Logoi Pistoi

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Logoi Pistoi

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

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

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

The Journal's editorial team consists of Dr Xavier Lakshmanan, Dr Paul Porta, Dr David Smith, Dr Theron Young, and Dr Dirk van der Merwe. The team is coordinated by Dr Xavier Lakshmanan.

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

Editorial

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

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

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

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

Dr Xavier Lakshmanan

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Pedagogical Innovation for Theological Education

Dr Xavier Lakshmanan

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Abstract: Engaging the major pedagogical and technological developments in contemporary educational research, this article is a search for a dynamic methodological framework for theological education. It interacts with the key trends, literature, and scholarship in education research. Drawing insight from educational developments, the author argues that the pedagogical and technological research in education is promising for theological education. Thus, the article is a critical appraisal of the importance of pedagogical innovation for contemporary theological education.

Key Words: Education, Pedagogy, Method, Research, Technology, Innovation, Theological Education, Collaboration, Framework, Literature.

Introduction

This article is a study in educational pedagogy. It engages the key contemporary trends in pedagogical and technological research in education. Recent research in the field proved creative, innovative, and fruitful. The author maintains that the pedagogical research in education is innovatively promising and constructively effective for theological education. Thus, the purpose of the study is to critically upraise the importance of pedagogical innovation for contemporary theological education. In this way, it is a search for an innovative educational pedagogy for effective theological education.

First, reviewing the major educational perspectives and developments, the study will demonstrate that pedagogy functions as a critical control in the educational

framework. It is an important regulator of quality, design, delivery, and outcome. Second, the article will engage the bibliometric-visualisation methods and collaborative approaches to upraise them as innovative and proactive pedagogies for theological education. Finally, the study will reflectively apply the pedagogical insight to the specific context of theological education and to the practice of teaching theology.

1. The Function of Educational Pedagogy

What is educational pedagogy and how does it function within an educational framework? The New South Wales Department of Education describes an educational pedagogy as "a wide range of teaching strategies and learning experiences,"[1] employed in the process of "promoting different ways of learning and thinking."[2] Here, pedagogy is imagined as a method. It is a systematic procedure that designs, directs, and measures the learning activity, bringing it to a designed outcome.[3] It then functions as a tool that monitors the quality of the design, promotion, and outcome by employing a standard of evaluation and review.[4] It is an important regulator. It is a methodical procedure that explains how one arrived at the outcome that they have arrived at.[5]

Accordingly, Thorpe argues that a dynamic learning process is "sustained by a proactive pedagogy, working creatively with technology"[6] for it is the "top-down control"[7] of the educational framework. In this sense, pedagogy is the tower of control that ensures quality, design, and outcome. It is a systematic approach that continuously collaborates the methodological, technological, and practical innovations for effective learning and teaching. She contends that the continued use of "outmoded pedagogy" is to be blamed for the "failure to transform educational institutions" using "new technologies."[8] In this way, the key function of educational pedagogy is to facilitate learning where the learner needs change and creative opportunities to engage dynamically with the content and their peers.[9]

[1]https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/pdhpe-syllabus-implementation/pedagogy. Accessed 10.05.2022.
[2]https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/pdhpe-syllabus-implementation/pedagogy. Accessed 10.05.2022.
[3]https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/pdhpe-syllabus-implementation/pedagogy. Accessed 10.05.2022.
[4]Mary Thorpe, "Educational Technology: Does Pedagogy Still Matter," *Educational Technology* 52, No. 2 (2012): 10-14.
[5]Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 2-10.
[6]Thorpe, "Educational Technology," 10.
[7]Thorpe, "Educational Technology," 10.
[8]Thorpe, "Educational Technology," 10-11.
[9]Thorpe, "Educational Technology," 10-11.

Searching for a "constructive" theological method within a framework of "interdisciplinary dialogue,"[10] Kärkkäinen envisages that a constructive theological method must be dynamically "integrative."[11] It must function as a methodical vision that strives for quality control, innovation, and sacrificially welcoming the other.[12] For him, theological engagement is complete only when it finds its transformative impact upon life. In educational research, this would be read as learning has only taken place when it has been applied to life. In other words, learning is an "integral component of being human"[13] and it is a "permanent change in behaviour, knowledge and thinking skills as a result of experience."[14] Similarly, in hermeneutic philosophy, the dynamic task of interpretation is complete only when the pathways set out by the text are appropriated in practical life.[15] Thus, the process of learning must be systematically guided beyond the horizons of understanding and explanation of the content into appropriation, application, and practice.[16] In this way, the point of learning is not mere impartation of knowledge.[17] Rather, it is a dynamic process of refiguring the way of being in the world.[18]

Kärkkäinen further argues that, in order to be proactive and innovative, this holistic method must be a "coherent vision," with organised consistent structures and procedures.[19] It also should be a "dialogical vision" to engage the emerging methodological and technological developments.[20] Finally, he argues that a proactive pedagogy must be a "hospitable vision" that will effectively draw creativity, innovation, and apply them collaboratively to enhance its framework in a limitless elasticity.[21] In this way, a fruitful pedagogy is a vision that strives for a collaborative activity of innovation. It should stretch beyond its theological and religious agendas to engage "nontheological and nonreligious"[22] fields of "natural sciences, cultural studies,"[23] and "sociopolitical"[24] resources in the constructive creation of a synthetic reality of life.[25] In this constant pursuit, institutions are free to sustain their "core

[10]Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation,*12.
[11]Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation,*13.
[12]Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation,*13.
[13]Michael Nagel and Laura Scholes, *Understanding Development and Learning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 3.
[14]Nagel and Scholes, *Understanding Development and Learning*, 11.
[15]Dan R. Stiver, *Ricoeur and Theology* (Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2012), 47-55.
[16]Stiver, *Ricoeur and Theology,* 47-55.
[17]Nagel and Scholes, *Understanding Development and Learning*, 5.
[18]Stiver, *Ricoeur and Theology,* 47-55.
[19]Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation,*12.
[20]Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation,* 21.
[21]Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation,* 29.
[22]Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation,*13.
[23]Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation,*13.
[24]Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation,*15.
[25]Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation,*14.

values" without "resisting necessary change."[26] Here, the organisational input to pedagogical innovation is also important.[27] But, all within the regulatory rule of a pedagogical procedure.

At this point, it is beneficial to note the striking contrast between a dynamic and outmoded pedagogy. An "outmoded pedagogy" focuses upon the process of teaching and its teacher, whereas an educational system designed and regulated by a dynamic pedagogy emphasises the process of learning and the learner.[28] For instance, the "traditional knowledge transmission model of teaching" is an "ill-healthy" model for the twenty first century educational context[29] for it heavily focusses on imparting knowledge and rarely address the issues, "experiences and needs of students."[30] Thus, what is key is a transition towards a dynamic pedagogical approach that will create an innovative learning experience. In this context, the "hypertext tool" that utilises metaphorical innovation is useful for education.[31] By using metaphors as epistemological and pedagogical tool in learning theory, Nina Bonderup Dohn constructs the philosophical inquiry into the framework of education through the "analysis of empirical investigations of learning practices inside and outside of schools."[32]

The function of methodology as outmoded or dynamic can be further illustrated from the hermeneutic philosophy that claims for a metaphorical innovation of reality.[33] Drawing from Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic discourse of metaphor, I have argued elsewhere that "dead metaphors" are lifeless and they are part of the ordinary prosaic language. They are lifeless because they cannot have the potential to create new meaning that will reconnect with linguistic innovation.[34] Nevertheless, "live metaphors" are dynamic, synthetic, and innovative to create fresh possibilities for a methodological reflection.[35] Consequently, metaphors and metaphorical reflection should be "deployed consciously in educational design, … as structuring resources of

[26]Jana Holiday, Linda Cannell, and James D. McLennan, "The Puzzle of Institutional Inertia in Theological Education," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 44, No. 4 (2020): 336.
[27]Yun Zheng, Jianfeng Wang, William Doll, Xiaodong Deng, and Melvin Williams, "The Impact of Organisational Support, Technical Support, and Self-Efficacy on Faculty Perceived Benefits of Using Learning Management System," *Behaviour and Information Technology* 37, No. 4 (2018): 311-319. https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2018.1436590.
[28]Thorpe, "Educational Technology," 10.
[29]Nagel and Scholes, *Understanding Development and Learning*, 6.
[30]Nagel and Scholes, *Understanding Development and Learning*, 6.
[31]Ece Merdivan and Nesrin Ozdener, "Effects of Different Metaphor Usage on Hypertext Learning," *Behaviour and Information Technology* 30, No. 2 (2011): 273-285.
[32]Nina Bonderup Dohn, "Models, Modelling, Metaphors, and Metaphorical Thinking from an Educational Philosophical View," *Historical Social Research*, No. 31 (2018), 47.
[33]Xavier Lakshmanan, *Textual Linguistic Theology in Paul Ricoeur* (New York: Peter Lang, 2016), 81-99.
[34]Xavier, *Textual Linguistic Theology in Paul Ricoeur*, 81-99.
[35]Xavier, *Textual Linguistic Theology in Paul Ricoeur*, 81-99.

thinking."[36] Metaphorical discourse as a pedagogical tool is not limited to educational research. It is also welcome in science studies in recent times. Tor-Finn Malum Fitje substantiates that metaphor "operates at every level of physics … as a linguistic tool, suggesting a likeness between two different things by applying the term for one thing for another thing,"[37] which physicists call models.

It is at this point that Thorpe's argument for a creative educational pedagogy becomes meaningful for it appeals for a collaborate engagement. She stresses the importance of continuously pursuing for "new forms of pedagogical creativity," which are synthetically innovative.[38] Like Kärkkäinen, her aim is for a hospitable vision, which is pedagogically proactive towards creativity, drawn from interdisciplinary or cross disciplinary avenues. This is what makes the learning and teaching a fruitful and fulfilling enterprise. Creative pedagogical practices are critical from the regulatory perspectives. Educators are compelled to continually engage with research to demonstrate that they are utilising the most current pedagogical practices to ensure that the learners are never disadvantaged due to poor or outdated teaching techniques and practices. Nevertheless, what are the avenues in which one can appropriate this synthetic creativity from? At this juncture, a search in the contemporary educational pedagogical research is indispensable.

2. In Search of an Innovative Educational Pedagogy

As a regulatory master key for education, pedagogical innovation is the pathway into the future, guided by a potential method that can continuously accommodate and facilitate creativity. Contemporary pedagogical research in education is broad. There is an endless number of approaches.[39] Each comes with benefits and flaws. Though they are valuable, this study cannot engage all of them except some that deserve mention.

First, the "co-adaptive design approach" assists in creating an environment for teacher's teaching practice.[40] It seeks to develop a system that will function as an interconnected communal "platform"[41] or "constellation" of practitioners who would assist each other's educational needs.[42] A "cultural responsive pedagogy" shows

[36]Dohn, "Models, Modelling, Metaphors, and Metaphorical Thinking from an Educational Philosophical View," 49.
[37]Tor-Finn Malum Fitje, *Transpositions: Aesthetico-Epistemic Operators in Artistic Research,* ed. Michael Schwab (Leuven University Press, 2018), 118.
[38]Thorpe, "Educational Technology," 10-11.
[39]Nagel and Scholes, *Understanding Development and Learning*, 1, 10-11.
[40]Elise Lavoue, Sebastien George, and Patrick Prevot, "Development of an Assistance Environment for Tutors Based on A Co-Adaptive Design Approach," *Behaviour and Information Technology* 31, No. 2 (2012): 127-141.
[41]Lavoue, George, and Prevot, "Development of an Assistance Environment for Tutors Based on A Co-Adaptive Design Approach," 128.
[42]Lavoue, George, and Prevot, "Development of an Assistance Environment for Tutors Based on A Co-Adaptive Design Approach," 140.

sensitivity toward the context of educational practice.[43] It aims to develop meaningful practices in a multicultural context to address the issue of teachers' feeling insecurity and inadequacy in the work place.[44] A related method that pre-services teacher's skills and perceptions in the online virtual environment is known as "simulative approaches."[45] Another important pedagogical approach is "hyper-text tool" that emphasises the use of live metaphors in educational practices.[46] This could be a useful tool if it is further developed in an interdisciplinary context of methodological and hermeneutical research. The "problem-solving approaches" engage with the issue of managing instructional system designs in learning processes.[47] The "pedagogy of pardon and forgiveness" is applied in foreign-language classrooms as a tool to address "the human right violations" in "intercultural citizenship education."[48] Finally, "the organisational approaches" see the organisational support playing a "primary role" in securing teacher's "self-efficacy."[49] The list can go on. The question remains: what is the potential pedagogical method of innovation? This researcher is persuaded by the following two but related pedagogical approaches to education, which will be evaluated and upraised hereafter.

2.1. Bibliometric-Visualisation Methods

The "bibliometric and visualisation methods" is a pedagogical method of dynamic data analysis in education.[50] It lays a technologically enabled "foundation for the analysis of educational activities by learning analytics."[51] It aims to integrate "innovative science" and technological developments to gather "real-time dynamic

[43]Emmanuel O. Acquah, Nikolett Szelei, and Heidi T. Katz, "Using Modelling to Make Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Explicit in Preservice Teacher Education in Finland," *British Educational Research Journal* 46, No. 1 (2020): 122-139.
[44]Acquah, Szelei, and Katz, "Using Modelling to Make Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Explicit in Preservice Teacher Education in Finland," 122.
[45]Maria Graciela Badilla Quintana, Angelica Vera Sagredo, and Miltiadis D. Lytras, "Pre-Service Teachers' Skills and Perceptions about the Use of Virtual Learning Environments to Improve Teaching and Learning," *Behaviour and Information Technology* 36, No. 6 (2017): 575-588. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2016.1266388.
[46]Ece Merdivan and Nesrin Ozdener, "Effects of Different Metaphor Usage on Hypertext Learning," 273-285.
[47]Robert D Tennyson and Margaret F Sisk, "A Problem-Solving Approach to Management of Instructional Systems Design," *Behaviour and Information Technology* 30, No. 1 (2011): 3-12.
[48]Melina Porto and Leticia Yulita, "Is There a Place for Forgiveness and Discomforting Pedagogies in the Foreign Language Classroom in Higher Education," *Cambridge Journal of Education* 49, No. 4 (2019): 477-499.
[49]Yun Zheng, Jianfeng Wang, William Doll, Xiaodong Deng, and Melvin Williams, "The Impact of Organisational Support, Technical Support, and Self-Efficacy on Faculty Perceived Benefits of Using Learning Management System," 311-319. https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2018.1436590.
[50]Jinzhuo Zhang, Xi Zhang, and Shan Jiang, "Mapping the Study of Learning Analytics in Higher Education," *Behaviour and Information Technology* 37, No. 10-11 (2018): 1142 -1155. https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2018.1529198.
[51]Jinzhuo Zhang, Xi Zhang, and Shan Jiang, "Mapping the Study of Learning Analytics in Higher Education," 1142.

information from educational resources."[52] The use of educational social media enriches "education related research with first-hand information about learner's learning status and performance."[53] The key process involves four major steps: "the measurement of variables, learning data collection, targeted analysis and reporting all of these."[54] The methodical tools employed by the development of "learning analytics" are: "social learning analytics, content analysis, disposition analysis and discourse analysis."[55] Thus, it is a data-mining educational pedagogy that seeks to form an "evaluation standard by analysing the data about students' behaviour," accurately predicting the students' performance, and then adjusting the learning and teaching techniques to improve the learning and teaching environment.[56]

Evaluating the effectiveness of this method in education, Jinzhou Zhang, Xi Zhang, and Shan Jiang argue that the recent technological innovation in education that focuses on "dynamic data analysis," becomes the key basis for analytical research development for education.[57] The authors demonstrate that this innovative move greatly enhances the process of "decision-making and strategy" in higher education.[58] They note that the "data mining and interdisciplinary research" that pursues a hospitable integrative approach is the "hotspot" of the time and it is the way forward in education.[59] These technologically enabled approaches can "solve a lot of problems more efficiently in real time,"[60] which the traditional educational systems failed to resolve in the past. This pedagogy provides a "synergistic approach and strategic development" across cross-disciplinary "educational innovation networks."[61]

The paradigm shift in this model is that it deconstructs the foundation of traditional education to reconstruct: "change of the role of the teachers."[62] It shifts the focus from

[52]Jinzhuo Zhang, Xi Zhang, and Shan Jiang, "Mapping the Study of Learning Analytics in Higher Education," 1142.
[53]Jinzhuo Zhang, Xi Zhang, and Shan Jiang, "Mapping the Study of Learning Analytics in Higher Education," 1142.
[54]Jinzhuo Zhang, Xi Zhang, and Shan Jiang, "Mapping the Study of Learning Analytics in Higher Education," 1143.
[55]Jinzhuo Zhang, Xi Zhang, and Shan Jiang, "Mapping the Study of Learning Analytics in Higher Education," 1151.
[56]Jinzhuo Zhang, Xi Zhang, and Shan Jiang, "Mapping the Study of Learning Analytics in Higher Education," 1152.
[57]Jinzhuo Zhang, Xi Zhang, and Shan Jiang, "Mapping the Study of Learning Analytics in Higher Education," 1142.
[58]Jinzhuo Zhang, Xi Zhang, and Shan Jiang, "Mapping the Study of Learning Analytics in Higher Education," 1142.
[59]Jinzhuo Zhang, Xi Zhang, and Shan Jiang, "Mapping the Study of Learning Analytics in Higher Education," 1142-1143.
[60]Jinzhuo Zhang, Xi Zhang, and Shan Jiang, "Mapping the Study of Learning Analytics in Higher Education," 1142-1143.
[61]Jinzhuo Zhang, Xi Zhang, and Shan Jiang, "Mapping the Study of Learning Analytics in Higher Education," 1142-1143.
[62]Jinzhuo Zhang, Xi Zhang, and Shan Jiang, "Mapping the Study of Learning Analytics in Higher Education," 1142-1143.

the "teaching mode and interaction process"[63] to a "more flexible" constructive way, which is collaboratively integrative. Here, the educator can achieve "personalised adjustments" relevant to every student and effectively intervene in "learner's learning behaviour in purpose."[64] It is a student-centric paradigm that focuses on learning and the learner rather than the teacher and their teaching. Consequently, it can be construed that bibliometric and visualisation methods is a pathway into innovation and creativity. It provides impetus for integrative reconstructions of pedagogical approaches. It steps out to collaborate with other methodological research sectors. It must be emphasised that the future of fruitful and effective learning and teaching environment lies in a collaborative approach in the full sense of the word.

2.2. Collaborative Approach

In agreement with the promising proposals of "bibliometric and visualisation methods," one should move further to a fully structured collaborative approach. A "collaborative pedagogy" incorporates "innovative methodologies" and "new technologies" in the process of engaging students to take an "active role" and leadership in learning processes.[65] Based upon the current studies in the field of pedagogical research, collaborative approach that maintains "virtual reality solutions in education" provide a creative experience in learning situation.[66] Watfa and Audi note that using "web-based labs" for research and learning enhanced learners' perception of instructional technology.[67] A constructive re-creation of pedagogical innovations and technological advancements within the context of education in a collaborative approach provides a pool of options to choose from and a multitude of ways to address and present issues of learning and teaching.[68]

This method employs the techniques of "modern voting systems" and "the computer technology virtualisation" in student engagement.[69] The key methodological approach adopted is an "Automatic Virtual Lecturing" that uses "live student

[63]Jinzhuo Zhang, Xi Zhang, and Shan Jiang, "Mapping the Study of Learning Analytics in Higher Education," 1142-1143.
[64]Jinzhuo Zhang, Xi Zhang, and Shan Jiang, "Mapping the Study of Learning Analytics in Higher Education,"
1143.
[65]Mohamed K. Watfa and Diana Audi, "Innovative Virtual and Collaborative Teaching Methodologies," *Behaviour and Information Technology* 36, No.7 (2017): 663-673. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2016.1275806.
[66]Mohamend K. Watfa and Diana Audi, "Innovative Virtual and Collaborative Teaching Methodologies," 663.
[67]Mohamend K. Watfa and Diana Audi, "Innovative Virtual and Collaborative Teaching Methodologies," 663.
[68]Mohamend K. Watfa and Diana Audi, "Innovative Virtual and Collaborative Teaching Methodologies," 664.
[69]Mohamend K. Watfa and Diana Audi, "Innovative Virtual and Collaborative Teaching Methodologies," 672.

feedback to dynamically reorder" the content of teacher's lecture slides.[70] The alteration of the content is done in association with an online video repository, which could substitute the teacher's lectures. Both the students and teachers are allowed to engage with the material collaboratively.[71] The research outputs of the academic staff and students are regularly added to the repository, which ultimately creates a "shared" paperless resource base and a collaborative online classroom. Here students are encouraged to "take virtual notes on their wooden tabletops" and the teacher provides "instant feedback" and "feedforward" on student progress."[72] The experts of this method constantly conduct research in the area to enhance the method and the new developments are consistently tested in live classrooms for performance.[73] In this way, the collaborative pedagogical approach to education provides students with a "unique lecture note-taking experience," "progress monitoring and immediate feedback," "collaboration between students," and a unique opportunity for the teacher to address students' needs privately and anonymously through the technological aid.[74]

The advantage of collaborative pedagogy lies in its use of "gamification, mixed reality," and "social media" as a significant pedagogical tool to develop "collaborative skills."[75] Martinez-Cerda, Torrent-Sellens, and Gonzalez-Gonzalex conducted research among 930 online learners based upon information and communication technologies. Their conclusion on the effectiveness of the collaborative pedagogy is promising.[76] First, collaborative skills are developed and explained using gamification," "mixed reality" and "social media" in a socio-technical learning context.[77] Second, in the process of developing and explaining collaborative skills, pedagogical practices such as media content, resource sharing, personal webpage, etc. are not as effective as gamification, mixed reality, and social media.[78] Third, the socio-technical factors such as "learning tasks," "students," and "organisation" play a

[70]Mohamed K. Watfa and Diana Audi, "Innovative Virtual and Collaborative Teaching Methodologies," 663.
[71]Mohamed K. Watfa and Diana Audi, "Innovative Virtual and Collaborative Teaching Methodologies," 663.
[72]Mohamed K. Watfa and Diana Audi, "Innovative Virtual and Collaborative Teaching Methodologies," 663.
[73]Mohamed K. Watfa and Diana Audi, "Innovative Virtual and Collaborative Teaching Methodologies," 663.
[74]Mohamed K. Watfa and Diana Audi, "Innovative Virtual and Collaborative Teaching Methodologies," 665-68.
[75]Juan-Francisco Martinez-Cerda, Joan Torrent-Sellens, and Ines Gonzalez-Gonzalex, "Promoting Collaborative Skills in Online University: Comparing Effects of Games, Mixed Reality, Social Media, and Other Tools for ICT-Supported Pedagogical Practices," *Behaviour and Information Technology* 37, No. 10-11 (2018): 1055-1071. https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2018.1476919.
[76]Martinez-Cerda, Torrent-Sellens, and Gonzalez-Gonzalex, "Promoting Collaborative Skills in Online University," 1055.
[77]Martinez-Cerda, Torrent-Sellens, and Gonzalez-Gonzalex, "Promoting Collaborative Skills in Online University," 1055.
[78]Martinez-Cerda, Torrent-Sellens, and Gonzalez-Gonzalex, "Promoting Collaborative Skills in Online University," 1055.

"decisive, positive, and significant role in collaborative skills development."[79] Finally, the research concluded that the gamification tool in education is effective in interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary educational sectors and it is very "useful for the employability of students."[80] Antigoni Parmaxi and Panayiotis Zaphiris argue that this is a decisive move to a "new culture" of education.[81]

Consequently, along with others, Watfa and Audi envisage that the collaborative pedagogy is promising, and it is the way forward in contemporary education.[82] This author agrees with Watfa and Audi, for, the collaborative pedagogy has the potential for the integration of ever-emerging methodological and technological advances into addressing the pressing complexity of learning and teaching. The collaborative method is pedagogically fruitful, flexible, promising, and adaptable. This leads one to wonder: if the future of education is sealed in the innovative creativity of its pedagogy, does it have any implications to theological education? Should theological education adopt such important steps to regulate itself with innovative and collaborative pedagogies?

