

South Florida Bible College
& Theological Seminary
Journal

Volume VI
2018

2200 S.W. 10th Street, Deerfield Beach, FL 33442
(954) 545-4500

© 2018 South Florida Bible College

CONTENTS

Benedictus: An Analysis of Zachariah's Hymn Fabiana Silva.....	1
Justification by Faith in Romans 1:16-17 Ricardo Pedreira Affonso Filho.	23
Calvin and Psalm 13 Adelcidio Pereira Neto.	37
Money and the Marginalized in Deuteronomy 15 Mark Linton.	66
Business to the Glory of God Larissa Maia.	85
I Will Build My Church...When the Spirit Comes Roseline Fequiere.	94
An Analysis of Revelation 13:11-18 Nadet Jean Baptiste.....	119
Psalm 34:17-20 as it Relates to Mental Illness Marta De Souza.	126
Ministering to those with Bipolar Disorder Allegra Joffe.	134
Abstracts of Recent SFBC&TS Theses & Dissertations	
Possessing What One Professes David J. Franks.....	142

Benedictus

An Analysis of Zachariah's Hymn

Fabiana Silva

The printing press was one of the most important inventions in the history of humankind. The revolution in communication that the product of a goldsmith called Johannes Guttenberg made would surpass any expectation. On the eve of the new era of mass communication, to have the Bible as its first major product was only fitting. The first version was the Jerome Latin Vulgate, and the first Hebrew Old Testament had its debut in 1488. However, the Greek New Testament would be long after that for financial reasons. Nonetheless, there were exceptions, and some short texts were printed in 1481, even prior the Hebrew one. Zachariah's Hymn was one of them.¹

The forerunner theme that this text brings goes even beyond of what we know of John the Baptist. The one that would self-described as a “voice that cry in the wilderness” had just born and his life would also be known as the one that broke four hundred years of a prophetic silence. However this short text was presented as a prophecy from the author and was also breaking a period of silence, by Zachariah, his father. Between Malachi and John the Baptist there was Zachariah, and before the “cry,” there was this prophecy.

This thesis intends to analyze this particular passage of Luke 1:68 to 79 with a different approach. Search if these Holy Spirit-induced words have a double meaning pointing not only for the fulfillment of the promise at that present time in the life of John the Baptist and the announcing the first coming of Christ, or if these words could also be applied to a forerunner generation and the second coming of Jesus.

The Author

There is no significant debate about who is the author of the third gospel. Most scholars do view Luke, the beloved physician mentioned in Colossians 4:14 as the author of this book, and consequently the author of Acts. In the book “New Testament Survey – Revised,” Merrill C. Tenney reinforce this concept by pointing out the works of the church fathers and their relation with the authorship in question, Tenney says:

External tradition supports the conclusion that Luke, the physician and the friend of Paul, was the writer of the Third Gospel. Justin Martyr of the

¹ Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman “*The Text of The New Testament – Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration*” (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005.), 137.

second century used this Gospel. Tatian employed it in the Diatessaron. Marcion included a revised form of it in his canon; and from the end of the second century onward it was widely quoted as Lukan. Tertullian alone quoted or alluded to the Lucan text more than five hundred times. Since the identity of the author is reasonably well established, some notice should be taken of his character and achievements.²

Another way of establishing the fact that Luke is the author is the analyses given by Willian Hendriksen. In his New Testament Commentary on Luke, Hendriksen brings up the fact that, although the third gospel is one of the Synoptic Gospels, there is a similarity with Paul's writing. For him, their theology and subject approach give a reason enough to believe that was indeed the same Luke that accompanied Paul is the author of this book. He lists six points of similarities between Luke approach to the Gospel and Paul's theology. And they are:

- a. Salvation is universal, yet particular;
- b. The importance on prayer;
- c. The emphasis that Jesus Christ is Lord;
- d. The doctrine of The Holy Spirit;
- e. The theme of Joy, shown as praise and thanksgiving;
- f. Luke's account of the Lord Supper resembles Paul's account on 1 Cor.11: 23-25.³

Besides the similarities in Luke's theology with the apostle Paul, it is crucial to understand who Luke was. In the same book from Hendriksen, 2007, shows that there is a high probability that Luke was a Greek gentile converted to Christianity. The text in question has a lot of Jewish symbolism making the reason for this information so relevant. That makes the wording to construct the phrases a verbatim transcript of the event more plausible than a personal rendition of what he understood.⁴

Richard A. Horsley, in his book *The Liberation of Christmas – The infancy Narratives on Social Context*, writes that:

There is wide recognition now that Luke 1-2 reflects a Palestinian Jewish milieu. Not only there are far more "Simiticisms" in these narratives than in the rest of Luke (with he canticles often being labeled as Jewish psalms, perhaps originally in Hebrew or Aramaic), but the

2 Merrill C. Tenney, "*New Testament Survey – Revised*" (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985) p.178

3 William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary-Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007.) p.6-7

4 Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary-Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, 9.

characters in Luke 1 are representatives of typical Israelite or "Old Testament piety", according to long-standing consensus. "Luke" is thought to have composed much of the narrative in chapters 1-2, but in doing so he drew not only on traditional biblical terms and phrases but on particular biblical forms and figures as well. 5

What Horsley fails to comprehend is the fact that, Luke did not draw the "Old Testament piety" with some research of phrases in order to construct "Jewish" narrative, for the fact that his audience, Theophilus was not Jewish either. The fact that these chapters show a distinct structure from the rest of the book should be regarded as a testament to the integrity. What Luke had proposed to do, and in verse one had confirmed that he did, and that was "to complete an account" by reporting a recent event using the same wording given to him and not to re-write any history based on the OT. But because of the fact that some of the dialogs were made by people under the influence of the Spirit, the prophetic language and style used by most of the main character were not uncommon. D. L. Tiede explains on the subject, "In fact, these chapters are so thoroughly permeated with words of ancient prophecies that they suggest a close community setting where a kind of archaic scriptural rhetoric is the living language of faith" With the fact that Luke was not a Jewish, makes the usage of such "archaic scriptural" a valid point for the veracity of his accounts.6

Now, a Christian approach on Luke today, it is based on the knowledge that it is scripture, therefore, divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, an accurate historical approach should have this canonical weight lift it up, and see why Luke decides to write this letter to Theophilus, a "fellow Greek of high rank...that was either a believer or an active seeker" as Bruce Larson describes in his commentary "Mastering The New Testament." At the beginning of the Book, Luke describes the reason he went into such endeavor, and the text reads, "That you (Theophilus) may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught." This account was not to present the Gospel, or to teach, but to reinsure what he "have been taught." So the usage of such an unfamiliar language pattern of one non-Jewish physician, giving an account to this also non-Jewish fellow would not have any other meaning other than the fact of the preservation of the language of the sources for the truthfulness of the testimony submitted.7

Tenney, in his book previously cited gives the same outlook on why Luke used this language approach. He says:

5 Richard A. Horsley The Liberation of Christmas – The infancy Narratives in Social Context (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1989) P.15

6 D.L. Tiede, *Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 25.

7 Bruce Larson Mastering The New Testament – A Book-By-Book Commentary By Today's Great Bible Teachers (Dallas, TX: Word Inc. Publishing, 1983), p.25.

The initial statement of Luke's preface declares that the Gospel was written to impart to its reader spiritual certainty concerning the things of which he had been orally instructed. The verb "instructed" is generally used in The New Testament of information that is imparted formally rather than casually. Evidently Luke wanted to give Theophilus an authentic basis in this Gospel for correcting the teaching with which he was already familiar."⁸

Another point for the type of language used also fall upon the fact that, in the benediction section, it says that Zachariah prophesied. With this information, this portion of the text should not be viewed as a choice of wording, neither by Luke nor by Zachariah. The approach to a prophetic text in the bible is different, not for the reason that is not as authoritative as the rest. Nonetheless, prophecies of the Old Testament were received as a word for word directive from God. In the book *Biblical Inspiration* by I Howard Marshall, explains that: "Since the prophets often give the impression that God's message came to them in a verbal form, and that they then repeated it aloud or wrote it down word for word, it would not be unfair to describe the process envisaged as one of dictation." Then he goes on explaining that although this happened in those sections, should not be used as an analogy to interpret that the rest of the bible was also a dictation from God. For Howard, the distinction between a "prophetic" text and a regular one should be made, even though; both of them are divinely inspired.⁹

Mark Allan Powell in his book "What are they saying about Luke?" gives a broader look on the author of the third gospel by looking into the main theologians are saying about Luke. He explains that the view of Luke as a theologian came from Hans Conzelmann and his word "The Theology of St. Luke". He then goes on citing that Luke is "universally recognized as a theologian of no mean stature who very consciously and deliberately planned and executed his work." The fact that Luke had a purpose and was very efficient in crafting this work to Theophilus is unquestionable. However, the greatness of the work should fall on his shoulders, in the same way, the power of the Holy Spirit thru Peter as shown in Acts 3:6 would not make him a "physician" because he was the instrument of God to heal that layman. And by Luke's words we read in verse 12 Peter asking, "Why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?" and in the same instance, why do we stare at Luke, as though by his own power or piety he

⁸ Merrill C. Tenney, "*New Testament Survey – Revised*" (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985) P. 182

⁹ I. Howard Marshall, "*Biblical Inspiration*" (Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 1982) p.31-32.

made the gospel? There are some works of the Spirit that there is a tendency to be credit to men.¹⁰

Regardless the proper accreditation of to whom credit is due, Luke or the Holy Spirit, Powell also explain a good point of Conzelmann was saying that "The overriding theological concept that emerges from Conzelmann study is Luke's scheme of salvation history. Luke divides the times, from creation to the end of the world, into three epochs: 1) the time of Israel, 2) the time of Jesus' early ministry, and 3) the time of the church." Purposely or not, in the Benedictus also has an allusion of different times, beginning with the old (v.70), them moving to this new prophet of the Lord (v.76) them describing a time of peace that probably would be accomplished in the same period specified in Revelation 21:4. ¹¹

The Holy Spirit in Luke 1-2

There are three songs around the nativity of Jesus in Luke's Gospel, and people filled with the Holy Spirit made them. In the first chapter, verse 41, describes Elizabeth filled by The Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry a blessing upon Mary, right after that, her response was the song known as the Magnificat. Analyzing the scene, what Elizabeth had just spoken was not news for Mary, for she had the annunciation by the Angel in verse 31. With all the things the angel told her did not prompt her to exult in praises as she did with Elizabeth. But although the subject was the same both by the angel and by Elizabeth, only in one scene is recorded that they were filled with the Spirit.

The other point for the understanding the fact that indeed Mary was also under the influence of the Spirit comes from the way the Holy Spirit moves since the Old Testament. The fact that a "prophetic Spirit" can be transferred from person to person because of the environment was not new. In 1 Samuel chapter 19, there is an example of how a prophetic environment could impact others even when the person in question is not a Prophet per se, or has any Priestly lineage. In verse 20 it says "Then Saul sent messengers to take David, and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as head over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messenger of Saul, and they also prophesied." After this, the Scriptures tell us that Saul sent it messengers two other times and the same thing happened, and when he decided to go, he also had the Spirit upon him and prophesied also.¹²

Now in the case of the Benedictus, it is clear in verse prior to the song where it not only says that Zachariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, but also that he was prophesying. The Magnificat is the only part where did not have

¹⁰ Mark Allan Powell "What are they saying about Luke?" (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989).p10

¹¹ Powell, 8.

¹² 1 Samuel 19:20 (ESV)

any specific verse saying that Mary was filled with the Spirit, but the assurance of it comes from the fact that Elizabeth was.

The third song is in Luke chapter 2, known by its Latin name as *Nunc Dimittis*. Simeon passage right before the *Nunc Dimittis* described three different times the connection with the Holy Spirit. First in verse 2:25 where it says, "The Holy Spirit was upon him," then explains that Simeon had a revelation by the Holy Spirit that he would see the Lord's Christ before his death, and for the third time that he "came in the Spirit into the temple." The emphasis on the Holy Spirit in this passage demonstrates the importance the author gives of the subject. Simeon story happens between verses 25 to 35, and in three different verses, there is mention of the Holy Spirit.

The Anchor Bible Dictionary gives a historical concept of the power of God's Spirit. And the explanation on one of the interactions between Spirit and people is described as follow: "God's spirit touches the charismatic person without human intervention and he/she, in turn, inspires a small group of people opposing a large inimical power (Judg. 3:10; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 9; 15:14; 1 Sam 11:6)." Despite the fact that the section highlighted in Luke is not a physical war, the concept of a person being touched without human intervention and also inspire others also appears in Luke. In the Magnificat, the fact that Elizabeth was the one that primarily was filled with the Holy Spirit shows the transferring aspect explained above and the wording of the song also displays a knowledge that would surpasses the common knowledge of a humble and young women of that time.¹³

In the subsequent songs, the Benedictus and *Nunc Dimittis*, the lack of human intervention also appears in the wording. But this time, although they both could have a previous knowledge to use words that consists mainly in a same structural OT, they both presented aspects of the future that could only be revealed by the Spirit.

When talking about the Holy Spirit in scripture, it is imperative to be aware that, the bible is an autobiographical book from the Spirit point, and He is undoubtedly the ultimate editor. So any so-called "appearance" of His name, it was made with His approval not only for the sake of the first audience but also for everybody that would be in contact posterior to those days. Nonetheless, regarding the subject of the Spirit in Luke, the Theologian Max Turner explains in the book "Reading Luke – Interpretation, Reflection, Formation" that a Jewish audience of this part would recognize these three references as a typical work of the "Spirit of prophecy." And that "Such revelations and 'immediately-inspired' speech would have been regarded as quintessential expressions of the Spirit of prophecy." Turner also explains that in the case of triple reference about John the Baptist and the Spirit that appears in verses 15, 17 and 80 of the first chapter, "mark him out as a unique figure on the stage of Israel's salvation history." He also explains that the Spirit that was upon John was indeed the "Spirit of prophecy." Now the power of the

¹³ David Noel Freedman Ed. "The Anchor Bible Dictionary – Volume 3 H-J" (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 262-263.

Spirit that enables the action was also connected to the story. As Turner pointed out, Luke also pass it by the silent period of activity on John's life and only when the mission starts it would be mentioned again.¹⁴

Benedictus

At the beginning of Luke's gospel, there are three songs known from the Christian's traditions by their Latin names. They are the Magnificat in chapter 1 verse 46 to 55 also known as Mary's song, The Benedictus in verses 68 to 79 and the Nunc Dimittis in chapter 2 from verse 29 to 32. The fact that there are so many prophetic songs surrounding the birth of the Messiah is intriguing by itself. There is a connective flow between these songs, so much so that could be joined together as one master song without losing the consistency. Nonetheless, there is a primary difference between them and is the fact that the Benedictus, although also has the theme about Jesus, it was chanted at the naming of John the Baptist.

The canticle starts with the previous announcement by the author that Zachariah was indeed filled with the Holy Spirit and prophecy the words of this song. As some of the prophecies of the past, this one also has a clear division in itself, one part from verse 68 to 75 and another block from 76 to verse 79. Eugene La Verdier in his commentary of Luke explains that these two parts are different not only in form, but also in style. In the first section, a blessing or berakah and then a change of time and focus from God to John, from timeless to future.¹⁵

The Wesleyan Bible Commentary compares the Benedictus to prophecies of the Old Testament, saying that "As the Magnificat is modeled on the psalms, so the Benedictus is modeled on the prophecies. ...And while the tone of the Magnificat is regal, that of the Benedictus is sacerdotal." In continuation, the commentary also presents the theologian F. W. Farrar intake on the subject, stating "Farrar calls the Benedictus 'the last Prophecy of the Old Dispensation and the first of the New.'" He was correct to give Zachariah this position of a point of change. And going forth with this analogy, not only the song is in the middle of this prophetic time, but also in the text itself there is a precise moment where there is a significant change of pace, from atemporal to future tense, and this happens in verse 76.¹⁶

In the same book, it also points to the division that happens in the text. Called as a poem, the division of the two parts is presented as, "The first

¹⁴ Craig G. Bartholomew Ed., Joel B. Green Ed., Anthony C. Thiselton, "Reading Luke – Interpretation, Reflection, Formation – volume 6" (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.), 270.

¹⁵ Eugene La Verdier "Luke – New Testament Message" (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier Inc., 1986.), 27.

¹⁶ Ralph Earle, Harvey J. S. Blaney and Charles W. Carter. "The Wesleyan Bible Commentary – Volume Four – Matthew – Mark – Luke – John – Acts" (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964) , 217.

eulogizes God for providing redemption (vv. 68-75). The second part is addressed to the infant John and prophesies the role, which he is to play as the forerunner of the Messiah, giving at the same time the contents of his message (76-79).¹⁷

Aside from the clear break in verse 76, another structural point of this Hymn is the chiasmic order some words appears: (a) visit – 68b; (b) people – 68b; (c) salvation – 69, (d) prophet – 70; (e) enemies – 71; (f) hand – 71; (g) our fathers – 72; then in reverse: (g') our father – 73, (f') hand – 74; (e') enemies – 75; (d') prophet – 76; (c') salvation – 77a; (b') people – 77a; (a') visit – 78b. This chiasmic structure that was so common in the Old Testament now appears in a way that gives a nostalgic tone to this New Testament text. Being so different from the rest of Luke's Gospel, the structural balance is another confirmation on a display of the power of the Spirit over Zachariah. Even him being a priest, the mathematical precision displayed here was probably a work of the Spirit and not of him, neither Luke.¹⁸

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people”

The prophecy annunciated in verse 67 starts with two redemptive words, 'visited' and 'redeemed.' I. Howard Marshall in his commentary on the Greek Text of The gospel of Luke explains that the concept of visitation as redemption comes from the OT. He says “The background of this concept is to be seen in the OT thought of God setting his people free by his mighty act at the Exodus, which was then applied typologically to subsequent acts of deliverance.” Despite the fact the prophecy began with the blessing, it soon changes with the acknowledgment of an action. It is clear that the focus point of the initial phrase is the Act's of God in the visitation and redemption rather than His character.¹⁹

Contrary to what happens in the Magnificat, where Mary starts with the focus on her good fortune than moves towards God as the song progress. In this song is the opposite. First if the blessing unto God and his mighty act upon His people, instead of the individual. Only by the end that the shift occurs, when Zachariah goes from God to a person, that in this case, is the child in verse 76. Nonetheless, the salvation of God is praised in both songs. The underline theme is the salvation of the Lord.

Darrell L. Bock, in his book Luke – 1:1 – 9:50, corroborates with the idea of the initial point of praise coming from a salvific point is related to the Old Testament. He says, “The language of the verse is that of OT national

17 Earle, Blaney and Carter “The Wesleyan Bible Commentary – Volume Four – Matthew – Mark – Luke – John – Acts”, 218.

18 Eduard Schweizer “The Good News According to Luke” (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1913), 40.

19 I. Howard Marshall “*The Gospel of Luke – A commentary on the Greek Text*” (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 90

salvation, as the God of Israel is blessed in terms that are commonly used in the OT.” Then he says, “Such Nationalistic features argue against reading these verses as containing only ‘transferred Christian significance’ for Luke” explaining in his notes that ‘the remarks do have implication for the church, but this language also includes notes of hope for Israel. On this text’s two levels of meaning.”²⁰

The conclusion of this verses made by Bock is valid, for indeed there is two levels of meaning, one for the church now, and another a future hope for Israel. But what is open here with this aspect is that there is a point of two different times, the time for the church, as in now, and the time for Israel, that is in the future. What Bock indicates, maybe without realizing, is the fact that if one of the meaning is the ‘hope of Israel’ as a literal sense of this nationalistic freedom. Taking into account that the “mystery of Israel Salvation” as taught by the apostle Paul in Romans 11 verse 26 it reads “And in this way, all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, and he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”. Is also in the future, this second meaning could be the second coming of Christ.

