman, "*Torah (Pentateuch),*" 610.
[20] Friedman, "*Torah (Pentateuch),*" 612.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

These three pieces of information provide scholars with a foundation for asserting that multiple sources exist within the text. However, it should be noted that these arguments complement each other in a way that strengthens the overall conclusion, with the arguments being more than the sum of their parts. For example, the division purely upon the basis of terminology also confirms the conclusions of the divisions based on interpolated stories.

The following evaluates these positions, offering a critique of where this author finds each view, in their extreme forms, to not account for all the data.

Evaluation of the Positions

While the Mosaic authorship position has been accepted for the majority of history, it has in recent centuries faced challenges which this author finds conclusive against Moses being the sole author.

The arguments raised by Archer are well accepted if used to argue for the authenticity of the exodus tradition and an Egyptian origin of the Israelites. It is hard to imagine how the Israelites wrote down their stories and acquired so many details correctly from an Egyptian perspective, especially the similarities between the tabernacle and the war tent of the Pharaoh. Wenham, citing authentic traditions, an absence of the Canaanite god Baal, and an almost complete absence of interest in the city of Jerusalem, argues in *The Religion of the Patriarchs* (1980) that the early narratives of Genesis regarding Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are entirely consistent with a 2nd millennium composition.[21] Taken together, their conclusions of authenticity are accepted.

However, no argument put forth by Archer contributes to Mosaic authorship. Archer seems to be arguing against the view that the stories of the Pentateuch are entirely creations of the 1st millennium. He succeeds in this argument but falls short in demonstrating that Moses contributed to authorship. All Archer is left with is the internal witness of the Pentateuch itself, but even this has its problems. Carpenter states that it is very difficult to determine exactly what is meant by Biblical phrases such as “the law of Moses,” and gives possible interpretations ranging from a core set of laws that the Pentateuch attributes to Moses to the full canonical set of five books we have today.[22] Given an absence of certainty, this author finds Archer’s conclusion of the Pentateuch’s full Mosaic authorship, based upon the internal references to Moses writing certain sections, lacking. Unaddressed by Archer are the clear textual parallels to material from non-Egyptian cultures (such as Hittite, Babylonian and Assyrian), which the Israelites would not have come into contact with until much later in their history.[23]

[21] Wenham, G. J., “The Religion of the Patriarchs”, Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives, IVP, Leicester, England (1980), pp 184-185.
[22] Carpenter, E. E., “Pentateuch”, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume 3, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans (1986), 742.
[23] Yee, Gale A., *Fortress Commentary on the Bible*, Fortress Press, Kindle Edition, location 3095.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Overall, this author finds the arguments for the non-Mosaic authorship are compelling. The existence of doublets, which when extracted read as coherent stories by themselves, is a forceful demonstration that the Pentateuch contains, at the very least, many non-Mosaic sources. A key point of difference, however, is the issue of when these sources were originally written, and what their relationship is to historical Israelite history. Original proponents of the documentary hypothesis were perhaps too keen to view these sources as merely inventions of their time. As an example, the Priestly source is generally dated to sometime after the exilic period (although Friedman argues for a time of around Hezekiah and definitely before the exile).[24] Some scholars interpret this data to mean that the contents of P did not exist before this time period and that the stories written by P were simply made up.

This view has been critiqued in two important ways. First, since the early days of the theory, many texts have been identified in the Pentateuch which were far earlier than previously imagined. In a lecture on the historicity of the exodus, Friedman declares a 12th or 11th century BC date of the Song of the Sea found in Exodus 15.[25] The same can be said for a number of other passages in the Bible, such as the song of Moses in Deuteronomy 33 and the song of Deborah in the book of Judges.[26] It is clear that, whatever the final date of composition may be, the origins of the material are in fact very ancient, and perhaps date right up until the time of Moses. Walton also crucially points out that there is a difference in cultural attitudes between authorship and authority.[27] Scribal activity in the ancient world need not separate the authority behind the text and the text itself. In this specific case, Walton argues that while Moses may not be the final author for much of the material in the Pentateuch, he nonetheless stands as the authority behind the laws and traditions that it contains.