3. Collaborative Pedagogy and Theological Education

Theological education is not exempt from a pedagogical regulation. The pedagogical renewal in education has critical implications for theological education. Amos Young sums up the current climate in theological education, saying it "needs liberation" for there is a "vulnerability that assails the wider theological guild"[83] because it is not as skilful as educational and scientific disciplines to engage "cultural, racial, and ethnic differences" into a "peculiarly uniform way of life."[84] He maintains that the traditional theological education providers who resist methodological and pedagogical change are "struggling" with "vulnerability and fragility."[85] Constructive and creative methodological approaches must be developed to move theological education from the current "disillusionment" to a level of reflective and collaborative "discernment."[86] It is at this juncture that Kärkkäinen's recommendations to move toward a constructive theological framework to stretch beyond its theological and

[79]Martinez-Cerda, Torrent-Sellens, and Gonzalez-Gonzalex, "Promoting Collaborative Skills in Online University," 1055.
[80]Martinez-Cerda, Torrent-Sellens, and Gonzalez-Gonzalex, "Promoting Collaborative Skills in Online University," 1067.
[81]Antigoni Parmaxi and Panayiotis Zaphiris, "Specifying the Dynamics of Social Technologies as Social Microworlds," *Behaviour and Technological Information* 34, No. 4 (2015): 413-424. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2015.1004650.
[82]Mohamed K. Watfa and Diana Audi, "Innovative Virtual and Collaborative Teaching Methodologies," 663.
[83]Amos Young, "Liberating and Diversifying Theological Education: A Subversive or Empowering Aspiration?," *Cross Currents* 69, No. 1 (2019): 10-17.
[84]Amos Young, "Liberating and Diversifying Theological Education," 10.
[85]Amos Young, "Liberating and Diversifying Theological Education," 10.
[86]Amos Young, "Liberating and Diversifying Theological Education," 15.

religious agendas to engage "nontheolgical and nonreligious"[87] fields of "natural sciences, cultural studies,"[88] and "sociopolitical"[89] resources, become critical though such an approach will potentially encounter the issues of plurality, diversity, and conflict of interpretations.[90]

Research in theological education expressing such dissatisfaction is abounding. Willie James Jennings challenges Christian thinkers to reconsider the goal of theological education.[91] Engaging the predicament of education, Chloe T. Sun reimagines the future of education as an all-inclusive movement of the Holy Spirit.[92] Amos Yong insits on the importance of restructuring theological education as a missiological task shaped by a pneumatological imagination.[93] Anthony R Cross sees an urgency of a methodological renewal in contemporary theological education.[94] Aaron Edwards observes theological reflection as a "theologically irresponsible activity" to address the current crisis of theological education.[95] Christian Scharen calls for a radical change in theological education for its "literature is overdue" in coming to terms with a "new contested" landscape of pedagogical frameworks.[96] Edwards appeals that theological education must enrich its methodological perspectives by adopting creative resources in order to keep the "rules of the academic games."[97]

Furthermore, Scott Woodward's analysis is revealing and interesting. He argues that the *telos* of theological education has never changed, and it always is ministerial formation.[98] For him, what has significantly changed was the context of formation and ministry.[99] Nevertheless, Ben Myers challenges this position. Referring to Schleiermacher, he argues that theology forms people for church leadership, which is wider in scope than mere ministry formation. Myers maintains that theological

[87]Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation,*13.
[88]Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation,*13.
[89]Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation,*15.
[90]Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation,*14.
[91]Willie James Jennings, *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2020), 1-176.
[92]Chloe T. Sun, *Attempt Great Things for God: Theological Education in Diaspora* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 1-176.
[93]Amos Yong, *Renewing the Church by the Spirit: Theological Education after Pentecost* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2020), 1-176.
[94]Anthony R Cross, "'To Communicate Simply You Must Understand Profoundly': The Necessity of Theological Education for Deepening Ministerial Formation," *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 19, No. 1 (2019): 54-67.
[95]Aaron Edwards, "The Perennial Urgency of Theological Education," *Evangelical Theological of Journal* 30, No. 1 (2021): 167-190.
[96]Christian Scharen, "The Current and Future Directions of Theological Education," *Cross Currents* 69, No. 1 (2019): 5-9.
[97]Aaron Edwards, "The Perennial Urgency of Theological Education," 186.
[98]Scott Woodward, "*Telos* of Theological Education: A Theological Reflection," *Cross Currents* 69, No. 1 (2019): 39-44.
[99]Scott Woodward, "*Telos* of Theological Education," 41.

education has almost no future in Australia if its goal is only ministry formation.[100] This implies that the current matrix of human reality that consists of "diversity and plurality" must be dealt with by creating a "cognitively contextualised theological education" for a multicultural context of life.[101] Accordingly, Woodward sees the value of "Social Image"[102] as an innovative tool for theological education in which "a cross-cultural preparation"[103] will take place in an "interactive, global, inter-faith community."[104] This proposal is nothing less than a collaborative approach to theological education. This is where Perry Shaw's critique is fruitful: theological education must move beyond the traditional "cognitive-affective-behavioural typology" to dialogically integrate all facets into a "significant creative change" of framework.[105] Seth J. Nelson calls this creative change a search for an "integrated model."[106]

Thus, it must be argued that innovative pedagogical development is a necessity for effective contemporary theological education. Experts in theological education research discourse a deficiency in the system and provide recommendations to engage with educational pedagogical innovations. This author is persuaded that such an innovative creativity is found in the collaborative pedagogy, which can liberate theological education from its current crisis. Neverthless, one shall not overemphasise the importance of pedagogy at the expense of contextual, economic, and demographic factors that are currently affecting the landscape of theological education globably. The pedagogical development will enhance the learning and teaching environment: the learners will learn better, and as a result, the church of the future will have leaders with a better grounding in the truths of the gospel and a more flexible ability to adapt those truths to their changing social context.

Based upon this study, this author recommends the following steps for a fruitful learning and teaching environment. First, change must be embraced without compromising the organisational core values such as biblical, theological, and ethical commitments. Second, a pedagogically regulated approach must be followed to systematically design, direct, and deliver content in a community of collaborative engagement of teachers and students. Third, continuous search for methodological and technological innovations is mandatory to enhance learning and teaching.

[100]Ben Myers, "Does Theology Belong in the University?: SchleierMacherian Reflections from an Australian Context," *International Journal of Public Theology* 15, No.4 (2021):484-495. https://doi.org/10.1163/15697320-01540015. Accessed 17.11.2022.
[101]Richard E. Seed, "Cognitive Contextualisation in Theological Education: A Theoretical Framework," *Evangelic Review of Theology* 45, No. 2 (2021): 113-127.
[102]Scott Woodward, "*Telos* of Theological Education," 39.
[103]Scott Woodward, "*Telos* of Theological Education," 40.
[104]Scott Woodward, "*Telos* of Theological Education," 41.
[105]Perry Shaw, "Holistic and Transformative: Beyond A Typological Approach to Theological Education," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 40, No. 3 (2016): 205-216.
[106]Seth J. Nelson, "Towards a Missionally Integrative Evangelical Theological Education," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 44, No 1 (2020): 4-22.

Fourth, constant inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary engagement and collaborative skill development is key. Fifth, the focus should be on learning and the learner in a collaborative attitude of practically engaging with resources through active involvement. Sixth, maintain healthy practices such as online resource repositories, feedback, and feedforward for assessments to ensure students' progress. Seventh, provide personalised attention to student needs and behaviours on purpose. Eighth, fresh innovative developments in methodology and technology must constantly be tested. Finally, caution must be exercised that the function of collaborative pedagogy is to constantly collaborate with other technological and pedagogical perspectives into innovation, not to take an exclusive position at the expense of others' validity.

Conclusion

This essay analysed the importance of pedagogical innovation in theological education. By engaging the methodological developments in education research, the author demonstrated the collaborative pedagogy is a promising and fruitful approach to theological education to address its current pedagogical deficiency. It is clear from the study that it is critical for theological education to engage with the emerging methodological and technological advancements to create innovative pedagogical frameworks to design, direct, deliver, and measure the effectiveness of its educational practices and experience without compromising its core values and theological commitments. Finally, based upon the insight gained, the study also provided some recommendations to be followed in the specific context of teaching theology. In a final analysis, pedagogical innovation is a master key for an effective theological educational practice. The application of a step-by-step process of collaborative pedagogy for theological education lies within the scope of another study.

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Co-Mission

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Abstract: A common approach to church and mission is that we gather for church, "come unto me," and scatter for mission, "go into all the world." This divided approach comes from a narrow reading of the Scripture of God and his mission. God is often viewed as a missionary God and we as his church are included in the sending. Following this line of thought mission commenced after the advent of sin, and the church, like God, is on a redemption mission in response to sin. Viewed this way mission is a second step rather than an action integral to the essential being of God. However, if the essence of the triune God is love, then the eternal mission of God is love. The essence of mission therefore for the church is to be such a living communal sign of God's love, anywhere and everywhere. And if the goal of mission is to be a mature and unified people of Christ, all who are part of his family are called to participate in this mission of love through the use of their diverse gifts. God therefore co-missions communal signs of love to go anywhere and everywhere, so that all belong, so that all build up all, so that all become unified and mature, as part of the universal family of God. It's not some gather, and some go. It's not send some to save some. The co-mission is all going together loving all anywhere. It is calling all to relationship, unity, and maturity in Christ, everywhere. The co-mission is all putting love where love is not. For this is the heart and mission of God.

Key Words: Church, Co-mission, Community, Disciples, Gather, Gifts, Go, Love, Loving, Maturity, Mission, Missional, Missio Dei, Send, Sending, Team, Teams, Together, Unity.

Introduction

A common approach to church and mission is that we gather for church, "come unto me," and scatter for mission, "go into all the world." On many levels, this has been the *modus operandi* of the church. Church pastors and leaders call the people to gather to worship and commission the willing to go and serve in the uttermost parts of the earth. The missionaries go, blessed with prayer and funding, and the remaining flock stay, perhaps content in the knowledge they have sent others, they have given to others, that they have vicariously participated in the great commission, and because they are not particularly gifted as evangelists or church planters, they feel the call to go may never apply to them. This divided approach comes from a reading of Scripture, of God, and his mission that needs rethinking. This dichotomy arises when the ecclesiology employed is pragmatic, and task driven. Gather for worship, send and go for mission. By following this approach the church has tended to turn inward and drift toward a nonmissional ecclesial form which has had a detrimental effect on both church and mission.[1]

The classical doctrine of the *missio Dei* (mission of God) which is "God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and God the Son sending the Spirit [and] Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world,"[2] has done much to ground and reinvigorate mission. However, a particular narrow interpretation of *missio Dei* has fed into the popularity of the gather or go approach. When "Mission is seen as movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission."[3] Thus, God is seen as a missionary God, and we are included in the sending.

Following this sending line of thought, if God's mission is to save people from their sin to reconcile them to himself, mission commenced after the advent of sin, and the church, like God, is on mission in response to sin as part of the reconciliation process. God sends Christ to save people from sin, and we go to proclaim this message in order to save some. Viewed this way mission is a second step, rather than an action integral to the eternal and essential being of God. In other words, mission is a contingent response to sin. Because of sin God acts to reconcile. From this perspective the church is created by a missional sending God as a missional sending community, and its missional role is to participate in his reconciling saving work.

This approach also has its roots in the sending God interpretation of John 20:21, which says, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." A sending to save interpretation of this text goes something like: "Just as God sent Jesus into the world

[1]John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 268.
[2]David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series, no. 16 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 390.
[3]Johannes Aagaard, "Trends in Missiological Thinking during the Sixties," *International Review of Mission* 62, No. 245 (1 January 1973): 13.

to save and reconcile the lost, so the church is sent into the world to preach the gospel in order to save and reconcile the lost." The emphasis is often placed on the going with the message of salvation. Of course this is not wrong, but it is narrow. So if this sending is a response to sin, and therefore a second step, rather than something that is integral to the heart and nature of God, is this the correct basis for an understanding of church and mission? Should we reconsider our basis for mission?

According to Livermore,

> mission isn't something that started after Adam and Eve sinned, and it's not just about getting souls saved. It's about living in light of our position as image bearers of God…. Mission is rooted in creation. It's not simply a corrective to sin. It's what God created us to do as human beings. God called Adam and Eve to reflect his glory by acting on his behalf with all of creation.[4]

Flett concurs and adds stating,

> The Father's sending of the Son in the power of the Spirit is not merely a remedial work for a fallen world. God's act is not out of any contingency. Even if that be human sin. His redemptive mission is God's self-declaration of who he is in himself from all eternity. In this demonstration of being for and with the human, the apostolic mission belongs properly to the eternal life of God.[5]

This alternative approach starts with an ecclesiology that is essence based. Rather than asking "What is the church to be doing and where?" a pragmatic task focussed approach, it asks, "How is the church to be, wherever it is?" an essence driven question. From this essence perspective ecclesiologists view the church as a reflection of the relational nature of the triune God. Agreeing with Livermore and Flett, the church as the ongoing reflection of God, reflects God not by merely responding in mission, but by being the image and heart of God, which includes mission. In this way, church and mission is connected to who God is not just to his response to sin. We must find the cause, the essence, the heart, not focus so much on the effect, the expression, the response.

1. The Relational Heart of God

Therefore, if mission is to come from the church reflecting the heart of God, we must ask "What is the heart of God?" By taking a trinitarian relational starting point, we find the clearest answer to the question is that God within himself, in his essence, is a God of love.[6] A trinitarian love that is unified and given in abundance to the other.

[4]David A. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 163–64.
[5]Flett, *The Witness of God*, 212.
[6]1 John 4:16.

The church then finds itself, in its essence, created through the love of Christ, indwelt, empowered, and transformed by the Spirit of love, with the goal of becoming the faith community of love, within the universal kingdom of the God of love. Just as God is for relationship with his people, the church is to reveal this relational heart of God for the people through loving as God loves. Any missional focus on sin and salvation, on repentance and reconciliation, which while necessary, needs to be taken up and find its place within the loving nature of God and the church. For the creation, the life, and the destination of the church find their reference within the relational loving nature of God, rather than in the missional responsive action of God alone. As Purves puts it:

> It is important to affirm the basic logic of divine love: God did not send Jesus to die for our sins so that God would love us. Rather, God so loved the world – us – that God sent Jesus to atone for our sins. The cross is the action *of* the love of God, not the condition *for* the love of God, and it is a love that went all the way into the hell of our separation from God in order to restore us to union and communion with God.[7]

This is to say that the expression of mission is caught up and comes from the essence of God's abundant community creating and recreating love. Any "sending to save" missional response aspect of the church community will have a finite end, the end of such mission. However, the church as the object and reflection of the relational heart and nature of the triune God, has a future eternal home that is ongoing and embedded in the eternal relational life of God.

Let's look at mission history this way. Mission started with God. Not as a task to complete but as an ongoing relationship to pursue. A mission of love. The triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit existed before creation as an eternal loving community. Out of the abundance of this love the triune God says, "let us create." One loving community creates a new loving community, the Eden community, Adam and Eve with God. Following the breaking of this community God moves to reconcile and recreate the covenant community, culminating in the coming of the Son of God. Jesus not only sealed the covenant forever, creating the eternal community of God through his death and resurrection, his life was a living incarnation of what a loving, reconciling, and missional community was to be. He knew his time on earth would be short and that the message of a universal kingdom under his universal kingship, to be enjoyed by an eternal community of God and his people, had to be preached to all nations upon his ascension. So what did Jesus do? He called together a community of disciples. He lived with them, he taught them, he sent them out on short term mission assignments, he refined them, they deserted him, he recalled and reshaped them,

[7]Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation*, 1st ed (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 94.

gave them his Spirit, and he commissioned them. At the core of his mission community was the call to love, to unity, and to maturity.

If the church, like the disciples, is to be a sign of the loving triune God, then the church must be such a loving sign of God's love to the world. Which means community, relationship, and love, are the core ingredients of the church in any and every location. Local church mission is the loving community at home, and mission abroad is the loving community on the move. Or like Saint John of the Cross said on July 6, 1591, "where there is not love, put love."[8] "Mission is putting love where love is not."[9] What are the implications of mission being viewed from a "sign of God's love" perspective rather than from a "sending for salvation" perspective?

2. The Essence of Mission

Firstly, the essence of mission changes. Viewing God as a missional God who sends Christ in response to sin to reconcile the world, and then sends the church with the message of salvation has produced "the church must do mission out there" approach. The result has been a church that has largely outsourced the responsibility of mission to parachurch organisations who do the sending of missionaries to go and proclaim, while the local church carries on the role of worshipping, teaching, and caring for the flock gathered.

But by taking a relational approach the gospel in its fulness is understood as "the movement from the love of God to reconciliation."[10] We can say the love of God is the cause, and reconciliation through the atonement is the effect.[11] Therefore, the essence of mission flows from love, it includes the salvation response which brings a reconciliation of relationship through faith, which then moves on toward the culmination of the eternal community of God.

Now we can reread John 20:21 from this new relational heart of God context. From the context of Jesus who had just prior demonstrated the extent of his love to his disciples through serving them by washing their feet.[12] From the context of Jesus who demonstrated the full extent of his love to all by giving his life for the world.[13] From the context of God who so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.[14] From the context of the covenant keeping God who pursued his people with love through a long history that included disobedience, discipline, and judgement, yet always with the goal of relationship restoration that comes through repentance, forgiveness,

[8]St John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of Saint John of the Cross* (ICS Publications, 1991), 22.
[9]Michael Moynagh, *Church for Every Context: An Introduction to Theology and Practice* (London: SCM, 2012), 208.
[10]Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 63.
[11]Purves, 64.
[12]John 13:1.
[13]John 15:13.
[14]John 3:16.

obedience, and reconciliation. From the context of a triune God who is love, who out of his essence and his abundance of love created the world. From the context of a relational loving God who created his people to be relational and loving, to live in a perfect world, in his perfect presence, experiencing his perfect love. If we read scripture from this context, the context of the triune God of love, seeing his people of faith as being created and sent as signs of the loving heart of God, we find our understanding of John 20:21 unfolds very differently. Just as the Father sent his one and only son into the world to communicate his abundant love and through his loving sacrifice to reconcile, restore and renew the covenant relationship between us and God, we are likewise sent to be a loving sign of this relational restoration we call the gospel. We are called to be love on the move for God.

This sounds very much like what Jesus said to the disciples in the upper room. Jesus commanded them to love one another and thereby be his witnesses through being a loving community.[15] God sent Jesus to represent his loving and unifying heart. Jesus expressed this in his life and ultimately and completely in his death. And following his ascension Jesus did not abandon his mission work of uniting and reconciling love, but rather through the Holy Spirit of Christ continues with and through his people to reveal the loving heart of God and reconcile and unify them to himself. Loving unity with himself is what he created us for, this through his Spirit he cannot stop doing, this we are called to image and reflect in mission with and for him. "As the Father sends" refers to Jesus and the disciples ongoing role to reveal the loving heart of God and to bring that which is not unified with himself into loving reconciled union.[16] Mission is "the good news of God's love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world."[17] The church is therefore to be a loving community in and for the world, thereby being a living sign of God's love, anywhere and everywhere. To be a sign of God's love is to put love where love is not.

3. The Expression of Mission

If we now look at mission expression from the "sign of love" perspective, rather than from a "sending to save" focus, we find that it changes both communally and holistically. First, mission becomes an undertaking of loving communities wherever they are, rather than an outsourced project or the sending of individuals. This overcomes the gather or go divide. Loving communities will love others locally and globally, as they go. Second, mission is holistic, it becomes an expression of loving people completely, rather than a message or a meal only, it is both. Or rather it is lovingly sharing all of life. Mission is a loving community loving the life of all. After all this is the way Jesus shaped his own mission and that of the disciples. It was communal and holistic; in other words, it was carried out by a community that loved

[15]John 13:34-35.
[16]Flett, *The Witness of God*, 220.
[17]Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 519.

the lives of others. It was mission through being an active loving community. And that is exactly what Jesus commanded. He has given us all authority through the Holy Spirit, and stressed that he would be with us always,[18] enabling us to be a going loving community of witnesses and to make disciples of all nations, thereby participating in the building of Christ's kingdom.[19] We are primarily called to express God's love through being a community with and for him, by loving fully the lives of others like he does, and by calling them to be reconciled and belong to God's community.

A call to belong to the community of God requires a community to make the call. The church is this community. As this loving going community we are called to express love like God. The triune God expresses love to those who know it not, through the giving of Christ. Christ expresses perfect love to those he created yet knew him not,[20] through the giving of himself. The church by the power of the Spirit expresses the love of God to those who know it not, through being an active community of God's love, both here and there. This is mission: together in community loving those who love not God and reconciling them to Christ by the work of the Spirit. It is taking the community of God's love to those who know not the love of God nor his community. It is reconciling for relationship with God and his people.

The reconciled community bears living witness to God's loving reconciling action. It is a reconciled community taking in their life a message of reconciling love to reconcile others, that they also may be reconciled to God and become part of the reconciled community. This is loving mission, it is reconciling mission, it is mission by revelation. Be my witnesses here, go be my witnesses there. Be love here, go love there. Go and reveal God's heart in word and deed, and in and through community.

Therefore, because missional witness is communal, it "is not the action of an individual in isolation, but an action of the community as she lives according to the promise of reconciliation."[21] As reconciled image bearers, we are all called to be witnesses to God's loving action. And the predominant channel of witness is through communities of loving action. Therefore, we can say "that if one is not a witness, one is not a Christian, and if the Christian community is not a missionary community, she is not a Christian community."[22] Going and loving is Christian witness. Going and loving together reflects the image and heart of God. Going and loving together is mission. Together going and loving others holistically is the great co-mission. Co (going together) + Mission (loving others holistically) = Co-Mission. The mission of

[18]John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 1271.
[19]Matthew 28:18-20.
[20]John 1:10-11.
[21]Flett, *The Witness of God*, 250.
[22]Flett, 262.

God is to love us. The Co-Mission is for the people of God to be God's life transforming and relational reconciling love wherever they are.

4. The First Community of Mission

Let's take a closer look at the first community of mission, Jesus with his disciples, and Jesus' great co-mission recorded in Matthew 28:16-20:

> Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Following his resurrection, Jesus called his band of disciples together. He had originally called them to follow him as the first community of disciples. The risen Jesus now arranges to meet the disciples at a mountain in Galilee. The disciples arrive, some with a heart of worship, others with hesitation and doubt. This after all was an awkward moment, the first encounter since their scattering in Jerusalem. Jesus meets the nervous disciples and gives "the final instructions for filling the mission for which they were originally called…,"[23] calling them to be a renewed believing community of witnessing disciples as they go.

The resurrection of Jesus confirmed he was the messiah, and the king of the newly inaugurated kingdom of God on earth. Having authority over all things, he instructs his disciples to go with his authority and with his Spirit. Wherever the disciples go they will now be within the kingdom of their King, so the going is not necessarily a going into a completely new or remote area from where they are. The word for "go," could be read "as you go" [24] and is not necessarily "an indication that Jesus speaks here of moving to a new area or field of mission." Jesus used the same word to refer to the disciples first mission expedition where they were sent to the lost sheep of Israel.[25] This was not necessarily cross cultural nor was it remote. In today's terms it was local or regional mission, to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria.

However, it is important to note that prior to this moment Jesus and his disciples had been focused on going two by two within Israel.[26] This post resurrection "go" shifts the emphasis from the Old Testament centripetal and Israel based mission of blessing

[23]R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 1108. Matthew 10:1-15.
[24]Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 718.
[25]Matthew 10:6-7, Mark 6:7.
[26]Matthew 10:7.

all those who come and join the people of God, to the now centrifugal and universal kingdom mission to all nations, or as Luke puts it – to the ends of the earth.[27] To make the commission effective universally will require many to go to other parts of the world, both local and global, to ensure that those who don't know do hear. And the size and nature of the "entire commission requires all believers to be involved in it."[28]

Jesus started his training of the disciples for this mission by sending out the twelve and then the seventy-two in teams of two. He ends his time with them with two main commands and a prayer. Love one another so all will know that you are my disciples. Love is to be the obvious mark of Jesus' disciples. Then, as you go, take this life changing love in word and deed to all. His prayer is that they may demonstrate unity, the unity of the triune God, in such a way that the world will see their loving unity and know Jesus' love for the world.[29] He constantly calls, encourages, and commissions them to be a loving unified community, often in the midst of fear and confusion. "Perhaps he knew… that in commissioning his disciples as a community he was reinforcing one of the best antidotes to doubt and fear, the security of relationships."[30] He called all to love one another, all to go make disciples, all to demonstrate unity together. All for all, is his communal missional call.