“and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,”

In the dictionary of Bible terms of M. G. Easton, the word Horn is a “symbol of royal dignity and power (Jeremiah 48:25; Zechariah 1:18; Daniel 8:24).” It also says that in the case of the whole expression ‘horn of salvation’ in Luke 1:69, means ‘salvation of strength, or a strong Saviour.’ For it was applied to Christ. The indicative that this ‘horn of salvation’ comes from ‘the house of his servant David,’ consolidates that could not be of John, Zachariah is talking about, but of Jesus.²¹

At the beginning of the chapter, in verse 5, the author perceived as necessary to explain that not only Zachariah was a priest of the division of Abijah, but also his wife Elizabeth ‘from the daughters of Aaron’. The Aaronic lineage of John the Baptist was set out before this Hymn. The fact that the Horn of Salvation would come from the house of David, as Jesus was, make it clear that the central character still God and His salvific act as initiated in the previous verse, and not an allusion to his recently born son.

Robert Stein, in The New American Commentary reveal that “The fifteenth benediction of the *Shemonah Ezreh*, a Jewish prayer dating from the first century, states, ‘Blessed be Thou, O God, who causeth the horn of salvation to sprout forth.’ Then Stein complements, “The salvation Jesus brought is a strong Lukan theme.” Regardless the fact that John was not from

²⁰ Darrell L. Bock “*Luke – Volume 1: 1:1-9:50*” (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 1994), 178.

²¹ M.G. Easton “*Easton Bible Dictionary – A Dictionary of Bible Terms*” (Scotland, UK: Thomas Nelson, 1897) . 574

the Davidic lineage, another aspect that the horn of salvation is also tied to Jesus is because salvation belongs to God (Psalm 3:8) 22

“as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,”

In this blessing section of the canticle, Zachariah testifies that he is witnessing the fulfillment of a promise. The ‘horn of salvation’ spoken by Jeremiah, Zachariah, David, and so forth, was already in Mary’s womb, and it was happening in his time. By reaffirming what he was praising about came from the mouth of prophets from of old, reiterates that the canticle had nothing to do with any personal happiness of having his mouth opened and his tongue loosened or the fact that in his old age he receives his answered prayer of a child. From the starts Zachariah praises the salvation in motion was happening in his present day, acknowledging that the fullness of time indeed has come. (Galatians 4:4)

Leon Morris, in the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries of Luke, says, “ The reference to the holy prophets stresses the divine purpose. God is working out his plan, a thought which is further emphasized in the references to his dealing mercifully with the fathers, to the ‘holy covenant’ and to the oath to Abraham (72f).” The blessing is not only connected solely to God, but it is specific to one action, one event, and what was spoken by the prophets from of old, will be shouted by a new prophet, also holy to the Lord. The grandeur of the event takes Zachariah’s eyes from his own son to see and report this ‘divine purpose’. 23

In the book “The Hymns of Luke’s infancy Narratives” by Stephen Farris expounds that there have been some scholars that believe that this verse was an addition made by Luke to the original hymn. One of the reasons given for this thinking is the fact that some, view this verse as a break from the flow of the song, believing the verses 69 to 71 a more coherent way. However, there are other scholars that view this verse has a link to an early liturgical language. Nonetheless, Farris explains “The verse as a whole insists that the raising up of the Messiah from David’s house is not something new; it is rooted in Israel’s history. The present salvation is the fulfillment of the ancient promise.” This is the main issue of the verse, regardless its origin, what is happening was in fact prophesied and foretold by the prophets from of old.24

As previously noted, they were coming out from an extended period of prophetic silence. Having an annunciation that they were witnessing something that God himself spoke thru the prophets of the past was a

22 Robert H. Stein “The New American Commentary – Luke – Volume 24” (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 99.

23 Leon Morris “Tyndale New Testament Commentary Volume 3 Luke” (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1988), 97.

24 Stephen Farris “The Hymns of Luke’s Infancy Narratives” (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015) p. 136.

significant crucial moment, one that would not be taken lightly. They understood and welcomed the prophetic, but at the time, they were only stories told from generation to generation, and not something experienced. But now Zachariah, filled with the Spirit, in the midst of an astonished group of people, declares that what only have heard was indeed being fulfilled in front of their eyes. And the faithfulness of God displayed in this new dawn.

“that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;”

In this verse occur the explanation of the salvation of verse 68 and the specification of from who the deliverance will be. Stein (1992), view this passage as although the terminology comes from the OT, like Psalms 18:17; 106:10; 2 Sam 18, “the ‘enemies’ are further described in this verse as those who ‘hate us.’ Luke understood this less as a political and nationalistic deliverance from enemies than as an OT metaphorical description and personal salvation from sin (Luke 1:77)”²⁵

Bock (1994), also says that ‘redemption has both political and spiritual elements since the hymn includes not only nationalistic themes (1:71, 74) but also a statement (1:77-78) about the forgiveness of sins (Klostermann 1929: 27).’ The themes noted by the theologian points to different times and events, having the forgiveness of sin happened with Jesus first coming and nationalistic and ultimate deliverance of Israel, a promise still unfulfilled, but in this case, prophesied by Zachariah as consummated in the same way other prophets used to declare God’s decisions.²⁶

Hendriksen in his commentary, previously cited, correlate this verse with Revelation 17:14 saying, “When Christ conquers, his followers conquer with him.” He also noted that ‘among those who hate us are also people. But the passage does not say that we should hate them.’ By bringing to account that the ‘deliverance’ of this verse is more than only a ‘spiritual deliverance’ but also means people that hate us, Hendriksen also opens the interpretation to a future deliverance that did not happen during the first coming of Christ, as the martyrdom of the saints confirmed it.²⁷

“to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,”

Still with the ‘salvation’ theme, in this verse, Zachariah, as a confirmation of a fulfilled promise, brings the covenant of the Lord forth. Stephen Farris (2015), says that the subject of Israel’ salvation in this section

²⁵ Stein “The New American Commentary – Luke – Volume 24”, 100.

²⁶ Bock “*Luke – Volume 1: 1:1-9:50*”, 179.

²⁷ Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary-Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, 125.

is even more profound. He stated: "Salvation, which involves the remembering of that oath, is primarily for 'present-day' Israel. But this salvation of Israel is also a continuation of God's mercy to the fathers. The rough parallelism of the verse makes it likely that 'showing mercy,' or more literally, 'doing mercy,' and 'remembering the covenant' are roughly equivalent." He also points that the OT allusions with the Davidic focus that had in verses 69 and 70, then Exodus and Moses at 71, is now with the patriarchs with the "oath/covenant language," regardless this language could also apply to David. 28

Darrel Bock, previously cited, explain the last part of the verse by saying, "The idea of remembering is not merely cognitive, but refers to God's bringing his promise into operation. The phrase could be rendered 'to act' or 'to effect' his holy covenant." The covenant, the salvation, and the motion to bring to a fulfillment had already started. Although was the naming of John the Baptist that the canticle was enchanted, Zachariah new of Jesus for Mary had being in his house.²⁹

Despite the fact that the Gospel of Luke expounds over any other side character, the primary objective is to report the good news of Christ. This is the Lukan message. Stein (1992) explains this portion of the Bible by reiterating this same concept he says, "For Luke, the coming of Christ clearly did not bring the creation of a new religion but the fulfillment of the covenantal promises God made to the saints of the OT."³⁰ This verse not only points to the past, to the holy covenant but also indicates the future and what would be stated by Jesus in Mathew 5 verse 17, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill."³¹

"the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us"

In here the promise has been granted. Hendriksen points to this verses 72 and 73 are "substantially identical in meaning with verses 54b, 55 of the Magnificat" Although they are very similar, these sections in the Magnificat 54 and 55 could not have an 'identical meaning' for it says different things. While in Mary's song God still helping his servant not forget the promise he spoke to the fathers, in this part, there is no need of God 'help the remembering', for He already granted and what was 'spoken' was already given. Although there is a very similar wording between the verses of those hymns, the change from 'remembering' an oath and 'receiving' is enormous.³²

28 Farris "The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives", 137.

29 Bock "*Luke – Volume 1: 1:1-9:50*", 184.

30 Stein "The New American Commentary – Luke – Volume 24", 100.

31 Matthew 5:17 (NASB)

32 Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary-Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, 9,126.

Farris (2015), comment on this verse as a closing section of the historicity given by Zachariah. He says, "The psalm has thus completed a rapid review of OT history. The saving act is not new; its roots reach back through David (69), Moses and the Exodus (71), to Abraham, the fathers of the people. 'The law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms' are here made to speak of Christ." And he just did the same, culminating in the granted oath.

For Darrell Bock (2015) also view this section as a Highlight of the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham and David. However, he explains, "The nature of OT promise always had physical and spiritual elements. How God will fulfill this OT expectation in Christ is part of the burden of Luke-Acts. Here, fulfillment's certainty is drawing near." In this case, there is an opening to an understanding that even the promises for the patriarchs, was beyond the spiritual salvation that Jesus bought on the cross, and can also include a real and physical liberation of the people of God from His second coming.³³

"that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,"

The previous verses show God's deliverance and the explanation of from whom he is delivering from. Now in this section explains the "why." Bock (1994) says that, "The position of the term at the start of the sentence means that the reference to fear's absence is emphatic. It reflects a life without the distraction of oppression... God fulfills covenant so they can serve him fearlessly. God saves for service." Then he goes on explain that the word used for "serve" has a unique meaning of service to God, and the times used in the NT was exclusively related to services for a deity. ³⁴

This section also gives reference to the deliverance in Exodus. In chapter 8 verse 1 where it says "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Go to Pharaoh and say to him – Thus says the Lord. 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me.'"³⁵ For the Jewish people, the connection of freedom in order to serve God was always there. Israel, being a theocentric nation, view God as the main goal of a society. To serve God, as a people or as individuals, was the objective. In Psalm 84:10a it reads, "For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere."³⁶ Regardless that in Exodus God explains the reason for Him to free the people, and Zachariah also reinstating this notion, in the psalm show that the will to serve God was in the people too. Schweitzer (1913) explains that 'Here we have a spirituality for which worship is the utmost joy. Freedom of worship is the ultimate goal.'³⁷

³³ Bock "Luke – Volume 1: 1:1-9:50", 185

³⁴ Bock "Luke – Volume 1: 1:1-9:50" .186.

³⁵ Exodus 8:1 (NASB)

³⁶ Psalm 84:10a (NASB)

³⁷ Schweizer "The Good News According to Luke", 43

It is fascinating that Zachariah was the one announcing that the salvation of the Lord was so that people would serve the Lord fearlessly. From everyone present at that time, Zachariah probably was one that most that understood the meaning of "serving the Lord." At the beginning of the story, Luke explained Zachariah service for the Lord. And for that, he had to be of a certain lineage (Abijah) (v.5), a righteous man before God (v. 6), serving as a priest (v.8) and had to be chosen by casting the Lot to enter the temple (v.9). And all of this, "according to the custom of the priesthood." As a culturally theocentric society as Israel was, the top positions were the ones that were spiritually related. Zachariah had the honor to serve in that time and now was proclaiming a time of deliverance for Israel to serve the Lord. Probably without realizing how big those sentences was, he was the walking analogy of the promise of the Lord, very similar as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were at times.

"in holiness and righteousness before him all our days."

The continuation of Zachariah description of the service of the Lord reiterates that what he is saying is beyond the earthly duty, for by voicing that the people would serve him in holiness and righteousness points to a time where the fear was gone, and the holiness and righteousness are not from the people but God. In Romans 3:21-22 it says "But now, apart from the Law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe;" In the same way that Zachariah gives a brief history of the OT as stated above, now the righteousness is received through faith, allowing us to go boldly before the Lord (Heb. 4:16), without fear, to serve Him. Only His righteousness and His holiness could aloud such act. The depth of the words Zachariah was pronouncing was probably beyond his capacity to grasp the spiritual shift was about to happen for the whole humankind.³⁸

This is the last verse of the first part of the text. In the subsequent verses will be in so much change, that the Theologian Stein, went so far as to call this verse as the last one of the blessing. For he says "The Benedictus, begun in Luke 1:68, ends at this point." Until this part that is nothing pointing to John. From the time Zachariah began to speak he is praising the Lord for a specific reasons given verse by verse, however, without giving any connection between what he was saying to why he chose that moment to say it. Zachariah's praise that began in verse 68, now has its peak by going a full circle and proclaiming the vision of the eternal life in the words "before Him all of our days." ³⁹

Hendriksen (1978) regarding this verse explains that, "As some see it, the term *holiness* as here used indicates what should be the relation of the

³⁸ Romans 3:21-22 (NASB)

³⁹ Stein "The New American Commentary – Luke – Volume 24", 100.

saved with respect to God; the term *righteousness* what should be their relation to men. Others, however, maintain that holiness means not doing what God forbids; righteousness, doing what he demands.” He then concludes that however what is the right approach in this case, it is the ‘perfection in the sight of God’ that should be the goal of God’s people. 40

“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,”

From this point begins the second part of the hymn. Now the blessing is not unto God, but to the child in front. The abrupt change is not only to the central focus point but also in the time Zechariah start to speak. If when talking about Jesus, the horn of salvation, he spoke in the present tense, although at that moment was still in Mary’s womb, to John, the child, he speaks in the future, “will be called the prophet of the Most High”. Farris (2015) says “The change in direction in the poem is, as has been noted, a dramatic one. Perhaps the most striking change is the appearance of the future rather the aorist.” 41

Fitzmyer also confirms the break this section has by saying “The sectional shift is indicated by the change of topic and by the shift from aorist tenses to future tenses.” This definite change of pace confirms, once again, that the first part was not about John. However there is an evident change, and although he is addressing John the Baptist, the subject is his mission, his ministry, making Christ still the central theme of the canticle. The coming of the Lord and the child in question are intrinsically tied. There is no address to his personal life nor pertaining his individuality. Differently of other blessings from fathers to sons in the OT like Isaac in Genesis 27 or Jacob in chapters 48 and 49, where there were special blessings for their lives, in this blessing, is the office of John the Baptist the one that is mentioned. 42

Stein (1992) on the section “For you will go before the Lord to prepare the way for him” believe that this is the explanation for the role as prophet that John receives in the beginning of the verse, he says “This clause provides the reason for John’s prophetic status. John’s preparatory role already has been stated in 1:15,17 and prepares the reader for its fulfillment in 3:4 and 7:27.” In the same way that the Aaronic lineage of both parents of this child was stated in verse five; making it clear so nobody would grant any future reference of the House of David to him. Having a pre-statement of who exactly John was by exalting this position, his mission and what he is going to do would give a future sign of who the Messiah was.43

40 Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary-Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, 126

41 Farris “*The Hymns of Luke’s Infancy Narratives*” p.138.

42 J.A. Fitzmyer “*The Gospel according to Luke (i-ix)*.” Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981) ,385.

43 Stein “The New American Commentary – Luke – Volume 24”, 100.

Now the prophecy unto John is an agreement of what was previously told by the angel in verse 17 of the same chapter. The news that Zachariah did not believe and had his voice silenced as a result, now with his tongue recently loosened was proclaimed before all the attendees of the event. The Angel had told him that John would come in the power and spirit of Elijah and he would be the forerunner of the Lord, and now he confirms the message. Edward Schweizer (1913) explains, “vs 76 interprets John as the forerunner of Jesus, against the background of the expected return of Elijah (Mal. 3:1, influenced by Exod. 23:20 and Isa. 40:3).”⁴⁴

“to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,”

In this section, also refutes any doubt about who this child was. Here, clarifies that the child would not bring salvation, but ‘give knowledge of salvation.’ Through the water baptism was given by John, the people were prepared to receive the redemption that came thru Jesus. The Bible reveals that the tasks Zachariah was expounding that this child would do, it is an accurate description of John the Baptist ministry.

Robert Stein, in the New American Commentary – Luke, explains this part “through the forgiveness of sins” or in the case of the translation above “in the forgiveness of their sins” refers not to political salvation. Instead, it alludes to a spiritual one. He says that there is no contrast between John’s role with Jesus, “for repentance and baptism leading to forgiveness and salvation are intimately associated with the preaching of both. The main difference is that the eschatological gift of the Spirit would be given to Jesus’ glorification. Here “Knowledge” is not theoretical but rather the experiencing of this salvation by means of the forgiveness of sins.”⁴⁵

Bock (2015) also speaks on this subject, “This strong spiritual emphasis within salvation differentiates the Christian hope from that of contemporary Judaism, which tended to emphasize the earthly and physical elements of salvation. But the redemption present in the Hymn does not lack physical elements, as the use of *lytrosin* (redemption) in 1:68 shows.” The fact that Zachariah although a Jewish Priest, he was prophesying, so his understanding of the moment was probably increased by the Spirit.⁴⁶

Dr. Alexander Maclaren, in his Exposition of Holy Scripture also explains about this tension on realizing if the prophet was talking to spiritual or natural salvation by saying, “...Zacharias both saw more deeply into the salvation which Christ would bring than to limit it to breaking an earthly yoke, and deemed more worthily and widely of its sweep than to confine it within narrower bounds than the whole extent of the dreary darkness which it came to

⁴⁴ Schweizer, “The Good News According to Luke”, 42.

⁴⁵ Stein, “The New American Commentary – Luke – Volume 24”, 100.

⁴⁶ Bock, “*Luke – Volume 1: 1:1-9:50*”, 190.

banish from all the world.” If Zachariah was fully aware or not, does not exempt the fact that the message that the Holy Spirit was giving thru him could be interpreted either way. 47

“because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high”

The image of Christ is presented again, however now, by the metaphor of sunrise. Stephen Farris expounds that this section points, together with verse 69, to a similar text in revelation, where the apostle John writes in revelation 22:16 “I am the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star.” Farris believes that “The one who ‘visits’ in Luke 1.78 is the one who speaks in Revelation 22.16, Jesus the Messiah of David’s line.”48

The words “Shall Visit” in the future tense, in some texts appears as “has visited.” Nonetheless in the book “Gospel of Luke” from I Howard Marshall describe the reason for that by saying: “Most Scholars regard the aorist as being due to assimilation to v.68 and accept the better-attested future, which fits in with the tense in v.76.” The acceptance of verse regarding the future does not stop concerning the future life of John the Baptist as the forerunner. For the sunrise that shall visit us from up high, although it is undoubtedly related to Jesus has already visited and was in Mary’s womb at the time that this hymn was pronounced.49

Regarding this issue, Hendriksen also wrote, “accepting the future tense here is favored by the fact that the passage occurs in a context of futures (“will be called,” “will go before” verse 76) Also, Jesus was not yet born, so that ‘has visited’ can but justified only if it be interpreted as a prophetic past. All in all it would seem that the future tense deserves the preference in this case,” The continuation of the same verbal tense agrees with the prophetic style of this section of the song. Zachariah now speaks unto the child, about events that either was about to happen or in a more distant future, even if in the case of the latter one, probably, without the full knowledge or understanding of Zachariah.50

“to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

47 Alexander Maclaren. “Expositions of Holy Scripture – St. Luke Chaps I to XII” (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1944), 29-30

48 Farris, The Hymns of Luke’s Infancy Narratives, 141

49 I. Howard Marshall – The Gospel of Luke – A Commentary on The Greek Text (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983) .94.

50 Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary-Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, 9,128.