Second, there has been a shift in the approach towards reading the Pentateuch critically with the introduction of literary criticism. Here, the view is to essentially ignore the complex compositional history of the text and to treat the Pentateuch as a final product.[28] This approach has the benefit of taking the text at face value, while still relying on source criticism throughout, and rests on the assertion that the text remains the product of a final decision. Whatever the compositional nature of the Pentateuch, a final redactor decided for certain texts to be included or rejected and arranged the material in a certain way. These decisions can be analysed and studied, while the tentative nature of the prior sources is overlooked.

---

[24] Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible*, 210.
[25] Richard Elliott Friedman, "The Exodus Based on the Sources Themselves," Lecture, Out of Egypt: Israel's Exodus Between Text and Memory, History and Imagination (San Diego, CA: University of California, May 31 - June 1, 2013).
[26] Friedman, "The Exodus Based on the Sources Themselves."
[27] John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Scripture,* The Lost World Series (InterVarsity Press, 2013), 25.
[28] Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 1: Genesis 1-15* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), xxiii.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Conclusion

It has been contended that the arguments for non-Mosaic authorship outweigh the case for sole Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. It has also been argued that denying any hand of Moses within the text overstates the data. Agreement can be reached, which allows Moses to have legislated the core of the laws which formed the Sinaitic covenant and certain general narratives. It also allows the text to be what it is, and retain the parallels to later time periods. These observations need not be a cause for concern for any faithful reader of the Pentateuch, since the final authority behind the text is God.

Bibliography

Archer, Gleason L. *The Authorship of the Pentateuch.* Chicago: Moody Press, 1994.

Arnold, B. T. "Pentateuch Criticism, History of," *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003.

Carpenter, E. E. "Pentateuch," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 3. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986.

Friedman, Richard Elliott. "The Exodus Based on the Sources Themselves," Lecture, Out of Egypt: Israel's Exodus Between Text and Memory, History and Imagination. University of California, San Diego, CA: May 31 - June 1, 2013.

Friedman, Richard Elliott. *Who Wrote the Bible?*. London: Cape, 1988.

Friedman, Richard Elliott. "Torah (Pentateuch)," *Anchor Bible Dictionary,* vol. 6. Sydney: Doubleday, 1992.

Homan, Michael M. "The Divine Warrior in His Tent, A Military Model for Yahweh's Tabernacle," Bible Review vol. 16 (2000): 22-26, 28-33, 55.

Goshen-Gottstein, M. H. "The Aleppo Codex and the Rise of the Masoretic Bible Text." The Biblical Archaeologist 42, no. 3 (1979), pp. 145-163.

Walton, John H. *The Lost World of Scripture.* The Lost World Series. InterVarsity Press, 2013.

Wenham, G. J. "The Religion of the Patriarchs," *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives.* Leicester, England: IVP, 1980.

Wenham, Gordon J. *Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 1: Genesis 1-15.* Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987.

Yee, Gale A. *Fortress Commentary on the Bible*. Fortress Press, Kindle Edition, 2014.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Book Review

Dr Paul 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 has completed 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.*

Branson, Mark Lau & Martínez, Juan F. *Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities.* Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011.

Scharen, Christian & Vigen, Aana Marie (eds.). *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*. Continuum, 2011.

The two books reviewed contribute to an understanding of the significant role that sociological studies plays in the development of contemporary contextualised theology and practice. From differing perspectives they propose an integrated approach to sociological and theological understanding that will enhance the Church's mission in a diverse contemporary community.

Scharen and Vigen divide their contribution into two sections. The first section provides a detailed theoretical basis for the role of ethnographic research in the development of Christian theology and practice. The second section engages with field researchers whose research makes a significant contribution to the understanding of a contextualised theology and ethics.

Branson and Martínez embed case studies within each chapter. These very personal narratives form a social focus for the implications of the authors' contributions to church leadership in multicultural churches.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

Scharen and Vigen (eds), *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics.*

Should not the title be "Ethnography and Christian Theology and Ethics?" I would be comfortable maintaining a perception of a dichotomy between the humanness of sociological studies and the authoritative nature of theological enquiry. After reading further into the text I realised that the editors' intention was to dismantle such a perception and replace it with a vibrant synergy of sociology and theology out of which comes a contextualised and contemporary Christian theology and practice. Consider the book's sociological and theological defence.

The social environment is the context in which theology is expressed and formed. Understanding the former will radically enhance understanding of the latter. The research participant and the research practitioner engage in a dynamic of information/formation in which sociological and theological perspectives are mutually challenged and changed. The participant provides the informative context that then results in a formative engagement with the research practitioner's understanding of diverse theological expressions and Christian practices and, subsequently results in new perceptions of how this is excercised in the practitioner's specific social/theological context.