5. Our Part in the Mission Community

All are required to carry out the co-mission. The command is not only to evangelise, but to be involved in making disciples, by baptising and teaching them to obey. This requires a community to enter into, through baptism, and a community of active gifted disciples to reach and mature the new disciples so they become mature family followers of Christ. The commission "is not expressed in terms of the means, to proclaim the good news, but of the end, to 'make disciples.'"[31] Baptism marks the entry into the family of God and the commencement of the learning process, which is being "transformed into the image of Jesus in lifelong discipleship."[32] Baptism marks the birth while teaching guides the life. To be a disciple is to be marked by baptism and to obey Jesus' teaching. "All this implies the central role of the church as God's primary agency for mission. Only in the community that is the church can disciples be baptized and taught to observe all that Jesus commanded."[33] Teaching "them" "indicates that everyone who has become a disciple of Jesus is to be involved in the

[27]Acts 1:8.
[28]Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 954.
[29]John 17:23.
[30]Moynagh, *Church for Every Context*, 188.
[31]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1115.
[32]Wilkins, *Matthew*, 954.
[33]David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 690.

process of discipleship."[34] Position, status, education, gender, ethnicity, were not factors in the discipleship process. It was all for all. Jesus hands over his role as the teacher to the disciples. They are now all to go as his representatives, with his continued presence, teaching under his authority what he commanded, with the guiding presence of his Spirit. Together all are called to go and disciple all.

Following in the steps of the disciples, we are now also called to go as a sign of his love, as his representative community, with his continued presence. "The active life of the individual is necessarily one of active participation in the commission of the Christian community."[35] As participants in the covenant with God every individual Christian must play an active part in this community, in being part of the community of mission. "Each individual is responsible for [the church] actually being a missionary community."[36] This also means that the church community cannot hand over the mission mandate to mission societies and organisations. The role of such parachurch groups is to facilitate the work of the community of God, the church, not replace it.

Paul tells the Ephesians there is one body and many parts, and one unifying Spirit who through the contribution of all, builds up the body of Christ in love.[37] Mission is body building. Mission is all contributing their gifts into the building process through going in love to include and build others up toward unity and maturity. Therefore there is a role for all in this loving mission. If it were about proclaiming salvation, then only the evangelists would need to go and participate. But "the command is not to evangelize but to perform the broader and deeper task of 'discipling' the nations. Many denominations and mission groups misunderstand this and spend all their effort winning new converts rather than anchoring them in the Christian faith (in spite of the many studies that show that too few are truly converted in that initial decision.)"[38] It is about communities of love taking the love of God to places where it is not and building those communities into mature loving disciples. And this requires two things. It firstly requires a community rather than individuals to demonstrate God's love. And it requires all the gifts of the community working together in love to make the body mature.

What do we need to make mature disciples? They need to know that the good news of God's love and forgiveness in Jesus exists. They must hear it, understand it, see it in us, and respond to it. They need to know they have moved from one family to another and be taught what it means to live life as part of this new loving community by

[34]Wilkins, *Matthew*, 956.
[35]Flett, *The Witness of God*, 236.
[36]Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation ; Volume III, Part 4* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), 505.
[37]Ephesians 4:1-16.
[38]Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, v. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 1080.

embracing the Lordship of Christ. They need to experience the family of God, to feel its care, compassion, healing, and nurturing heart. Therefore they need loving apostles and evangelists to share the gospel. They need loving encouragers and servers to welcome them into the family. They need pastoral carers to counsel and love them, so they know they belong and are valued. They need loving prophets and teachers to protect, warn, and grow them into mature disciples. They need to experience the love and gifts of the full body of Christ to build them up to become mature in Christ. We need loving teams and communities to go everywhere, into all nations, doing all of this.

So when we hear someone say "go into all the world" what do we think? Well I used to think that command was mostly for cross-cultural evangelists called missionaries. I thought these were special and mysterious individuals, who go overseas to preach the gospel while I safely stay at home because I am a Bible teacher. But that thinking is wrong. I must ask myself "How can I be constantly moving with my brothers and sisters, as a loving community, and demonstrate God's overwhelming reconciling love through using my gifts to build others up, whether near or far?" God is calling all those gifted by God, which is all of us, to go here and there, and use our gifts in love, together. Because all gifts are needed to make mature disciples.

6. Mission Communities Today

So what might this co-mission look like today? The life and ministry of Paul, his team, and the churches of the time, give us a good example of how this co-mission could play out in our communities of faith today.

6.1. Paul's Missional Community

6.1.1. Church commissioned teams: Paul and Barnabas were commissioned by the church in Antioch. The church leaders under the guidance of the Spirit set apart Paul and Barnabas, key leaders, to form a mission team.[39]

6.1.2. Going in teams: Unless circumstances prevented, Paul is always on mission with a team around him. Paul takes others with him; Paul encourages them to work alongside and with him. Even after the disagreement with Barnabas, Paul takes another, Silas, going again as a team, while Barnabas takes John Mark, creating a second team.[40]

6.1.3. Ongoing relational ministry: Paul and his team continually visited the same places, some nearer to his home church and some further away, showing that

[39]Acts 13:1-3.
[40]Acts 15:36-41.

mission was an ongoing relational ministry, with community blessing community.

6.1.4. All gifts are involved: Paul and his team created, strengthened, and matured churches. Using Acts 14:21-28 as an example we see the following aspects mentioned in relation to the churches in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch.

a. They preached the gospel (v21)
b. They won disciples (v21)
c. They strengthened the disciples (v22)
d. They appointed elders (v23)

A multiplicity of giftings were required to carry out such a wide range of activities.

6.1.5. Continued partnering: Paul and his team returned to the same churches again and again, building ongoing loving partnerships. On returning to the home church in Antioch, Paul reported all God had done through them (Acts 14:24). The connection between the growing network of churches was a family matter. The widening network of churches continued to support each other. Jerusalem and Antioch supported the fledgeling churches in many ways, while later on the newer churches had the opportunity of collecting and sending a gift to support the needs of the church in Jerusalem.[41] Paul also empowers those he had trained, like Timothy, and partners with them in expanding the ministry.

7. Our Missional Communities

Using the above as a broad framework we can consider what this alternative co-mission may look like for our faith communities.

7.1. Church commissioned teams: Church leaders under the guidance of the Spirit should commission primarily teams of people, rather than individuals, to move out locally or globally for loving community-based mission.

7.2. Going in teams: Where possible communal mission rather than individual mission should be the norm. Inspired mission initiatives should involve teams. We need one another for strength, for support and encouragement, and for the exercising of a variety of gifts. We need, like Paul, to take others with us and encourage them to work alongside us in ministry teams.

7.3. Ongoing relational ministry: Mission is not project-based but is relational. The focus must be the building of relational communities that are continually

[41] 1Corinthians 16:3.

encouraged and sustained through ongoing loving relational connection, partnership, and collaboration.

7.4. All gifts are involved: The building of faith communities through preaching the gospel, ongoing discipling, teaching, pastoring, growing and appointing elders, requires a multitude of gifts. All are required to reach and build up others. So whether you are an apostle, evangelist, teacher, pastor, carer, server, all are called to go and work together.

7.5. Continued partnering: Churches should continue to partner with other churches in a relationally unifying and mutually maturing network. Like Paul, we empower those who have been trained and partner with them in expanded ministry. This relational blessing, one toward the other, toward unity and maturity, should be ongoing.

8. Implications

Through embracing a communal "sign of God's love" approach to mission, rather than a "sending to save" approach, the following implications flow:

8.1. Church commissioned teams: Teams, not just individuals, are exercised to consider mission and mission strategy from a communal perspective, both at home and abroad. Faith communities, not just para-church organisations, are activated in loving relational mission. Churches overcome the gather-and-go divide by viewing church as a loving community on the move anywhere and everywhere.

Focus Shift: Rather than asking "Who will go and evangelise?" ask, "Who will come with me to demonstrate God's love to others?"

8.2. Going in teams: Numbers build strength. We need each other for constant encouragement and support. Taking others with us, encouraging and training others as we work together should wherever possible be the approach. Importantly going in relational loving unified teams is also an active sign of the gospel itself. Others can see the love of God when we take love to where love is not. Such mission becomes holistic and communal.

Focus Shift: Rather than asking "What missionaries or mission activities are we supporting?" ask, "How are we encouraging and participating in team mission locally and globally?"

8.3. Ongoing relational ministry: Love should not end. Ongoing relational mission demonstrates the ongoing love of God and provides what is necessary for the continual maturing of the body of Christ in each locality.

Focus Shift: Rather than asking "Where and what are the mission needs?" which are project-based questions, ask "How are we as a community going to continually love other communities to maturity?" which is an ongoing relational approach.

8.4. All gifts are involved: The shift in focus, from some going, to all being needed to love and mature all, opens the potential involvement in mission to many more than previously were engaged, and to many more who never thought they could be involved. It is now all for all, anywhere and everywhere.

Focus Shift: Rather than asking, "Where are the missionaries who will go?" ask, "How are we all using our gifts and contributing to mission together, at home or away?"

8.5. Continued partnering: No longer will people be saved without being discipled. No longer will people be discipled without strong church leadership being put in place to continually unify and mature the body. No longer will infant churches be abandoned by the planting parents. All churches will feel they belong to a wider family of churches and feel they are givers and receivers of the loving grace required to move all toward unity and maturity. All teams will feel like they belong to one big partnering family.

Focus Shift: Rather than asking "How many souls are saved or how many churches are planted?" ask "How has the network of missional faith communities grown and matured and are they in unity partnering together and blessing each other still?"

Go together. Invite others to be with us. Encourage others to work alongside us. And continue to partner with those who we have trained and released into expanded mission and ministry, both near and far. Following this approach, we go together as a relational sign of God's love, we use all our gifts to invite, unite, and build up the people of God toward maturity in Christ. We become active communities of love, building and partnering with other communities of love.

Conclusion

God is love. Mission is part of the essence and expression of God's creating, including, reconciling love. He co-missions loving communities of his people to go in love to reflect his love in places where his love is not, both locally and globally. The goal of mission is a mature and unified kingdom community, the bride of Christ. He has called all who are part of his body to participate in this mission through the use of their diverse gifts to invite all and build all toward maturity, unity, and participation

in the kingdom community of God.[42] He co-missions all to go for all, so that all belong, so that all build up all, so that all become unified and mature, as part of the universal family of God. It's not gather or go. The co-mission is all putting love where love is not. For this is the heart and mission of God.

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[42]Ephesians 4:11-16, Colossians 1:28.

Public Theology

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Abstract: The essay draws on the interchange between an Australian social public and the Christian theological response to contemporary issues impacting that public. The diverse components that make up the Australian public are identified through an historical survey accompanied by census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Recognition of Australia's societal diversity shapes the Christian theological contribution to the social dialogue that we are called to engage in. That contribution, then, becomes a public theology, a Christian response to the complex issues of our contemporary community.

Key Words: Migration, Ethnicity, Community, Public Theology, Social Imaginary.

Introduction

We are living in unprecedented times. The Covid 19 pandemic impacted contemporary global, national, and personal structures; social separation and suspicion replace community identity and harmony; the social *angst* was palpable. As members of the social community, we encounter, and share, the deep-felt concerns of fellow constituents who sought an empathetic assurance of God's presence and purpose in what would appear as evidence of humanity's aloneness and deity's absence.

Although we may now be living through the waning days of the pandemic, the world has certainly not returned to any sense of a perceived pre-pandemic "normalcy." The invasion of Ukraine, political instability across the Pacific, global financial pressures, dire ecological forecasts and fears of recession deprive us of hoped-for post-pandemic stress relief.

Kjetil Fretheim called for a specific and urgent theological response directed to the public domain in which crises are more than perceptual or theoretical but personal and bewildering in their implications. What is needed, then, is a public theology that identifies and experiences with the community of suffering. Fretheim identified and prioritised the mission of theology in the public community.

> New policies at all levels - local, national, and global - are needed. This is no small task, but it must be done. In fact, it is an existential challenge. People's lives are at risk. Living in despair and feeling hopeless, people ask the obvious, challenging, and disturbing questions: Why this suffering, and why me? Where is God in this crisis? The problem of evil becomes not only a philosophical riddle to solve, but a personal and collective struggle. It leads us into the abyss of suffering and meaninglessness, as well as to the imperative of care and compassion, and the fight for recovery, reconstruction, and reconciliation. The crisis presents us with not only an intellectual, political, and existential challenge. It becomes a moral commitment.[1]

This paper accepts the urgency of the theological response to the unprecedented challenges facing the post-Covid 19 global community. However, our attention will focus on the social, spiritual and political challenges within the Australian public. We will assess the implications of Freithem's "moral commitment" from the perspective, firstly, of the public to which this commitment is directed. Secondly, we will consider the theological content and conversation through which the proposed public theology is actioned.

1. The Australian Public

Public theology is multi-disciplinary. There is, of course, the theological dimension. There is also the sociological environment to which theology is directed. If we desire to effectively communicate a theological response to the anxious community, we are required to understand the identity(ies) and social dynamics that uniquely characterise that public.

The secularisation of Western society imposed a philosophical dichotomy on the concept of social structure. A singular social sphere was replaced by plural spheres: the social public and the private religious or subjective. An intrusion from the private

[1]Kjetil Fretheim, *Interruption and Imagination: Public Theology in Times of Crisis* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 1-2.

into the public is perceived as a subjectively sourced imposition of the private on the public domain. The private domain, on the other hand, maintains an inherent right that does not answer to public norms or expectations.

The interaction of public and private in the social dynamic has much to do with the cohesive functioning of the social community (public) and the individuals (private) who identify within that community. In such a scenario, interaction moves between coercion to conform, to a dynamic responsibility of the public and the private. In contrast, an absence of social cohesion may result in self-focused individuality.

This is not to promote coercive social conformity or individual non-responsibility. Rather, a social interaction that is founded on a cohesive mutual responsibility and mutual consequence: private to public and public to private. We are moving here into the realm of a social community, a mutuality. That is, a responsibility to the "other."[2]

The scenario is the religiously diverse and perceived competitive, marketplace of ideas and practices characteristic of the Australian public. The challenge is to hear the voice of the religious and ethnic "others" to the same extent as we want them to hear our "voice." Public theology is the Christian voice amongst many others in the Australian public. In order to "hear" the diverse voices of the Australian public, we turn our attention to the Australian social imaginary. Charles Taylor defined social imaginary as

> [T]he ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and images that underlie their expectations.[3]

A social imaginary recognizes the integral relationship between the individual and the social group or community.[4] Indeed, the concept is one of shared expectations and realities. Pearson also recognizes the common or shared nature of the social imaginary. He identifies the social imaginary as

> a set of self-understandings, background practices, and horizons of common expectations that are not always explicitly articulated; nevertheless, they give a people a sense of shared group life.[5]

[2]It is here that the writings of Emmanuel Levinas challenge the very heart of public theology. Consider his *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. Michael B. Smith & Barbara Harshaw (New York: University Press, 1998). Terry A. Veling's aptly titled *For You Alone: Emmanuel Levinas and the Answerable Life* (Cascade Books, 2014), 142-162, provides an excellent introduction to Levinas's unique impact on Public Theology.
[3]Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Public Planet Books, 2003), 23.
[4]M. Baran, "Taylor's Conception of Social Imaginary: A Philosopher's Contribution to the Social Sciences," *Horizon's of Politics* 4, no. 9 (2013): 75-88.
[5]Clive Pearson, "Imagining a Reformed Practical Theology and Ethics," In C. Pearson (Ed.), *Imagining a way* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 47.

How are we, then, to describe the Australian imaginary? Miriam Dixson[6] has written on the critical importance of Australia's Anglo-Celtic imaginary. Here it is assumed that the settler/colonial society established a national imaginary of what it means to be Australian. We would, however, question whether Australia's imaginary began on the 13th May, 1788.

Rather, the development of the Australian imaginary began with a pre-colonial indigenous imaginary made up of the continent's "first peoples" who arrived some 65,000 years ago establishing multiple and divese societies. As Tina Brown, a Ngunnawal Elder observes:

> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are complex and diverse. The Indigenous cultures of Australia are the oldest living cultural history in the world – they go back at least 65,000 years. Indigenous communities keep their cultural heritage alive by passing their knowledge, arts, ceremonies, and performances from one generation to another, speaking and teaching languages, protecting cultural materials, sacred and significant sites, and objects. For Indigenous Australians, the land is the core of all spirituality and this relationship and the spirit of 'Country' is central to the issues that are important to Indigenous people today.[7]

This was not the way that the first peoples were seen by those who made up the initial members of the second peoples who first arrived in 1788.[8] They deemed the indigenous cultures as primitive,[9] a society destined for eventual demise, as anticipated in Alfred Deakin's address to the inaugural Federal Parliament quoted

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[6]Miriam Dixson, *The Imaginary Australian: Anglo-Celts and Identity 1788 to the Present* (Sydney, NSW: University of New South Wales Press Ltd, 1999).

[7]https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/reports/closing-the-gap-2018/celebrating-indigenous-culture.html. Accessed 10.10.2021.

[8]Captain Cook claimed the land for the British Empire under the legal term "terra nullius." The legality of the term is unquestioned. However, he was some 60,000 years too late. Jock Collins is indeed correct to say that "Australia has a long history of immigration" (J. Collins, "Globalisation, Immigration and the Second Long Post-war Boom in Australia," *Journal of Australian Political Economy* 61, (2008): 244. However, we may contend that the indigenous peoples that he refers to were, in fact, the descendants of the first wave of immigration. Indeed, a history of Australian migration acknowledges that the first immigrants arrived in Australian approximately 50,000 years ago.
(http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/objectsthroughtime-history/50000-years-before-present/index.html).
Archaeological discoveries at Jabiru in the Northern Territory pushes that earlier by more than 18,000 years. Estimates are now that the indigenous population has lived in Australia for a minimum of 65000 years.
(http://www.smh.com.au/technology/sci-tech/aboriginal-archaeological-discovery-in-kakadu-rewrites-the-history-of-australia-20170719-gxe3qy).
According to the article "The discovery also confirms that Australian Aborigines undertook the first major maritime migration in the world." Accessed on the 24th July, 2017.

[9]Charles Darwin was later to describe a corroboree that he had witnessed as "a festival amongst the lowest barbarians." Cited by Raewyn Connell, *Southern theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2007), 77.

below, a side-bar in the Australian story. Wadjularbinna Doomadgee, a Gungalidda leader in the Gulf of Carpentaria, for example, retells the historical failure to recognise the innate meaning of indigenous spirituality.

> Our people before the white man were very spiritual people. They were connected to land and creation through the Great Spirit. There was a Good Greater and Great evil spirit. And Satan was the great evil one. So there wasn't much difference in what the missionaries brought with them and what we already had.[10]

Recognition of the First Peoples as participants in the Australian public has certainly developed from the date of Dixson's text. Recent developments within theological education circles support the inclusion of Australian and Torres Strait Islander knowings within an institution's curriculum.[11]

Dixson saw the contemporary Australian imaginary as a process of emergence from the unitary Anglo-Celtic "core culture" to a "poly-ethnic one." Dixson further insisted that the core Anglo-Celtic culture should not be abandoned for it ensures cohesive continuity. As such, the Anglo-Celtic identity is essential as the Australian imaginary interacts with immigrant polyethnicities.[12] An abandonment, or neglect of the core, claims Dixson, may result in fragmentation and forfeiture of an identifiable Australian imaginary.

To avoid either social fragmentation or perceived Anglo-Celtic hegemony in the Australian social structure, Dixson proposed a two-pronged movement, one of transition and the other of consolidation. Transition recognizes the continued enrichment of the Australian imaginary through interaction with the multiple imaginaries of the diverse ethnicities that are part of the Australian public. Consolidation recognizes the continued consolidation of the Australian imaginary through the cohesive value of the Anglo-Celtic ethnicity. Thus, the Australian imaginary is in a continuing cohesive transition of re-imagining and reforming itself. This idea of transition and consolidation, however, is a relative latecomer to studies of the Australian social identity.

The Australian Federation was founded on the concept of the preservation of the Anglo-Celtic imaginary at all costs. The clear intention of the Immigration Restriction Act (1901), one of the first pieces of legislation to be introduced to the Federal

[10]Wadjularbinna Doomadgee, *Spirituality* (1996), Retrieved from australianmuseum.net.au.
[11]As exemplified in the School of Indigenous Studies of the University of Divinity, the University website defines its vision "to encourage the development of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander theologies and ministries and to decolonise the Eurocentric versions of Christianity that remain dominant in this country" (https://divinity.edu.au/university/school-of-indigenous-studies/ (Accessed 16.09.2022).
[12]We would also include here, the recognition of the contribution of the "first peoples" as essential to this transitioning of the Australian imaginary.

Parliament, was to exclude non-white immigration. In the words of Alfred Deakin, Australia's first Prime Minister,

> In another century the probability is that Australia will be a white continent with not a black or even dark skin among its inhabitants. The Aboriginal race has died out in the South and is dying fast in the North and West even where gently treated. Other races are to be excluded by legislation if they are tinted to any degree. The yellow, the brown, and the copper-colored are to be forbidden to land anywhere.[13]

Forty-seven years later, the White Australian policy encountered its first serious challenge with the post-Second World War immigration program. However, the program was not without its detractors. The Board of Directors of the Australian Natives Society[14] cautioned the Honourable Arthur Calwell, Australia's inaugural Minister of Immigration,

> The Board of Directors has been requested to urge your government to take every precaution in the selection of a suitable type of immigrant to be introduced into Australia as the progress of Australia must certainly be retarded if our high standard of citizenship is considerably lowered by the introduction of a low type of individual particularly if of other than British stock.[15]

A majority population of the so-called "British stock" was assured through a post war Government assisted passage scheme specifically provided to British citizens migrating to Australia. The cost of passage to Australia was set at £10.00 (Aust.). The British arrivals were colloquially called, therefore, "ten pound poms."[16]

The gradual demise and eventual legislative burial of the White Australia policy occurred in 1975 with the passing of the Racial Discrimination Act.[17] The progressive impact on the Australian public is evidenced in Graph 1. The diversity of countries of

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[13]Alfred Deakin, *London Morning Post* (12 November 1901 cited in Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Melbourne University Press, 2005), 90.

[14]Of the Australian Natives Association the "unifying goal was members' determination to eliminate from Australian society any sense of cultural inferiority associated with being an Australian-born 'colonial' and to create a society free of British class restrictions. Although it lobbied government to redress injury and hardship to Indigenous people resulting from government policies, the ANA was firmly of the view that Australia's future as a socially harmonious nation lay in it being a society of white people. (https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/australian-natives-association).

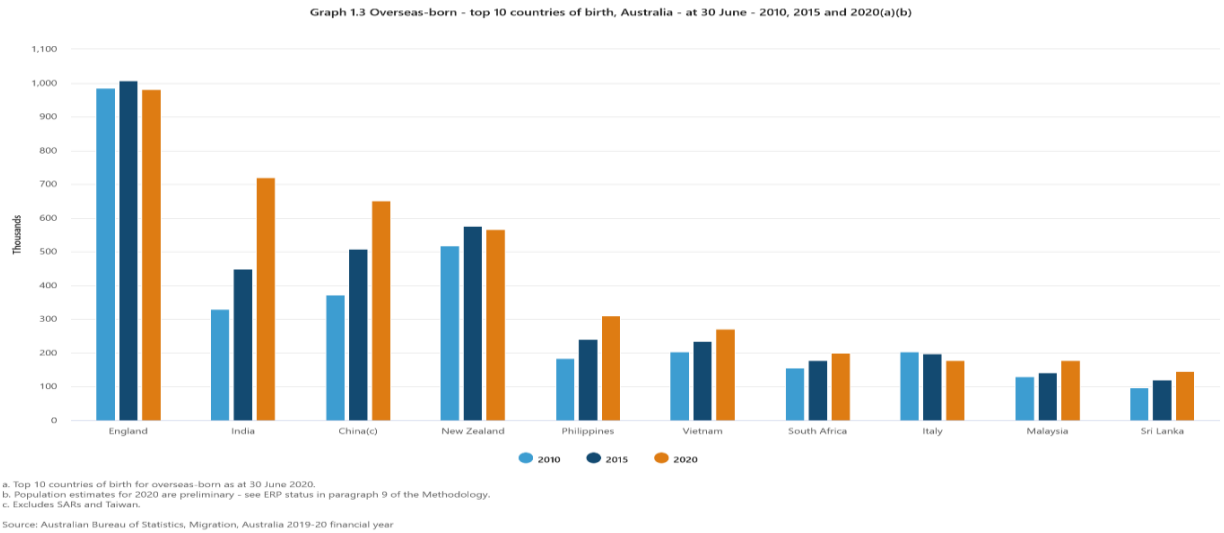
[15]www.smh.com.au/multimedia/misr/doc5b.html. Accessed 27 June 2017.

[16]The following You Tube videos record advertisements of the scheme broadcast in Britain: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GhVNPGgfjY. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TA_0B2yXMDU.

[17]The Racial Discrimination Act 1975: https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2016C00089. Accessed 27th July 2017.

origin within the Australian population is significant with the trend away from a majority Anglo-Celtic and European identities to more diverse Asian identities.