Although Zachariah starts to describe the future of his child in verse 76, this last verse is a continuation of Jesus description. The one that gives light to those who sit in darkness, or guide our feet into the way of peace, is Jesus, and not John. In the book *Mastering the New Testament – Luke*, from Bruce Larson, it says, “Christ brings the light and shows the way, but you and I must respond to the light and walk toward it. Zachariah’s hymn was not some religious incantation. He was talking about life and light and deliverance.” As Larson wrote it, there is a calling not only upon John the Baptist life in these words, but also a broader calling where everyone must respond.⁵¹

Farris (2015) compare this passage with Isaiah, saying, “Those who sit in darkness are doubtless the people of Israel as in Isaiah 9.1”. However there is another passage that although is linked with this verse, and is in Psalm 119:105, the word is the light for the psalmist's feet, later in John’s Gospel it will reveal who was the word. Nevertheless, even without the full measure of the revelation, Zachariah was saying what John would write about years later, that Jesus was indeed the Word that brings light to our feet. 52

The final part of the hymn for the theologian Bock (2015) is a conclusion of Jesus mission of guiding the lost, and he says, “The task is presented in the two infinitival terms *epiphanai*, to shine and *kateuthynai*, to guide. Both infinitives explain the role of the rising sun’s visitation (1:78), but in addition, they seem to describe in particular the purpose of his coming.” Zachariah starts praising the Lord and finishes praising the Lord. The Chiasmus showed in words, also appears in the main objective. The redemptive act of God, either nationalistic or spiritual permeates this song in a way that there was no other way of finishing without the continuation of praising the Lord and speaking of His acts. 53

In conclusion, as pointed by Raymond E. Brown, in his book, “The birth of the Messiah” Hymns usually recapitulates the main subjects and motifs. This one was no different. From verses the first parts there is a mention of the visitation of God, followed by God’s covenant being presented, then John the Baptist making the way ready for the Lord. Now the conclusion has the visitation with the “lighting from on high” with His mercy; namely, Jesus preceded by John the Baptist. In the two last verses, there is a return on Jesus and John’s mission, confirming the Christological centrality of the Hymn, even when talked about John.⁵⁴

Conclusion

51 Larson, *Mastering The New Testament - Luke*, 46.

52 Farris, *The Hymns of Luke’s Infancy Narratives*, 141

53 Bock, “*Luke – 1:1-9:50*”, 193.

54 Raymond E. Brown “*The Birth of the Messiah*” (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1979),

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." – Revelation 22:16

This verse from revelation is very similar to Zachariah's story in Luke 1. In both scenarios we have an angel testifying some event, then the statement that Jesus is the root and the descendant of David and the confirmation of His brightness. This prophetic book shows the end of times, and in different accounts, there are guidelines for how the people of God should prepare for it. From the beginning of the book, it shows a series of letters to churches of the apostles John's time. These seven churches were real places that received specific directions or praises from Jesus. There is little to indicate that this prophecy did not occur in its completion, nevertheless, none of them still exist.

Regardless the fact that the letters were indeed to the churches of the first century, the Bible, carrying these stories, opens the possibility to the re-interpretation, or double meaning of the same letters to be applied either about active churches of this time or even in an individualist projection over one's life. The approach of these chapters from revelation as purely for historical content is an enormous waste of what had been said to the churches. In the same sense, the primary application of Zachariah's Hymn on the first coming of Jesus should not be a blockage to points to a different moment in time. The nationalistic words, the praising of acts that still did not happen should be the propeller for a broader approach of the text. In the same way that every church should be aware of the "Nicolaitans" of today and the "Jezebels," the forerunner aspect that the Church of God holds prior His second coming also should be taking to an account.

Every prophecy of the Bible will be fulfilled (1 Cor. 13:8) and it is clear that Zachariah's prophecy also talks about a physical deliverance and peacetime that could only be accomplished by the end of times, upon Jesus returns. The second part of the Hymn speaks of the office of John the Baptist, probably one of the reasons that there was no particular blessing unto John's personal life. As observed on the analyses above, the indication of physical freedom for the nation and salvation from all that hate the people of God is presented in most of the verses and a constant on the comments of several theologians. The tension between spiritual and natural it is evident, and regardless of the interpretation of what this tension means for each one, there is a consensus that what Zachariah was speaking could be both. Beside the chiasmic structure this prophecy shows, there is no loop in the meaning, and the Hymn is an increasing message of hope displaying love thru acts from God towards men and from man towards God.

In Romans 11 verse 25 - 26 it is written "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery – so that you will not be wise in your own estimation – that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, and so all Israel will be saved..." The apostle Paul was explaining that the prophecy of salvation for Israel had not yet come, even though Jesus had already come, died on the Cross and

ascended to the Father, there will be time specific for Israel. Having this knowledge on the future of Israel makes any reference made by Zachariah on Israel as an indication of a future hope, even without realizing. When Jesus came, the eschatological clock began. Nonetheless, the freedom that the OT mentioned about Israel, as Paul revealed, had not been fulfilled, but will with the Parousia.⁵⁵

In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus commissions his disciples and says, "Go therefore and make disciple of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commended you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."⁵⁶ This was precisely the office of this forerunner had. John baptized (Matthew 3:8), he made disciples (Acts 19:1), and he taught (Luke 11:1). The same commission that was upon him was later given to all the disciples; the calling of one became a calling to every disciple, to the Church.

If the Great Commission is a commandment to be forever held until the second coming of Christ by the Church, there is no reason to not regard Zachariah Hymn as a prophecy that touches this new generation too. The office is the same, and the goal is the same, to prepare the way for the Lord. With the difference that in this time is not only the power of the Spirit but a united 'cry' between the bride of Christ and His Spirit, as in Revelation 22:17 "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water without cost."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Romans 11:25-26 (NASB)

⁵⁶ Mathew 28:19-20 (NASB)

⁵⁷ Revelation 22:17 (NASB)

Bibliography

Bartholomew, Craig G. Ed., Green, Joel B. Ed. and Thiselton, Anthony C. Ed. *Reading Luke – Interpretation, Reflection, Formation – volume 6*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

Bock, Darrell L. *Luke – Volume 1: 1:1-9:50*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 1994.

Brown, Raymond E. *The Birth of the Messiah*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1979.

Earle, Ralph, Blaney, Harvey J. S. and Carter, Charles W. *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary – Volume Four – Matthew – Mark – Luke – John – Acts*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964.

Easton, M.G. *Easton Bible Dictionary – A Dictionary of Bible Terms*. Scotland, UK: Thomas Nelson, 1897.

Farris, Stephen. *The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015

Fitzmyer, J.A. *The Gospel according to Luke (i-ix)*. Anchor Bible. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981

Freedman, David Noel Ed. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary – Volume 3 H-J* New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992.

Hendriksen, William. *New Testament Commentary-Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007.

Larson, Bruce *Mastering The New Testament – A Book-By-Book Commentary By Today's Great Bible Teachers*. Dallas, TX: Word Inc. Publishing, 1983.

La Verdiere, Eugene. *Luke – New Testament Message* Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier Inc., 1986.

Maclaren, Alexander. *Expositions of Holy Scripture – St. Luke Chaps I to XII*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1944.

Marshall, I. Howard. *Biblical Inspiration*. Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 1982.

Marshall, I. Howard. *The Gospel of Luke – A commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983.

Matzger, Bruce M. and Ehrman, Bart D. *The Text of The New Testament – Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Morris, Leon. *Tyndale New Testament Commentary - Volume 3 - Luke*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1988

New American Standard Bible – La Habra, CA: Foundation Publications Inc., 2004.

Powell, Mark Allan. *What are they saying about Luke?* Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989.

Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Survey – Revised*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985.

Tiede, D. L. *Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980.

Schweizer, Eduard. *The Good News According to Luke*. Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1984

Stein, Robert H. *The New American Commentary – Luke – Volume 24*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992

Justification by Faith in Romans 1:16-17

Ricardo Pedreira Affonso Filho

For I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17).

It is hard to believe that a bad people or a criminal, who did evil all life, still has a chance to be saved. There are a lot of texts in the bible that speaks of the forgiveness of God for those who were bad persons.

One of the most beautiful doctrines in the Bible and most certainly the most inexplicable is the doctrine of justification by faith. Justify is to make someone righteous without the person deserving. The Bible teaches that anyone who comes to God and believes in Jesus Christ as their Savior is made righteous no matter what the person has done. For example, Manasseh even sacrificing his own children to God, was a sorcerer, made everything, but came at a time when he repented in heart, God forgives him and took him back to his kingdom. There is no way for us humans to explain how God has such a great love to forgive the worst murderer, even Manasseh who killed his own children. The love of God is incomprehensible.

In our human conception a person who commands to kill or sacrifice his own child must suffer or die, but in the God's conception, it is very different. Even though in the Old Testament God acted with the death penalty for some people who had no desire for repentance, but when there is repentance, God forgives through faith in Jesus. From the moment that we have faith in what Jesus did on the cross for us, and we accept him as a savior, the Bible says that God makes righteous, in other words, even if people do not deserve it, Jesus' justice is transferred to the person.

Only the grace of God causes our sins to be forgiven. If God offers us this gift, we must accept it with joy. A biblical example that shows this grace is the thief who was on the cross next to Christ. For the person to have been condemned to death on the cross, he must have done something very horrible in society, and when the thief asked Jesus to remember him, Christ immediately justified him, because he repented from the heart. When a person repents from the heart, the person gives God the freedom for him to act in his life.

Many people think of enjoying all life as they want and after that repent, and get salvation, but is a danger the person thinking that way. If we do not accept the invitation of Christ today, we have the risk of being hardened by sin. The heart is hardened in such a way that the person feels no need of repentance. Therefore, it is not safe to think that way.

Wayne Grudem defines justification as “*an instantaneous legal act of God in which He thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ’s righteousness as belonging to us, and declares us to be righteous in his sight.*”¹ The author continues saying that the use of the word justify in the Bible indicates that justification is a legal declaration by God.

The verb Justify in the New Testament (*Gk. dikaiōo*) has a range of meanings, but a very common sense is “*to declare righteously*”.² The idea that justification is a legal declaration is quite evident also when justification is contrasted with condemnation. Paul says, “*Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn?*”. To condemn someone is to declare that person guilty. The opposite of condemnation is justification, which, in this context, must mean “*to declare someone not guilty.*”³

Robert Gundry argues that “*as a remedy for the sinful plight of humanity, God has provided justification*”. He says that the book of Romans presents the sacrificial death of Christ as the basis of justification and faith as the means of appropriating the benefits of his death. Romans portrays Abraham as a good example of faith, against the rabbinic doctrine of Abraham’s store of merit so excessive that other Jews can draw on it. Romans also lists the manifold blessing of justification – peace, joy, hope, the gift of the Holy Spirit and others – and contrasts the unbeliever’s position in Adam, where sin and death take effect, and the believer’s position in Christ, where righteousness and life eternal take effect.⁴

BROAD ANALYSIS ON JUSTIFICATION

The use of the word “*justify*” in the Bible indicates that justification is a legal declaration by God. The verb justify in the New Testament has a range of meanings, but a very common sense is “*to declare righteously*”. What is the Justification? Wayne Grudem defines Justification as an instantaneous legal act of God in which He thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ’s righteousness as belonging to us and declares us to be righteous in his sight.⁵

Justification by faith is one of the most important doctrines of Christianity. It is itself generates, feed, edifies, and defends the church. Without it, God’s church would hardly overlap, for the church fell and stood by her, is the main pillar of all biblical doctrines. Justification is as a legal act or a divine sentence in which God declares forgiven every sinner who believes in Jesus. It is an act contrary to condemnation, because removes the guilt of the sinner and restores to the sinner the condition of the child of God, with all

¹ Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Zondervan. 2000. Pag.723.

² Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Zondervan. 2000. Pag.723.

³ Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Zondervan. 2000. Pag.724.

⁴ Gundry, Robert. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Zondervan. 2012. Pag.436.

⁵ Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Zondervan. Pag.723.

rights, duties, and privileges. From the justification that the Holy Spirit initiates in the sinner, all the process of sanctification until his glorification.

Justification has some basic characteristics that Paul brings in the book of Romans.

- 1) *Begins in God* – The first characteristic is that Justification begins in God, where the manifestation of it is in benefit of the sinner. He who initiates the will to forgive the sinner, declaring the sinner free from all guilt and that there is no further condemnation of the sinner.
- 2) *Is by faith* – The second is that justification is by faith. Faith has no merit, but it is the instrument that receives the gift. This faith does not come directly from the human being but from God.
- 3) *Necessity* – The third characteristic is that justification is a necessity. All men, without exception, are sinners and need the forgiveness of God. The righteousness of God is for all, for all sin and lack the glory of God.
- 4) *Free* – The fourth characteristic is that justification is free, being a gift from God to the man. It cannot be bought by human works or conquered by personal merits.
- 5) *Jesus Christ* – The fifth characteristic is that the justification is based on the person of Jesus Christ. For us, it was free but had a high price for Jesus. It was through his sacrifice that there is the possibility of all human being to be forgiven because the guilt was imputed to him.

PERSPECTIVES ON JUSTIFICATION

Habakkuk was a prophet of Judah and probably a Levite because of the musical notes present in chapter 3 of his book. Habakkuk was in a moment of uncertainty and questioning because he was not understanding the reason God allowed all those things. The book of Habakkuk does not provide a solution to the problem of evil in our world, because people do not have faith and simply believe in God, but the lesson of Habakkuk 2:4 brings that the faith must be exercised in God, who will bring Justice. People who have faith in God will win in any circumstance. Even with all adversity, Habakkuk did not abandon God. People of God must wait patiently, knowing that God has a greater plan.

As Habakkuk said, the righteous will live by faith. Thus, this expression is rooted in the Old Testament. Righteous is the person who lives according to the will of God. The minor prophet did not understand why the sovereign God was using a sinful nation to destroy his own nation. God only wanted Habakkuk to understand that his people, who are righteous, had to live by faith.

John Stevenson says that Paul quotes this passage to tie the two separate threads of righteousness and faith together. The righteous one as described by Paul looks to the man who has been declared by God to be righteous because of the imputation of Christ. This man is saved by faith. But that is not all. He shall also live by faith. The believer is also one who lives by faith.⁶

Paul in Romans 1:17 reaffirms what Habakkuk said, that by faith a person can be made righteous before God. But now, the righteous is before Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for us. Before we were righteous before the law.

Mark Powell gives his opinion about the new perspective and the old perspective. He says that Paul closely connects justification and salvation with the death and resurrection of Christ, and he does so in a way that brings out present and future dimensions of Christian Experience.⁷

For him, an example of the New Perspective can be found on Paul in Romans. The New Perspective affirms that people are put right with God by trusting in what God has graciously done through Jesus Christ rather than by being faithful to the covenant that God made with Israel (Old Perspective). In this view, works of the law = covenant markers that identify Jews belonging to God's chosen nation (circumcision, Sabbath observance, dietary restrictions, etc.)⁸

The context of Habakkuk 2:4, from which Paul quotes, is that the one who had confidence in God was preserved although those around him perished. The righteous Jew would live in spite of the prophesied Babylonian invasion by his faith. Just as his physical life was preserved by faith, so Paul now says that the believer in Christ lives spiritually by faith.⁹

This verse changed the life of Martin Luther, a priest who began to study the Bible because he had the opportunity in his doctorate, at a time when the Bibles were restricted. It has dislodged the understanding that we do not have to pay for our salvation. We do not need to buy heaven, but simply receive the loss of our sins of grace. We do not need to buy divine favor.

PAUL ON THE THEME OF JUSTIFICATION

Paul in the letter to the Romans introduces the theme of justification, which is the main theme of the epistle. Romans 1:17 says: *"For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"* Habakkuk already presented with God's inspiration this understanding that the righteous had lived by faith. But it is not the righteous for self-righteousness, but the righteous who are justified by Jesus, and Paul implies that the man should not

⁶ Stevenson, John. *Romans: The Radical Righteousness of God*. Redeemer Publishing. 2008. Pag.27.

⁷ Powell, Mark. *Introducing the New Testament*. Baker Academic. Pag. 266.

⁸ Powell, Mark. *Introducing the New Testament*. Baker Academic. Pag. 267.

⁹ Reasoner, Vic. *Commentary on Romans*. Fundamental Wesleyan Publishers. Evansville. 2002. Pag.40.

base his life on material things, but rather rely on Jesus. Therefore, if anyone need to be justified, God himself is to graciously supply the justice necessary for the loss, which is accomplished by the sacrifice of Christ.

Justification by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ makes up the great theme of Paul's letters to the Romans. Jesus himself implied something similar in his parables of the prodigal son, the Pharisee and the Tax collector, the laborers in the Vineyard, and the great supper. The same implication lies behind his statement: "*I did not come to call righteous people but sinful people to repentance*". Thus, Paul did not invent a doctrine of free forgiveness, rather, he developed it in his own distinctive way. The doctrine receives its most systematic treatment in his letter to the churches of Rome.¹⁰

It is a summary of the letters to the Romans. Also, the summary of the gospel message. Here we have the text of the whole Epistle of Romans: First, the words "Gospel" – so dear to Paul, as will appear. Next, the universal saving power of this gospel is asserted. Then, the secret of the gospel's power – the revelation of God's righteousness on the principle of faith. Finally, the accord of all this with the Old Testament Scriptures: "The righteous shall live by faith."¹¹

According to John Stevenson, verses 16 and 17 can be understood as the thesis statement for the entire book of Romans. They will set forth the message that is to take us through the rest of the book. The author goes on to claim that verses 16 and 17 form a transition between Paul's introduction and the main theme of his epistle. This transition is marked by four causative prepositions ("for").¹²

Vincent Taylor wrote that within these two verses Paul states the authority of the Gospel. Here Paul defines *who* establish the gospel. He states the energy of the gospel. Here Paul defines *what* the Gospel is. And he states the agency of the Gospel. Here Paul defines *how* the Gospel is received.¹³

Paul begins the verse 16 saying that he is not ashamed. This is a figure of speech called "understatement." Paul is understating what he really means. He is not merely unashamed of the Gospel. He is eminently proud of the Gospel.¹⁴

Paul was not ashamed of the gospel, he was not ashamed to believe in Jesus Christ one day. Paul was a Jew and had been a persecutor of Christianity, had understood that Jesus was a false prophet and that his followers were a threat to the true religion and that they needed to be eliminated. Paul held a personal crusade to eliminate Christians, even getting

¹⁰ Gundry, Robert. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Zondervan. 2012. Pag.430.

¹¹ Newell, Willian. *Romans Verse by Verse*. Moody Press. Chicago. 1978. Pag.18.

¹² Stevenson, John. *Romans: The Radical Righteousness of God*. Redeemer Publishing. 2008. Pag.25.

¹³ Reasoner, Vic. *Commentary on Romans*. Fundamental Wesleyan Publishers. Evansville. 2002. Pag.40.

¹⁴ Stevenson, John. *Romans: The Radical Righteousness of God*. Redeemer Publishing. 2008. Pag.25.

permission from the Jerusalem authorities to hunt down Christians in neighboring towns.

One day Paul met Jesus, whom he pursued on the road to Damascus, and the persecutor became a worshiper. What he was ashamed and persecuted before is now the very faith he embraces. So, the statement "*I am not ashamed of the gospel*" makes extraordinary sense when we realize who is saying it. Was he a man for whom the gospel was a shame for the nation of Israel, that is, a carpenter hanging from a cross was the son of God? It was a scandal, but Paul became a Christian, and not only that, he became one of the foremost preachers of the gospel of Jesus. Paul felt blessed by God for having had that revelation on the road to Damascus.