Scharen defends the priority of human experience in the formation of contemporary theology. He and Vigen advocate qualitative research practice as the only valid way to hear the voices of human experience in their variegated world context. In this way, theological understanding is enhanced and may even be dramatically altered.

The theological argument comes from the human experience of the transcendent. Christian theology and practice, as partial glimpses of divine reality, require continued critique and development. In this way, theology moves from an authoritative status to a "guiding normative role."

Milbank and Hauerwas are criticised for their separation of theology and ethics from sociology. Milbank's defence of the Christian "social event" as the critique of the human society is plainly at variance with Scharen and Vigen.

Hauerwas advocates the Church community as the critique of the world community. Christian ethics is the solution for the problems that are bought to the surface through sociological research. Scharen and Vigen find such a position as untenable in a world in which "actual church people look rather a lot like everybody else!"

Scharen and Vigen's arguments are supported by the research exemplars in the book's second part. Each was selected to demonstrate how research may call for a paradigmatic shift in the way theology and ethics are informed and formed. Not only do these research contributions call for changes within the research field under consideration. They also, and more importantly, call for change to Christian theology and ethics.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

The varied approaches to ethnographic research bring home the book's practical worth. The suffering of the marginalised AIDS women of Kenya and Chicago cries out for a reappraisal of a Christian ethic that is perceived as either ignorant, or even worse, oblivious to such suffering; the multiple responses in the Christian Church to physician assisted suicides demand a radical reappraisal, an ethic from the side of the afflicted and suffering; an ethics of plenty is condemned by an ethic of personal curse turned into communal blessing; perceptions of a "white man's" God is poetically and powerfully contrasted with a God of the poor; barriers of inherent power and privilege are dismantled in open communities of trust and service to others.

Each field research is witness to the over-all theme of the book: theology and ethics must engage with and, when necessary be re-directed or re-formed by the human context. Is this a rallying cry for a socially formed theology, a feared theology "from below"? Or is it a valid recognition that theology and Christian practice are inextricably linked with the human condition in all its varied and bewildering settings? A theology that settles for academic solutions to the human condition, removed from the human settings in which that theology is applied may forfeit the dynamic inter-change of the human and the transcendent that will transform theology's understanding of humanness and the human experience of the transcendent.

Branson and Martinez, *Churches, cultures and leadership: A Practical theology of congregations and ethnicities.*

Local church leadership is challenged to engage missionally with the diverse cultural identities within the North American community. The book is notable for the multiple approach of Bible studies, practical exercises, case studies, discussion guides and suggested film titles. A dedicated website, www.churchesculturesleadership.com, provides a forum for ongoing discussions. Such aids encourage the reader to engage in personal reflection and application. The authors' commitment to their ongoing project is undeniable and highly commendable.

Cultural issues are discussed from an in-depth critique of the major culture, the Euro/American culture and its interaction, or indeed lack of, with minority cultures. A similar approach to multicultural Australia would, without doubt, be an invaluable resource for church leaders.

The detailed assessment of the historical background to the fractured American community suggests a critical methodology for an analysis of the Australian community's response to its changing multicultural context. The overt racism of post-colonial America may also be compared with the overt white supremacy tragically reflected in the now rejected White Australian policy.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

The power relationship between the majority culture and minority cultures is applied to the dynamics of relationship in the mission of local church to its culturally diverse community. Ways in which church leadership may build bridges of mutual understanding and identity across the cultural divide are suggested throughout the book.

Priority is given to the voice of human experience in multiple cultural contexts beginning with the authors' very personal multicultural journeys. Their contrasts of cultural experience enable them to speak on behalf of the majority and the minority cultures with personal conviction and compassionate understanding.

A culturally informed and transformed church leadership will require a dynamic cycle of reflective praxis, a cycle of theological understanding and practical engagement. Indeed, the format of the book invites the reader to engage in such reflective praxis.

In part 1 of the book, Branson articulates a biblical case for multicultural context from Israel's experience in Babylon and the New Testament church's repudiation of "culture based fellowships." The local church cannot be bound by ethnic constraints. Rather, it reaches out to those who are excluded by the majority culture whether that exclusion is based on socio-economic or ethnic differences. The New Testament Church broke out of the accepted homogenous social units of their day. The question is, does today's local church reflect the same inclusive resolve as being "sent" in the biblical sense to their specific cultural community?