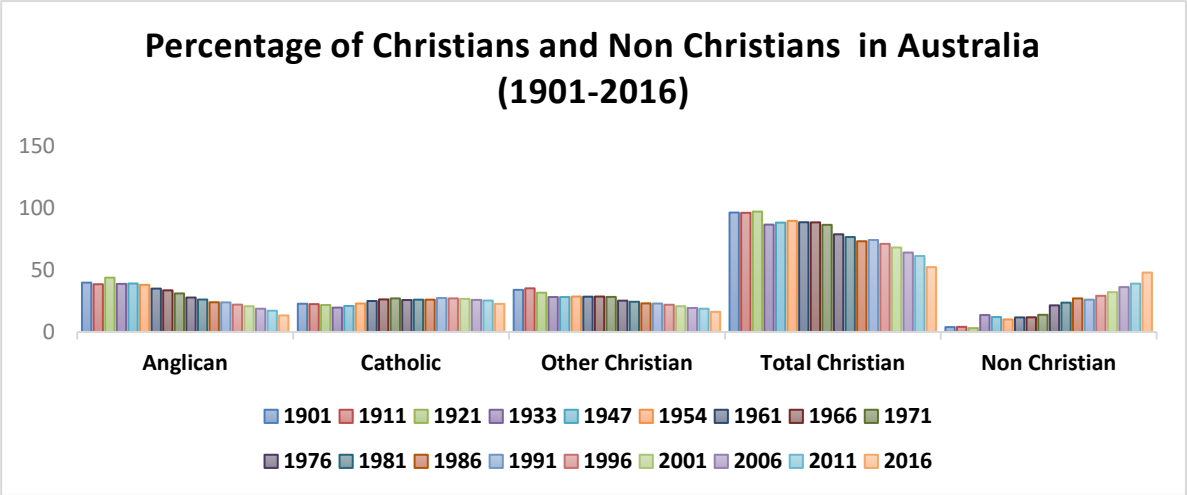
Graph 1



How then, are we to apply the movement away from an Anglo-Celtic hegemonic public to the culturally diverse Australian public to our theme of public theology?

First, we look at Australia's historical religious development through the lens of the national census conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Graph 2 indicates the growth of the Anglican and Catholic denominations as well as a composite indicator of all other Christian denominations in comparison with non-Christian respondents.[18]

Graph 2

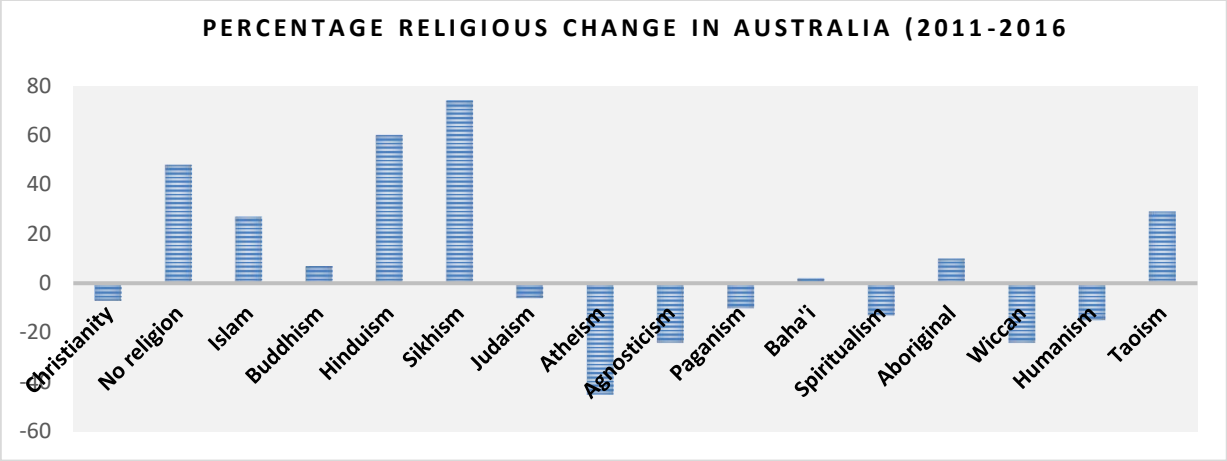


[18]The voluntary nature of the religion question in the census as well as the inclusion of many "smaller" denominations under the general heading of "other Christian," there may be some statistical anomalies in these percentages. However, the overall trends are evidenced.

The graph indicates that the percentages of the Christian and non-Christians almost intersect in the 2016 census. From 96.1% of the population at the start of Federation, the Christian population has almost halved to 52.2%. In contrast, the non-Christian population in 1901 was 3.9%. That percentage increased to 47.8%. The release of the results of the 2021 Census[19] indicates that 43.9% of the population identify as Christian, 38.9% identify with no religion, 3.2% identify with Islam, 2.7% with Hinduism and 2.4% with Buddhism. The total percentage of non-Christian respondents in the 2021 Census was 47.2%. For the first time, the percentage of non-Christians exceded the percentage of Christians.

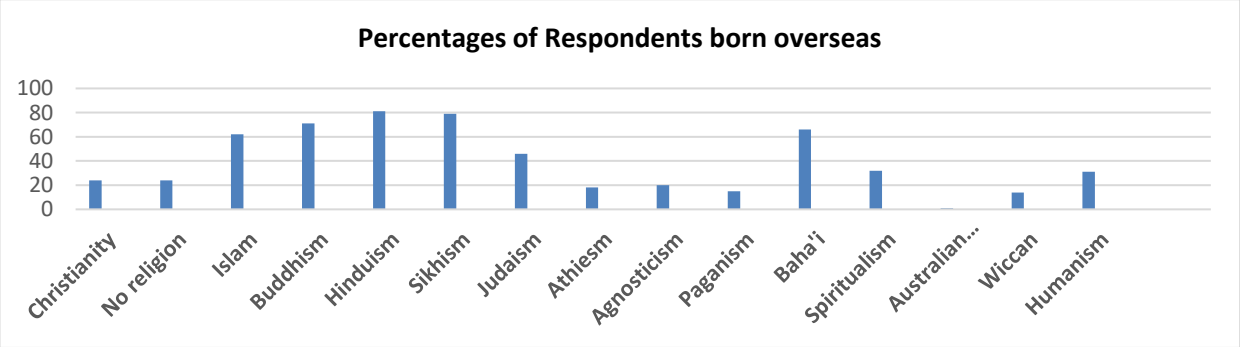
Graph 3 is a breakdown of the religious responses provided in the 2011–2016 Census. The graph indicates a 7% fall in the Christian population along with a significant increase in Sikkh and Hindu population.

Graph 3



Graph 4 compares the percentages of respondents born overseas per each religion response in the 2011-2016 census.

Graph 4



[19]Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census. https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/religious-affiliation-australia. Accessed 16.09.2021.

Of the Christian respondents, 24% were born overseas.[20] That is, almost a quarter of Christians identified in the census are not identified within an Anglo Celtic imaginary. They bring something else, their own culturally formed voices to the Christian public dialogue. How will this play out in the development of a uniquely Australian Christian church?

The interplay of the secular and the religious in the Australian social public is exemplified in a recent debate regarding what constitutes a knife. A student at a Sydney school injured a fellow student with his knife, a *kirpan*. In the ensuring debate, the secular authority identified the *kirpan* as a knife (the instrument that caused the harm); the Sikh community, however, identified the knife as a *kirpan* (an integral religious symbol in the Sikh community). In this case the secular ceded to the religious. The NSW Government changed its laws regarding what, in this case constitutes a knife in public schools. Knives are not allowed, but a modified *kirpan* is.[21]

How do we respond to the religious debate in our community? Do we align with religious freedom? Or do we, ponder possible consequences of the secular ceding to diverse religious voices? Elaine Graham makes the point; "The post-secular represents the emergence of a new kind of public square in which religion is newly resurgent, and yet its legitimacy as a form of public reason continues to be hotly contested."[22]

We need to draw a caveat here. The perspectives of a post-secular society are, in the main, contextualised within the political identities of a Western secular imaginary. In contrast, a non-Western context may, in fact, privilege a religious imaginary in which the public and private domains reflect a voluntary or coerced consensus of the national and social role of the religious. Here, religious states, particularly Islamic states, come to mind. Other examples may be less evident, but nonetheless effective in their private/public consensus. Implications are not geographically confined to distant shores but, for us, local. I refer you to the above table of religious affiliation in Australia. The voices in the Australian public conversations evidence a diversity that erodes its historical Anglo-Celtic imaginary,[23] in the cultural and religious contexts. Is it not time to go public? Yes. But how do we actually go public?

[20]Christianity declined by 7% in the same census period (graph 3). We may assume that the Christian population may have decreased even further if not for the addition of 20% of the total migration that responded as Christian (graph 4).
[21]https://www.nsw.gov.au/have-your-say/changes-to-knives-schools-policy. Accessed 28.08.2021.
[22]Elaine Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Public Theology in a Post-Secular Age* (SCM Press, 2013), xviii.
[23]As identified as the central argument of Miriam Dixson's text, *The Imaginary Australian: Anglo-Celts and Identity: 1788 to the Present* (Sydney, UNSW Press, 1999).

We draw attention to the marketplace of ideas with which a public theology is to engage with, to interact with, to accept in order to influence a global community.

What, then, are the possibilities for public engagement in the contemporary post-secular and culturally and religiously diverse Australian public? Elaine Graham[24] refers to Charles Taylor's assessment of a secular public: "We no longer live in societies in which the widespread sense can be maintained that faith in God is central to the ordered life we (partially) enjoy." Graham, however, identifies the potential opening of the public to a renewed theological discourse:

> Increasingly, political theorists of many kinds are asking questions about the self-sufficiency of the secular to furnish the public domain with sufficiently robust values for consensus to that end, therefore post secular culture heralds a greater latitude towards religion, not only as a system of private beliefs but also a source of public discourse.[25]

2. The Theological Context

Here we bring in the theological dimension. When we speak of social responsibility and interaction, do we do so from a perspective that privileges a Christian theological approach. Do we not, then, do so with a perceived threat of a covert, or, at times even an overt responsibility to define theological truth as it truly is? That is, Christian theology is truth as truth, all other definitions fall short. Such an approach is not a conversation. Rather, it is a correction, an imposition of the private into the public?

We offer the following theological scenario for an Australian public theology; the *missio Dei* and the *imago Dei*.

Public theology participates in the *missio Dei* within its creation context. In this sense, public theology is not simply a synonym for the evangelistic mission, though it is part of it. Rather, we broaden our understanding of the *missio Dei* into multiple facets of the human social phenomena. Humanity is created in the *imago Dei* with the corollary, that humanity is an expression of the *imago Dei.* This is reflected in the Old Testament through the message of the prophets. Consider Isaiah's strident condemnation of his contemporary society's abandonment of truth and virtue: "So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter" (Isaiah 59:14). Perhaps, Amos' dire prophecy of a famine of "hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11-14) may also be applied here.

Isaiah and Amos may well have been addressing our own contemporary community. In what way might a public theology address such community challenges?

[24]Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, 35.
[25]Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, 8.

To answer that question, we first turn to E. H. Breitenberg. He provides a succinct definition of the role of the public theologian:

> Public theologians … seek to communicate by means that are intelligible and assayable to all, how Christian beliefs and practices bear, both descriptively and prescriptively, on public life and the common good, and in so doing possibly persuade and move to action both Christians and non-Christians.[26]

Bryan Massingale[27] of Fordham University provides a four-point strategic model as to how that may take place. Public theology is done by:

2.1. Addressing Issues of Public Concern, Urgency and Import

Such are the issues that affect our daily life such as the common elements of justice, hope and peace that are identified as the common *angst* and cry out for the answer. The issues of the pandemic and the "new normal" are also essential elements here. The faithful and the faithless are alike challenged. Other issues of public concern may include:

2.1.1. The challenges of the Anthropocene age such as climate change and environmental sustainability.
2.1.2. The uncertainties of global and regional security.
2.1.3. The encroachment of social media on public and private lives.
2.1.4. Knowing in a new age in which we are blissfully led on an algorithmic monorail of ideas and tastes, likes and unlikes.
2.1.5. The innate quest for identity, life and ultimate self-meaning.

For the public theologian, these are not simply the concerns of the "other." Rather, they are our concerns as well. We are members of the Australian community, participants in the same developing/evolving Australian imaginary. We share in the *angst* but with a difference: a faith assurance in the Creator/Redeemer (Colossians 1:15-17).

2.2. To a Religiously Pluralistic and Diverse Audience of Fellow Members of a Civic Community

The public theologian is both speaker and audience in the public arena as a fellow member of that social public. He/she speaks from within the public and not from outside; a nearness and not a distance. Here is participation. More than sympathy or even empathy. It is identity as a fellow sojourner throughout the human lifespan. The public theologian, then, has a stake in the outcomes of the social discourse whether

[26]E. H. Breitenberg, "To Tell the Truth: Will the Real Public Theology Please Stand Up?," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23, No. 2 (2003): 96.
[27]Bryan Massingale, "Theology in the Public Square in the Twenty-First Century," *Horizons* 43 (2016): 351-373.

that discourse is climate change, social justice, gender equality or the pandemic. We journey together.

A public theology inevitably brings God into our community conversation. Such a conversation is "(r)esisted by secular liberals, who challenge the right of explicitly religious beliefs and faith-based organizations to intervene in public debate or policy-making."[28] However, our religiously diverse public with its challenge of diverse gods and concepts of deity provides the Christian public theologian with an opportunity to hear the voice of such "others" while, at the same time, having an opportunity for the "others" to hear the Christian voice.

Consider the following examples of the diverse voices in the public theology conversation:

Adogame, Afe. *The Public Face of African New Religious Movements in Diaspora*. Taylor and Francis, 2016.

Agang, Sunday Bobai., Forster, Dion A., and Hendriks, H. Turgans (eds.). *African Public Theology.* Langham Creative Projects, 2020.

Chung, Paul S. *Postcolonial Public Theology: Faith, Scientific Rationality and Prophetic Discourse.* Wipf and Stock, 2016.

Hershock, Peter D. *Buddhism in the Public Sphere: Reorienting Global Interdependence*. Taylor and Francis, 2017.

Nocak, David. *The Jewish Social Contract: An Essay in Political Theology*. Princeton University Press, 2009.

Patrick, Gnana. *Public Theology: Indian Concerns, Perspectives and Themes*. Fortress Press, 2020.

Soliman, Asmaa. *European Muslims Transforming the Public Sphere: Religious Participation in the Arts, Media and Civil Society*. Taylor Francis, 2017.

Stille, Max. *Islamic Sermons and Public Piety in Bangladesh: The Poetics of Popular Preaching*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020.

What then is the Christian public theologian's vocabulary? We enter the conversation in order to communicate the Christian theological response to the contemporary public.

[28]Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place,* xxi.

2.3. In a Way that is Accessible to People of any Faith or No Faith

Our public discourse is to be rational, intelligible and, most of all comprehensible. Our Christian faith may be grounded on truths that to us are self-evident within our religious tradition. They may, however, be incomprehensible to our public conversation partners.

Are there opportunities to explore the common ground of humanity, of the human experience and history to share the truths thus imbedded in each of us as bearers of the *imago Dei*? David Tracy suggests we look to what he termed "the classics" of the human story. Could not the humanness of Shakespearian tragedy or the classics of contemporary cinematic art open our public conversations to a common understanding of human tragedy and triumph?[29] Perhaps I am wandering too far from our theological moorings. The fourth strategy will tie it all up for us:

2.4. While Rooted in and Inspired by one's own Perspectives, Commitments and Faith

I quote Massingale:

> (D)oing public theology by addressing a religiously diverse audience does not require that one bracket or surrender one's own faith commitments. The theologian offers to his/her neighbours and fellows the fruits of his/her intellectual expertise and spiritual affection. Indeed, it is because of one's faith and theological expertise that one can feel obligated to speak.[30]

It is here that our public theology participates in the *missio Dei.* Our Christian conversation affirms a faith commitment to revealed truth and the One who is the Revealer of that truth. While addressing the unfathomable mystery of God as He is within the confines of human dialogue, we re-affirm our trust in that revealed truth. We are prepared to have our theological understanding challenged. We are not, however, prepared to have our Christian faith in the Triune God compromised.

And thus, let us dialogue with our diverse fellow members of the Australian community with an assured and confident theology of God's presence and purpose in the "best of times (and) the worst of times."[31]

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[29]Clive Marsh, *Cinema and Sentiment: Film's Challenge to Theology* (Paternoster Press, 2004).
[30]Bryan Massingale, *Theology in the Public Square in the Twenty-First Century*, 354.
[31]Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, 10.

Baran. M. "Taylor's Conception of Social Imaginary: A Philosopher's Contribution to the Social Sciences." *Horizon's of Politics* 4, no. 9 (2013): 75-88.

Barreto, Raimundo, Cavalcante, Ronaldo. da Rosa,Wanderley P. *World Christianity as a Public Religion*. Fortress Press; Minneapolis, 2017.

Breitenberg, E.H, "To Tell the Truth: Will the Real Public Theology Please Stand Up?"*Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23, no.2 (2003): 55-96.

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The Research-Theology-Culture Interface

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Abstract: For a theology student new to research, this paper explains some fundamentals. It defines research as the search for evidential answers to research questions. Research is not: a 'cut and paste' job of ideas found in the literature; a defense of personal convictions; polemical; opinions, nor is it a sermon. Its language is free of emotions and superlatives, aiming to reach the mind, not the heart. Research is systematic. It has an array of paradigms from which the researcher can choose to guide the complete research process and provide justification for the choices made. This systematic process enables a third party to critically evaluate the quality of the research. There is a lack of consensus on what constitutes theology, religion, culture, and theological research. The student will find that this is a significant problem because what is not defined cannot be measured. Unless such constructs are clearly defined, the researcher cannot determine the impact of theology on culture, or the impact of culture on theology. The paper cites seven theology-culture studies from Africa, Australia, Thailand, UK and USA that demonstrate the research-theology-culture interface. The data suggests that the nexus runs both ways: theology influences culture, and culture influences theology. The task for students of theology is to determine how ministry on the ground may be counter-cultural, or reflect culture, or transform culture.

Key Words: Research, Theology, Culture, Paradigms, Studies, Interface.

Introduction

This paper is targeted at theology students new to research. It is not concerned with researching theology-culture matters within the Bible, but with researching the impact of theology on today's culture, and the impact of culture on theology. It begins with explaining some fundamentals of what research is, what it is not, and the tool kit of research paradigms. At the end, I will provide some examples of the research-theology-culture interface from the literature.

1. Research Defined

Research is the search for answers to questions. If there is no research question (RQ), there can be no research. A RQ must be specific, clearly defined, and the research follows a systematic process of collecting and analysing data to provide the answer. By reviewing existing research in the chosen area of study, one will discover the most important authors, findings, concepts, debates and hypotheses, and what gaps exist in the knowledge base. So, a research aims to fill some of these gaps, thus making the case for one's research.

2. What Research is Not[1]

Research is not a cut and paste of ideas found in the literature, nor a defence of personal convictions where unfavourable evidence might be ignored. Research is not polemical, its vocabulary is neutral, free of emotions and superlatives. Research is not opinions, but the presentation of evidence. Research is not a sermon, which aims to reach the heart. Research, however, aims for the mind, to inform and convince it.

3. Research Paradigms

The word *paradigm* has its aetiology in Greek where it means *pattern*, so, a *research paradigm* constitutes the pattern of beliefs that orient how a researcher sees the world. It is the conceptual lens through which a researcher examines the methodological aspects of a research project to determine the research methods that will be used and how the data will be analysed and interpreted. A paradigm comprises five elements; epistemology, ontology, methodology, axiology, and rhetoric.[2]

[1]Nancy Vyhmeister, *Quality Research Papers for Students of Religion and Theology* (Grand Rpids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2020), Chapter One.
[2]Kuvunja A, "Understanding and Applying Research Paradigms in Educational Contexts," *International Journal of Higher Education* 6, No.5 (2017): 26-29.

Epistemology concerns knowledge; its nature, forms and how it can be acquired, and communicated. *Ontology* concerns the researcher's belief system about the form and reality of the phenomenon under investigation, and what the researcher believes can be known about that reality. *Methodology* concerns the research design, methods, approaches and procedures used in obtaining the desired data that will provide answers to the research questions. *Axiology* concerns ethics, the defining, evaluating and understanding concepts of right and wrong behaviour relating to the research. Finally, *rhetoric* concerns the shared understanding of the language of research. There are a number of paradigms employed in modern research ranging from objectivist to subjectivist, and every one is based upon assumptions regarding reality and how it may be understood. Nevertheless, much research combines both objectivistic and subjectivistic elements.[3]

Fyson pertinently wonders, though, what lens might Christians use to undertake their research if not through one of the common ones available.[4] He suggests that we adopt Watkins' idea of exploring reality through a "Biblical Theory" as a basis for a more coherent Christian way of understanding the world as the Bible contains not only a set of truths, stories and doctrines, but recurring patterns of thought, (paradigms no less), through which we live, and think about everything. The reason why we should develop a biblical paradigm is that the mere materialist assumptions that drive much of current research are inadequate to explore spiritual aspects of theology and culture.

4. Theology and Culture Defined

4.1. Theology

What is different about *theology*? Theology is the study of *theos*, God. However, the consensus seems to end there, because *theology* is under attack from many quarters today – from fearful believers who see it as a threat to their faith, to secularists who see it as a threat to truth.[5]

For a start, there is a lack of consensus about theology among different theological disciplines. For example, Williams distinguishes *Confessional Theology* from *Critical Theology*. The former, in the case of Christianity, focuses on Jesus Christ as the object

[3]Mittwede, S. K, "Research Paradigms and Their Use and Importance in Theological Inquiry and Education," *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 16, No. 1 (2012): 23–40. https://doi.org/10.1177/205699711201600104.

[4]Stephen Fyson, "Biblical Theory and Research Paradigms," (2021): https://crucis.ac.edu.au/biblical-theory-research-paradigms/. Readers might also be interested in Pihlström Sami, "Pragmatist Perspectives on Theological and Religious Realism," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 6, No. 1 (2014):37—59. Also, Smith M, "Theological Frames for Social Research," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 31, No. 1 (2018): 71-92. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/15709256-12341368.

[5]Williams T, "What makes you think Theology is a subject?," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 31, No.1 (2018): 250-259. Retrieved August 20, 2021, from https://www.jstor.org/stable/26489093.

of our commitment. Conversely, Critical Theology is characterised by detachment rather than by commitment, except to truth, aligning itself with philosophy and the physical, biological, and human sciences in its readiness to subject every belief to critical examination. Ogden agrees, arguing strongly that theology is different from religious studies, since the ground of its difference is what constitutes it a distinct field. For while theology certainly is not alone in asking about the meaning and truth of the Christian witness of faith, it certainly is alone in being constituted as such.[6] Practical Theology is a good example, for it has to do with the theological study of practices or lived religion, which is why there is strong overlap with social sciences.[7]

So, theological research is research undertaken for theological purposes, and critical examination of the origins and development of Christianity is a valid undertaking whether from a confessional or critical point of view. However, what muddies the research water further, is not only the lack of consensus about theology, but that there are no clear-cut definitions of religion.[8] To make research even more confusing and difficult, we find that 'theology' and 'religion' are often used as synonyms.

This lack of clear-cut definitions highlights a significant difficulty for researchers. Lord Kelvin, a physicist and mathematician of the last century has put it well:

> I often say that when you can measure what you are speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind; it may be the beginning of knowledge, but you have scarcely, in your thoughts, advanced to the stage of *science*, whatever the matter may be.[9]

A researcher, therefore, needs to be clear on the meaning of the construct that is being studied, as do the respondents in any research project.

4.2. Culture

To be human means to be embedded in culture, yet theologians have never been of

[6]Ogden S, "Theology and Religious Studies: Their Difference and the Difference It Makes," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 46, No. 1 (1978): 3-17. Retrieved August 18, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/1462751.
[7]van den Berg J.A, & Ganzevoort R.R, "The Art of Creating Futures - Practical Theology and a Strategic Research Sensitivity for the Future," *Acta Theologica* 34, No. 2 (2014): 166-185. https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ACTAT.V34I2.10.
[8]Schilderman H, "Defining Religion: A Humanities Perspective," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 27, No. 1 (2014): 176-198. Also, W. A. Bauman, R. R. Bohannon II, "Religion: What is it, who gets to decide, and why does it matter?" (Routledge, 2011), chapter 1.
[9]https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/William_Thomson.

one mind as to the role culture ought to play in theology.[10] *"Culture"* is a word widely used while over the centuries its meaning has changed. The word is derived from the Latin cultivare ("to till the soil"), and culture's original meaning was "the care and tending of crops or animals." Then it was extended to tending humans, and the development of the person.