Far from being a weakness, as perhaps the Romans thought, the gospel was the manifestation of the power of God. It is in the gospel that the power of God manifests itself in a clear and extraordinary way. By saying that the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, Paul is assuming that the human being is lost. Otherwise, he would not say that it was the power of God for salvation if everyone goes to heaven.

In saying that the gospel is God's power for salvation, Paul is assuming that the human being is lost and needs salvation. Not only for the Greeks, the barbarians, the idolaters but for the Jews themselves. Even the Jews who received the revelation of God in the Old Testament are lost because they have received the law of God and have not understood how the gospel is revealed in them, thinking that the law was a way of salvation, creating a religion of merit, trying to save itself by the works of the law.

This condemnation extends to the entire human race, regardless of nationality, gender, color, and age. Children are lost, teenagers, young people, adults and the elderly are also lost. The whole human race is defiled by sin.

The other religions insist on saying that man is good, and that salvation is within man. The argument is that the Man just needed to look into his heart. The justification that the world brings is that if the man is evil it is because he was born in a depraved environment. We are in a society that does not admit sin, and places blame on the culture, the parents, the education, being that the individual escape his responsibility. This is the religion that the world today likes, that we are good, that we are not responsible for our actions. Different, Christianity begins with sad news, that we are sinners and that we are under the wrath of God.

God saves sinners through the gospel, which is good news for us. Jesus Christ endured the wrath of God and the punishment that mankind deserves. The cross was not a moment of weakness, but a moment of revelation from God, because there he was carrying all iniquity. When Paul speaks of salvation, it is not only hell but in every way. The gospel saves us from the guilt of sin, puts us at peace with God, saves us from the power of sin here in this world, and learns to let go of our habits, to overcome our sins, the tensions of our hearts and to live doing the that's right, loving the next and forgiving. It

is a complete salvation from the guilt and power of sin. That is how God saves sinners, there is no other form of salvation given to man but through the gospel.

Paul states that it is the manifestation of God's power. The greatest demonstration of the Power of God is the ransom of sinners, giving them salvation and eternal life. Christianity is not a formal religion, it consists basically in experiencing the power of God, a liberating experience that comes from the gospel because it involves experience with God. We do not need to have the dramatic experience that Paul had with God, God has unusual ways of getting people to experience the power of the gospel, what matters is that this power can reach all of us. Christianity is not just being a part of a church. The gospel is the power of God to save. Is the power of God because it is the gospel that the righteousness of God is being revealed.

Paul says it is for everyone who believes. Thus, it is not to save every human being, but for the person who believes. It is from faith to faith that salvation reaches us. First to the Jew, for it was first announced to him in the Old Testament in the form of symbols. Then to the entire world, all those who believe. Faith here is not only intellectually agreeing but surrendering to Jesus, putting our trust fully in him and his work. Faith is to embrace the gospel with all your heart, being willing to live with Jesus.

Willian R. Newell says that the preacher or believer of the gospel have to believe in the bottom of his soul that the simple story, Christ died for our sins, was buried, hath been raised from the dead the third day, and was seen, is the power of God to salvation to every one who rest in it, - who believes!¹⁵ The message of Paul is that the power of God will save everybody who believes in Jesus Christ as the only savior.

The gospel is not to the Jew first because Jews are more important than the others, but because came to them before came to us.

RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

Paul implies that a man would be justified if he could practice the law, but because no one can keep it perfectly, there is no justification by this way. Another explanation would be that it is no use for the individual to know the will of God, to know the law and the commandments of God, to simply listen and not to practice, that does not make sense. What validity does a person have to read the Bible and not put it into practice, that is, knowledge does not save anyone, it is necessary to know and put into practice, and this process comes from God because the bible says that will and effecting comes from the Lord.

We must obey the laws of the Lord, but no one will be justified by good works because when we do the good for others, it is not from ourselves, but God, because there is nothing good in man. When a person realizes something positive, the person receives from God the conditions to be able to distribute

¹⁵ Newell, Willian. *Romans Verse by Verse*. Moody Press. Chicago. 1978. Pag.19.

his goodness, so we are not justified and saved by good works, but by grace through faith. Perhaps this was Paul's perspective in making this statement.

Paul knows that the righteousness that he has before God is not anything of his own doing; it is the righteousness of God that comes through Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 3:21-22).¹⁶

Imputed righteousness is the ground of justification. According to the New Testament usage, the words "righteousness" and "justify" are from the same root. God declares the one justified forever whom He sees in Christ. It is an equitable decree since the justified one is clothed in the righteousness of God. Justification is not a fiction or a state of feeling; it is rather an immutable reckoning in the mind of God. Like imputed righteousness, justification is by faith, through grace, and made possible through death and resurrection of Christ. It is abiding and unchangeable since it rests only on the merit of the eternal son of God.¹⁷ He continues saying that justification is more than forgiveness, since forgiveness is the cancellation of sin, while justification is the imputing of righteousness. Forgiveness is negative (The removal of condemnation), while justification is positive (the bestowing of the merit and standing of Christ).

Faith is not a leap in the dark. Faith according to the Bible and Christianity is a firm trust in God's promises and things, which, though invisible to us, are as certain as the air we breathe. Faith is not only a positive thought that things will work out, nor so little have a conviction or effort to think that something will work. It is not a kind of mental agreement that God exists. Faith is the certainty of things hoped for and the conviction of facts that are not seen. Faith is to entrust the future of our soul and our life to a promise of God. Faith is the certainty that these things we do not see, which are as real as those things that are physically manipulated. If God does not touch our hearts, we will always be incredulous, mixing truth with error, deluded. God must open our hearts to the truth. Faith is a full trust in the truth of Jesus, that God brings forth in our hearts.

The human being does not meet the justice of God based on the merits. We need that God help us. We meet that justice "*from faith to faith.*"

The Jews understood that Man was justified before God by his works, God accepted based on what someone deserved. If one does not deserve it, he would be doomed, that is, a religion of merit, which was the religion of Judaism at the time of Paul, and it was what they said had happened to Abraham. Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation because he deserved it. In the religion of works God owes it, God is obliged to pay if a person does a certain work, and God, in the end, is obliged to save the person. However, this situation is unthinkable. If we ask God what is our, he will give us hell, because as a sinner, that is what the human being deserves. God owes nothing to anyone, God has no obligation to save us from the day that man became a sinner.

¹⁶ Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Zondervan. 2000. Pag. 727.

¹⁷ Chafer, Lewis. *Major Bible Themes*. Zondervan. 1974. Pag. 200.

God saves sinners through the gospel, which is the good news for the human being. Jesus Christ endured the wrath of God and the punishment that man deserves. The cross was not a moment of weakness, but a moment of revelation from God, because he was carrying all iniquity.

John Stevenson clarifies this well when he explains that "from faith" looks to the point of salvation and "to Faith" might be a reference to the life of faith. Faith is the beginning of our relationship with Christ. But it does not stop there. It goes from faith to faith. The righteousness of God is continually revealed. It is revealed when God judges the sinner and it is revealed when God justifies the sinner. It tells us how we have fallen short of God's glory and it shows us how God moved to save us when we wanted nothing to do with him. It points out how we really are and then it changes how we really are. It does this, not by the works of the law, but through faith.¹⁸

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE

Paul in Romans explains the justification by faith in Jesus Christ. Justification is a free act of God, God wanted to make us righteous. It is a free act of God because it is not covered by our attempts to be righteous because if this righteous status is achieved by our attempts, it will not be grace. All persons are deprived of the grace of God; however, we have been justified for free.

Justification is closely related to forgiveness, but it is more than mere acquittal; it implies and effects the restoration of relationship. It is, in that sense, more closely linked to reconciliation. Paul says that people are justified or put in a right relationship with God by faith, though interpreters often note that the Greek word translated as "faith" (*pistis*) in English Bibles can also mean "faithfulness." Furthermore, the biblical texts do not specify whose faith or faithfulness puts people right with God. The question arises as to whether what justifies people is their own faith in God, or God's faithfulness to the divine promises, or indeed Christ's faithful obedience to God's will. Paul himself does not seem bothered by this apparent ambiguity. Throughout Romans he presents justification because of divine faithfulness (4:25; 5:18) but seems always to assume that those who are justified trust God's promises, believe the Gospel and strive to be faithful in their response to what God has done (5:1-2; 10:10).¹⁹

When Paul gives an overview of the process by which God applies salvation to us, he mentions justification explicitly: "Those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified" (Rom.8:30). The word called here refers to the effective calling of the Gospel, which includes regeneration and brings forth the response of repentance and faith (or conversion) on our part.

¹⁸ Stevenson, John. *Romans: The Radical Righteousness of God*. Redeemer Publishing. 2008. Pag.27.

¹⁹ Powell, Mark. *Introducing the New Testament*. Baker Academic. Pag. 263-264.

After effective calling and the response that it initiates on our part, the next step in the application of redemption is "justification." Here Paul mentions that this is something that God himself does: "Those whom he called he also justified."²⁰

More recently, N.T. Wright has made a significant contribution in his book, *What Saint Paul Really Said*. Wright's focus is the gospel and the doctrine of justification. He demonstrates that the core of Paul's gospel was not justification by faith, but the death and resurrection of Christ and His exaltation as Lord. The proclamation of the gospel was the proclamation of Jesus as Lord, the Messiah who filled Israel's expectations. In his view, Romans 1:3-4, not 1:16-17, is the core of Paul's message to the Romans, contrary to traditional thinking. Justification is not the center of Paul's thought, but an outworking of it: "*The doctrine of justification by faith is not what Paul means by 'the gospel'. It is implied by the gospel; when the gospel is proclaimed, people come to faith and so are regarded by God as members of his people. But 'the gospel' is not an account of how people get saved. It is, the proclamation of the lordship of Jesus.*"²¹

MARTIN LUTHER AND THE JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

A right understanding of justification is absolutely crucial to the whole Christian faith. Once Martin Luther realized the truth of justification by faith alone, He became a Christian and overflowed with the new-found joy of the gospel. The primary issue in the Protestant Reformation was a dispute with the Roman Catholic Church over justification. If we are safeguarding the truth of the gospel for future generations, we must understand the truth of justification.²²

It was the grace of God, Luther says, that made him realize that, contrary to all that had been taught him, "*righteousness of God*" in Romans 1:17 did not signify a new requirement revealed in the gospel or the New Testament, but the good news of the free forgiveness of all sins, because of the redemptive death of Christ.

Luther already understood that the death of Christ was important, as well as a demonstration of God's love as an example of love to be followed in serving others. The problem was in attributing salvation in part to the work of Christ (his redemptive death on the cross) and partly to the human work (meritorious works). It was taught that the merit of salvation was partly given by God, and partly accomplished by works. By this, the "gospel of Christ" became, for the afflicted conscience, a new demand for meritorious works.

The justice of God is based entirely on the merit of Christ, by which we are reconciled to God. It is "*righteousness of faith*" as opposed to "*righteousness of works*," because it is freely offered in the gospel.

²⁰ Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Zondervan. 2000. Pag. 723.

²¹ N.T. Wright. *What Saint Paul Really Said*. Grand Rapids, MI. 1997. Pag. 132-133.

²² Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Zondervan. P. 722.

This is the first righteousness, of which we are clothed in baptism, the righteousness of Christ and all that He has done for us. There is also, according to Luther, a second "righteousness," which begins in baptism, and which is the fruit of faith in Christ. This second righteousness, like the "first," is always new, never perfect, but a daily resumption, because it is the life of obedience to God's commandments. The righteousness that springs from faith wages a permanent war with the "rest of sin," a struggle against carnal temptations (works) and spiritual (faith).

The first righteousness is the "*grace*" of God, and the second is the "*gift of grace*," the journey that begins at baptism and ends at the resurrection. Justification is only by grace because the righteousness that absolves us before God is the righteousness of Christ, not ours. Justification before God, or grace, says Luther, is outside of us and cannot be tainted by our sins. The life of justification, in turn, is our daily life, of imperfect love and precarious service to God and to our neighbor.

In the "gospel" there is only peace, forgiveness, comfort, joy and salvation. He discovered that, in the midst of the struggle against sin in daily life, the Christian finds comfort in the gospel. The great comfort to all who hear the gospel of the grace of God in Christ is to know that the grace of God and the righteousness of Christ cannot be fragmented and thereby lose their perfection. Our life is fragmented, with ups and downs, victories and defeats, but our sins can never contaminate the righteousness we receive through faith in Christ, the forgiveness of sins.

The Christian justified by faith in Christ is free to serve others in true and disinterested love, each one in his own vocation. Love that springs from faith is greater than any natural love because God does not love what is perfect or beautiful in his eyes but loves the "poor and miserable sinner." This is the true meaning of the doctrine of justification, which is not a theological question of the sixteenth century, but a fundamental question about the meaning of our existence in the world.

The doctrine of justification by faith is a rediscovery, in the life of every Christian, of his place in the world, of the meaning of his existence. Faith in Christ first frees us from sin, but also from the deception of meritorious deeds. The best works, according to Luther, are not the ones that draw the most attention or distinguish us in the church and society. The best works are those that meet the next in their real needs and those that attract little attention. The doctrine of justification by faith in Christ teaches us that what are not the "good" works that make us "good" people. On the contrary, we must first become "good" and then practice "good" works.²³

It is hard to deny that Paul's experience was not like that of Luther. Paul thought that he was right in search of his sinless life on the precepts that there surrounded "as to zeal persecuting the church, as to the righteousness which is in the law, I was blameless".²⁴ More on made it clear that was not converted

²³ Schaff, Philip. *History of the Christian Church*. Concordia Publishing House, p. 132.

²⁴ Holy Bible. Almeida Século 21. São Paulo: Vida Nova & Hagnos, 2008.

by this greeting fervent but to be found in him, not having as my righteousness which is of law, but that comes from faith in Jesus, the righteousness which is of God by faith.²⁵ Luther was flawless in their efforts to fully comply with all monastic requirement, however aware that with God nothing was. Genuine conversion Luther was when he started teaching disciplines related to the Scriptures. In 1515 he began lecturing on Paul's letter to the Romans, where his soul was consumed by the words of Paul.

Luther could explain how he was before men "My situation was that, despite being an impeccable monk, I put myself before God as a sinner troubled by my conscience and had no confidence that my merit would satisfy you." However, aware of the limitations of human merit to the whole Creator, did he return to meditate in the Bible, particularly in the Epistle to the Romans, in order to get a solid answer to which could calm once for all your soul: Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that 'the just shall live by his faith. So, I understood that God's righteousness is the righteousness by which grace, and absolute mercy of God justify us by faith. Because of this discovery, I felt reborn and entered the open doors of paradise. All Scripture took on a new meaning [...] this passage of Paul became to me the gate to heaven.²⁶

When Luther discovered the righteousness of God in Romans 1:17 "*The just shall live by his faith*" was there that the monk threw out all your garments of good works and thus rendering the saving grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

The peace of God for those who have faith is the application of this theory. In Romans 1:16-17 we can see the peace of God for everybody that have faith in God and have a fear to not merely the forgiveness of God. The best way to understand this passage is to remember the context in which it was written. Paul wrote to the Church of Rome with the purpose of exposing the gospel that he preached and presented himself since he was not known. He sought support for missionary projects to the north of Rome, which at the time was not evangelized and there was no testimony of Christ. But to go to Rome, Paul needed the support of the church. This letter to the Romans represented Paul, his plans, and projects, mainly questions related to his ministry.

The point of Paul in Romans is that those who believe in Jesus are the Messiah they already enter in the "Shalom of God", they already experience the benefits of this kingdom, such as peace, love, and deliverance from wrath. As the Jews looked to the future, waiting for the earthly Messianic Kingdom, set up as an event, Paul told us that the Messiah here and now has already experienced the values of that kingdom. Peace, love, and loss is given to us now by faith in Jesus Christ, and not by law, merits or by the minuscule guard of the law of Moises or by any law or moral code, but now by faith in Jesus Christ, freely, those who Believe in Jesus as the Messiah, they already enter the kingdom of God here and now.

²⁵ Philippians 3:9

²⁶ Curtis, A. Kenneth. *The 100 most important events in Christian History*, 1998, p.100.

CONCLUSION

The great question that is posed before humanity since the fall into paradise is this, how can we be accepted by God, so that we can have eternal life after death. In paradise, our first parents lost that original justice that was conferred upon them in creation, God created man in his image and likeness and endowed him with justice, retinue, kindness, and innocence. The man, however, using the freedom that God gave him, fell from that state of justice in which he was created, and the result is that with the first couple, all his descent fell with him, becoming unjust before God, and consequently, all humanity that was represented in it also lost that justice. We have already arrived in this world devoid of self-righteousness, that is, we are born sinners. In what way can we be considered righteous before God, this is the great theme of the Bible and especially of the Romans.

The practical implications of the doctrine of justification by faith alone are very significant. First, this doctrine enables us to offer genuine hope to unbelievers who know they could never make themselves righteous before God: if salvation is a gift to be received through faith alone, then anyone who hears the gospel may hope that eternal life is freely offered and may be obtained. Second, this doctrine gives us confidence that God will never make us pay the penalty for sins that have been forgiven on Jesus merits. Of course, we may continue to suffer the ordinary consequences of sin.

Moreover, God may discipline us if we continue to act in ways that are disobedient to him, doing this out of love and for our own good. But God can never nor will ever take vengeance on us for past sins or make us pay the penalty that is due to them or punish us out of wrath and for the purpose of doing us harm. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus". This fact should give us a profound sense of joy and confidence before God that we are accepted by him and that we stand before him as "not guilty" and "righteous" forever.²⁷

²⁷ Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Zondervan. 2000. Pag. 732.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Chafer, Lewis. *Major Bible Themes*. Zondervan. 1974.
- Curtis, A. Kenneth. *The 100 most important events in Christian History*. 1998.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Zondervan. 2000.
- Gruden, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Zondervan.
- Gundry, Robert. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Zondervan. 2012.
- Holy Bible. Almeida Século 21. São Paulo: Vida Nova & Hagnos. 2008.
- Newell, Willian. *Romans Verse by Verse*. Moody Press. Chicago. 1978.
- N.T. Wright. *What Saint Paul Really Said*. Grand Rapids, MI. 1997.
- Philippians 3:9
- Powell, Mark. *Introducing the New Testament*. Baker Academic.
- Reasoner, Vic. *Commentary on Romans*. Fundamental Wesleyan Publishers. Evansville. 2002.
- Schaff, Philip. *History of the Christian Church*. Concordia Publishing House, p. 132.
- Stevenson, John. *Romans: The Radical Righteousness of God*. Redeemer Publishing. 2008.

Calvin and Psalm 13

Adelcidio Pereira Neto

The term hermeneutics has become increasingly popular in recent years. There is a lot of talk about legal, philosophical, literary and, of course, theological hermeneutics. As a result, this word has its meaning extended and extended in many ways. Its essential definition is very simple; it is a discipline that deals with interpretation or how they prefer some: the science of interpretation, or the art of interpreting. Others, however, take it "as the theory of the interpretation of written texts."¹

Although we are challenged every day to understand the meaning of things, in the dialogues we take, in the readings we do, and also in the symbolic language and in the understanding of the images we visualize, we do, however, intuitive way. Because of this, it is important to emphasize that theorists use the term hermeneutics when they have in mind a more careful interpretation to differentiate what we might call naive (common sense). The intuitive hermeneutics is not enough to solve all our difficulties with daily readings, especially when it comes to something a little more complicated. This evidence has already been noticed in the academic circles where a new type of illiteracy is being spoken today: functional illiteracy (reading illiteracy), that is, most students, even in higher education, have a hard time understanding a text, and, much more so, to express that understanding in his own words.