The ethnically diverse narratives of the multicultural church interact forming fresh narratives of memory and cultural identity which are tested within the process of reflection-praxis against the Gospel narrative. The web site includes video interviews with the ministers of various multicultural churches and the ways in which the diverse narratives blend together to form their distinctive church narrative and then to reach out in new understanding to the multi narratives of the ethnically diverse public community to which the missional community has been "sent."

Branson and Martínez consider two impediments to multicultural engagement in the American community. Two of these are significant for the Australian community. Racism is a major impediment to intercultural engagement within the American multi-cultural context. The authors define racism as the abuse of power by the majority cultural group over minority cultural groups. Sadly, cultural abuses of power are not unique to the American community. What of the possibility of such occurring in the Australian society? What does the political and social ambivalence to the so-called "boat people" say about the majority Australian culture's use of power over the minority "other"?

Further impediments to cross cultural interaction include the dynamic of cultural individualism over against the culture of communitarianism. Euro/American individualism contrasts with the collective or communal characteristics of Latin and Asian cultures. Surely,

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

here is a direct application to the Australian setting. The communal identity of ethnic groups in which decisions are made by the group may find difficulty in identifying with centrally focused leadership in an Australian local church.

Part 2 is integral to the context of the interaction between the theological and the missional in the local church. Branson employs Habermas' conceptual framework to discuss the theoretical background for a cross cultural worldview. His aim is to assist the reader to a "communicative competence" which he further develops in chapter 9. Martínez's contribution draws on his experience with his denomination's difficulties to understand the Latina church. His incisive comments on the role of language in cross cultural understanding are essential reading for the local church leader. Communication may be stifled by misunderstanding caused by the contrasting cultural dynamics of language forms. Consider a conversation between an Australian minister whose informal language form expresses social equality and a church member whose formal language is hierarchical. The latter is embarrassed by a perceived over familiarity while the minister has difficulty with seemingly patronising attitude. To some church members the pastor may be informally referred to by his/her first name. In the formal language of hierarchical cultures, the minister's title must always be used. The Australian multicultural church would benefit from finding a way to promote the dignity of the minority language(s) while promoting access to the use and understanding of the dominant language. All this without a perceived abuse of power!

Branson's final chapter blends theoretical and experiential formats. The theoretical builds on the leadership triad first introduced in chapter 1. The experiential is provided by the story of Ramón's leadership of a historically Euro-American church as it sought to reach out to its Latino community. Guiding principles supported by Ramón's personal narrative include a minister's interpretative engagement with the cultural identities of the public community while using Biblical principles to open the local church to an acceptance of the culturally "other." The outcome is the creation of relationships of confidence and trust.

There is a pneumatological element that cannot be ignored. As the local church leader follows the principles of ministry to the diverse community, The Spirit provides meanings and relationships that are embodied in the life of the Church community. The process of adaptive change becomes a part of the life and practice of the local church as it adapts to the changing dynamics of its community. Not to participate in this process will only stultify the mission of the local church with it becoming an enclave of the major culture surrounded by communities of minor communities.

Conclusion

The two books under review propose a positive role for sociological enquiry in the development of Christian theology and practice. Scharen and Vigen envisage theology and ethics as equal partners with ethnography to understand the diversity of human situations and to address them from the perspective of contextual uniqueness. It may be that such a

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies

partnership stretches a conservative understanding of the authoritative basis of theological enquiry. And yet, such a partnership, as the varied ethnographic exemplars graphically demonstrate, directly provides an essential critique for the development of theology and ethics within the changing human condition.

Branson and Martínez direct attention to sociological enquiry within the missional context of the local churches' mission to its community. It may be that the reader will gloss over the intense concentration on the varied power plays with the American cultural contexts. This would be to the reader's loss. Reflective praxis in theory and actual practice will provide a momentum for the Australian Church to transformatively engage in missional involvement with the diverse public community.

I may have questioned some theological assumptions and cultural interpretations. I was, however, profoundly challenged in my understanding of the ethnographic turn in theology. Reflective praxis will, I hope, become an essential element of my understanding of the missional church "sent" to the diverse ethnicities that form such an intricate pattern that comes together in what we call the Australian society.

 © Copyright 2020 Australian College of Christian Studies