In the 1920s, "culture" meant the customs and rituals of a particular social group, transmitted externally to members who in turn passively internalise it. However, in the 1980s, culture became the product of social interaction, with humans as active creators, rather than passive receivers.

5. Theology-Culture Nexus: *Does theology affect culture, or the reverse, or both?*

5.1. Culture Affecting Theology

Theologians have often asked: How should culture influence theology?[11] On the one hand, some deny the influence of the theologian's cultural context, because all theology is controlled by Scripture, so that pure theology is not affected by the culture; it is supracultural.

Conversely, the Bible was given in a time, culture, and place far removed from our own, so interpretation of it cannot be culture free. Indeed, the perceptions that people "do theology" from within a particular culture, means that for it to be meaningful to people, it must be contextualised. Here, the natural and social sciences help our understanding of the culture-theology interface.[12]

Manning reinforces the connection between culture and religion, and contends that the task of the theology of culture must be to articulate the multidimensional religious meaning of culture in accordance with the norms of Christian revelation as they correlate to concrete situations.[13]

Klemm goes further. While he asserts that, traditionally, *theology of culture* has been the subdiscipline aimed at identifying, analysing, and interpreting religious meaning in the various domains of socio-cultural life, he argues that because of rapid changes

[10]Stanley J. Grenz, "Culture and Spirit: The Role of Cultural Context in Theological Reflection," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 55, No. 2 (2000): 37-52. Available at: https://place.asburyseminary.edu/asburyjournal/vol55/iss2/4.
[11]B. A. De Vries, "Towards a Global Theology: Theological Method and Contextualisation," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 37, No. 1(2016): 1536. http:// dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve. v37i1.1536.
[12]Mary M. Veeneman, *Introducing Theological Method: A Survey of Contemporary Theologians and Approaches* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), Chapter Five.
[13]R. Manning, "The Religious Meaning of Culture: Paul Tillich and Beyond," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15, No. 4 (2013): 437–452. https://doi-org.rp.nla.gov.au/10.1111/ijst.12020.

in culture, and the need to respond with insight, and because the concept of "culture" has become hotly contested, we need a renewed theology of culture conceived as "theological humanism." Theological humanism is a defence of the integrity and dignity of human life, commits itself to human well-being weary of exclusivist claims by religious communities with triumphal voices to cultural domination.[14]

5.1.1. Africa: Culture of Place Affecting Theology

Niemandt[15] points out that *place* has theological significance in the Scriptures because narratives connected to a place form its identity. Sacred places have sacred stories, such as Eden, Ararat, Ur, Egypt, Canaan, Jerusalem, Babylon, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Golgotha, Antioch and Rome. Reading these stories with a missional hermeneutic might contribute to the development of a theology of place.

The South African landscape, Niemandt says, is being deeply transformed. Not a single neighbourhood resembles the neighbourhoods of 25 years ago, leading to a crisis of place – a sense of displacement. For some, land tells a life story of sacrifice and hardship, and for others, it symbolises deep loss and disenfranchisement. Land lies at the centre of many wars and conflicts. Places and land lie close to the heart. Consequently, there is a renewed urgency to reflect on a theology of place, spirituality and missionality. As a result, Christian theology and church mission need to embrace place. Christian life and a healthy congregational culture must be grounded in the neighbourhood.

5.1.2. UK: School Culture Affecting Theology

Francis *et al*[16] reports on a large quantitative study of the impact of UK Anglican school culture on a range of religious, social and personal values, compared with schools without a religious foundation. Remarkably, of the 11 dependent variables tested (including drug use, illegal behaviour, racism, attitude toward school, conservative Christian beliefs on sexual morality), only self-esteem, showed any significant difference between the two types of schools. Anglican schools' students recorded a significantly lower level of self-esteem, which was not consistent with their ethos.

[14]D. Klemm, "Introduction: Theology of Culture as Theological Humanism," *Literature and Theology* 18, No. 3 (2004): 239-250. Retrieved August 16, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/23926049.
[15]C. J. P. Niemandt, "Rooted in Christ, Grounded in Neighbourhoods – A Theology of Place," *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 40, No. 1 (2019). doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v40i1.1997.
[16]Leslie J. Francis, Andrew Village, Mandy Robbins, David W Lankshear, and Tania ap Siôn, "Defining and Measuring the Contribution of Anglican Secondary Schools to Students' Religious, Personal and Social Values," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 27, No. 1 (2014): 57-84.

Francis reported another study assessing spiritual health of 13-15 year-old pupils attending secular, Anglican, and private Christian schools in England and Wales.[17] Overall, the spiritual health within Anglican schools was indistinguishable from that within non-religious schools. However, the spiritual health within private Christian schools was distinctively higher than the others, which was consistent with their aims of creating a radical alternative educational culture to that found in schools without a religious character.

5.1.3. USA: Culture of Online Theological Learning

M. H. Heinemann studied teacher-student interaction and learning in online theological education, where the cultural context is quite different to face-to-face learning. Seminary students from nine accredited seminaries completed a Web-based survey about their experience of online courses. On average, students were well satisfied with the teacher–student interaction they experienced and reported significant cognitive and affective learning gains, which challenged the assumption that the teacher and student must be together physically for the student to learn.[18]

5.2. Theology Affecting Culture

5.2.1. South Africa: Social Media & Personal Identity

Social media platforms, built by corporations, are free to use in exchange for personal data, which the corporation is free to sell to third parties or use through their targeted advertising services. Cole Turner's[19] concern was that social media, filled with socialbots and other questionable "friends," transforms the meaning of personal identity by changing the ways in which people today present and understand themselves.

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[17]L. *et al* Francis, "Defining and Assessing Spiritual Health: A Comparative Study Among 13- to 15-Year-old Pupils Attending Secular Schools, Anglican Schools, and Private Christian Schools in England and Wales," *Peabody Journal of Education* 87, No. 3 (2012): 351-367.

[18]M. H. Heinemann, "Teacher-Student Interaction and Learning in Online Theological Education. Part Four: Findings and Conclusions," *Christian Higher Education* 6, No. 3 (2007): 185–206. The paper referenced here offers theological students interested in research exposure to a variety of research terminology. These are reviews of online learning literature, types of RQs, discussion of theoretical frameworks, research designs with multiple variables, construction of measurement scales, descriptive statistics, t-tests of significance for mean differences, regression analysis, intercorrelations, dependent variables, multicollinearity, discussion of results, recommendations, and study limitations.

[19]See the article by R. Cole-Turner, "Commodification and Transfiguration: Socially Mediated Identity in Technology and Theology," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 75, No. 1 (2019): 1-11. doi:https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i1.5349.

As we are defined by relationships with others and with God, the question for Cole Turner was how can Christian theology speak into questions of personal identity and social relationship on social media.

Jesus spoke to his followers about abiding in an organic social connection with God, as His "friends" (John 15:15), just as branches do in a vine, not just "friended" as on Facebook but beloved and befriended through God's unmerited grace. This transfigures each person in Christ and defines our identity. More than Google or Facebook or anything else in all creation, God befriends us not to commodify us but to glorify us. As Christians, we need to narrate our own transfiguration with at least as much care as we represent and narrate ourselves on the "timelines" of social media?

5.2.2. Africa: Better Pastors and Better Congregations

Seed[20] cites the case of a group of pastors in Africa, who, when reflecting on their theological training, stated that it was disconnected from the African mind, and the urban and rural contexts in which they now ministered. They were well taught in the traditional disciplines of theology, but once in the parish they struggled to see how these impacted the lives of their church members.

In response, a theological education consultant developed a curriculum for pastors aimed at building student capacity to function in their cultural context. Reflecting later, the leaders who had commissioned the curriculum remarked on the visible impact the training had had on church growth. Graduates of the programme had planted a large number of churches, and local congregations expressed a preference for congregations to be led by the graduates of this programme, as they were the pastors most able to minister to the people's needs.

5.3. Theology Affecting Culture Affecting Theology

5.3.1. Thailand

Hughes[21] reports findings from Thailand and Australia. Empirical studies of the church in northern Thailand demonstrated that in terms of architecture, and the forms of service, the churches were often countercultural, reflecting the patterns of the Presbyterian church from which the missionaries came. However, with sermons

[20]R. E. Seed, "Cognitive Contextualization in Theological Education: A Theoretical Framework," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 45, No. 2 (2021): 113–127.
[21]P. Hughes, "The Multi-Dimensional Issue of Culture and Christian Ministry," *Journal of Contemporary Ministry* No. 1, (2015): 6–16.
https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/ielapa.466363081847085.

there was a strong Thai cultural flavour. For example, sermons did not deal with the Easter message, which was offensive to the Thai worldview, that being murdered must mean that one has "bad karma" from previous lives, that it is something shameful and humiliating.

5.3.2. Australia

Charismatic churches more frequently use contemporary forms of architecture and music, but are countercultural, for example, in their teaching on many aspects of life, such as premarital sexuality, which may explain their greater appeal to many younger people than the appeal of the mainstream churches. In terms of practical ministry, the maintenance of ministry patterns built on the New Testament has been interpreted in many ways. For the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, it means not using musical instruments in worship and singing only the Psalms and not celebrating Christmas because Christmas is not mentioned as a festival in the New Testament.

Conclusion

The research data suggests that the pursuit of a culture-free theology is both biblically unwarranted and culturally unsuccessful. In brief, the ministry in a church may relate to culture in different ways simultaneously. The challenge for theology is to work out in which dimensions ministry should be cultural, in which it should be "counter-cultural," and in which it should be seeking to transform the culture.

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A Secular Christology of *Ecclesia*

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Abstract: Living in a pluralistic society, M M Thomas felt the need to redefine the church in appropriate terms to suit the secular sense by including all into understanding new humanity. His lifelong exegetical quest was to correlate the faith with the situation while criticising the church's existential life as a closed community, limiting people from embracing the *koinonia* experienced in the form of fraternal human community. Because of the church's existence in the secular setting, Thomas began to recognise how to interpret the church in its context to include all people as part of a genuine human community. Consequently, Thomas redefined the church in terms of what she does in the world rather than what she is. He sought to interpret the church for the secular context as a genuine human community created in the new humanity of Christ.

Key Words: *Eucharist*, Social *Dharma*, *Diakonia*, *Koinonia*, Messiah, New Humanity, Humanisation, Secularism, Pluralism, Human Community, Ecclesiology.

Introduction

M. M. Thomas is a prominent Indian Christian theologian. This paper is a study in his secular Christology. Thomas's quest to liberate the Christian Church from its traditional moorings, which he believed incapable of carrying out its mission, led him to construct his own concept of the church by an analysis of secular ideologies. He aspired to build a church appropriate for a multicultural, secular society while still

being Christ-centred. According to Sabu Philip, Thomas' argument consisted in his interpretation of the church "on the basis of what the church is for, rather what the church is."[1] In this regard, Thomas interpreted the church's character and shape concerning the entire community's corporate existence and the church's social nature. In this context, the paper focuses solely on how Thomas redefined the conventional assumption of the church whilst engaging in a pluralistic society in which he lived. Accordingly, the study will first examine how the church possessed a minority consciousness that forms a communal body with its norms and bounds in a diverse religious situation and then argues where the church's secular *dharma* (responsibility) exists. It will also explore the church's secular *diakonia*, eventually defining a church that is open to including a wider humanity.

1. The Church's Minority Consciousness in Pluralistic Context

Thomas asserts that the concept of church is more about the interpretation of the corporate nature of the church as a genuine human community that unites people together to fulfil its mission to the whole of humanity. This aspect of the church's mission is not just proclamation but also participation in the human struggle. He says that "as a religious community, the Christian church is a minority community in India."[2] He criticised the Indian church for its exclusiveness that kept the church aligned with the traditional hierarchy of the caste system.[3] He says, "the minority consciousness is so strong that they easily became appendages to the statuesque power structures and ideology, forgetting that they represent the destiny of all the people in the land."[4] This consciousness withholds any action and blocks the church from taking a bold stand towards the poor and the oppressed.

Consequently, it is high time for the church to exhibit its new presence in India, characterised by firm determination to fight against oppressive structures and construct a new society. Thomas argues that "the minority-consciousness of the Indian Christian community, which makes it seek, or accept conformity with powers that be because they promise protection to it, is a denial of the theological nature of the church of Jesus Christ."[5] This attitude of the church will prevent the church as an agent for social change to bring about economic and political justice. This also led the church to become a religious group like the Muslim or Sikh community. The minority consciousness of the church paved the way for insecurity among the Christian community because numerically, they are insignificant compared to the

[1]Sabu Philip, *Beyond Humanization: A Trinitarian Search on Mission* (Tiruvalla: CSS & Dharma Jyothi Vidhya Peeth, 2004), 146.
[2]M. M. Thomas, *Spiritual Body: 1 Corinthians,* trans. T.M. Philip (Tiruvalla: CSS, 2005), 80.
[3]M. M. Thomas, *Response to Tyranny* (Tiruvalla: CSS, 2000), 90.
[4]M. M. Thomas, *Church and Human Community* (New Delhi: ISPC, 1985), 21.
[5]Thomas, *Response to Tyranny,* 91.

other religious populations of India.[6] Christians generally tend to create a minority communal consciousness that becomes introverted, weak, and aggressive where they have dominance.[7]

Thomas assumes that Paul's advice to the church in Corinth is relevant and applicable to the church in India. The church should keep a close connection and contact with the followers of other faiths, secular life, and ideologies. He claims that "the principles like democracy, secularism, socialism and casteless society etc., which independent India has accepted as its goal do express the Christian ideal of brotherhood sisterhood to a certain extent."[8] Thomas realises the fundamental issue with the church is not different from the ideals of non-Christians. The mission of the church is for the whole world, not just for a closed community. For him, the closed nature, which is the communal form of the church, is unaware of the action outside of the church. It is the action outside the building community allowing humans to grow in the fuller stature as part of the new humanity. The church in India continued to remain a closed community. The church became isolated from the larger community into mission compounds and denominations. It led to the church remaining an exclusive Christian caste. In other words, a closed communal group instead of being open to society and the world.[9]

2. Secular *Dharma* of the Church

Thomas asserts that the *dharma*[10] of the church in the context of pluralism and secularity is "to promote renewal and discipline within its fold is integrally related to its commitment for participating in the socio-political change in the wider society, in cooperation with the adherents of other religious faiths and secular ideologies."[11] The church as the body of Christ should not limit itself to the boundary of today's established churches. Instead, in Thomas's opinion, "openness is the very fundamental characteristic of the church of Christ, and its form should be such as makes this double openness in Christ to God and the world an abiding reality."[12] The issue with the church today is its communal nature, which is forming a distinct religious community with its own social norms and boundaries rooted in self-centredness that closes its door to other people. The church is not just for particular people but the whole of humanity. Thomas understands Christ as the God of all

[6]Thomas, *Response to Tyranny,* 91-92.
[7]M. M. Thomas, *Christian Ecumenism for the Renewal of Secularism in India*, ed. Aruna Gnanadasan (Nagpur: NCCI, 1990), 111.
[8]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 80.
[9]Smith, "Ecclesiology of M. M. Thomas," 30.
[10]*Dharma* is a Sanskrit term, meaning vocation, responsibility or ethics.
[11]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 81.
[12]M. M. Thomas, *The Open Church, in the Church: A People's Movement,* ed. Mathai Zachariah (Nagpur: National Christian Council of India, 1975), 62.

humanity. So, he says,

> The fact is that the church conceives of Jesus Christ not as the '*Ishta deva*'[13] of Christians, but the Lord and Saviour of all humankind and therefore, the church understands itself, not as one community among many communities each with its gods, but as the first fruit of this creation (Col.1: 15), that is as 'the part' which consciously acknowledges, declares and manifests the spiritual destiny of the whole mankind in Jesus Christ.[14]

His emphasis is that of a boundaryless church that accommodates everyone without any barrier. As a result, Thomas takes 1 Corinthians 9:19, "for though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more" to interpret that Paul became "a servant of all, people belonging to different religions and ethnic groups."[15] He draws on the Pauline conviction that "Christ's gospel, transcending all class and religious cultures is God's work. So, the gospel is God's power to judge and transform all cultures."[16] Paul identified himself with people of different communities, respecting their cultural traditions for the proclamation of the gospel. In light of this Pauline conviction and theology, Thomas argues, the church in India should have the vision of a Hindu culture centred on Christ. The reason is that it will "eradicate all worships negating Christ and all caste regulations preventing human interaction and cooperation."[17] By this, Thomas argues that "those among the Hindus who have accepted Christ as Lord, along with renewed Hindus who have accepted Christ as belonging to the church" will be engaged.[18] In this way, the other faiths, ideologies, and cultures will become transformed and "renewed in Christ and will find a way to the body of Christ,"[19] to become a church for others with a goal of humanisation as its mission.[20]

3. Secular *Diakonia* of the Church

Thomas interprets 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 in terms of the love that is revealed in the personality of Christ. The basic description of the passage is divine love, "known as *agape,* which accepts the other person without conditions."[21] He interprets *agape* love manifested in various dimensions of human love "such as respecting those to whom

[13]*Ishta deva* is a personal deity of choice from among many deities or it is a chosen deity of a person or a person's favourite deity.
[14]Thomas, *The Open Church, in the Church: A People's Movement,* 62.
[15]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 93.
[16]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 93.
[17]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 93.
[18]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 94.
[19]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 94.
[20]M. M. Thomas, *Towards a Theology of Contemporary Ecumenism: A Collection of Addresses to Ecumenical Gatherings, 1947-1975* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1978), 161.
[21]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 107.

respect is due, persevering valuable cultural values, finding a life-partner, caring for children, keeping friendship with those whom we like, struggling for social justice, searching for divine truth."[22] These are natural expressions of love. Sometimes, conditions are attached to it, but God's love manifested on the cross sets no conditions. It is a purely selfless love that acts as the spiritual force transforming all other expressions of love.[23] According to Thomas, the obligation of the church is "to proclaim and prove that the divine love manifested on the cross is the force that transcends all other expressions of love, and at the same time transforms and sanctifies them."[24] While this is being proclaimed, the various expressions of love reflected in man, woman, friendship, social *diakonia* are intimately associated with divine love. This will result in deepening in all forms.[25] In this framework, Thomas claims that "actions for justice based on the ideals of the human fraternity will get further strengthened when inspired by the divine love manifested on the cross."[26] The natural expression of love includes justice, love and peace in all sectors of life in the economic and political aspects.[27]

Thomas assumes that "laws of justice attempt to subject power structures in common life under the concern for humanity."[28] Moreover, "the basic principle that inspires various political ideologies such as democracy, socialism, *Sarvodaya, anthiodaya etc. …* is love."[29] All the aspects in the structure of society need renewal under the inspiration of love manifested on the cross. The agape love, which is divine, challenges and transforms all existing justice in socio-political structures among human beings who are struggling for their true humanity and well-being.[30] In this structure, Thomas recommends re-examining the form of church as a congregation to meet human needs and the unity of all things in Christ. Thomas wants the church to participate in liberating activities and redeem cultures, ideologies, and religions from their inherent demonic forces. The aim is to make them truly human. He thinks that the church's *dharma* is "participation in the struggles of Asian peoples for a fuller human life in the state, society and culture, in a real partnership with men of other faiths and no faith, is the only context for realising the true being of the church's ministry and mission."[31]

[22]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 107.
[23]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 107.
[24]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 107.
[25]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 107.
[26]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 107.
[27]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 107.
[28]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 107.
[29]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 107.
[30]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 107.
[31]M. M. Thomas, *Christian Response to the Asian Revolution* (London: SCM, 1966), 104.

4. Church: A Secular Christ-Centred Human Fellowship

Thomas endorses a new shape for the Christian church for the pluralistic context, a Christ-centred secular human fellowship. He does not reject the Christian concept of the church. However, he denies the communal religious nature of the Christian church in India because it makes the church a Christian church as a separate religious community of Christians or caste.[32] His stress is on developing a form of church as the Christ-centred secular human fellowship. While interpreting Luke 5:39, Thomas asserts that "an attempt was made at an early stage to keep the Christian community part of the Jewish church"[33] (Luke 24:53, Acts. 2; 21:17-29). This failed when the church began to expand its boundaries beyond the Jewish community to the non-Jewish world, assuming a universal nature.

Further, he points out that the "church as the new Israel could grow only as it redefined the traditions of the old Israel, even while accepting them."[34] In the same manner, when Greeks embraced faith and became part of the church, "the church accepted the Greek cultural values and philosophies"[35] by redefining, transforming and renewing them in the light of the gospel of the person of Christ.[36] In this sense, Thomas takes a pluralistic context like India, where the plurality of ideologies and faith traditions that exist are dominated by Hinduism. In these settings, he poses a question as to "whether it is possible for the Christian church to emerge within Hindu culture while the Hindu religion and society are redefined in the light of Christian humanism and Christ?"[37] In this process, he proposes two developments that need to be considered. First, a renewal of Hindu traditions in meaningful ways for the church to grow and witness Christ in the milieu of Hindu culture. Second, an attempt to shape the Christian church to be more Indian including Hindu culture in its own life.[38] This will bring together the people in India as one genuine human community.

Thomas further explains that the impact of secularisation breaks the separation between people of different faiths and people having no faith. This brings people together as one community. They are all involved in the human struggle for the true meaning of their personal and social existence, especially the idea of religious fellowship in the whole life of the community. Thomas accepts this as the actions carried out in terms of humanisation. In this structure, the gospel of Jesus Christ is

[32]T. Jacob Thomas, *Ethics of a World Community: Contributions of M.M. Thomas Based on Indian reality* (Culcutta: Punthi Pusthak, 1993), 182.
[33]M. M. Thomas, *Jesus-God's Anointed, Luke 1-9, Contextual Theological Bible Commentary,* trans. T.M. Philip (Tiruvalla: CSS, 2007), 94.
[34]Thomas, *Jesus-God's Anointed,* 94-95.
[35]Thomas, *Jesus-God's Anointed,* 95.
[36]Thomas, *Jesus-God's Anointed,* 95.
[37]Thomas, *Jesus-God's Anointed,* 95.
[38]Thomas, *Jesus-God's Anointed,* 95.

perceived as the message of the new human fellowship. Thomas points out that the relation between Christian faith, other faiths, and secular ideologies not only co-exists in the same society but also collaborates to build a common secular society and culture.[39] Thomas believes that all religions and secular ideologies are struggling with the humanisation of the modern world. He is confident that dialogue among them would lead to harmony in a pluralistic society. Thomas emphatically argues that "I cannot see any difference between the accepted missionary goal of Christian church expressing Christ in terms of the contemporary Hindu thought and life patterns and Christ-centred Hindu church of Christ which transforms Hindu thought and life patterns from within."[40] By this, he meant to convey that "finding expression in the constant quest by the fellowship to interpret the Hindu religious tradition in the light of Christ from within that tradition."[41] That means staying within the Hindu religious community to transform its religious and social patterns in light of Christ; thus, making Indian society a common framework for all other faiths to become genuinely religious without becoming communal frictions.[42] In this context, he says that moving from the Hindu to the Christian religion is unnecessary because it separates an individual from the Hindu community in the social, legal, and religious sense.[43] Thomas strives for a Christ-centred secular human fellowship that stays within one's religion: one can follow Christ to become genuinely religious without becoming communal.[44] In this way, he attempts to avoid the communal tensions in the society or state.

5. Church At the Boundary: Towards a Wider Humanity

According to Thomas, those who are "outside" the church who acknowledge Jesus Christ, but reject the established church are increasing day by day. Even the political leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Ram Manohar Lohia, social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and a large number of Indian spiritual leaders have accepted Christ in a sense as a focal point of their struggles and have tried to relate Christ's love and human justice along with their fights for freedom and justice. Many Hindus sincerely love Jesus and wish to follow his teachings but cannot accept baptism and join the established churches. This reality of those who are "outside" the church is a fact, which needs recognition. The question before the established churches is how could they be more open and welcoming to the people in communion with Christ, and yet outside the church. In a sense, these people have tried to experiment and practice the vision of a Christian community in a theological dimension. They seem to be radically

[39]Thomas, *Contemporary Ecumenism,* 103.
[40]Thomas, *Salvation and Humanization,* (Madras: CLS, 1971), 40.
[41]Thomas, *Salvation and Humanization,* 40.
[42]T. Jacob Thomas, *Ethics of a World Community*, 185.
[43]Thomas, *Some Theological Dialogue* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1977), 114.
[44]Thomas, *Some Theological Dialogue*, 115.