With regard to the Bible, a more careful study for its interpretation is justified, given its importance, especially for the three great monotheistic religions: Christianity, Judaism, Islam; and also because it proposes to be normative, as far as religion, ethics, and morality are concerned, for many who take it as a reference. Also, the Bible was written in a completely different culture from the West, its texts predate most of the Greco-Roman classics, and more, it concentrates a wide range of writers, covering approximately sixteen centuries. If this were not enough, we have difficulties with vocabulary, genres, and literary styles, date, authorship, translations, etc.

By understanding the relevance of the construction of biblical hermeneutics, and because we are aware that we have more than two millennia of Christian interpretation of the Bible, which produced tremendous and renowned interpreters, there is a purpose of rescuing the contribution of John Calvin. Moreover, Calvin was undoubtedly one of the most prolific theologians, who contributed to his great work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, and especially because he commented the entire Bible practically.

Obviously, we could not address all of Calvin's comments in this work, so for reasons of pondering, the subject will be delimited to the Psalm

¹ GRENZ, Post Modernism: A guide to understanding the philosophy of our time, 1997, p.146.

commentary. The reasons for this choice are varied, but we can summarize them by borrowing the argument from Erwin Mulhaupt²: first, the Psalms were special to Calvin because of his personality, he fully identified with David (and other writers) in his struggles and crises, secondly, the book of Psalms was the only exception to Calvin's practice of exposing the New Testament on Sundays (the Old Testament stayed for the week) and lastly because he employed the psalter in the liturgy as no other. Also, is justified in choosing Calvin's commentary on Psalms as a starting point for his study of the theology of the Reformation in Geneva, and not with the Institutes, arguing that this "reflects the emerging consensus of Calvin's Institutes should be read in the light of the comments and not in reverse."³

It should be added that studying the book of Psalms will help us to understand the Bible better. For the psalms are poems and prayers that express varied traditions, events, values, and themes, assembled into an integrated whole and celebrated in the context of community or personal worship prayer. These poems were initially conveyed orally, but over time they evolved into a more formal style as they were written and collected in the psalter. Gradually, they assumed the character of the Word of God, they became the object of personal prayer and devotion, a rich inspiration for the journey of the "just," so that "those who want to make progress in the school of God need the Psalms."⁴

However, the present psalter is varied and complex in its content and form, we shall dwell on Calvin's hermeneutics in the so-called lamenting psalms⁵ which account for about a third of the collection. These chants express individual and collective lamentations, resulting from crises provoked by adverse situations and social-political struggles common in ancient Israel. So the motive could be an epidemic, a plague, a lost battle, or any calamity that struck the nation, and individually a severe illness, solitude or false testimony. However, it is difficult to pinpoint a specific historical situation, since language makes use of stereotyped images. Probably the imprecision and generality of language may have been a strategy for these prayers to be used in various situations and by any individual. Another exciting aspect of these psalms is that the Psalmist always protests innocence, his crisis and pain are heightened because his experience apparently disassociates from his theology. He has to live with the silence of God, perceived in the absence of redemptive acts in his favor. Thus, these psalms represent the prayers of the righteous in times of grave crisis; the words flowed impelled by the pain. The choice of

² Erwin Mulhaupt apud SELDERHUIS, Calvin's theology of the psalms, 2007, p. 14^[1]_[SEP]

³ SELDERHUIS, op. cit., p. 15^[1]_[SEP]

⁴ Ibid., p. 24^[1]_[SEP]

⁵ In this paper, we choose the terminology of lament, following Arthur Weiser (he also admits supplications) to understand that it is more forceful because it expresses better the gender (content and form) of this group of psalms. In addition to the terminological question, we are also credited to Weiser for the classification list of the lamenting psalms: individual lamentations (Ps. 3; 5; 7; 13; 17; 22; 25; 26; 27; 31; 35; 38 And collective lamentations (Ps 44, 74, 79, 80, 83, 90, 137).

this group of psalms stems, in part, from the attempt to understand how Calvin re-read the theme of suffering, revolt, despair, etc.

This work will begin with the attempt to address the historical evolution of the roots and theological-hermeneutic influences on Calvin. Then, chapters two, we will try to identify some assumptions and principles in the hermeneutics of this reformer. In chapter three, from a clipping, we propose to make a more focused discussion of Calvinistic hermeneutics from its reading of Psalm 13. This analysis will be made in the light of the contribution of the modern study of the psalms. In his conclusion, it will be presented some considerations in the form of challenges to the contemporary Protestantism.

Finally, we hope that the study of John Calvin's hermeneutics provides an opportunity to redeem some of the hermeneutic wealth of sixteenth-century religious reform. We are aware of the difficulties of this endeavor, for, to the best of our knowledge, Calvin "never wrote anything that resembles a treatise on hermeneutics"⁶, and, on the one hand, much has already been written about themes that some aspect of the theological thought of the reformer of Geneva, however, on the other, it seems that the hermeneutic question has been completely neglected. Thus, we expect that this ransom is relevant and can offer, in particular, to present-day Protestantism, pertinent challenges to respond in a balanced way to the contemporary theological-hermeneutic issues.

ROOTS AND THEOLOGY-HERMENEUTICAL INFLUENCES ON CALVIN

In this chapter, we will try to outline the main theological-hermeneutic strands that influenced the Genevan Reformer. We are aware that due to Calvin's erudition, and the limitation of this work, it would be too much to attempt to make an exhaustive analysis so that it will be representative. Moreover, this reconstruction will depend mainly on deduction, for Calvin is quite generic about his sources. On the other hand, despite the difficulties and limitations mentioned above, we believe that a line of reconstruction of the theological-hermeneutic influences on Calvin should contemplate the literal, psychological and pastoral-homiletic approaches. For as far as we have walked with Calvin in the Psalms, this triad sums up his "method." Thus, obviously, and in a sense, a good part of the commentators or schools, prior or contemporaneous with Calvin, who prioritized these aspects exerted an influence on the reformer. The proposal is to highlight some names in this long chain.

The school of Antioch arose in opposition to Alexandria that dominated biblical hermeneutics in the first centuries. Alexandria was famous for the allegorical method of interpretation. It is true that the followers of this school did not ignore the literal sense. In fact, his greatest exponents, Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD) established a theory which attributed five senses to

⁶ ANGLADA, Introduction to Reformed Hermeneutics, 2006, p. 88

the Scriptures (historical, doctrinal, prophetic, philosophical, and mystical)⁷ and Origen, (185-253 AD) the remarkable successor of Clement, he saw in the constitutive parts of the human being (according to him, body, soul, and spirit) an analogy to the Scriptures which would thus have three meanings: the body, the literal sense; the soul, the moral sense, and the spirit, the allegorical or mystical sense⁸. Despite this, the pendulum has always favored the figurative sense.

Even so, we cannot be simplistic and reduce Alexandria to bizarre allegories. It is necessary to recognize that many followers of this school became notable for the erudition, also, at least in the first moment, the attempt of Alexandria consisted in seeking to give an answer to the Jews and to some heretics who tried to misrepresent the Scriptures. Therefore, it was up to them to face the significant challenge of making the Old Testament a Christian document, therefore relevant to the Church. Although his motives may be considered noble, Alexandria opened the door so that the exegete could interpret the text at his convenience, since no regulative principle was established that governed allegorical exegesis.

Then the school of Antioch emerges on the scene in an attempt to curb the abuses of spiritualization and to point out an alternative path, especially regarding the reading of the Old Testament. The founder of this school was Lucian of Antioch (240-312 AD)⁹, who is attributed (despite the lack of concrete evidence) the attempt to standardize the existing Greek texts, which gave rise to the Byzantine or Syrian text. Thus, Luciano is credited with initiating a rich tradition of biblical studies marked by scholarship and knowledge of the original languages. Its greatest exponents were:

Deodore of Tarsus (390 A.C.) who wrote a treatise entitled: What is the difference between contemplation and allegory? In which he defends "contemplation" or theory against the allegory which seemed to impose a forced meaning on the biblical text. He also wrote a commentary on the Psalms in which he attempts to explain the sound hermeneutical principles for good understanding of the Psalms, thus seeking to interpret the psalms within their historical context.

Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428 AD), considered the greatest Antioch exegete, commented "with extraordinary critical wit, he wrote a treatise against the allegorical interpretation called *Concerning allegory and history against Origen*¹⁰, in which he obviously criticizes Origen's approach. In his own approach, he sought to focus on the natural and literal sense, using an interpretation that would later be termed grammar-historical. This approach is evidenced in his work on the psalms, where he seeks to reconstruct the probable occasions of the psalms and tries to establish the original meaning intended by the author. Theodore, too, severely limited the number of Old

⁷ VIRKLER, Hermeneutics: principles and processes of biblical interpretation, 1987, p. 44

⁸ Ibid., idem^[1]_{sep}

⁹ LOPES, The Bible and its Interpreters, 2004, p. 134

¹⁰ GREIDANUS, Preaching Christ from the Old Testament, 2006, pp. 111-111

Testament texts that speak of Christ, which earned him the accusation of "Judaizing" (as Calvin later did).

In addition, he attempted to explain texts such as Paul's reference to the allegory in Galatians ¹¹ and Zerubbabel made by the prophet Zechariah, defending the thesis that Scripture is a text of superimposed layers, so both the meaning of the story as well as, of the gospel must be preserved in the interpretation. The apparent discrepancies he attributes to the hyperbolic language of writers who find full knowledge in Christ. Therefore, although he accepts the typological element in the Bible and finds messianic passages in the psalms, however, he explained most of them from the historical point of view.

John Chrysostom (407 AC), which translated means golden mouth, a nickname that he received after his death and which is justified by his extraordinary gift of oratory. He quit his legal career to become a monk. After a few years living in the mountains, among monks, in an austere life, to the point of harming his health, he returned to Antioch where he was ordained a deacon, an elder and appointed to the office of preacher, a position he held for twelve years. His reputation as a preacher grew so much that he was obliged by the Emperor to accept the primacy of Constantinople. Despite the troubled life, the fruit of the polemics involved, which resulted in an exile, he produced a vast literary work composed mainly of sermons, but also of some treatises and a considerable number of letters.

Chrysostom's homilies deal with doctrinal, polemical, and exegetical aspects. In exegesis he commented on a large number of books of the Bible, trying to explain the historical meaning of the texts. Chrysostom defended the principle that allegorical or mystical readings of the biblical texts should only be admitted if the authors themselves suggested them. Thus, "his sermons were exegetical and eminently practical. It enchanted him with the simple and grammatical understanding of the Scriptures." ¹²

In the light of the above, it is evident that the School of Antiochia had severe restrictions on allegorical reading, even if it was a typology. On the other hand, they were aware of the difficulties with some passages, especially the Old Testament prophecies, for they could not deny that the literal-historical sense sometimes pointed to a higher sense, the anagogical meaning. This meaning is termed the *theoria* term that designates the "mental state of the prophets when they receive visions ... it is an institution or vision by which the prophet can see the future through the present circumstances." ¹³ This principle allowed the exegetes Antiochians to conceive a higher sense for certain passages without, however, giving up the anchor of the literal sense.

We can summarize the principles of interpretation of Antioch to sensitivity and attention to the literal sense of the text, *theoria*, historicity of the reports

¹¹ GREIDANUS, p. 112^{f11}_{sep}

¹² WALKER, History of the Christian Church, 1983, p. 188

¹³ LOPES, p. 136

and authorial intention. It can be seen, then, that the emphases of Antiochian hermeneutics are similar to those of the reformers.

Hence, Calvin, as a reformer exegete, is a creditor to Antioch, even though he, in the psalms of lamentation, does not cite this school directly. In many ways his hermeneutics is a resumption of Antioch. This becomes more understandable if we analyze the Humanism-Renaissance influence, which rejected the entire medieval worldview by proposing as an alternative a return to the Greek-Roman classics. Calvin and the Reformers, as men of his time, were obviously influenced by this thought. However, on the other hand, they could not fully embrace this project, since the proposal to return to the classics was mainly a denial of medieval theocentrism, hence the attempt to dialogue as a more "profane" culture, which despite its religiosity, was more characterized, in its cosmovision (a state of inner consciousness), by the philosophy.

So the Reformers, in rejecting the medieval theological-hermeneutic edifice, needed to elect a new building to dialogue, so they chose to rescue the precious inheritance of their fathers, notably from Antioch.

The influence of Augustine

Augustine is undauntedly one of the most important figures in the history of Western Christianity. He is considered the last of the Church Fathers of antiquity before the Middle Ages. His theology of salvation, the sacraments, and the Church was impactful on the development of Catholicism. He was a significant influence on Western monasticism, one of the most significant culture-shaping institutions of the Middle Ages.

Augustine was born in 354 in the city of Thagaste (modern-day Algeria).¹⁴ Augustine was not born into a very wealthy family, and the only hope for his upward mobility was to get a classical education. He was educated in the Latin Roman classics, such as Virgil and Cicero. His education was rigorous in Thagaste and very disciplined, and Augustine proved himself to be a remarkable intellect. He wrote many theological works ranging from Christian virtues to the mystery of the Trinity.

At first, Augustine despised the religion of his mother, which he called "fables of old women"; also, the Latin translation used by the Church was, for rhetoric, "a series of unsightly and even barbarous writings."¹⁵ We must add that the question of the origin of evil already bothered Augustine. His mother had taught him that there is only one good God, but where did all the evil that was around him and within him come? If, on the one hand, he could not find answers in Christianity, on the other hand, from 373, when he studied Cicero's Hortensius, "he aroused his longing for philosophical wisdom." He then approached Manichaeism,¹⁶ as a listener who for a time would answer his

¹⁴ GONZALEZ, *An Illustrated History*, (V. 2), 1980, p. 166

¹⁵ ALTANER, p. 412^[1]_{SEP}

¹⁶ Manichaeism is a doctrine that mixes Christian and Gnostic elements. His teachings are derived from Mani who is considered a prophet and apostle of a new "religion of light." As they believed,

anxieties, for it seemed to him, "proud man of knowledge," a religion "founded on reason, and free from all authority - as opposed to the Orthodox Church - who boasted of possessing the true Christian doctrine. The points in the Manichaean doctrine that attracted Augustine's attention were the rational explanation of the universe, the rejection of much of the Old Testament, and the statement "that there was not one eternal principle but two, and one of which was evil, while the another was good."¹⁷ (Translation by author)

From Africa, he went to Rome. Then he went to Milan, where recommended by the mayor of Rome, Simimco, obtains the official chair of rhetoric. In this city, although accompanied by his mother and friends, he "was shaken by previous anxieties, captive of his carnal passions and overwhelmed with doubts"¹⁸. However, he suddenly experiences a profound conversion, which is partly due to his disappointment with Manichaeism, partly because he discovered Neoplatonism,¹⁹ which helped him "to conceive God and the soul in less materialistic terms. But mainly because of the impact of Ambrose's powerful preaching, whom he listened to because of the famous oratory, but which gained his attention by what he spoke, and helped him to solve one of the great problems that prevented him from accepting Christianity: "How could the Scriptures with their harsh language and their stories of violence and robbery be the word of God. " Thus Ambrose gave him the hermeneutical key to read the Scriptures, especially the Old Testament.

Augustine, after his conversion, was baptized by Ambrose, then renounced and returned to North Africa, yearning for the practice of the contemplative life. However, his desire was fulfilled for a short time, for with only eight years of conversion, and against his will, he became bishop of Hippo. There he remained for thirty-five years as pastor and theologian devoted entirely to his people. Moreover, he still found time to write many works, concerning various aspects of Christian truth. What would make him the most quoted theologian throughout the Middle Ages, thus becoming one of

he had received the final and complete revelation that Jesus, Buddha, Zoroaster received in part. Manichaeism was intended to offer a response "to the mysteries" of the human condition, pointing the way to our divine origin and liberation from material ties. Moreover, through various myths, they tried to explain the origin and functioning of the universe, so they arrogated themselves strictly rational and scientific. It is added that they used the conception of two eternal principles as an attempt to explain the problem of evil, so they also rejected much of the Old Testament (GONZALEZ, op cit, 2004, pp. 17-20).

¹⁷ GONZALEZ, A History of Christian Thought, (v. 2), 2004, p. 19. As we will make many quotations from this work, we will use only the indication of v. followed by the number to differentiate volumes. Other works of the author will be differentiated by the year of publication in Portuguese. We also inform you that, from now on, all the quotations in this work, of works that are not in English, are free translations made by the author of this paper.

¹⁸ ALTANER, p. 413

¹⁹ As far as the influence of Neoplatonism on Augustine goes, it is an object of discussion among scholars. However, there is no denying it. Gonzalez is of the opinion that Augustine probably knew Plotinus and Porphyry, and other Neoplatonist's. And that Neoplatonism helped him overcome his skepticism and overcome "the two main obstacles that stood in the way of his intellectual acceptance of the Christian faith - the incorporeal nature of God and the existence of evil." (Gonzalez, (v. 2), pp. 20-21)

the great doctors of the Roman Catholic Church, but also "was the favorite author of the great reformers."²⁰ John Calvin quoted Augustine more than any other Church Father in his monumental work, the *Institutes*.²¹

But it was against Pelagianism²² that Augustine produced his principal theological works,²³ in which lies the basis of thought which would exert significant influence upon the reformers, notably on Calvin. We can sum up Augustine's thought against Pelagianism at some points²⁴: 1. He affirms the corruption of the human race from original sin; 2. The human being is free to choose among several alternatives, but is not free not to sin; 3. Children share in original sin, so they are sinners and need to be baptized; 4. Only irresistible grace can lead us into a new state, in which the freedom to sin as to not sin is restored; 5. Only the predestined can make the "decision" to accept irresistible grace.

When examining the theological-hermeneutic framework of the reformers, notably Calvin, the evidence of these points it's perceived. Thus it is evident that doctrines such as total depravity, irresistible grace, and predestination are to a large extent a resumption of Augustine. Moreover, the Augustinian conception of the Scriptures, as the word of God, can be seen in the presuppositions and principles of Calvin's hermeneutics, which we shall see in the following chapters. Even in the Psalms, which Augustine expounded through homilies, in which he preferred the allegorical-mystical sense, Calvin is a creditor to Augustine, for he follows him in his "soul-mirror" approach.

Certainly, the literal sense was not unknown to Augustine. Augustine sought to discover the intention of the author. However, it is necessary to recognize that due to the "wider context and the rule of faith, he made the historical interpretation relative. On the other hand, Altaner is of the opinion that Augustine reserves the literal approach to "his scientific commentaries on Scripture and controversial works."²⁵ Like the episode in which Augustine borrows from Jerome, through letters, a "more correct exegesis of the passage," for Jerome's interpretation made Paul a liar, which compromised not only the authority of an apostle but of Scripture itself.

Returning to the Psalms, we must admit that Calvin sometimes quotes Augustine directly to criticize his interpretation: "Augustine's attempt to prove, in the light of these words, that those who do not believe in the terrible

²⁰ NICHOLS, History of the Church, 1985, p. 178

²¹ In 1536, at age 27, Calvin published the first edition of the *Institutes* of the Christian religion, systematic theology that advocated the teachings of the Reformation.

²² Pelagianism obviously derived its name from Pelagius. Not much is known about him, but it is certain that in 405 AD he had contact with Augustine's theology, which "reacted violently because it made all things dependent on the grace of God and seemed to leave no room for human efforts and participation."