Christian rooted in the soil and are engaged in actions upholding and promoting gospel values so that a distinction from church life would be hard. Thomas considers that this is a natural boundary between the world and the church. Distinguishing between those in the eucharistic community and those outside is challenging because both Christian and human community have got the same centre in Jesus Christ.[45] So Thomas considers that there is only the core or the centre for the church, and it is not necessary to draw the boundaries. This is significant in the case for a relevant boundaryless church in India open to the whole of humanity.

Thomas recognises the Pauline concept that the church is the body of Christ and explains that the church is the divine instrument to continue Christ's work of humanisation. He perceived the church as the body of Christ, a broken body.[46] In history, the church symbolises Christ's continuing presence and is the vehicle for Christ's work in the world. Humans are given the gift of receiving new life and becoming part of the church, which is the spiritual body of Christ through Christ's death and resurrection.[47] Thomas says that the unity of the church originates from the foundation of the church, which is Jesus Christ, who was crucified, died, and resurrected. He is the only foundation; "that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19).[48] The church has no discrimination of gender, racial or caste within its fellowship because its unity exists on the faith in God's grace freely given through Jesus Christ. Thomas claims that "we should not allow gender distinction which is a natural one or racial distinction which came into existence due to socio-cultural reasons or caste-religious distinctions to break spiritual unity of the church."[49] He interprets it by taking 1 Corinthians 12:13 that "For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."[50]

Thomas defines the church as the community created in the new humanity of Jesus Christ as the *Koinonia* in Christ, that is, communion in the messiah, who is Jesus of Nazareth.[51] However, both Panikkar and Devanandan claim that "the features not only of a Christ who is more than Jesus of Nazareth but also a people of Christ in the world history, are more than the historical community of those who were openly

[45]Thomas, "The Struggle for Human Dignity as a Participation for the Gospel," in *What Asian Christians Are Thinking* (Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1976), 103.
[46]Jesudas M. Athyal ed., *M. M. Thomas, The Man and His Legacy* (Tiruvalla: CLS, 1997), 52.
[47]M. M. Thomas, *Athmika Sareeram* (Spiritual Body) (Tiruvalla: CLS, 1996), 17. This is an original Malyalam version of the source.
[48]Thomas, *Athmika Sareeram,* 44.
[49]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 30.
[50]Thomas, *Spiritual Body,* 30.
[51]T. Jacob Thomas, *Ethics of a World Community,* 167.

acknowledging Jesus as God and Savior."[52] In this context, according to Thomas, "Panikkar's *Unknown Christ* of traditional faith and Devanadan's *Acknowledged Christ* of the renascent faiths have to be redefined."[53] They call for a redefinition of the church of Jesus Christ, to include a "wider people of Christ"[54] which includes the faith responses to Christ outside the church, and to include the need for Christians to be in dialogical partnership with others in witnessing Christ to them.[55] This calls for the redefinition of the wider *koinonia* in Christ in history. Since the church is the human community and a sign in this world, the *koinonia* within the church is the anticipation of the *koinonia* in and among the whole people. This demands the sharing of material, spiritual, physical resources and a coming together to make it possible.[56] Thomas calls this form of Eucharist community "the structured nucleus."[57]

Consequently, acknowledging Christ, that is outside the institutionalised church as an "unstructured nucleus"[58] calls for a redefinition of different levels and forms of *koinonia* in Christ. This involves three concentric circles with Christ as the centre.[59] First, there is the *koinonia* of the eucharist community. This form of the church acknowledges the person of Jesus as Messiah. Second, there is a larger koinonia of dialogue among people of different faiths inwardly being renewed by their acknowledgement of the intimacy of crucified Christ. T. Jacob Thomas interprets this as "their acknowledgement of the ultimacy of the pattern of suffering servanthood as exemplified by the crucified Jesus."[60] Finally, there is a still larger *koinonia* of those involved in power. The political struggle for the new society and the world community is based on secular or religious anthropologies but informed by *agape* of the cross.

Thomas acknowledges the tension between these communities and thinks that the spiritual tensions between them are essential for developing a relevant Christology, a relevant Christian mission, and relevant forms of church life in the Indian context. Hence, Thomas wants to distinguish the traditional idea of the church as a religious community and sees it as a wider *koinonia* centred in Christ.[61] He says that the boundary of the new humanity in Christ is not the same as that of the empirical

[52]M. M. Thomas, *Risking Christ for Christ's Sake: Towards as Ecumenical Theology of Pluralism* (Tiruvalla: CSS & ISPCK, 1990), 114.
[53]Thomas, *Risking Christ,* 114.
[54]Thomas, *Risking Christ,* 114.
[55]Thomas, *Risking Christ,* 114.
[56]Thomas, *Atmika Sareeram* (Mal), 212.
[57]This is the community of people who openly acknowledge the crucified Christ and risen Christ as the Christ and gathered around the Lord's Table and the exposition of the word of God and scattered for witnesses and service, as the church of the people of Christ. CF. T. Jacob Thomas, *Ethics of a World Community* 167 and M. M. Thomas *Risking Christ,* 114.
[58]Thomas, *Risking Christ,* 113.
[59]Thomas, *Risking Christ,* 113.
[60]Jacob Thomas, *Ethics of a World Community,* 167.
[61]Cicil Hargreaves, *Asia Christian Thinking* (Madras: ISPCK & CLS, 1972), 133.

church of Christ. This is the witness of the new creation which cuts across the church and the world.[62]

According to Thomas, Christian *koinonia* is based on Divine forgiveness and the manifested spirituality of the Lord's Supper, which extended itself in some kind of mutuality in congregational life. This was the point of challenge and tension to the traditional social structure, and eventually contributed to the development of a new national social reform movement and a new politics of community development.[63] Thomas affirms that "this centrality of divine forgiveness releases men and woman from the idolatry of communalism of religion, race, nation, class, sex and caste or even ideology which, in alienated conditions, provided spiritual and social security."[64] Thomas discovers how new humanity is related to the church. Jesus Christ is acknowledged as the new man by his death and resurrection: through him, a new humanity is created by God, making the beginning of a new age. The new humanity of Jesus Christ is a movement working in the history of the world. It is renewing and transforming everything according to the nature of the new man, Jesus Christ. It is a movement of the Spirit, directed and controlled by Jesus Christ, leading to man and nature.[65] The new humanity as the redemptive movement in history has enough potential to transform the world. By this creation of the new humanity, humans are informed of God's purposes in history and can participate in the new humanity of Jesus Christ. Humans are beneficiaries of it and serve as co-workers with God in the movement of redemption.

The new humanity has another significant dimension: to inform humans of history's purposive movement and goal, that history progresses towards its fulfilment.[66] It also serves as criteria in humanity's grappling with various puzzles and problems of nature and saves their plans from the derailment of self-justification and self-projection.[67] Moreover, the new humanity in Christ is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its maker, Jesus Christ. In the new humanity of Christ, there cannot be Greek and Jew; circumcised or uncircumcised; barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman, but Christ is all in all. "Through Jesus Christ a new communion of the Spirit, based on mutual forgiveness and gratitude to the divine forgiveness received in Christ, building up tissues of love, comes into being among the communities of the

[62]M. M. Thomas, *Christian Response to Asian Revolution* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 102.
[63]M. M. Thomas, *New Creation: Twelve Selected Sermons Given on Various Occasions* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1976), 20.
[64]M. M. Thomas, "The Secular Theologies of India and the Secular Meaning of Christ," eds. R.S. Sugirtharaja & cecil Hargreaves, *Readings in Indian Christian Theology,* 5th ed. (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), 98.
[65]M. M. Thomas, *Man and Universe of Faiths* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1972), 129.
[66]M. M. Thomas, *Sarva Srishtrikkum Adyajathan* (Malayalayam, *First Born of All Creation: Letters to Colossians and Philemon* (Tiruvalla: CSS, 1978), 23.
[67]M. M. Thomas *Parivarthanathinte Daiva Sastram* (Malayalam, *Theology of Evolution* (Tiruvalla: Theological Literature Committee, 1982), 111.

world, producing the spiritual ferment of their renewal and humanisation (Col. 3:10 -18)."[68]

Thomas affirms that Jesus is the first fruit of new creation, breaking into history and directing it to the final consummation. The church is the body of Christ and the symbol. The church is the body of Christ in the history of the world.[69] She is the instrument for Christ's activity in the world. Therefore, Thomas considers the power politics to establish "shalom" as witnessing Christ and the power of his resurrection.[70] However, Thomas distinguishes the new humanity from the church and considers that they are not identical. Thomas starts with new humanity in Christ, "the humanity which responds in faith and receives the liberation of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, transcends the church."[71] The institutional church, with its membership, cannot be identified as the new humanity. The church is the first fruit, the instrument of God's purpose to unite all things in Christ, but the church is not itself the new humanity.[72] Instead, he presented church as the sign in history pointing towards the goal of humanity; all humanity is moving towards the new humanity in Christ and through Christ.

Conclusion

Thomas proposes a paradigm of the church as a genuine human community that embraces new humanity in Christ, which fits various faith practices. As new humanity in Christ, the church transcends all minority consciousness, which prevents it from fulfilling its social *dharma* towards the struggle against oppressive structures that obstruct the formation of a new human community which eventually is composed of all people who acknowledge Christ at various levels, including humans on the periphery. In this respect, he employs the Corinthian church as an analogy to examine the pluralistic situation, stating that the church needs to uphold a close relationship and interaction with people of different faiths, secular life, and ideologies.

The church, in its social *dharma*, Thomas asserts, requires reaffirmation of its commitment to socio-political reforms in the larger society by participating in humanisation movements. The church's closed nature, according to Thomas, is a communal structure rooted in self-centeredness that excludes other humans. Against this backdrop, the concept of social *diakonia* helps the church to emerge from its closed nature by exhibiting the selfless love demonstrated on the cross, which

[68]M. M. Thomas, *The Secular Ideologies of India and the Secular Meaning of Christ* (Madras: CLS, 1971), 98.
[69]Thomas, *Atmika Sareeram,* 16.
[70]Thomas, *Salvation and Humanization,* 58.
[71]Thomas, *Some Theological Dialogue,* 112.
[72]Thomas, *Some Theological Dialogue,* 113.

transforms and sanctifies all other acts of love. The ethical values of the human fraternity will be enhanced in all elements of this transformation and sanctification process, including economic, social, and political elements, paving the way for the creation of a new humanity.

In a pluralistic society, Thomas envisions a new church model, which promotes Christ-centred human fellowship while rejecting the church's communal religious essence centred primarily on the eucharistic church affairs, limiting the church within the boundary of the eucharistic community, which makes church communal. Thomas embraces the concept of the church as the community created in Jesus Christ's new humanity, which he describes as the *koinonia* in Christ, profoundly grounded in the communion of the Messiah, who is the Jesus of Nazareth. *koinonia* identifies the church as a human community, which will serve as a sign in the world, symbolising the inclusion of all humans in Christ by forming the new humanity.

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The Lord's Supper in a Filipino Perspective

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Abstract: This article interprets the *meaning* of the breaking of bread from the perspective of Filipino indigenous values. In the discussion, I will argue that the Filipino indigenous worldview can provide a fresh and meaningful understanding of the Lord's supper that is culturally relevant for the Filipino Brethren. Furthermore, the concept of *meaningfulness* has something to do with the *contextual interpretation* of the Lord's supper based on Filipino cultural and socio-political realities. Contextual interpretation underlines the role of local culture and worldview in the interpretative process. The aim is to provide a meaningful perspective and understanding of the Lord's supper for the Filipino Brethren churches while at the same time illuminating an often neglected scriptural aspect of the Lord's Supper.

Key Words: *Eucharist*, Interpretation, Context, Indegenous, Lord's Supper, Culture, Identity, *Kapwa*.

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1. The Lord's Supper and the Brethren

The Lord's supper in the history of the Brethren signifies an essential aspect of the movement: *unity in the name of Christ*. The pioneers of the movement had attempted to realize the universal unity of the body of Christ through the Lord's supper.[1] Originating in Dublin around 1825, some of the earliest members desired to come together for worship and communion without denominational barriers. These men

[1]Neil Dickson, "'Sweet Feast of Love Divine': The Lord's Supper in the Brethren Movement," *Brethren and the Church*, ed. T. J (Studies in Brethren History; Glasgow, 2020), 287.

had no intention of establishing a new denomination, for that would defeat their purpose in coming together, neither did they intend to establish a movement.[2]

However, according to Neil Dickson, while it is true that for the early Brethren, the emphasis of the Lord's supper is about the *unity of the church*, they hardly wrote about the theology of the Lord's supper.[3] But as evangelicals, the Brethren's focus during the observance of the Lord's supper was no doubt the cross or the death of Christ.[4] Dickson concludes; "It was inevitable, given the significance that the Lord's supper had for the Brethren, that a rich understanding of the occasion would emerge. Their theology and practice of the Lord's supper was its own interpretative tradition."[5] For the Brethren, their coming together at the Lord's table is an embodiment of their deep theological belief and an expression of spirituality. It is the "quintessential expression of the piety of the members and was central to its practice."[6] Nevertheless, it is important to consider what does the Lord's supper, then, *mean* for the Filipino Open Brethren churches?[7]

The article is an attempt to interpret the *meaning* of the breaking of bread from the perspective of Filipino indigenous values. Here, contextualization is construed as a task to make the gospel[8] culturally meaningful. As a contested term, contextualization is defined in various ways.[9] The difficulty lies in clearly delineating

[2]F. F. Bruce, *In Retrospect: Remembrance of Things Past* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1993), 314.
[3]This is especially true of the earliest of all Brethren publications. As a result, it is difficult to establish a recognizably Brethren doctrine or theology of the Lord's supper. The reason behind this phenomenon is the Brethren's aversion in the movement to systematic theology, which makes a synthesis of a different understanding of the service difficult. Dickson, "Sweet Feast of Love Divine," 299.
[4]Dickson, "Sweet Feast of Love Divine," 296.
[5]Dickson, "Sweet Feast of Love Divine," 302.
[6]Neil Dickson, "'Shut In With Thee': The Morning Meeting Among Scottish Open Brethren, 1830s–1960s," *Change and Continuity in Church History,* ed. R. N. Swanson (Studies in Church History; Woodbridge, 1999), 275.
[7]The Brethren movement arrived at the Philippine shores in 1920 through the work of Cyril and Ann Brooks. In his autobiography, Cyril Brooks, who is better known as "Dad Brooks," described the work of the Lord as a triumph of God's grace in the lives of the Filipino People. Along with other foreign missionaries from the Brethren assemblies in the United States, New Zealand, and Australia, with some nationals from other countries, Brethren assemblies experienced growth in the grace and knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Currently, there are no less than 150 Brethren assemblies all around the Philippines. Cyril Brooks, *Grace Triumphant: Autobiography of Cyril Brooks* (Kansas City, KS, 1982).
[8]In this paper, the term 'gospel' refers not only to the message of salvation but includes the whole life of discipleship and life as a community of believers.
[9]For example, Stephen Bevans describes the dynamic of contextualization by using models. Bevans stresses that models are essentially the construction of ideal types and useful to describe reality but should not be read literally. He maps his model using a scale that runs from a conservative to a radical spectrum. In the case of Robert Schreiter, he describes the relationship between gospel and culture by using the term "local theology" as opposed to "contextual theology." For him, the former "captures the essence of the new way of doing theology that he is concerned to write about." Schreiter's main concern in his book *Constructing Local Theology* (London, 1985) is to show that Western theology is unable to respond to the questions and issues rising from the local cultural situation. For him the interface between gospel and culture is described in three ways of doing local

the relationship between the gospel and cultural context. Nevertheless, as a disputed concept, its sole intention is to make the gospel culturally meaningful to the people. By principle, contextualization aims to show how the gospel should be understood from the point of view of the culture bearer, *the indigenous community*. It means that the gospel should be contextualized "within" the indigenous culture to make it culturally meaningful and understandable.

Moreover, the article adopts some value concepts derived from indigenous psychology, specifically in the mode of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino Psychology). *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* emerged in the 1970s as a reaction against Western domination of social science after the Second World War. For Virgilio Enriquez, the most prominent scholar of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, the massive influence of America in education, religion, politics, and social media, "predisposes the Filipino to adopt the colonial viewpoint in studying and explaining the Filipino psyche."[10] Consequently, it fails to understand the factors and influences that shaped the Filipino worldview. Instead of liberating the indigenous consciousness, Western psychology deepened the colonial mentality. There is a need to balance the outlook of personality and cultural studies in the Philippines. The Filipino worldview should be analysed and understood in the socio-political and economic context of the Philippines.

In the words of Enriquez, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* seeks to explain Philippine realities from the Filipino perspective taking into account the peculiarities, distinct values, and characteristics of the Filipino, which Western models invariably fail to explain or consider. This failure has a serious consequence—a perpetuation of the colonial status of the Filipino mind. Therefore, as a reaction against the domination of Western psychology, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* is tasked to decolonize the Filipino mind. It promotes a study of the Filipino psyche and personality based on the experience, ideas, and orientation of the Filipino by emphasizing their identity and national consciousness.[11] Thus, in this article, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* serves as an interpretative framework to produce a contextual interpretation of the Lord's supper. The indigenous perspective is adopted as a heuristic frame in understanding the Lord's supper as meaningful for Filipino Brethren communities.

2. The Lord's Supper and Indigenous Perspective: A Meaningful Construal

In this section, the Lord's supper is analyzed from the perspective of the *Sikolohiyang Pilipino.* Enriquez's Indigenous Social Interaction Theory (ISIT) is based on human

theology which refer to translation, adaptation, and contextual. Each of these is determined, not only on how theology interacts with cultural context, but also the relationship between theology and the community where it arises. "Contextualization" as a disputed concept has a sole intention of making the gospel culturally meaningful to the people. Angie Pears, *Doing Contextual Theology* (New York, 2010).

[10]Virgilio Enriquez, "Indigenous Personality Theory," *Indigenous Psychology: A Book of Readings* (Diliman, Quezon City, PH, 1990), 287.

[11]Enriquez, "Indigenous Personality Theory," 287.

interaction, a significantly valuable aspect of life in the Philippines. Thus, "social interaction is a meaningful focus of investigation in the process of identifying and analyzing basic concepts of Filipino personality, social psychology, worldview, and philosophy."[12] Enriquez believes that Filipinos have levels of human interaction ranging from mere civility (*pakikitungo*) to a more profound sense of identification (*pakikiisa*). The distinction goes beyond conceptual description, it is also behavioural. Levels of human interaction fall into two categories: "outsider" (*Ibang tao* category) and "insider" (*Hindi ibang tao* category). The distinction lies in the level of interpersonal relationships.[13] The levels of interaction range from the relatively uninvolved civility (*pakikitungo*) to the total sense of identification (*pakikiisa*).

Accordingly, these dynamics in an interpersonal relationship can be observed in the context of food-sharing. The *bisita* "guest" (*ibang tao*/outsider category) is treated differently compared to close family friends (*hindi ibang tao*/insider category). The *bisita* is offered special cuisine, served in special wares and utensils, while the close family friends (*hindi ibang tao*) is treated very casually and informally. The casual treatment of the close family friends does not connote indifference in comparison with a special treatment for the guest. The distinction lies in the level of interpersonal relationships. Enriquez notes, "What the Filipino eats, its source and the way it is prepared and served, indicate an intimate, as well as practical relationship between man and nature."[14] The guest (*bisita)* is treated on the level of 'civility' (*pakikitungo)*, and on the other hand, the close family friends (*hindi ibang tao)* is treated on the level of "oneness" *(pakikiisa)*. In other words, food-sharing and eating is a social phenomenon in human interaction and relationships that can either involve the *ibang tao* (outsider) or *hindi ibang tao* (insider).

Moreover, under the ISIT, the Filipino concept of *kapwa* is a core value that comprises the *outsider* and *insider* categories. In Filipino, *kapwa* is the unity of the "self" and "others."[15] On the other hand, as Enriquez notes, "The English 'others' is actually used in opposition to the 'self' and implies the recognition of the self as a separate identity."[16] For Filipino, *kapwa* is a "recognition of shared identity, an inner self shared with others."[17] *Kapwa* is considered the core value underlying Filipino interpersonal behaviour. Finally, both "outsider" and "insider" are treated as *kapwa* (self-in-the-other, shared identity) and acted out through *pakikipagkapwa* (treating other as equal), which also refers to "humanness at its highest level."[18] The Filipino concept of *kapwa* and its derivatives is a valuable concept to communicate the

[12]Virgilio Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology: The Philippine Experience* (Diliman, Quezon City, PH, 1992), 39.
[13]Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology,* 21.
[14]Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology,* 41.
[15]Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology*, 43.
[16]Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology*, 43.
[17]Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology*, 43.
[18]Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology*, 43.

meaning of the breaking of bread to Filipino people. Later, I will demonstrate how the idea, as mentioned earlier, is a helpful category in the contextual interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11: 17–24 about the Lord's supper.

The significance of the Lord's supper is usually construed as a doctrine of Christ's redemptive sacrifice for his people. The traditional interpretation of the Lord's supper centres on "remembering" the cost of our salvation symbolized by the elements on the table—the bread and the wine. The emphasis is thanksgiving and worship (vertical), and individual or personal retrospection (individual pietism). While these emphases are significantly true, on the other hand, this focus tends to pay less attention to the ethical and moral dimension of this religious practice. Careful exegesis strongly suggests that Paul's interpretation of the Lord's supper in 1 Corinthians 11: 17–23 emerged primarily out of social factors and, therefore, should be included in the analysis.[19] Socio-cultural analysis of the passage strongly indicates that Paul's intention for the institution of the Lord's supper is a response to the problem of division between the rich and the poor in the church of Corinth.[20] Their attitude and manner are inappropriate for the kind of occasion whenever they come together. For Paul, the fact that they ended up with one of them "goes hungry and another drunk" (v.21) proves that there is disorder. Even before the meal started, a sense of division defined the relationship they have as a community: "For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper" (v.21). Their relational problem, which affects the true essence of coming together for the Lord's supper, is tantamount to contempt for the church of God and direct humiliation to the poor (v. 22). Their divisions at the Lord's supper annuls the unity they have. Therefore, the meaning of the breaking of bread is not solely about vertical relationships (relationship to God), but equally important is the horizontal relationship (man's relationship with other men). In the moral and ethical dimension, the concept *kapwa* may shed light on understanding the Lord's supper to be culturally meaningful for the Filipino people. At this point, it is essential to discuss the Filipino idea of *kapwa* concerning the ethical implication of the breaking of bread.

The problem of division in Corinth is the problem of *pakikipagkapwa* (treating others as equal). Their social distinction underlines the cause of division. Most scholars agree that division was between the rich and the poor. The rich with their behaviour

[19]Gerd Thiessen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia, 1982), 146. At the outset, Paul's discussion on the Lord's supper is motivated by a strong rebuke on the abuse of this important gathering. In short, it is not solely a doctrinal or theological issue, but behavioral or ethical problem. This can be demonstrated on Paul's repeated phrase "when you come together" (vv. 17, 18, 19). As it appears in the passage, it is connected with Paul's dissatisfaction of their attitude when coming together, "*it is not for the better but for the worse*" (v.17), "I hear there are divisions among you" (v.18), "I hear that there are factions among you" (v.19). What precisely was Paul referring to in this gathering or coming together is the observance of the Lord's supper "when you come together it is not really to eat the Lord's Supper" (v.20).
[20]Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: MI, 2014), 587.

were "humiliating those who have nothing"—the poor. That they could bring food both for themselves and for others and their wealth gave them social status.[21] Social distinction based on wealth and power is a direct violation of *pakikipagkapwa* (treating others as equal) which is central in the Lord's supper. In Corinth, the division is caused by a failure of the rich to treat the needy members of the church as *kapwa* (co-equal). The manner they treated the poor was a direct insult to their dignity as being humans. As a Filipino core value, *kapwa,* according to Enriquez, is the "superordinate concept that embraces all levels of interaction"[22] and *pakikipag-kapwa* means "accepting and dealing with other persons as equal."[23] Human interaction is rooted primarily in the concept of *kapwa.* It is having a deep awareness of shared identity that predisposes a commitment and respect to the dignity of others. Paul's rebuke centred on the abusive attitude of the rich towards their poor brothers and sisters in Christ.