²³ Gonzalez is of the opinion that three are deserving of special mention: About the Spirit and the letter, About nature and grace and About original sin. (GONZALEZ, (v.2), p. 32)

²⁴ These points are an attempt to summarize the excellent discussion presented in: GONZALEZ, (v. 2), pp. 28-33 and 41-48

²⁵ ALTANER, p. 428

judgments of God have no experience of the goodness of God, is too inadequate. To perceive their mistaken view of the passage, it is enough to look at the following clause [...] "²⁶. However, although Calvin distorts Augustine from the hermeneutic key to read, especially, the Old Testament, there is no denying that Augustine greatly influenced Calvinist hermeneutics.

The Medieval Influence

It is common to hear reference to the Middle Ages, as the Dark Ages, an extended period in which obscurantism prevailed. However, while on the one hand it must be admitted that the Middle Ages were marked by declines and shadows, on the other, of course, there were high achievements, especially the twelve and thirteenth centuries which can be considered a "classical" period by their "worldview, originality and the beauty he created." Particularly the thirteenth century is of fundamental importance, for in it were laid specific bases that served as anchor and spring for a new worldview. Among them, we highlight two: the growth of universities, the introduction of Aristotle and Arab and Jewish philosophers.

Indeed, the birth and growth of universities were one of the main responsible for the change of mentality that would result in Humanism-Renaissance and Reformation. The major modern universities date from this period. They became famous for the field of study that specialized, so Paris and Oxford became the great centers of Theology. Many would be the differences of the universities regarding the education of the monasteries, but three points, in our opinion, are primordial. The first is the freedom to think without ecclesiastical tutelage.

The teachers and students were encouraged to question the teachings of the great theologians and philosophers, who were true dogmas. It is symptomatic that the most significant thinkers of the late Middle Ages were professors at major universities.

Second, the university provided the translation of works that received considerable resistance by the conservative thought of the Church, such as the works of Aristotle. Moreover, these translations have brought the Western world into contact with various Arab and Jewish philosophers.²⁷ And finally, the Bible itself was studied more academically. We must also remember that one of the factors that contributed to the emergence of the university was the tradition of the schools of theology in the cathedrals since they used a system of reading called *quaestio*, as opposed to the studies of the monasteries, more devotional (*lectio*).²⁸

At first, this introduction encountered severe resistance, for when a small part of Aristotelian philosophy was known, it was already sufficient to stir up a

²⁶ CALVIN, The Book of Psalms, (v. 2), 1999, p. 29

²⁷ GONZALEZ, p. 225

²⁸ LOPES, p. 153

debate "on the use of dialectical reason in the field of theology."²⁹ Moreover, Aristotelian philosophy, in many respects, was incompatible with the traditional Augustinian-Neoplatonic philosophy. The fact that the works of Aristotle arrived in the West after a real way of *Via Crucis* was translated, from Greek to Syriac, to Arabic, to Spanish, to Latin. Another difficulty is that Aristotle appeared in company with the Arab philosophers and Jews that were far from being simple exhibitors.

However, due to reservations with existing translations, he was forced to seek more direct translations of the Greek originals, a work that some scholars, such as: Gerard of Cremona and Henrique Aristipo, undertook. Despite the resistance, when Aristotelianism triumphed, ironically, the adverse factors paved the way for the development of Western thought and, consequently, for the Reformation. First, acceptance of Aristotelianism constituted a change of hermeneutic paradigm, for the Christian world, after hundreds of years, beckoned the possibility and legitimacy of approaching the Christian faith with a philosophical worldview that was not traditionally sustained. Second, around the originals (*ad sources*), and criticisms of the existing translations, paved the way for Bible translations to be revised as well, using the best of philology at that time.

At the time of the Renaissance, the term "humanism" did not have the current connotation in which it became synonymous with denying the existence or importance of God, a secular worldview. It is true that Humanism reacted violently against medieval theocentrism, but this did not mean the denial of God, not even of religion, but a desire to liberate the knowledge of superstition and ecclesiastical censorship and control. In reality, in a sense, it was a protest movement with everything that restricted thought, hindered the human spirit, and limited human experience. On the other hand, the umbrella of humanism harbored a great heterogeneity, so to call someone a humanist writer, "does not mean to convey any essential information regarding his philosophical, political or religious position."³⁰

Was there, then, anything to characterize humanism? Apparently, the answer is, yes, but there is disagreement as to the answer to this question. It seems to us, however, that we would be right to characterize humanism as a cultural and educational movement, interested above all in promoting eloquence in its most different forms.

The contribution of humanism to the Reformation was very significant and of high impact on the reformers, since the leading reformers were in a sense humanistic. In the hermeneutic perspective, the most relevant contribution was the general principle that can be synthesized in the slogan *ad sources* (back to sources). Humanism generated a real fever, a treasure hunted, since any piece of ancient sculpture or manuscript was disputed. There was also an intense search for the learning of Greek and Latin. Also, the invention

²⁹ GONZALEZ, (v. 2), p. 222^{f11}_{sep}.

³⁰ MCGRATH, Theological, Systematic, Historical, and Philosophical: An Introduction to Christian Theology, 2004, p. 72

of the press has made available many classic works, for example, "editors devoted themselves to the publication of Virgilio, Tacitus, Caesar and Titus Livius."³¹

The new posture regarding study and knowledge implied a new method of interpretation. For direct access to the classical works allowed them to be "freed from the crusts with which generations of copyists had covered them." However, the most radical implication was the exposure, from the emergence of humanistic textual and linguistic techniques to the "alarming discrepancies between the Vulgate and the texts it purportedly translated."³² All of this certainly had the power to open the way to doctrinal reform.

Calvin obviously received the influence and impact of the humanist movement. Perhaps the doctrine of "common grace" has preserved him from rejecting this classical cultural heritage, for he was a talented and too realistic humanist to accept that the fall had led man to utter depravity in the scientific field. It is also noted that the humanist influence on Calvin's life derives mainly from the legal hermeneutics of Orleans and Bourges, which he probably studied after 1528. On this occasion, French legal humanism was at its peak. According to McGrath, French humanism was characterized by "developing a procedure (*mos gallicus*) that directly resorted to the original classical legal sources in their original language."³³ The influence of Orleans on Calvin can be seen, for example, in the effort to harmonize all biblical texts.

BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS AND APPROACHES OF CALVINIST HERMENEUTICS

No discussion of the biblical-theological foundations of Calvin's hermeneutics can dispense with the realization that the whole edifice of Calvinist thought was built mainly upon its conception of the Scriptures. Therefore, we will begin this chapter by offering a panoramic view of the debate surrounding the question of Bible authority. Having established this point, which we believe to be indispensable, then we will continue to present some Calvinistic approaches and assumptions. Of course, we will not deal with all of them, but of those that seem most relevant to the construction of their hermeneutics.

In Reformers, Bible authority is closely related to one of the fundamental principles of the Reformation, *sola scriptura*, traditionally seen as the "formal principle" of the Reformation in distinction from the "material principle" of justification by faith alone. Moreover, all the Reformers shared what Zwingli called "the clarity and certainty" of the Word of God.

It is evident that the Reformers were unanimous in maintaining that the Bible was to be accepted as the only Word of the Lord and that it was divinely inspired. It should be recognized, then, that they were not at all "interested in

³¹ MCGRATH, 2004, p.62

³² MCGRATH, 2004, p.75

³³ Ibid, p.76

an abstract or formal theory of inspiration, but rather in the power of the Bible to convey a sense of encounter with the divine and to evoke a religious reaction on the part of the listener."³⁴

But before attempting to understand Calvin's thinking, especially the authority of the Bible, it is necessary, even if tangentially, to rescue this discussion in the history of the church.

In short, we can say that throughout the Middle Ages, becoming a Christian was to accept the authoritative tradition, not directly from the Bible, but from the interpretation given by the Church, since faith was, above all, submission to the Church, to its teaching and his discipline. However, at the end of the Middle Ages, the preparation of the soil was begun, in which the Reformation would cultivate its seeds. Summarizing, the flourishing of Biblicism, notably with Wycliffe and the principle *ad fontes* of the humanists. Thus, was the desire to seek the pure waters of the gospel straight from the Bible. Referring also to the thought of Luther, who also had a significant influence on Calvin.

Luther diverged from Occam's nominalism that based his radical criticism of the Church in the Bible. According to Tillich,³⁵ in nominalist theology "the Bible was the law of the Church that could be used against the Church, but it was not law." Luther also rejected the conception of the Renaissance in which the Bible was conceived as the "source of true religion," as edited by Erasmus. Therefore, for Luther, the biblical principle would be neither the "legalist" attitude of nominalism nor the "doctrine" of humanism.

Thus, Luther began to read the Bible from the attempt to construct a hermeneutic in harmony with his new understanding of the relationship with God, a position that appears in his concept of the word of God. He also affirmed that in the Bible lies the word of God, the message of Christ, the atonement, the forgiveness of sins and the gift of salvation. For him, it was clear that the Bible contained the gospel message, but it existed before the Bible (canon), for example, in the preaching of the apostles. In this way, he understood that the books of the Bible were an emergency situation, even if necessary.

In Luther's spiritual conception, it was understood that the Spirit wrote the divine revelation, though it did not dictate it. In this way, the way is opened for a critique, religious part, historical part, since it did not matter if Moses wrote the Pentateuch, or that even the accurate prophecies of the prophets were often, apparently, mistaken. In fact, Luther would have combined spiritual-pneumatic with philological.

That said, we can turn to Calvin, who is considered a second-generation reformer, for by the time he was on the scene it had been nearly two decades since Luther had posted his famous theses at the door of the Wittenberg cathedral. In a sense, the Reformation had lost its vigor and was prone to plunge into academic discussions. Calvin would give new impetus, "thus resuming his victorious course. All the vigor of faith of the heroic days came

³⁴ GEORGE, *Theology of the Reformers*, 1993, p. 311.

³⁵ TILLICH, *History of Christian Thought*, 2000, pp. 241 to 243

back to life. Gifted with exceptional religious sensitivity, he impregnated his comments with a rich evangelical sap, becoming the greatest exegete of his century."³⁶ Calvin is not only the most excellent exegete of his time but the foundation of modern biblical exposition and theology. However, in spite of receiving this prominence, we must not forget that it depends on many points, and of many who preceded it, especially of Luther.

Calvin, like Luther, entirely rejected the medieval thesis that the authority of the Scriptures was established by the Church at the time it formulated its canon. Calvin, too, emphatically denies the discourse that reverence for the Scriptures and authority to establish the canon is a determination and prerogative of the Church.

Unlike the Reformers, what would prove the authority of Scripture is the inspiration, so in this way its value was intrinsic, so it needed nothing outside itself to lend authority to it; instead, it is the Church that must submit to the Scriptures. Calvin argues that the proof of this lies in the fact that the Christian Church was founded on the preaching of the prophets and the apostles, without this foundation the church itself would undoubtedly have existed.³⁷ However, if the appeal to the Scriptures is only a pretext, then, for truth, one must resort beyond ecclesiastical authority or biblical quotation to the "truth of God (*veritas Dei*) by itself which is the last authority upon which all must cast themselves and upon which all must depend. [...] judgment to be passed on the truth or error of theological interpretation and statement. " " For Calvin, the truth is not tied to the interpreter, for "the truth of God is the truth of the kingdom over which we can never exercise any rule or control. Like this case, we can only listen to it and devote our attention to it."³⁸ Therefore, let the interpreter be a theologian or the Church: "The locus of authority rests with truth in itself, and not with him who seeks to know or to interpret it, ourselves or the church."³⁹

In addition, Calvin, like Zwingli, distinguishes the double testimony of the Spirit. He witnesses in the Bible, inspiring it, but also in the believer's heart and mind, enlightening him. The unbelief of many only serves Calvin to strengthen his convictions that no one can be assured of the faith without the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

It is also necessary to say that Calvin emphasizes the witness of the Spirit from the revelation in Christ, thus denying any privilege to the Church to be the "exclusive organ of the Spirit" as if it could add something to the biblical doctrines, he once again stood beside Luther in rejecting the Catholic Church. On the other hand, the emphasis on the inner witness of the Holy Spirit did not imply that Calvin would agree with the pretensions of the spiritualists. It follows, then, that one of the fundamental points in the doctrine of Bible authority in Calvin is the unity of the Word and the Spirit. It can be seen,

³⁶ STROHL, *The Thought of the Reformation*, 2004, p. 19.

³⁷ CALVIN, *The Institutes*, I. 7.1, 1985, p.89

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 93

³⁹ *Ibid*, *Idem*

therefore, that Calvin avoided extremes. Neither the spiritualists nor the clericalists. This aspect of balance is central to Calvin's thought.

Certainly, we can see that no attempt to understand Calvinist hermeneutics can dispense with the perception that in Calvin there is a close relationship between hermeneutics and theology. For "the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, in which the knowledge of God is mediated to us, cannot be isolated from the epistemological and theological questions that are brought into discussion by the reality of the knowledge of God."⁴⁰ Hence, Calvin's position is based on his understanding that one can not know God without considering how he has revealed himself to himself and that this revelation is mediated by the Holy Spirit who gives us enlightenment. Therefore, interpretation and knowledge walk side by side.

In Calvin, method and content can not be separated. The supreme principle that served to govern all of Calvin's thought was that the content and method are the same. Moreover, it is precisely where content and method are in agreement that doctrine can pass in the most rigorous test.

The relationship between biblical interpretation and theology is easily seen in the second edition of *The Institutes* when Calvin presents an explanation of his purpose in writing it. There he seeks to refer to his readers for his next commentary on the Epistle to the Romans for an indication of the way he wishes in all his remarks to relate biblical interpretation to doctrine.

The discussion of the relation between theology and hermeneutics in Calvin's work leads Torrance to summarize this question of Calvinistic hermeneutics on three points:

1- The fundamental purpose of theology is to serve the interpretation of Sacred Scripture. It is the task of the theologian to inquire into the main notions and doctrines found in the Scriptures, delimiting their interdependence through the *fidei* analogy [...], not to construct them in the order of a systematic structure, but to do in the clear order of scope, which is the object and the ultimate end or direction of biblical revelation.

2- Theology is necessary because the Scriptures are not subject to particular interpretation. While the word of God mediated to us in the writings of the Old and New Testaments is not obscure in itself, but brings much light of its own, it may still be unclear to us because of the notions we bring to interpret it.

3- The critical reference of theology turns to God's word in the Scriptures, which means that the center of authority is transferred back to the interpreter of the word of God. The word of God is the object of theological inquiry and interpretation, in which truth is lodged, it is not on the subject of the interpreter, that is why the interpreter, be it the individual theologian or the church itself, must

⁴⁰ TORRANCE, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 1988, p.61

appeal not to the subjectivity of the interpreter, but for the purpose (of the word).⁴¹

Having said this, we understand that the need to enunciate some Calvinistic presuppositions in a summarized form, which will help us to understand John Calvin's hermeneutics better, is entirely justified.

The Scriptures for Calvin were the Old Testament, as was bequeathed to us by the Jews except for the Apocrypha, and the New Testament according to the canon accepted by the Christian churches. The way God served to convey his message did not matter to Calvin, whether they were oracles, visions or ministries of men who were to transmit this revelation to posterity. What really should be taken into account is that in the minds of men there was a conviction that the doctrine or the information transmitted came from God himself.

Calvin used the verb "to dictate" to refer to the Scriptures. However, this language is figurative. In fact, Calvin did not wish to support the thesis of verbal inspiration, but "that the result of inspiration was as if it were a saying. Reproduction was the word of God free from human mixing. The word "dictation" was used at that time to express the effect rather than the mode of inspiration."⁴² Calvin, therefore, accepts as an axiom what the Bible claims, through its writers, which is the Word of God. It is interesting to note that at this point Calvin departs from the humanist-renaissance spirit, which would conceive the Enlightenment thought, characterized by rationalism. Commenting on the psalms of lament, Calvin repeatedly affirms the inspiration of the Bible.

Just to illustrate, we quote Psalm 79: 1 in which he refers three times to the psalmist as a prophet: "Here the prophet, in the person of the believers, complains that the temple was tarnished," "then the prophet a complaint that, when the heathen came to the inheritance of God, the order was, so to speak, inverted, " the prophet begins with them and then goes on to speak of the killing of the saints."⁴³

Calvin put too much emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit for the interpretation of the Bible. Only hearts illuminated by the Spirit could give credence to the Scriptures: "The word will not attain to human hearts before it is sealed by the inner witness of the Spirit."⁴⁴ It is obvious that Calvin did not espouse presumption and charismatic exaggerations, but only draws attention to the fact that although we cannot discern the divine mysteries in their nature, yet we have intuitive and very evident knowledge of the truth of God in his word in the Holy Scriptures.

However, if on the one hand, Calvin did not give up the concept of inspiration, which made the Bible a divine book, on the other side, he was well aware that in a sense it was a human book. Probably what most influenced his

⁴¹ TORRANCE, *op. cit.*, p.70-71

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp.70-71

⁴³ CALVIN, (v. 3), p.249

⁴⁴ CALVIN, *The Institutes*, I. 7.4, p.93

vision was his concept called the "accommodation principle."⁴⁵ This concept defended the idea that God accommodated his divine language to human language. Starting from the principle that God used human language, then we can point out the fact that the Bible was written by different people, at different times and in different contexts. This brings us to what some scholars call "detachment."⁴⁶

This distancing implies some areas: temporal, contextual, cultural, linguistic and authorial. There is also the divine aspect of the Bible that results in spiritual-moral detachment. Moreover, we have the problem of the errors of the copyists and the difficulties of the translations. Calvin deepens this question by admitting various styles of biblical texts. He attributes style variations to the fact that several writers are responsible for different portions of the Bible. Calvin thus adopts a dialectical approach, especially the Scriptures. For he has no difficulty in recognizing textual problems, the result of human work, anticipating, in a sense, textual criticism. However, he always maintains that the meaning of the passage is clear, based not only on the context but often evoking the presupposition of inspiration.

This verse is somewhat wrapped up in the matter of expression. But concerning meaning there is no obscurity [...] The Word, *beratsach*, means to kill, and therefore I have restricted myself to this idea in her translation. And yet I do not condemn the opinion of those who translate it as a destructive sword.⁴⁷

Our attention is neared drawn to the fact that Calvin was a profound connoisseur of the church fathers and their commentaries. Calvin's erudition extrapolates the sacred sphere; he traveled with freedom and authority in secular writings. His knowledge of philosophers and classics is notorious. Nevertheless, the most admirable thing is that Calvin does not use this knowledge as a matter of authority in religious matters.

The Reformers insisted that the Bible was the judge of all religious controversies, interpreting itself through its parts. Let us also mention the Institutes: "Among the majority, however, there has prevailed the most pernicious error of only as much value in attending to the Scripture as it is granted by the council of the church. As if, in fact, the eternal and inviolable truth of God rests on the will of men."⁴⁸

The application of this presupposition, of the Bible as an interpreter of itself, was facilitated by Calvin's vast knowledge of the Scriptures and his privileged memory. We can say that one of the reformer's favorite expressions was "Scripture is his interpreter."⁴⁹

⁴⁵ MCGRATH, 2004, p.154

⁴⁶ LOPES, p.24^[1]_{SEP}

⁴⁷ CALVIN, (v. 2), p.270^[1]_{SEP}

⁴⁸ CALVIN, The Institutes, I. 7.1, p.89

⁴⁹ Calvin, (v. 2), p. 342

Even if we study the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in history superficially, we will find that Calvin gave great prominence to the role of the Spirit. While for centuries the discussion in this regard centered on the divinity and personality of the Spirit, Calvin emphasizes the work of the Spirit, notably in salvation and in the process of interpreting the Scriptures. We need only examine your Institutes to recognize that there are abundant quotations about the Spirit. As an example, we can refer to the first book of the Institutes: I.5.13; I.7.4-5; I.9.1-3; I.13.14-18. Therefore, it would be no exaggeration to call Calvin the "theologian of the Holy Spirit."