The rich had no sense of *pakikipag-kapwa* and treated the poor as inferior and not equal to them. The problem of conflict and division is caused by social stratification, an acceptable social dynamic in the Graeco-Roman culture, but not in Church.[24] Respect for one's dignity is pivotal in interpersonal relationships. The category of "outsider" (*ibang tao*) and "insider" (*hindi ibang tao*) are both under the heading of *pakikipagkapwa* and what encompasses all interaction is *kapwa* as the core value. Furthermore, the Lord's supper is an occasion for believers *in all walks of life* to come and share a meal together. Paul's rebuke on the abuse of the Lord's supper stems from the attitude of some believers (most probably the rich) in the way they treat

[21]Similarly, Ben Witherington sees the problem as "further stratification and division amongst 'the have and the have nots' portions of the church in Corinth." It appears that the context of the Lord's supper happened in the social setting of a meal probably, an agape meal. Ben Witherington III, *Making a Meal of It: Rethinking the Theology of the Lord's Supper* (Waco TX, 2007). In a similar vein, Stephen Barton argues that the issue was about boundary markers. Some in Corinth intent on "collapsing together categories of household and church, and the meal serves as boundary marker." Stephen C. Barton, "Paul's Sense of Place: An Anthropological Approach to Community Formation in Corinth," *New Testament Studies* 32, No. 2 (1986), 225–246.

[22]Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology*, 43.

[23]Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology*, 45.

[24]Despite many similarities with a Roman *collegium* or *symposium* (social gathering and an occasion for gaining or showing social status), the Lord's supper is not identical with such associations. Rather, because of the many similarities with meal gathering in Roman culture, the Corinthians may have viewed their gatherings as some sort of "association" and behaved accordingly at the Lord's supper. On the contrary it was the tradition of the Last Supper in the framework of the Passover that the source of the Lord's Supper is rooted. The abuse that occurs on the Lord's table stems from their failure to recognize the theological and ethical implications of the spirit behind the sharing of this "sacred" meal ("when you come together it is not really to eat the Lord's Supper"). The occasion of the gathering transforms the occasion of the meal. Paul's rebuke on the attitude of the believers was direct attempt to deconstruct the social stratification which defines the nature of the social clubs in ancient Graeco-Roman culture. So while it is true that Smith's sociological reading of Paul's account is helpful to see the role of ideology in perceiving the issue of conflict in Corinth, but I think he fails to integrate the theological aspect in his analysis. For a thorough analysis of the Eucharist in the context of the Roman banquet ideology see Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist; The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

their needy members. Division erupts in their midst and in their coming together "it is not for the better but for worse" (v.17).

The ethical dimension mentioned above often escapes in interpreting Paul's intention because of the default interpretation focusing on the redemptive work of Christ for the Church. Adopting the Filipino concept of *kapwa* and its derivative *pakikipag-kapwa*, intensifies the ethical and moral motif in Paul's rebuke. For Filipinos, a person is not an individual entity but finds his or her identity in others. To live without regard to other people is equivalent to *hindi marunong makipagkapwa* (does not treat another person as equal). Consequently, inherent in *pakikipagkapwa* is a moral responsibility that is "definitely inconsistent with the exploitative human transaction."[25] To be a human is to be a *kapwa*. To exist as a human is to perceive one's existence as a shared reality with others. *Pakikipagkapwa* as means of social interaction defines *the level* of interpersonal relationships. The treatment may vary (*ibang tao* and *hindi ibang tao*), but it does not in any way diminish respect to human dignity or *pagkatao.*

The failure of the rich in the Corinthian church is the lack of awareness of shared identity. The rich and powerful *hindi marunong makipagkapwa* (does not treat another person as equal) is equivalent to having no sense of existing identity. Here, the Filipino concept of ego (*ako*) departs from the Western idea of "self" as an individual entity and being. *Ako* is the shared inner-self or *kapwa* (I relate; therefore, I exist). I have no existence apart from others. I do not give identity to myself. It is the other that gives identity and meaning to a person's existence, *kung wala ikaw, wala din ako* (without you there is no I).[26] Enriquez defines it well:

> A person starts having *kapwa* not so much because of a recognition of status given to him by others but more because of his awareness of shared identity. The *ako* (I, the ego) and the *iba-sa-akin* (others) are one and the same in *kapwa* psychology: *Hindi ako iba sa aking kapwa* (I am not different from others). Once *ako* starts thinking of himself as separate from *kapw*a, the Filipino 'self' gets to be individuated in the Western sense and, in effect, denies the status of *kapwa* to others. By the same token, the status of *kapwa* is also denied to the self.[27]

The division is a direct attack on the concept of being a church as "life-together." Paul's admonition is towards the healing of the body, as stated in 1 Corinthians 11: 27–9. Paul cautioned the believers to examine themselves if they were worthy of taking part in the bread and the wine. The whole warning points to "sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord." Moreover, he admonished them to "discern the

[25]Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology*, 45.
[26]Vitaliano Gorospe, *Filipino Search for Meaning: Moral Philosophy in The Philippine Setting*, (Manila, PH, 1974), 88–9.
[27]Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology*, 43.

body" to avoid self-judgment plaguing them. In keeping with the flow of his argument, "discerning the body" refers to the church (not universal, but the local assembly in Corinth) as a visible expression of the body of Christ. Reading it in the context of the social relation of the Corinthian believers, to participate in "an unworthy manner" is to "eat in a way that provokes division (v.18)."[28] To "be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord" is to sin against the body of Christ, the people of God founded in the New Covenant. The Corinthians have failed to recognize that the community of believers is what the body of Christ stands for.[29] Paul's description of the institution of the Lord's supper is a claim for the spirit of *pakikipagkapwa-tao.*

Pakikipag-kapwa as a level of interpersonal relationship is aimed towards the level of oneness (*pakikiisa).* The latter goes beyond civility. *Pakikiisa* (oneness) refers to a more profound sense of identification, a level of fusion, oneness, and complete trust. To participate in the Lord's supper is an invitation to *pakikiisa kay Kristo* (oneness in Christ). At the same time, the Lord's supper is a reminder of our shared existence as humans. This idea is remarkably demonstrated in the Filipino value of *pakikipag-kapwa tao* (treating others as equal)*. Pakikiisa* or *Pagkakaisan* (identification, oneness) is the highest level of interpersonal relationship. Being one with others is the highest expression of *pakikipagkapwa.* Here the reflexive quality of the shared inner-self in *kapwa* receives the most significant value.[30] This quality is beautifully expressed in the Filipino saying, "*Ang sakit ng kalingkingan, ay sakit ng buong katawan"*[31] (the pain of the little finger is felt by the whole body). Interestingly, Paul used this expression to describe the unity they have as members of one body (1 Corinthians 12: 26ff). In the instructions about their attitude in coming together for the breaking of bread, Paul rebukes them of their division, jeopardizing the vital truth about the nature of their unity.

Emphasis on the ethical dimension of the breaking of bread is not a devaluation of the redemptive work of Christ. Instead, Paul reconfigured the Last supper tradition (Matt. 26: 26–9; Mk 14: 22–5; Lk 22: 17–20) in the context of social division in the church of Corinth. His main concern rests on the proceeding verses, which contain a warning about an inappropriate spirit in coming together for the supper of the Lord (1 Cor. 11: 27–32). This then is followed by an admonition to correct their out-of-step attitude during the observance of the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11: 33–4). It becomes more meaningful to the social context of Corinth. In a sense, Paul was able to contextualize the Last-Supper tradition without diminishing the sacrificial and redemptive work of Christ. Paul reminded them of the call for unity in the church (the Body of Christ) as

[28]Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 606.
[29]Richard Hays, *First Corinthians: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY, 1997), 200.
[30]Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology*, 53.
[31]Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology*, 53.

a powerful means of "proclamation of the Lord's death." The church is an alternative community, a living declaration of the death of Christ and his coming reign.

Conclusion

Reading from the perspective of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, the Eucharist becomes more culturally meaningful for the Filipino people. As explored in this paper, *kapwa* as a core Filipino value is a valuable concept to understand not only the doctrinal aspect of the Lord's supper, but also its ethical/moral dimensions. This focus becomes possible because the indigenous perspective is integrated into the process of theologizing. But more importantly, because the indigenous worldview (including the socio-political and cultural context) is the starting point in the process of contextualization in particular and doing theology in general.

Moreover, the breaking of bread, when interpreted in the context of the Filipino experience, sheds a new light on Scripture. The doctrine of incarnation can be understood in the context of *kapwa* and *pakikipag-kapwa.* God, through Christ, revealed his *self* (being) to humanity, *Ang Dios ay nakipagkapwa- tao sa pamamagitan ni Kristo* (God becomes one of us in Christ). Making this statement does not in any way reduce the concept of divinity in respect to God. But just like what Paul said in Philippians, "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2: 5). This statement is in the context of respect and honour to one's dignity. Christ's "self-emptying" (as taking the form of human flesh) is a concept or an analogy for *Ang Dios ay nakipagkapwa-tao sa pamamagitan ni Kristo* (God becomes one of us in Christ). As a response, every time we gather together to take part in the Lord's supper, we are to "remember" not only what Christ has done for us (*nakipagkapwa-tao ang Dios).* But equally important is the manner we relate to one another as "brothers and sisters in Christ" (*kapwa kapatid kay Kristo*). This implication is very significant—but it would take another paper to exhaust it.

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The Healing Power of Forgiveness

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Abstract: This paper seeks to promote a Judeo-Christian understanding of the meaning and dynamics of self, interpersonal and communal forgiveness around a common core for psychologists, researchers, therapists, theologians and pastors. Foundational to the discussion is the elucidation of nine concepts based on 24 biblical terms and how a broader understanding that embraces all dimensions will benefit psychological research, therapists, pastors and a religious theology of forgiveness.

Key Words: Forgiveness, Biblical Terminologies, Healing, Interpersonal, Psychology, Research, Theology.

Introduction

I believe a Judeo-Christian understanding of forgiveness will aid pastors in redemptive applications of forgiveness. It will more accurately guide the therapist. It will give psychologists studying forgiveness a tool for evaluating the merits of the plethora of definitions that currently exist. Highlighted will be the link between divine, interpersonal, community forgiveness and healing. Forgiveness will no longer be some vague abstract ideal, but a living transformative healing dynamic. Where this is done, an eternal contribution may be made to human conflict. As Bishop Tutu said, "Without forgiveness, there is no future."[1]

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[1]D. Tutu, "Speech: No Future Without Forgiveness (Version 2)," *Archbishop Desmond Tutu Collection Textual* 15 (2003): https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/archbishoptutupapers/15.

1. Forgiveness: A Multi-Dimensional Concept

Christianity can be aptly designated the Gospel of Forgiveness. One of the affirmations of its creedal statements is, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."[2] Forsyth alleged, "the forgiveness of sin is the foundation and genesis of Christianity; it is not an incident in it, nor in the Christian life."[3] The message of divine forgiveness of sin is the distinctive truth of Biblical revelation (Acts 10:43).

Forgiveness of sin, both divine and interpersonal go to the heart of the Christian understanding of a spiritual relationship with God.[4] The Bible provides extensive discussion of forgiveness. Through stories, incidents, parables and direct teaching, the concepts and principles of forgiveness are clearly taught in the Scripture.

The heart of the Biblical doctrine is to be found in the life and ministry of Christ. Early in His ministry Jesus claimed the prerogative to forgive sins (Mark 2:1-12). Jesus proclaimed forgiveness, taught forgiveness, served as the paradigm of forgiveness, and died in order to procure forgiveness for repentant sinners.[5] The climax of Jesus' exposition of Scripture declares and stresses "… repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47).[6]

Apostolic preaching affirmed that forgiveness of sins is the result of believing in Jesus (Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 28:16). Paul was commissioned to go to the Gentiles so that they might receive the forgiveness of sins (Acts 26:18). Christ came into the world and died on the cross so that forgiveness of sin might be righteously granted to repentant sinners. "To say that Christianity is Christ is to understand the Christian faith as forgiveness personified in Christ."[7]

Biblical forgiveness has a twofold dimension: (1) God's forgiveness of people, and (2) the need for people to forgive one another.[8] There are more than 125 references to forgiveness pertaining to human forgiveness.[9] Moberly asserts that "Human forgiveness is to find its inspiration in man's experience of the forgiveness of God.

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[2]Heidelberg Catechism, 1563; Westminster Confession of Faith, 1643; Nicene Creed, 325.
[3]P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 341.
[4]David Jennings Jr., "The Transgressor's Response to Denied Forgiveness," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 14, No.1 (2016), 17.
[5]K. H. C. Graham, "Forgiveness, Spiritual Well-Being and Religious Orientation Among Religious Professors, Christian Psychologists and Pastors in Southern California," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Biola University, 1990), 5.
[6]*The NIV Study Bible, New International Version,* ed. Kenneth Barker (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), is used for all Biblical quotations unless specified.
[7]C. S. Calian, "Christian Faith as Forgiveness," *Theology Today* 37, No.1 (1981), 439.
[8]Richard N. Longenecker, "Forgiveness," *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics,* ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: MI: Baker, 2011), 311.
[9]J. P. Pingleton, "The Role and Function of Forgiveness in the Psychotherapeutic Process," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 17, (1989), 27-35.

God's forgiveness must find an expression of itself in man's forgiveness of man (Matt 6:14-15; 18:21)."[10]

The Apostle Paul taught that the way for people to stop "biting and devouring" each other (Gal 4:15), and not respond to interpersonal injustices, hurts, violations, and inadvertent wrongs with hatred, bitterness, discord, fits of rage, dissensions, divisions, revenge, malice, slander, or carrying grievances as an attempt to wound and get even with those who have wounded them would be to forgive as God in Christ forgave them (Col 3:12-14).

According to the New Testament Scriptures, forgiveness and unforgiveness have a profound influence on the spiritual well-being of an individual (Matt 6:12; Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; Gal 4:15-26). Forgiveness is the Christian way to let go of the residual need for revenge. Smedes maintains the context that calls for interpersonal forgiveness is a deep, unjust injury or hurt inflicted by another. The injury can be physical, moral, emotional or psychological.[11] Forgiveness is central to man's relationship with God (Luke 24:47) and is the oil that is to permeate meaningful human relationships (Col 3:12-14).

Forgiveness is one of the key concepts bridging psychology, theology and pastoral ministry. Emerson claimed forgiveness is central to pastoral ministry (Eph 4:29-32; Col 3:8-14).[12] Jones and Watts protest against replacing the Judeo-Christian view of forgiveness with secular ones or "therapeutic forgiveness."[13] Hope believed the concept of forgiveness was a "nodal point at the interface between psychology and religion."[14] Norris contended that a dialogue between the fields of Biblical study and psychotherapeutic exploration on the subject of forgiveness would provide mutual enrichment.[15]

2. The Meaning of Forgiveness

What does it mean to forgive? Gorsuch and Hao believe "forgiveness is best understood as a multidimensional construct."[16] How is forgiveness to be defined?[17]

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[10]Fraser Watts, "Relating the Psychology and Theology of Forgiveness," *Forgiveness in Context: Theology and Psychology in Creative Dialogue,* eds. Fraser Watts and Liz Gulliford (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 4. Cited from R. C. Moberly, *Atonement and Personality* (London: John Murray, 1901), 63.

[11]L. B. Smedes, *Forgive and Forget: Healing The Hurts We Don't Deserve* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984).

[12]J. G. Emerson, *The Dynamics of Forgiveness* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 12.

[13]I. G. Jones and Watts, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1985), 50-51.

[14]D. Hope, "The Healing Paradox of Forgiveness," *Psychotherapy* 24, No. 2 (1987), 40.

[15]D. A. Norris, *Forgiving from the Heart: A Biblical and Psychotherapeutic Exploration* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation: New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1984).

[16]R. L. Gorsuch, & J. Y. Hao, "Forgiveness: An Exploratory Factor Analysis and Its Relationship to Religious Variables," *Review of Religion Research* 34, (1993): 333-347.

[17]Some philosophers have argued that forgiveness is just too diverse and diffuse of a practice to be captured by a simple, singular theory. Nick Smith observes that our "notions of forgiveness seem to

Investigations involving forgiveness have noted that there has been no uniform understanding of the meaning or theology of forgiveness among psychologists, theologians or pastors. A common understanding of the meaning of forgiveness would contribute to a fruitful dialogue between the fields of psychology, theology and pastoral ministry on forgiveness.

Twenty-four terms are used for forgiveness in Judeo-Christian Scriptures portraying it as a multi-dimensional concept.[18] The figurative sense of twelve Hebrew and twelve Greek terms are used to metaphorically picture the essence of forgiveness and describe what is involved for the forgiver to forgive another. The Greek terminology carries over the facets and images of forgiveness directly to the results of Christ's death. It is the Cross that provides the righteous basis for divine forgiveness. The words are: *selíḥāh; sālaḥ; 'abar; kāp̱ar; kāsāh; kābas; nāsā̂; kāsâ; nāqâ; rāḥaq; šālak; kāḇaš; māḥâ; makkâ;* and *zakar; aphiēmi; aphesis; charizomai; apoluō, apolyō; paresis; exaleiphō; kaluptō, kalyptō; airo; apolouō; louō; luō; katharizō.*

These twenty-four terms present forgiveness as a ninefold, multi-dimensional concept: Pardon; Mercy; Cost-Bearing; Removal of a Burden; Erasure of the Record of Wrong; Cleansing; Cessation of Negative Responses; Acceptance and Healing of a Relationship.

3. The Pardoning Power of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the act of granting a free pardon. It is "an act or an instance of officially nullifying punishment or other legal consequences of a crime."[19] Forgiveness as the pardon of sin is supported by nuances of two Hebrew terms: *sālaḥ, 'abar,* and nuances of four Greek terms: *aphesis*, *apolouō*, *luō*, and *paresis*. God is a pardoning God. "He will freely or abundantly pardon" (Isa 55:7). Micah writes:

> Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl our iniquities into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:18-19).

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identify a loose constellation of interrelated meanings among various beliefs, judgments, emotions and actions." Nick Smith, *I Was Wrong: The Meanings of Apologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 134. Even after decades of sustained empirical enquiry, psychologists remain divided about how forgiveness ought to be defined. The "major issue characterizing this new science of forgiveness has been how forgiveness ought to be defined." Everett Worthington, Jr., ed., *Handbook of Forgiveness* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 3. Also, W. Klassen, *The Forgiving Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), contended that theologians had often been tardy in defining and exegeting the doctrine of forgiveness.

[18]Biblical scholars are not agreed on how many terms and metaphors convey or contribute to the biblical concepts of the doctrine of forgiveness. See also Busenitz, 1980; Grider, 1984; Klassen, 1966; Monsma, 1975; Snaith, 1950.

[19]Bryan A. Garner, *Black's Law Dictionary* 7th ed. (St. Paul, MN: West Group) cited "Forgiveness," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2010, 2017): 1137.

The concept of forgiveness as pardon focuses on the guilt and failure of the transgressor and the subsequent freedom forgiveness brings. Narramore notes that, "Christ's atonement and our appropriation of God's forgiveness through salvation are clearly the central Biblical concepts relating to guilt."[20] To pardon the offender implied that the penalty required by law was waived and the prisoner freed.[21] Before the person can genuinely receive forgiveness, be a beneficiary of forgiveness they must repent of their sin (Luke 15:18-21).[22] Forgiveness as pardon indicates that the sin which has a dominance over both the transgressor as well as over the transgressed, has lost its power to demean, control, or torment the forgiver. The transgression loses its significance and its capacity to influence how the forgiver relates to the transgressor. Forgiveness as Pardon emphasizes the consequent freedom enjoyed by the forgiven.[23]

4. Forgiveness: An Act of Mercy

Forgiveness as mercy is a concept highlighted throughout Scripture[24] by the terms *kāp̱ar, ḥāmal, charizomai* and discussed at length by theologians.[25] The rationale and blueprint for forgiveness as mercy is embedded within the character and example of Christ (Eph 4:32).

Forgiveness by God of repentant sinners is a merciful act. In Isaiah 63:9, *love* and *mercy* express the motive for God redeeming his people without reservation.[26] Forgiveness as *mercy* is how God dealt with Israel's sinfulness and constant rebellion.[27] God declares to Moses, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and

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[20]Bruce Narramore and Bill Counts, *Freedom From Guilt* (CA: Harvest House, 1984), 293.

[21]Contrary to the Scripture, Worthington, some theorists and researchers allege that forgiveness "doesn't mean pardoning or forgetting an offense." They argue that it is different from pardoning. Everett Worthington, *Handbook of Forgiveness - Understanding Forgiveness of Other People: Definitions, Theories, and Processes* 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2020), 11.

[22]McNulty's research suggests that when there is an absence of repentance, forgiveness may have a dark side. James K McNulty, "Highlighting the Dark Side of Forgiveness and the Need for a Contextual Approach," *Hand Book of Forgiveness*, eds. Everett Worthington and Nathaniel G Wade (New York: Routledge, 2020), 33-42.

[23]Minas, A. "God and Forgiveness" *Philosophical Quarterly* 25 (1975), 138-150.

[24]Cf. Exod 34:5-9; Ps 78:38; 86:5; 130:4; Isa 55:7; Dan 9:9; Luke 7:42-43; 2 Cor 2:7,10,12:13; Eph 4:32, Col 2:13-14; 3:13.

[25]E. A. Blum, *The Forgiveness of Sins: A Biblical Theological Study* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation; Basel, Switzerland: The University of Basel, 1985). CF. I. A. Busenitz, *Divine Forgiveness: Conditions and Limitations* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation; Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1980).

[26]Mike Butterworth, "(*ḥemla*), Compassion, Mercy," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 171.

[27]G. A. F. Knight, "Leviticus," *The Daily Study Bible: Old Testament*, ed. J. C. L. Gibson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 34. See also, J. J. S. Perowne, *The Book of Psalms: A New Translation with Introduction and Notes,* vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 66.

gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin" (Exod 34:6).[28]

Jacob sends gifts to Esau hoping to pacify, *Kapar*, or appease him and, therefore, be *merciful* to him (Gen 32:20).[29] When Jacob and Esau met after their twenty-years of estrangement they met in a rash of forgiveness. The forgiven Jacob holds his forgiver Esau's beard in his hands, as they lock chest to chest, embracing, and Jacob exclaimed, "For to see your face is like seeing the face of God" (Gen 33:10-11).[30] The Greek term *charizomai* reinforces the aspect of forgiveness as an act of mercy.[31] This term means to grant a favour; grant gratuitously; show kindness or favour; to give freely; bestow; to grant forgiveness; forgive freely; to pardon; to cancel a debt; and remit.[32]

Jesus uses *charizomai* to describe forgiveness as cancelling the debt of a sinful woman, (Luke 7:36-50). He teaches that not only is forgiveness the discharge from a debt (Luke 11:4), the judicial act of setting someone free (Luke 6:37). Paul employs *charizomai* to emphasize the fact that forgiveness is a gift graciously and freely granted to the offender, the trespasser (Col 2:13-14).[33] Osborne explains:

> Once we have experienced God's merciful forgiveness, it is mandatory that we show that same forgiveness to others. Forgiveness and mercy are essential aspects of the kingdom living, and those who refuse to do so will not be shown forgiveness or mercy by God … mercy must stem "from your heart," meaning

[28]Daniel writes, "The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you." (Daniel 9:9–11). Isaiah appeals, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have ***mercy*** on him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon" (Isa 55:7).
[29]F. Brown, ed., *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix Containing Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1979), 497.
[30]K. S. Carter, "Forgiveness Revisited: God's and Ours," *Brethren Life and Thought* 22, No.3 (1977): 200.
[31]Luke 7:42 -43; 2 Cor 2:7, 10b, 10c; 12:13; Eph 4:32-32; Col 2:13; 3:13a, 13b.
[32]G. A. Abbott-Smith, G, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament,* 3rd ed (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1953), 479. See also, W. Zimmerli, "Charizomai," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* ed and trans. Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,1964, IX), 376-87.
[33]Margaret Holmgren, for example, allows that resentment can reoccur: "By overcoming her negative feelings at the time she forgives, the victim does not necessarily eliminate these feelings without a trace. They may recur from time to time throughout her life. However, once she has determined that forgiveness is the appropriate attitude towards her offender and has overcome her negative feelings towards him, it will presumably be possible for her to conquer these feelings again if they do recur. Thus, we can plausibly say that the victim has forgiven her offender when she first overcomes her resentment towards him." Margaret R. Holmgren, "Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 30, No. 4 (1993): 341–342, cited by Hughes Paul M and Warmke Brandon, "Forgiveness," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ed. Edward N Zalta (2017): URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/forgiveness/>.

with all sincerity and not through pretension or due to legalistic requirements (Matthew 5:7; 6:14-15; 9:13; 12:7; Jas 2:13).[34]

The act of forgiveness is a gracious, kind, loving merciful cancellation of the sinner's obligation. The merciful actions of God in forgiveness are to be imitated in human forgiveness.

5. Forgiveness: The Lifting of a Burden

The Biblical concept of forgiveness as the removal of the burden is well documented by Biblical and theological writers.[35] The spiritual oppression or depression experienced as a result of wrongdoing is lifted through forgiveness. It was this concept of forgiveness that is portrayed by John Bunyan when Pilgrim arrived at the foot of the cross. As Pilgrim puts his faith in Christ, he feels the burden of sin roll off his back.