CALVIN'S READING OF THE PSALM XIII

In this chapter we intend, from a clipping, to look more closely at the Calvin reading of the lamenting psalms. For this, we chose Psalm 13, which we consider to be a good representative of this genre. To substantiate our choice, we could evoke the fact that this psalm is classified as a lamenting psalm, or similar terminology, by the majority of psalm scholars. It is evident that Psalm 13 is not the only one to enjoy this almost total unanimity, but being one of them, we believe it is a reasonable justification.

Also, this psalm summarizes the main elements of the lament: the complaint (outburst), the plea and vows of trust and praise. It is also added that this psalm presents itself "with a clear structure, well ordered in its line of ideas and impressive agility of feeling." So in verses 1-2, we have the lamentation itself (complaint/outburst), in verses 3-4 the supplication (intercession/motivation) and verse 5-6 concludes with the vow of trust and thanksgiving. Thus, this very brief psalm, of only six verses, "depicts the essential structure and movements of lamentations."⁵⁰

Having said that, we understand that we are in a position to start our work. To do so, we shall try to make a more detailed exposition of Calvin's commentary on the psalm mentioned, and thus, for a didactic question, we have resolved to divide into two points that follow.

*How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?
How long will You hide Your face from me?
How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart daily?
How long will my enemy be exalted over me? (NKJV)*

Calvin divides the thirteenth psalm into three periscopes, the first being verses 1 and 2 (2 and 3 in Hebrew). Faithful to his custom of highlighting a clause in the periscope, he begins his commentary on verse one, after a short introduction, emphasizing the sentence: "How long, O Jehovah?" Calvin goes on to present a brief attempt to situate the context of this psalm in the course of

⁵⁰ MCCANN, A theological introduction to the book of Psalms. The Psalms how Torah, 1993, p. 90.

David's persecution under Saul, he admits that the psalmist was completely forgotten by God: "Apparently David, as far as he can be judged in the light of the real state of his activities, was in fact forgotten by God."⁵¹

For Calvin, however, this feeling was not the result of abandoning the "truthfulness of God's promises," or resting on His grace, but rather, because this is the natural thought of one who for a long time is overwhelmed with calamities and does not see any "sign of divine assistance (לעזרה סימן) (אלוהית)."⁵²

He also argues that the complaint itself testifies to the faith of the psalmist, who sees no relief and well-being except in the divine hands. At the end of the commentary on this verse, Calvin again refers to "how long, forever?" He understands that this is a "defective form of expression, much more emphatic than asking himself: Why does it take so long?" The purpose of the psalmist would be to "nourish his hope and encourage himself in the exercise of patience," for he did not complain of a calamity that lasted a few days.

It is noted that Calvin was able to understand and highlight valuable points for the reading of this psalm. However, he fails to discuss other aspects that could enrich his exposure. For example, he does not mention that *מתי עד, זמן כמה* (*until when*) is repeated four times, this being by itself quite emphatic.

Another point worth mentioning, still in the first verse, are verbal parallels (*to forget, to omit*) and (*to hide, occult, to cover up*). Indeed, "forgetting" and "hiding the face" refers to "refusal of practical help," just as "remembering" or "seeing" is an anthropomorphic language that, concerning God, does not mean states of conscience, but rather preludes to action. It is also recorded that the word, literally your faces, in the Old Testament describes a "way of visualization in which Yahweh reveals himself."⁵³

In the second verse, Calvin highlights: "How long will I consult my soul?" He attempts to explain the psalmist's questioning by arguing that "in adversity, men give themselves up to discontent" and as they find no leniency in any direction," they feel confused by the confused crowd of their thoughts. "Calvin follows his exposition by evoking the example of the sufferers who, because of acute pain, "feel and desire to change their position at every moment," but only achieve more agitation and nervousness. Thus "when pain seizes the hearts of men their miserable victims are shaken in their inmost."

It is interesting that Calvin made mention of the experience of a sick man to exemplify the crisis of the psalmist, but that he does not care about the possibility of illness being the cause of suffering. His assumption probably explains this that David is under Saul's persecution. In this case, the language that describes a patient would be metaphorical.

Consider and hear me, O Lord my God;

⁵¹ Calvin, p. 262

⁵² Psalms 6: 3; 35:17; 74:10; 79: 5; 94: 3; 80: 4.

⁵³ MCCANN, p. 91

*Enlighten my eyes,
Lest I sleep the sleep of death;
Lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed against him";
Lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved. (NKJV)*

Calvin begins his comment by emphasizing the expression, "Look at me and answer me," in which he understands that there is a certain order, but that he claims not to be "before or after" about God. It rests on the principle of accommodation, which was used by the Holy Spirit, to substantiate this view. However, it seems to us that Calvin contradicts himself by using "order" to apply the passage, for he asserts that the expression here amounts to placing "divine mercy in the first place, and then adding his assistance, since God, then he hears us when, having compassion on us, he moves and induces us to help us. "

Moreover, the perception of the structure of parallelism would already indicate that the author's "intention" in using "to consider" and "to respond" is much more an idea of reinforcement and expansion of thought than an emphasis on the order of words.

About the point under discussion, we understand that two relevant points remain outside of Calvin's exposition. First highlight the strength of imperatives, as they are imperatives of "ultimatum," extreme cries (*crying*) for help. *להסתכל, לתפוס* "Look, perceive," is a word that in the Old Testament relates to a characteristic of crying in prayer.⁵⁴ Then, with the complaint the psalmist emphasizes the relationship with God, then his situation and, finally, refers to the enemy. The poet earnestly desires to restore communion with God; he knows that there is only hope of life if God "looks" at him and listens to him. The idea that the "*presence of God*," his "*look*," means "*service*," to the supplicant, was widespread in the ancient cult, as Babylonian parallelism shows.⁵⁵

Calvin further emphasizes: "Lighten my eyes." Go to the Hebrew to explain that he understands to have the meaning of "blowing the breath of life because the vigor of life transpires mainly in the eyes, "he exemplifies this use Pv. 29:13, I Sam 14:27. Thus, the request for "enlightenment" is a supplication so that the power to live would be restored, for without the light-life of God, what remains is darkness and death. Calvin recognizes that the verb to fall asleep *להירדם* is a "metaphor of a kind similar to that used to die." But perhaps the question that needs to be raised is whether the psalmist felt close to death by "broken" fellowship with the Lord, or if a mortal sickness testified that communion had been broken? Of course, any option would be greatly aggravated by the oppression of the enemy.

The likelihood of the reason for suffering to be a deadly disease is not absurd, for the relation to death in Old Israel was complex, especially if death

⁵⁴ GUNKEL; BEGRICH, *Introduction to Psalms. The genres of the religious lyric of Israel*, 1998, p. 2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2

was premature or violent. It is a fact that the nearness of death in the Old Testament always aroused deep sorrow. Moreover, in a world dichotomized between pure (holy) and impure (profane) it was complicated for the just (pure) to accept death with tranquility, for the dead is always in the last degree of impurity, not to mention the issue of leprosy.

Job's example is illustrative, for if a person were to be contemplated by doom and disease, this would undoubtedly be interpreted as evidence of his sin. Therefore, it is not difficult to imagine the scenario of a righteous man who was facing a severe illness; he would obviously be oppressed and falsely slandered by his enemies, he would experience a hostility resulting from the "simplification of the law of retribution".

Calvin ends the discussion of this periscope by highlighting the phrase: "For (lest) my enemy."⁵⁶ He correctly understands that it is a reiteration of the psalmist concerning the enemy. He understands, too, that this reiteration describes the "pride of his enemies." The poem would be an appeal not to "forsake his servant to the mockery of the wicked." As long as the enemies were in "ambush," waiting only for the moment of their ruin to ridicule him. Calvin, on the other hand, disagrees with the psalmist's guilty plea, rather "it must be noted, however, that he had in his conscience a consistent witness of his integrity."

It can be seen that Calvin's considerations are based on a topical approach, much more than on a foundation in the structure and form of the poem. For example, it does not mention that (my enemy), besides being a repetition of v. 3, is in parallel with (my opponents). Thus the psalmist's greatest desire was that he should not allow occasion and motive for the enemy to take advantage, saying: I prevailed over him.

*But I have trusted in Your love;
My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.
I will sing to the Lord,
Because He has dealt bountifully with me. (NKJV)*

Calvin begins the exposition of this periscope, claiming that the psalmist still does not enjoy the benefits of prayer, but rather depends on the "hope of deliverance" which the "faithful divine promise" gave him the ability to feed. This hope served as a "shield to repel temptations." He, therefore, concludes that although the psalmist was "grievously afflicted and a multiplicity of worries made him despair," he nevertheless maintained the resolve to "continue steadfast in his confidence in divine grace and the hope of salvation."

However, Calvin pushes the sense of the passage somewhat to emphasize the role of faith in the promise. It is true, as we shall see, the text seems to project the song of praise for the future. However, v. 5 makes it clear that there has been a radical change in the psalmist's heart-soul. This verse begins with

⁵⁶ This Clause Translate the Hebrew שלִי הָאֵיִב

the conjunction that Calvin himself translates with the sense of adversative (but). Moreover, the presence and position of the personal pronoun (self) are quite forceful, since "it has the force of an emphatic statement."

This change is so radical that it deserves some particular attention because we can see that at the end of the lamenting psalms the "painful shades of vivid and desperate supplications are replaced by words of firm assurance of being attended to and of deep confidence."⁵⁷ Therefore, probably, what justifies the vow of trust and praise is not necessarily faith, but the change that operated on the psalmist in this way, it seems that faith, in this case, is more an effect than a cause.

Moreover, another interesting point about the vow of confidence is that Calvin points out the fact that (in your love), which he translates into your goodness, it has been placed first. He understands that this is justified by being the cause of deliverance, or in other words, the object of the psalmist's confidence.

Calvin concludes his commentary on this verse by making a brief discussion of the verbal times⁵⁸ in Hebrew, which he correctly perceives to be different. He interprets (exulting) as future that would denote "the continuous exercise of express affection." Therefore, no affliction could remove from his heart the "joy of faith." Because, when we know Him, when we hear His voice, when we see His face, then there is [no] suffering, which can terrify us completely.

Turning to the verb מרענן (exalt), it calls our attention, beyond the temporal meaning that expresses continuous action, the fact that this verb was used by the psalmist to describe the feeling of extreme joy of the oppressors should he come to stumble. Thus the exulting of the oppressors, who was frustrated, is experienced by the psalmist simply because he was the target of the Lord's salvation.

Regarding verse 6, Calvin chooses the sentence: "I will sing unto the Lord," to emphasize. In it he emphasizes the "future time," because he understood that David had not yet obtained what he longed for, "but being fully convinced that God was at hand to grant deliverance, he endeavored to give thanks that is why." He could, however, raise a question: would YHVH have already heard the cry of the just and therefore the liberated? Or at least he had already waved the salvific oracle? Or would this statement of exaltation and praise be the result of trust in God? In reality, we can not respond dogmatically to these questions, but what is important is to emphasize that this end demonstrates the strength that comes from the trust of one who has Yahweh as an ally. Yes, God is our defender.

⁵⁷ Psalms. 6: 2; 7: 11; 16: 10; 20: 7; 27: 6; 28: 6; 31:20, 52:10; 55:24; 56:10; 61: 6; 94:22; 130: 7; 140: 13; Jr. 20:11.

⁵⁸ In the study of the Hebrew verb, we must be careful about "time." For, even if the verbs indicate time and mode, the primary emphasis is on the aspect, the way of action. Also, time must be perceived in context.

Calvin concludes his commentary discussing the use of the verb "to sing" which comprises to denote "nothing less than to grant a benefit from mere grace," against those who translated it for reward. He bases his option on the understanding that this is the meaning in many other passages of the Scriptures, but he does not quote them. Moreover, it argues, as a basis for logical reasoning, that it would be inconsistent with actions of grace if God were rewarded or repaying his servant. It is clear that Calvin now operates in the field of apologetic approach to "refute the absurd and commonplace sophistry of those who force this passage to prove the merit of the works."⁵⁹

In spite of all this interpretation, we understand that Calvin is right to translate as an expression of the grace of YHWH since the psalmist was treated liberally. Thus, it would imply in a blessing that stands out the generosity of God, because what God gives exceeds what man asks.

Concluding our exposition on the main points of Calvin's commentary, we are compelled to surrender the evidence that he pointedly and competently discussed many aspects of the thirteenth psalm, on the other hand, we are also forced to acknowledge the fact that several other aspects were left out of Calvin's exposition, especially when we avail ourselves of modern research and contribution. Another important point is to note that, because of its structure and application, its comments seemed more expository preaching, than merely a theological outline.

An attempt to detail Calvin's methodology.

Trying to elaborate the methodological question is not a simple and easy task, considering that the so-called academic exegesis has advanced a great deal in this area, to the point that it has resulted in a diversified and in some respects complex matter. Moreover, we must recognize that even a method such as historical-critical, whose methodology is well defined, there is, however, divergence in its application.

Now, if there are difficulties about methodology in general, certainly much more, when our focus is the methodology of Calvin. First, because we could even walk in the Psalms, it does not indicate following a defined methodology. Therefore, we understand that in this field we must tread very carefully, making it clear that our considerations work on inferences, and it is never too much to remember which inferences facilitate speculation. Despite the difficulties, however, we will try to sketch something that can be seen as the methodology of Calvin in Psalm thirteen.

Calvin begins his comment, as usual, with a summary of the psalm. In which he states that this psalm is connected to the former by the same theme.

⁵⁹ Calvin's editor inserts a note in which he says that it means "to return, to repay, to reward," whether evil for evil, good for evil, evil for good or good for good. He also points out that the defenders of the merit of good works, in the light of this passage, do for the "notion of retribution bound to the word." However, despite this sense, it claims that it can not extract from this passage any conclusive argument in support of this doctrine. (Calvin, (v.1), p. 268)

Apparently, he does not bother to classify the Psalms by his literary genre. However, in presenting the summary of Psalm 13, he clearly identifies the essential elements of this group. "David, feeling distressed, so to speak, submerged in a whirlwind of calamities and a multiplicity of afflictions, begs the aid and the help of God ... and at the conclusion, taking heart, cherishes the inescapable hope of life, in the light of the promise of God, even in the midst of the terrors of death."⁶⁰

We notice in this summary that Calvin identified the complaint, plea and vote of confidence-praise. It should be emphasized, in his words, that the psalmist nourishes affliction/anguish in the face of the "whirlwind of calamity" and "multiplicity of afflictions." He also stresses the fact that the psalmist "begs the help and help of God." And finally, he recognizes that the psalmist takes heart and "cherishes the inescapable hope of life." Thus, regarding the division of the psalm, Calvin, in a certain sense, approaches modern scholars. The explanation for this, probably, is his literal approach, in which he seeks to separate into small periscopes and make a verse-by-verse exposition. Hence, as this psalm is very clear in its parts, Calvin was able to perceive what is evident about the structure.

As for the question of authorship, at the beginning of his commentary, Calvin refers to the author of this psalm as being David.⁶¹ It seems to us that he bases his position on the subscript which he accepts without reservation. On the other hand, we are aware that the character of a homily in his comments caused him to avoid more technical and theoretical questions, leading him to the practice of pastoral exegesis.

It is observed, then, that he recognizes as valid the Jewish tradition which attributed most of the psalms to David. It is difficult to assert dogmatically what led Calvin to uphold Davidic authorship for most of the psalms. Certainly, he considered the contextual evidence of the psalms, but sometimes he gets the impression that he works with a sort of "canonical critique."⁶²

After the authorship is affirmed, Calvin sketches a small discussion about the context of this psalm which also refers to the question of the date. He suggests that the background to this psalm is the persecution that David suffered under Saul.⁶³

However, he soon abandons this question to deal with what he understands to be the most relevant, namely that the problem was not the persecution itself, but the concept that David enjoyed with the population. "David was greatly hated by the majority of the people because of calamities

⁶⁰ Calvin, (v.1), p 261.

⁶¹ Calvin says, "David, feeling distressed." He goes on to affirm David's authorship: "David was greatly hated," "David, seemingly, as far as he can be judged." Calvin refers directly to David as Author of the Psalm for more than ten times. (Calvin, (v.1), p. 261-9)

⁶² Canonical criticism is a methodology that "studies the eventual process that would have led to the constitution of the current text, that is, the canonical text."

⁶³ Calvin, (v.1), p. 261-262.

and bad news circulating against him, to the point that almost all men judged that God had no less hostility towards him than Saul and his other enemies."⁶⁴

Finally, one should realize the practice of Calvin in which he explores the aspects of the original text. Thus, he always seeks to elucidate and substantiate his argument in the light of the original languages. But it must be emphasized that this exegetical approach deals more with words than with a thorough exploration of syntax or poetic structure. So in short, we would say that in the commentary on the Psalms, Calvin usually begins his exposition with a summary, in which he asserts the authorship, which somehow points him to the path to establish the probable context. Moreover, he always divides the psalm into small periscopes in which he highlights some clauses that he discusses topically. Its methodology also consists in the use of the original text (LXX) which can be perceived by the numerous citations. It is evident that this "method" of study and analysis is not rigid, but we can quickly identify it in reading his commentary on the lamenting psalms.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before we attempt to reflect on some of the challenges of Calvinist hermeneutics to present-day Protestantism, we believe it is necessary, even if at all, to conceptualize this modern Protestantism. This task rejects any simplistic and simplifying analysis attempt, first because much has already been written on the subject. Second, because this current and contemporary Protestantism was born with a vocation to complexity and diversity.

This Protestantism was also born with a vocation for inconsistency, outlining strange chemistry, given the fact that indoctrination, both in the pulpit and in the Sunday Bible Schools, remains uniformly Arminian, revivalist and pietistic, leaving the Calvinist system circumscribed to its last stronghold: the chair of the seminars. Also, we understand that the Protestantism Modern for sustaining itself in the "scholasticism-pietism-apocalypticism" tripod, is born with the vocation to the alienation to the movements of self-help, and humanistic intellectuality. The spirituality resulting from the scholasticism emphasized the intellect, of the pietism to individual concern and from apocalypticism to eschatological exacerbation.

Besides these influences, we must add the attempt to conceptualize present-day Protestantism; the impact of the market on the church. It must, however, be recognized that it is difficult to critically analyze the current political-economic system, considering that there has been a significant improvement in people's lives, which can be exemplified in the techno-scientific achievements. Moreover, the church, today, to Marxist deception, would not be the most significant alienating agency, because, undoubtedly, the media has played this role in a very competent way.

It is also added that the market has the function of legitimizing and justifying undertakings that are efficient and productive. Therefore, the virtues celebrated

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 262

today for a good church; are competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency. Thus, technology, comfort, and celebrate the ability to mitigate the problems of humanity. Are we a heavenly agency or a business company?

There is a clash between the mind of Christ and modern consciousness. We are today a modern church, not because we include modern instruments in our liturgy, but because we incorporate the values of modern society. Secularization, individualism, and progressive factors are some of these new realities that have changed the landscape of human and religious relations. In light of the preceding and the perception of modern influence on Protestantism, we understand that Calvinist hermeneutics has some relevance as an alternative in the construction of biblical hermeneutics.