Forgiveness is frequently conceived as the lifting up of the one bowed low under the burden of their guilt or iniquity (Isa 46:4; 53:4). David's sins result in a crushing burden that has multiple aspects: physical, emotional, moral and psychological.[36] Confessing his sin, through divine forgiveness, David experiences his burden being *lifted up* or *lifted of himself* (Ps 32:5; cf Exod 24:7; 28:42; Lev 19:17; 22:5ff; Matt 11:28-30; John 1:29).[37] Supremely it is God who forgives sin by taking the load off the sinner's shoulders (Exod 34:7; Num 14:18; Mic 7:18).[38]

In Isaiah 53:11, the root *sabal*, to "*bear a burden"* is paralleled in the next verse by *nasa*, "the servant (Christ), *bore* the sins of many" (Isa 53:12; Acts 8:33).[39] *Nasa* portrays forgiveness as the *lifting up* of the burden of sin (Psalm 32:1, 5);[40] the *bearing* or *carrying of sin*.[41] (Lev 20:20; 24:15; Num 9:13; 18:22; Ezek 23:49);[42] and also emphasizes the *taking away* is seen in Hosea 14:2 - "Take away, *nasa*, all our iniquity." [43]

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[34]Grant R. Osborne, "Matthew," *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament* (Electronic edition) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 697.
[35]Ps 32:1, 5; Isa 53:12; John 1:29; Hebrews 9:6-28; Hebrews 10:1-4, 11-25; 1 John 3:5; F, Brown, ed. *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix Containing Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1979) 671; W. C. Kaiser, "Nasa," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. II (Chicago: Moody, 1980c), 600-601; V. N Olsen, "The Doctrine of Forgiveness in the Light of the Hebrew and Greek Languages," *The Stature of Christ: Essays in Honor of Edward Heppenstall*, eds. V. Carner & G. Stanhiser (Loma Linda, CA: Loma Linda University 1970), 25; C. Ryder Smith, *The Biblical Doctrine of Grace and Related Doctrines* (London: Epworth, 1956),15.
[36]Kaiser, "Nasa," 600-601.
[37]Kaiser, "Nasa," 600-601.
[38]C. Ryder Smith, *The Biblical Doctrine of Grace and Related Doctrines* (London: Epworth, 1956), 15.
[39]Kaiser, "Nasa," 600-601.
[40]Brown, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew,* 671.
[41]Kaiser, "Nasa," 600-601.
[42]Klassen, 43.
[43]Brown, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew,* 671.

In the New Testament a Greek term *airo*[44] is used of a substitutionary bearing of penalty, the *taking away* the guilt of sin by Christ (John 1:29; 1 John 3:5; cf. Matt 21:21; John 19:31; 1 Cor 5:12).[45] John 1:29 can be rendered as "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world by the atoning power of His blood." Best observes,

> Lord Jesus Christ paid the penalty for sin. He fulfilled the law and satisfied justice and holiness. Now the Divine Judge offers the wonderful gift of full and free pardon, the forgiveness of sin, the lift of a damning burden.[46]

While human forgiveness cannot remove the burden of guilt a person bears before God, it can lift the burden or weight experienced by the violator who is aware of and repentant for the wrong done (2 Cor 2:5-11). Human forgiveness can lift the burden or weight experienced by the violator when forgiveness ends the disruption caused by their wrong. If we choose to withhold forgiveness, then we hurt ourselves more than we do anyone else.

6. The Costliness of Forgiveness

In the act of forgiving, the cost or penalty for a wrong, whether actual or perceived, is borne by the forgiver and not by the one forgiven.[47] Forgiveness as cost-bearing is supported by theologians[48] and by research that has amassed reliable evidence that forgiveness can have important costs.[49] Chafer asserts,

> Forgiveness on the part of God toward man proves the most complicated and costly of undertakings. As seen in the Bible, there is an analogy between forgiveness and debt and, in the case of that forgiveness which God exercises, the debt must be paid - though it be paid by Himself - before forgiveness can be extended.[50]

For forgiveness to be genuine requires a true understanding of the nature and the character of the crime committed. Sin is not to be viewed lightly.[51] "Forgiveness

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[44]V. N. Olsen, "The Doctrine of Forgiveness in the Light of the Hebrew and Greek Languages," eds. V. Carner & G. Stanhiser, *The Stature of Christ, Essays in Honor of Edward Heppenstall* (Loma Linda, CA: Loma Linda University, 1970), 25.

[45]"*Airo"* means, to take away, to bear, to carry, expel, remove, to throw. Joachim Jeremias, "*airo" Theological Dictionary New Testament* vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans 1964),186.

[46]W. Best, *God Forgives Sinners* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 40.

[47]Longenecker, "Forgiveness," 310.

[48]Gary Inrig, *Forgiveness: Discover the Power and Reality of Authentic Christian Forgiveness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 2005), 37, 50; Donald M. Baillie, *God Was in Christ, An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961); Fisher Humphreys, *The Death of Christ* (Nashville: Broadman, 1978); C. F. D. Moule, "The Theology of Forgiveness," *Essays in New Testament Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

[49]Strelan, P., Crabb, S., Chan, D., & Jones, L, "Lay Perspectives on the Costs and Risks of Forgiving," *In Personal Relationships* 24, (2017): 392–407.

[50]Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1976), 161-162.

[51]The Jews are told 49 times that only sacrificial blood can make atonement for the worshipper. Forgiveness is the price of a life, a ransom or redemption via payment. Leviticus 23:27, 28; 25:9;

implies the reality of sin. In forgiveness, sin is not rationalized away, denied, explained as harmless or relative."[52] It is surprising that research of forgiveness dynamics and a biblical theology of forgiveness is often pursued without any reference to sin itself. It is sinful that behaviour that is forgiven. Forgiveness treats "the entire range of indebtedness and bondage created by sin."[53] Such forgiveness is a uniquely Christian doctrine.[54]

Calian writes, "There is a cross at the center of the Christian faith. From Jesus' birth to the cross, reconciliation initiated by God was a costly affair."[55]

Barclay emphasizes that,

> There is one eternal principle which will be valid as long as the world lasts. The principle is - *Forgiveness is a costly thing. Human forgiveness* is costly. A son or a daughter may go wrong; a father or a mother may forgive; but that forgiveness has brought tears … There was the price of a broken heart to pay. *Divine forgiveness* is costly. God is love, but God is *holiness*. God, least of all, can break the great moral laws on which the universe is built. Sin must have its punishment or the very structure of life disintegrates. And God alone can pay the terrible price that is necessary before men can be forgiven. Forgiveness is never a case of saying: "It's all right; it doesn't matter." Forgiveness was and is the costliest luxury in the world.[56]

Christian forgiveness is to be aware of the supreme cost Christ paid on the Cross to procure their forgiveness.[57] In view of the debt God has forgiven, how dare a Christian refuse to forgive a brother or a sister whose debt is by comparison a mere trifle.

7. Forgiveness as Cleansing

Forgiveness as the removal of the pollution caused by sin is a further dimension of forgiveness in the Judeo-Christian scriptures. Forgiveness as cleansing is very important in relation to objective guilt before God or man, a guilty conscience, the sense of shame and the feelings of uncleanness and filthiness than can accompany the violation of divine and/or human laws.[58] Forgiveness as cleansing is supported by

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Chafer, *Systematic Theology,* 161-162; Humphreys, 93; Klassen, 73-83; H. R. Mackintosh, *The Christian Experience of Forgiveness* (London: Nisbet, 1927), 188-93.

[52]John M. Vayhinger, "Protestantism and the Therapist," R*eligion Systems and Psychotherapy,* ed. Richard M. Cox (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1973), 58.

[53]Donald A. Carson, ed., *Right with God: Justification in the Bible and the World* (Torquay, Devon, UK: Paternoster, 1992), 113.

[54]James M. Houston, "Forgiveness," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible,* ed. Walter Elwell (Ada, MI: Baker, 1998), 810.

[55]Calian, "Christian Faith as Forgiveness," *Theology Today* 37, (1981): 440.

[56]William Barclay, *The Letter to the Hebrews,* 2d ed. (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew, 1957), 120.

[57]Vayhinger, H, "Forgiveness," 58.

[58]J. Cornwall, *Let Us Enjoy Forgiveness* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1978), 146.

nuances of three Hebrew and three Greek terms: *kapar, naqah, kabas,* which means "to wash;"[59] *apoloúō, loúō, katharízō.*

Kabas focuses on cleansing the sinner from impurity, from the stain or pollution of sin that is effected by divine forgiveness (Isa 6:7; Ezek 36:25; Zech 3:4).[60] A person's heart can be washed from evil (Jer 4:14). David implores God to, "*Wash away* all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin … *wash me (kabas)* and I will be clean" (Ps 51:7). Malachi portrays the Messiah as one who *launderers*, or whose actions are like a *launderer's soap (kabas)*, which will purify people, *washing away* the stain of their guilt (Mal 3:2; cf. Jer 2:22).

Naqah, signifies to be clean.[61] In Ecclesiasticus *Naqah* is translated forgiveness in the New English Bible (Ecclus 16:11b; NEB).[62]

Paul is commanded to "… be baptized and *apoloúō, wash* your sins *away*" (Acts 22:16).[63] The Corinthians are described as those who *had been washed* (1 Cor 6:11). Forgiveness results in cleansing the human heart, cleanses the conscience, the affections, the disposition. Jesus Christ is described as the one "who loves us and has *freed* us, *loúō or washed* us from our sins by his blood (Rev 1:5).[64] *Loúō* is also used in Hebrews of believers having been cleansed of the outer as well as the inner defilement of sin (Heb 10:22).

Peter describes the forgiveness of Gentiles as *katharízō*, a cleansing of the heart (Acts 15:9).[65] James exhorts his readers to purify their hearts and *wash* their hands (Jas 4:8). Christ gave Himself for us in order to redeem and *purify* us, *katharísē*, for Himself (Tit 2:14). Christ cleanses, *katharisas*, the church by washing her, *loúō*, with water through the Word (Eph 5:26). Divine forgiveness cleanses the conscience, *kathariei* (Heb 9:14, 23).

Such cleansing is preceded by the trespasser repenting and confessing the wrong to the one sinned against (Ps 32; 51:4, 7). Those who confess their sins to God are forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness (I John 1:7, 9). No longer does the violator need to feel dirty, soiled, unclean in the sight of the forgiver. Conversely for

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[59]Brown, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew*, 460.
[60]Brown, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew*, 460. In the LXX *kabas* is chiefly translated by *apolouo*, wash (Rev 7:14; 22:14).
[61]Brown, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew*, 667.
[62]*The New English Bible, Old Testament, Apocrypha, New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 137.
[63]Walter Bauer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,* trans and ed. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963), 95.
[64]Abbott-Smith, *Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament,* 272.
[65]Abbott-Smith, *Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament,* 222.

the forgiver, forgiveness as cleansing means viewing the transgressor in a completely new light (1 John 1:7, 9; Rev 1:5; 5:9; Ps. 51).

8. Forgiveness as Erasure of the Record of Wrong

The Judeo-Christian Scripture use five terms that give insight into forgiveness the erasing of the formal written record as well as the vision and mental record of wrongs.

Maha, means the act of erasing that which had been written on a tablet or in a book (Exod 32:32; Num 5:23; Ps 109:14). David prays that God would *erase* his transgressions and iniquities (Ps 51:1-2, 7). His criminal record is completely erased.

Exaleipho, means, to, blot out, wipe out a written record.[66] Peter urges his hearers to, "Repent, then, turn to God, so that your sins may be *blotted out,* ...."[67] The completeness and definitiveness of our forgiveness is recorded in Colossians.[68] God freely *charizomai* forgives, graciously *exaleipho*, *cancels* the debt, and *airo, wipes out* the written record that condemns by *destroying* the damning record (Col 2:13-14).[69]

Kasa, emphasises forgiveness as the erasure of the mental vision one holds of the criminal. *Kasa* includes the concept of the covering of sins by God which He puts out of His sight or the concealment of the records of sins (Neh 4:5; Ps 32:1; 85:2).[70]

"Forgive and Forget" is a very misleading expression.[71] Neither God or people are asked to have mental amnesia. To remember sins is to punish them. God declares, "I, even I, am He who *blots out, kasa,* your transgressions, for my own sake, and remember, *zaka,* your sins no more" (Isa 43:25).[72] In Psalm 51, there is the idea of wiping out, wiping away -*maha* - or blotting out the memory of sins.[73] God sweeps them away like a cloud or mist, and deliberately remembers them no more (Isa 44:22).

Augsburger indicates that in forgiving the forgiver finishes the demands of past

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[66]Bauer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament,* 272; Abbott-Smith, *Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament,* 158-59.
[67]Acts 3:18; cf. Ps 50:9; 109:13; Isa 43:25.
[68]Douglas J. Moo, "The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon," *Pillar New Testament Commentary*, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 208.
[69]Peter O'Brien, "Colossians," *Word Biblical Commentary,* ed. Ralph P. Martin (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 133.
[70]Brown, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew,* 491; Kaiser, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 626; Morro, *The International Standard Bible Encylopedia,* 340-44.
[71]Charles T. Jones and Daniel R. Ledwith, *Finding Freedom in Forgiveness* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2005), 96.
[72]Brown, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew,* 269-70.
[73]Brown, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew,* 562; Kaiser, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament,* 626.

"predicaments, problems, failures and says goodbye to them with finality."[74] By forgiving, the past no longer has control over what happens in the present. Forgiving is draining the past of its power to hurt us.[75]

To remember, is a call to action. God acts when he remembers Samson (Judg 16:28). Not to remember sins means they have been forgiven (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:12; 10:17). There was nothing left in the mind of the forgiver or on the books to incriminate the forgiven person (Rev 20:12).

The offence is erased from the records and memory as an act that requires judgement (Ps 25:7; 79:8; Hab 3:2).[76] "Forgiving heals your memory as you change your memory's vision. When you release the wrongdoer from the wrong, you cut a malignant tumour out of your inner life. You set a prisoner free, but you discover that the real prisoner was yourself."[77]

9. **Forgiveness as Cessation of Negative Responses**

Forgiveness as cessation of negative responses is embodied in divine and human forgiveness.[78] It involves a shift in emotions and attitudes towards the offender, "characterized by the cessation of animosity."[79] Murphy notes we should think of forgiveness as overcoming a variety of negative feelings that one might have toward a wrongdoer—resentment, yes, but also such feelings as anger, hatred, loathing, contempt, indifference, disappointment, or even sadness.[80]

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[74]David Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Forgive-True Forgiveness: Caring Enough Not to Forgive: False Forgiveness* (CA: Regal Books, 1981), 46.

[75]David Stoop and James Masteller, *Forgiving Our Parents, Forgiving Ourselves: Healing Adult Children of Dysfunctional Families* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1991), 188. Smedes acknowledges that, "It would give us some comfort if we could only forget a past that we cannot change. If we could only choose to forget the cruelest moments, we could, as time goes on, free ourselves from their pain. But the wrong sticks like a nettle in our memory. The only way to remove the nettle is with a surgical procedure called forgiveness." L. B. Smedes, *The Art of Forgiving: When You Need to Forgive and Don't Know How* (Nashville, TN: Moorings, 1996), 133.

[76]G Inrig, *Forgiveness: Discover the Power and Reality of Authentic Christian Forgiveness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 2005), 15-34.

[77]Smedes, *Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 132.

[78]A wide range of negative responses reported by psychologists that cease as a result of extending forgiveness include: anger; ceasing to feel, letting go resentment; giving up claim to requital; giving up hopes, actions, wishes, and fantasies of retribution/retaliation; releasing or freeing the transgressor; fore-going repayment; removal of barriers to acceptance; befriending; loving; ceasing to give someone the cold treatment, by absolving the person of perceived wrongs.

[79]R. C. A. Hunter, "Forgiveness, Retaliation, and Paranoid Reactions," *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal* 23, (1978): 171.

[80]Jeffrie G. Murphy, *Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 59. Cited by Hughes, Paul M, Warmke, Brandon, "Forgiveness," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of*

Biblical writers use nuances of five terms to explain forgiveness as the cessation of negative responses: *salah, kapar, 'abar, rahaq,* and *kabas*.[81] The Hebrew word *kapar* carries the idea that for the forgiven God's wrath is averted, His anger turned away. Proverbs, James and Peter note that it is love that motivates or inspires the forgiver to *cover* all offences (Prov 10:12; Jas 5:20; 1 Pet 4:8).

Jesus says: "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive your sins" (Mark 11:25). Forgiveness requires a change of heart before negative vindictive responses can be replaced (Matt.18).

Paul counsels getting rid of negative reposes. Instead, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Eph 4:31-32; Rom 12:17-19; Col 3:12-13).

Forgiveness of another involves letting go of resentment, "giving up of megalomaniac and omnipotent fantasies and identifications and the acquisition of the capacity for empathy with one's fellow man."[82] Witvliet asserts, "accountable forgiving would responsibly resist nursing grudges, flaunting one's moral superiority, totalizing the offender."[83] "Past resentments are dealt with, not just discarded; are owned, not disowned; are recognized, not repressed; are released, not retained. Then there is room for a new beginning."[84] Stott remarks,

> Once our eyes have been opened to see the enormity of our offence against God, the injuries which others have done to us appear by comparison extremely trifling. If on the other hand we have an exaggerated view of the offences of others, it proves that we have minimized our own.[85]

The Christian is to see their own debt in its true perspective.[86] Seeing their own sins for what they really are would liberate them from the poison of resentment. An accurate understanding of their own waywardness and disobedience and the magnitude of their own debt that God freely forgave them in Christ would enable

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Philosophy ed. Edward N Zalta (2017): https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/forgiveness/.

[81]Brown, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew,* 491.

[82]R. C. A Hunter, "Forgiveness, Retaliation, and Paranoid Reactions," *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal* 23 (1978): 171.

[83]Charlotte van Oyen Witvliet, "Forgiveness, Embodiment, and Relational Accountability: Victim and Transgressor Psychophysiology Research," *Handbook of Forgiveness - Understanding Forgiveness of Other People: Definitions, Theories, and Processes,* 2nd ed., eds. Everett L. Worthington, Jr. and Nathaniel G. Wade, (New York: Routledge, 2020), 168.

[84]James R. Bjorge, *Living in the Forgiveness of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 60.

[85]John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986), 149-150.

[86]"This would prevent them from falling prey to 'hurt myopia' a disorder in which we always see the hurts we cause others as being smaller than the hurts they cause us." Arch D. Hart, *Feeling Free, Effective Ways to Make Your Emotions Work for You* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1979), 91.

them to experience and live in the freedom of an attitude which is overflowing with forgiveness.[87]

10. Forgiveness as Acceptance

Forgiveness as Acceptance is primarily a matter of how the victim feels towards the offender. There is a "decrease in one's negative thoughts, motivations, emotions and behaviours towards someone who has committed an interpersonal offense."[88] Potentially this may lead to the forgiver's unconditional acceptance of the transgressor.

Not only is there an outward welcome, but inwardly the forgiver has welcomed the prodigal home. This is graphically portrayed by the prodigal's father. Not only is the son accepted back, he is also washed, clothed, freed from his past and given full status as a son. The father refuses to allow the boy's forgiven past to affect their present relationship as father and son. The father's embrace embodied, physical, emotional and spiritual acceptance (Luke 15:11-32). There is no probationary period.

Tillich emphasized accepting the grace of a God who had "unconditional claim upon our lives, yet does not destroy us in our guilt and despair"[89] In this line of thought, forgiveness has been construed as accepting acceptance and extending it in return.[90]

Augsburger gives wise advice when he writes,

> Whenever any element of superiority or any feelings of coming down on the other rise within you, you refuse it. Redirect it. Reach out to the other, not down. Stand over against, not above. Stand with, not over. Stand equal in working through to forgiveness; otherwise we are trading one sinful position for another.[91]

Jesus models how forgiveness and acceptance do not need to imply condonance of improper moral behaviour. In the incident that takes place in Simon's house (Luke 7:36-50), Jesus so clearly models these distinctions. His acceptance of the woman is on the basis of His gracious forgiveness. In that incident, forgiveness is acceptance.

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[87]Hart, A. D. Hart, *Feeling Free, Effective Ways to Make Your Emotions Work for You* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1979), 91.
[88]Elise Choe, Aaron McLaughlin, Stacey E. McElroy-Heltzel, and Don E. Davis, "Forgiveness and Religion/Spirituality," *Handbook of Forgiveness* 2nd ed., eds. Everett L. Worthington, Jr. and Nathaniel Wade, (New York: Routledge, 2020), 107.
[89]Paul Tillich, *To Whom Much is Given: The New Being* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1955), 162.
[90]S. Spidell and D. Liberman, "Moral Development and the Forgiveness of Sin," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 9, (1981): 159-163.
[91]D. Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Forgive-True Forgiveness: Caring Enough Not to Forgive: False Forgiveness* (CA: Regal Books, 1981), 16.

It is not to be concluded that failure to repent on the part of the offender releases the offended from all obligation to extend forgiveness. Without the repentance of the one who has wronged him the offended can have a forgiving state of mind

The ground or basis for forgiveness as acceptance is the command of Jesus to forgive 70 x 7 or seven times a day. Seventy times seven signifies an indefinite number of times (Luke 17:3-4; cf. Matt 18:21-22; Ps 119:164), unlimited forgiveness. Seven times a day is a colloquial way of expressing unlimited repetition. Such forgiveness is never exhausted. To forgive is to know no limits.

11. Forgiveness as Healing of a Relationship

Freedman alleges forgiveness is distinct from reconciliation, a term implying the restoration of a broken relationship.[92] Yet according to the Judeo-Christian Scriptures, reconciliation is the complete work of forgiveness.[93] Forgiveness as "Healed Relationships" is the goal of both divine and human forgiveness.[94] For example, God and Israel. Blum defines divine forgiveness as,

> Christ's act of taking our sin (2 Cor 5:18-21), with its guilt and punishment upon himself and so removing it that the destroyed relationship is restored. Objectively, this was accomplished at the cross but it must be applied to men.[95]

Examples of forgiveness as the healing of human relationships include: Hosea and his wife; Peter and Jesus; the eleven apostles and Jesus; John Mark and Paul.

The effect of forgiveness is to restore to its former state the relationship that was broken by transgression. Such a restoration requires the co-operation of both parties. Sincere, deep-felt sorrow for wrong, which works repentance (2 Cor 7:10), is the condition of mind that must be present in the transgressor to enable them to receive

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[92]Freedman, S, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation: The Importance of Understanding How They Differ," *Counseling and Values 42*, (1998): 200–216. Cited by Paul M Hughes and Brandon Warmke, "Forgiveness," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ed. Edward N Zalta (2017): https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/forgiveness/.

[93]Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Forgive-True Forgiveness*, 34; J. M Brandsma, "Forgiveness: A Dynamic, Theological and Therapeutic Analysis," *Pastoral Psychology* 31, No. 1 (1981): 40-50; Cornwall, *Let us Enjoy Forgiveness* (Old Tappen, NJ: Revell, 1978), 137-45.

[94]"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:18–21).

[95]E. A. Blum, *The Forgiveness of Sins: A Biblical Theological Study* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Switzerland: The University of Basel, 1985), 173.

forgiveness from the offendee.[96] There must be both a granting and an acceptance of forgiveness (Luke 17:3-4).

Cornwall notes one of the prime purposes of forgiveness is the restoration of a lost relationship (2 Cor 2:5-11).[97] Forgiveness must open the channels of mutual trust, love, acceptance and real brothering. The transgressor must take responsibility for their guilt and express a change of heart, repent (cf. Luke 17:3). Joseph's forgiveness becomes the bridge to restored fellowship among his repentant brothers (Gen 37-45).[98] "When the estrangement again becomes a fellowship, and fragmentation becomes wholeness, then forgiveness has truly taken place."[99]

Barriers to a healed relationship through forgiveness include: the guilty party is dead, defiantly unrepentant, or geographically uncontactable. Forgiveness as healed relations required a reciprocity that will not always be present in every situation. In these situations, "one must forgive as fully and as deeply as possible for their own good"[100] and maintain a spirit of goodwill while forgiveness as a healed relationship remains an ideal that cannot be achieved.

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[96]W. C. Morro, "Forgiveness," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia,* vol. 2, ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 341.

[97]Cornwall, *Let us enjoy forgiveness,* 143.

[98]Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Forgive* , 71.

[99]J. R. Bjorge, *Living in the Forgiveness of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 64.

[100]J. P. Pingleton, "The Role and Function of Forgiveness in the Psychotherapeutic Process," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 17 (1989): 34.

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