On this agenda, which turns religion into yet another of the articles on the popular shelf of consumption, the theology of retribution is reinterpreted under the theology of prosperity. This theological vision, based heavily on neoliberal philosophy and ethics, finds faithful adherents and ardent defenders, practically, within all denominations. Obviously, in this work, we have no condition to analyze this theology. We only want to emphasize one aspect, within several, that the critics of this theology have pointed out: the fragmentation and loss of the authority of the Scriptures. For prosperity theology relativizes the "Word of God, when always and only health and conquest, blessing and prosperity are announced. Calvin, differently, recognizes that the various genera in the psalms serve to "structure our life," but above all, "they will teach us and exercise us so that we may carry the cross; and carrying the cross is a genuine proof of our obedience. "

Calvin's commitment to the cross is so evident in the reading of the Psalms that we can say that for the reformer: The mark of election is oppression, doom and forced exile, in short, the mark of election and salvation is the cross. Considering that for Calvin the cross is an instrument not only of justification but also of sanctification (mortification), it is no wonder that he is so emphatic. Therefore, given the place of the Scriptures in the hermeneutics of Calvin, we understand that it is pertinent to modern Protestantism that needs to rescue the authority of the Word of God. The authority that must be taken seriously, not only when it makes promises of blessing and prosperity, but still, by showing that the spirituality of the righteous passes through the "valley of the shadow of death," by conflicts and crises. Spirituality that invites the just to exercise faith even in the face of the mystery of suffering.

In addition to the denial of pain, the Illuminism influence (positivism) on the church led to a kind of rationalization of suffering. Whenever a contemporary righteous begins the exercise of lamentation, he will be discouraged by "godly" phrases such as "God knows what is best for you," or "all cooperate for the good of those who love God." Without entering into the merits of hermeneutics, we realize that there is no concern for the anguish of the suffering, solidarity is only rhetoric. Like the example of Job's friends: "They are not interested in the truth, nor in Job. They are far more interested in proving and sustaining their theological schemes than in seeking the truth and understanding the pain and suffering of others. It is not only in the theology of

prosperity that lamentation is seen as lack of faith, is the idea of the "superman," walking along with the criticism of Christianity that the church legitimized and cooperated for the perpetuation of weakness.

As we briefly paint the liturgical-religious framework of modern Protestantism, we understand that Calvinist hermeneutics from the psalms of lamentation becomes pertinent as it confronts and exposes the psalmist's pain when he recognizes the legitimacy of the righteous in verbalizing his crises and suffering, in signaling with the possibility, even if momentary, that the Lord treats us as if he had forgotten us.

The denial of pain may even serve as a momentary anesthetic, but what is the result of the prolongation and deepening of suffering? Better, then, is the path pointed out by the psalms that offer us an alternative and therapeutic model built up from confrontation and outburst. This model helps us to resist the tyranny of individualization, given that if, on the one hand, it allows us to look within ourselves, to know ourselves and to verbalize our deepest emotions, but, on the other hand, it carries a great emphasis on the community. The true biblical community knows that pain cannot be processed on its own. In isolation, the power of suffering will always grow.

The hermeneutic challenge

Nowadays, we find adherents and defenders of the most varied approaches, much to the taste of postmodern pluralism. However, it is perceived that our Protestantism, for lack of knowledge, receives these influences without any critical sense. Obviously, we are not able to assess postmodern hermeneutics in this work; we only want to record that the current hermeneutical scenario is quite complicated, and should not be unknown to Bible readers.

Many aspects could be discussed regarding modern Protestant hermeneutics in an attempt to dialogue with the Calvinist hermeneutics. However, we would like to highlight only what we believe to be most pertinent. It is evident that modern Protestantism, too, has been strongly influenced by the presuppositions of Reformed hermeneutics, and consequently of Calvin. Anyone who wants to see this fact should simply compare the assumptions listed in the second chapter of this paper to realize that they are clearly present in both the historical and the modern Protestantism as well as in all the ramifications of Pentecostalism. Also, in general terms, we also find Calvinist principles and approaches in the way many pastors and communities read the Bible.

However, beyond this influence, we understand that Calvin's hermeneutics can serve as a relevant alternative. For, one of the most exciting aspects in this hermeneutics is the dialogue and use of admittedly humanistic tools. As an example, we can evoke Calvin's tendency to harmonize seemingly irreconcilable texts and aspects. It is therefore realized that Calvin had no problem using philosophical-secular hermeneutic tools of his time. However, he categorically rejected humanistic assumptions of a secularizing tendency.

Thus, in the light of Calvinistic hermeneutic practice, today's Protestantism is challenged to dialogue and use the current tools, without, however, incorporating the presuppositions that contradict the Scriptures, not only those of a traditional secularizing tendency but also, those that tend to reproduce the business agenda.

Finally, as we close our considerations, we would like to emphasize that we do not advocate the thesis that Calvinist hermeneutics is the only viable alternative. Moreover, as we have seen, in attempting to trace a historical evolution of the theological-hermeneutic roots and influences on Calvin, Calvinist hermeneutics is a link of a great chain that shelters a rich tradition, synthesized in the literal-psychological-pastoral approach of the psalms. Traditions that seek to combine fidelity and relevance in the interpretation of the Scriptures, that is why we maintain their pertinence, in the hope that present Protestantism will find a north amid the winds that threaten the foundations of the community of faith.

Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCE:

CALVIN, John. The Book of Psalms. (Vol 1 and 2). Translated by Valter Graciano Martins. São Paulo: *Paracletos*, 1999.^{[L]_{SEP}}

SECONDARY SOURCES:

ALTANER, Berthold; STUIBER, Alfred. Patrology - life, works and doctrine of the Fathers of the Church. Translated by Nuns Benedictines. 2. ed. São Paulo: Paulinas, 1988.

ANGLADA, Introduction to Reformed Hermeneutics. Ananindeua: Knox Publications, 2006.

BORTOLINI, Knowing and Praying the Psalms: popular commentary for our days. 3. ed. São Paulo: Paulus, 2006.

GONZALEZ, An Illustrated History, (V. 2). Translated by Paulo Arantes. 1. ed. São Paulo: Cultura Cristã, 2004.

GEORGE, Timothy. Theology of the Reformers. Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1998.

GRENZ, Post Modernism: A Guide to Understanding the Philosophy of our Time. São Paulo: Vida Nova, 1997.

GREIDANUS, Preaching Christ from the Old Testament - A contemporary hermeneutic method. Translation by Elizabeth Stowell Charles Gomes. São Paulo: Cultura Cristã, 2006.

MCGRATH, Theological, Systematic, Historical, and Philosophical: An Introduction to Christian Theology. Translated by Marisa Lopes. São Paulo: *Casa Cristã*, 2004.

MCCANN, Clinton J. *A theological introduction to the book of psalms*. The psalms how Torah. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.

NICHOLS, Robert Hastings. History of the Church. 6. ed. São Paulo: Presbyterian publishing house, 1985.

LOPES, Augustus Nicodemus. The Bible and its Interpreters. 1. ed. São Paulo: Cultura Cristã, 2004.

SELDERHUIS, Herman J. *Calvin's theology of the Psalms*. Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007.

STROHL, The Thought of the Reformation. 2. ed. São Paulo. 2004.

TORRANCE, Thomas F. *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, The Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988.

TILLICH, Paul. History of Christian Thought. 2. ed. São Paulo, 2000. ^[1]_[SEP]

VIRKLER, Hermeneutics: principles and processes of biblical interpretation. São Paulo: Vida, 1987.

WALKER, History of the Christian Church, (V. 2). Translated by Dr. Glênio Vergara. 4. ed. Rio de Janeiro / São Paulo, 1983.

Money and the Marginalized in Deuteronomy 15

Mark Linton

The Bible declares that God is the creator of all that exists and, in his creativity, generously furnished the earth with its wealth and resources. As God has given generously, Christians are commissioned to personify the nature of God through generous Christian giving. This paper will seek to highlight how the principles of the Sabbatical Year in Deuteronomy 15, ought to influence Christian giving to the marginalized in society. This paper will also seek to highlight the divine ownership of wealth and human stewardship, present an exegesis of Deuteronomy 15, and the biblical model for Christian giving displayed in the Old and New Testaments.

Generosity is a biblical principle which is highlighted extensively throughout the bible. In the book of Genesis known as the book of beginnings in Chapter 1:1, its narrative begins with the words; “*In the beginning, God created*”,¹ asserting that God is generous as the creator of the universe and did so as an expression of His love.² The assertion that God created everything in the opening of the biblical narrative of Genesis 1, gives revelation in determining ownership of the universe and its possessions. God created, therefore God is sovereign and the sole owner of all that exists.³

Christian theology has traditionally understood the sovereignty of God through the act of creation on the concept that God created ‘everything out of nothing’ known as ‘*creation ex nihilo*’.⁴ This concept of “*creation ex nihilo*” means that the universe and all its material possessions are not eternal, nor essential but proposes that God’s creativity was an act of divine will motivated by His divine love.⁵ The divine will and love of God, saw that God freely chose to create and share His love generously with a created world outside of himself.⁶

In Genesis chapters 1 and 2, the concept of stewardship is revealed. The steward is defined as: one who is charge of a very big house to manage its affairs and takes care of property that belongs to another individual.⁷ The theological interpretation of Christian stewardship is based upon the understanding that Christ is the creator of the universe, recognizing his

¹ All scriptures quoted within this paper are from the *Life Application Study Bible: New International Version* (Eastborne: Kingsway Communications Ltd, 2002)

² Wayne A. Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) 98.

³ P.E Burroughs, *The Grace of Giving*, (Nashville: Convention Press, 1957) 24.

⁴ Richard Cunningham, *Creative Stewardship: Creative Leadership Series*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979) 34.

⁵ Cunningham, 34.

⁶ Cunningham, 34.

⁷ Webster’s New World College Dictionary. Accessed April 19th 2018, Available at: http://www.yourdictionary.com/steward#websters?direct_search_result=yes

lordship and acknowledging his providence and ownership.⁸ Christian stewardship also recognizes that mankind are stewards who have been made in the image of God and have entered into a personal relationship with Him through redemption.⁹

God's relationship to man can be magnified by the words giving and generosity with the illustration of an all-loving God who continues to give generously of himself as an action toward men displayed throughout the Bible.¹⁰

In view of this, Christian stewardship cannot be responsibly lived apart from the purposes of God in creation and redemption. Due to God's love and grace, he has made man a representative of Himself and has given him dominion over all he has created and therefore man has a duty to honor and glorify Him with the gift of life and the world's possessions and resources as responsible stewards.¹¹

Stewardship informs the life of the Christian and requires all members of the covenant community to meet their human obligations in society which involve human rights, justice, equality, peace and impartial dissemination of the world's resources. As stewards, Christians are called to strive with God to deform the secular system of the world and its practices towards the kingdom system of God.¹²

The principles of Christian stewardship derive from the goodness and love of God which accentuates the importance of generous Christian giving. God who loves also gives, and if God is both loving and giving the two elements must be coextensive and integral elements of Christian stewardship. To give generously is the indispensable nature of God and Christian giving ought to faithfully reflect the nature of God.¹³

The covenant people of God in the Old Testament had a clear understanding of the concept of stewardship as it pertains to giving and generosity to those in need. The concepts of stewardship pertaining to giving and generosity are highlighted in Deuteronomy 15 in observance of the sabbatical year of release.

The Sabbatical Year was an institution designed to generously assist the poor by canceling their debts and relieving them of the debt obligations as a form of provision for their sustenance. Further it was a humanitarian mandate for Israel to elevate the suffering of the poor through support, generous giving and charitable acts as stewards of Gods blessings and provision.¹⁴

⁸ P.E. Borroughs, 27.

⁹ Cunningham, 21.

¹⁰ Cunningham, 5.

¹¹ Cunningham, 21.

¹² Cunningham, 27.

¹³ Hiley H. Ward, *Creative Giving* (MacMillan Company: New York, 1958) 12.

¹⁴ Robert Wafawanaka, "Am I Still My Brother Keeper? Biblical Perspectives On Poverty" (USA: University Press of America, 2012) 60-63.

Overview of Deuteronomy

The book of Deuteronomy is one of the most important books of the Old Testament as it bridges the gap between the Law and the Old Testament account of the history of Israel. The book of Deuteronomy is regarded as a reinstatement of the laws contained in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. The laws in these books are linked with the giving of the law by Moses at Mount Sinai soon after the Israelite nation had crossed over the Red Sea, upon being released from slavery in Egypt. The Deuteronomic laws, were given to the later generation of Israelites when they were on the verge of occupying the Promised Land.¹⁵

The nature of Deuteronomy highlights the punishment of Israel by God for their failure to keep its promises and the laws of God, which provided a reminder for the next generation of Israelites who would occupy the Promised Land, of his laws to follow, which would ultimately reverse the direction of Israel's history and gain God's blessings.¹⁶

The Deuteronomic law codes, were of central importance as they incorporated many social matters concerning the welfare of the poor, with admonitions to act justly and to behave generously towards them, being an expression of God's will for His people.¹⁷ The nature of the Deuteronomic law, was to serve as an ideal guide for living as a people in covenant relationship with God. Obedience to the laws were required if Israel were to love and serve the Lord with all their hearts as commanded in Deuteronomy 5.¹⁸

The deep concern for the welfare of all individuals within the community emphasized in Deuteronomy, highlights the importance of community responsibility concerning the poor being an act of justice. Justice in Deuteronomy was not to be administered based on class, wealth or social status, but according to an individual's need and by law, every effort was to be made to protect the weak, poor and vulnerable.¹⁹

Throughout the book of Deuteronomy, the Lord instructed the Israelite nation to help and care for the poor among them when they arrived in the Promised Land, which was an imperative part of land occupation, and in chapter 15, proposed a Sabbath Year commonly known as the 'Year of Release'. The Sabbath Year was designated to deal with the remission of debts incurred by the poor and those who became enslaved due to their poverty.²⁰

¹⁵ David F. Payne. *Deuteronomy* (Westminster John Knox Press: Kentucky, 1985) 1.

¹⁶ David F. Payne, 5.

¹⁷ David F. Payne, 5.

¹⁸ Edward J. Woods. *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Deuteronomy* (USA: InterVarsity Press, 2011) 32.

¹⁹ George Arthur Buttrick, *Interpreters Bible: Volume 2* (USA: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952) 427.

²⁰ Buttrick, 427.

The Hebrew Bible uses a range of Hebrew words in reference to the poor and in the context of Deuteronomy the word used is ‘*ebyon*’. The word ‘*ebyon*’ appears sixty-one times in the Hebrew Bible and is used to refer to those who are materially deprived, destitute and in a state of want and need. The term ‘*ebyon*’ is often used in unification with the term ‘*ani*’. The term ‘*ani*’ is another Hebrew reference for poor and when used in unification with ‘*ebyon*’ refers to the poor and needy. The expression of these terminologies accentuates the desperate nature of the impoverished not only being poor and needy but also in a state of oppression.²¹

Cancellation of Debts

In Deuteronomy 15:1-11, the Lord instructed that compassion for the poor ought to be demonstrated through the cancellation of debts. In verse 1 the Lord commanded: “*At the end of every seven years you must grant a release*”. According to Mayes, the root word for ‘*release*’ means to ‘*to let fall*’ which was to stand as a reminder to the Israelites that the ownership of the land was a gift from God.²²

According to Thompson, he proposes that the term “*release*” was an expression of establishing social justice as a form of generous provision for the poor and disenfranchised.²³ Exell in his commentary, asserts that “*release*” in context of Deuteronomy, refers to a case of charity by which the poor was to be shown by readily and freely relieving their distress.²⁴ Cairns, asserts that the term “*release*”, refers to the ‘*letting be*’ of the debt, in the understanding that just as God has sovereign rights over the land, he is also in control of the economy and its operation. He further proposes that; “*release*” was a mandate for the Israelite community to order their wealth concerning the needs and rights of the poor.²⁵

In verse 2, it states: “*And this is how it is to be done. Every creditor shall release the loan he has made to his fellow Israelite. He shall not require payment from his fellow Israelite or brother, because the Lords time for releasing debts has been proclaimed*”.

According to Cairns, this verse demands a total cancellation of debt in consideration of the poor.²⁶ Mayes suggests that “*every creditor*” refers to an individual who has taken a pledge or lent his fellow brother something and is exhorted to have compassion on the borrower, by forgiving and releasing the pledge of his hand.²⁷ According to Exell, “*he shall not require payment from his fellow Israelite or brother*” appeals to the moral position of the lender, in

²¹ Wafawanaka, 50.

²² A.D.H. Mayes, *The New Century Bible Commentary Bible: Deuteronomy*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979) 248.

²³ J. A. Thompson, *Old Tyndale Commentaries: Deuteronomy*, (UK: InterVarsity Press, 1974) 187.

²⁴ Joseph S. Exell, *The Bible Illustrator: Deuteronomy*, (Grand Rapids: Baker House, 1978) 356.

²⁵ Ian Cairns, *International Theological Commentary: Deuteronomy, Word and Presence*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992) 147.

²⁶ Cairns, 147.

²⁷ Mayes, 248.

which he is to consider his own position and demonstrate brotherly love and kindness through acts of generous charity.²⁸

In verses 3-5, it states: *“You may require payment from a foreigner, but you must release any debt your brother owes you. However, there should be no poor among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving to you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, if only you fully obey the Lord your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today”*.

Mayes, in observance of this verse, proposes that the term *“your brother”* equates to one’s neighbor who may be in need.²⁹ Cairns, in observance of this verse, asserts that the provision and compassion required by the Israelites was to be extended to all members within Israel with compassion and without bias.³⁰

In verse 4, *“there should be no poor among you”*, exerts the importance of community responsibility for generously giving to the poor. According to Cairns, this proposes the theological ideal of humanitarian provisions and their effectiveness with eliminating poverty.³¹ MacDonald agrees with this by suggesting this alluded to the charity Israel was to demonstrate towards their neighbors so that there would be no person in continual poverty. In verse 5, *“he will richly bless you”*, Macdonald further proposes that the creditor would not suffer because of the charity extended as God would bless him in return.³²

In verse 6, the assurance of blessings is proclaimed by God, which states: *“For the Lord your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will not borrow from none”*. Woods proposes that the blessing of *“you will lend to many”* refers to the prospect of Israel becoming a creditor nation, in obedience to sharing generously with the poor.³³ Gaebelein agrees with this by asserting that, the obedience to give generously would not only bring the blessing of there being no poor person in Israel, but would also bring economic superiority over the nations.³⁴

The Sabbatical Year was a test of faith as in the seventh year, all debts were to be cancelled. This test of faith, pertained to the act of generosity towards the poor as the Lord commissioned although, it would essentially cost the lender when the year of release came. This required the lender to act in compliance to will of God, with the right attitude and with a willing heart.

In verses 7-8 it states: *“If there is poor among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your poor brother. Rather be open-handed and*

²⁸ Exell, 356.

²⁹ Mayes, 248.

³⁰ Cairns, 147.

³¹ Cairns, 148.

³² William MacDonald, *Believers Bible Commentary*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992) 214.

³³ Woods, 207.

³⁴ Frank. E. Gaebelein, *The Expositors Bible Commentary, Volume 3* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992) 104.

freely lend him whatever he needs.” According to Gaebelein, “*hard-hearted or tight-fisted*” refers to the subjective basis for behavior, in that generosity and kindness should be exercised towards the poor, by freely giving whatever is needed.³⁵

As verses 7-8, refers to the subjective basis for behavior, verse 9 refers to the subjective basis for thoughts and emotions when administering to the poor. In verse 9 the Israelites were exhorted to: “*be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: The seventh year, the year for cancelling debts, is near, so that you do not show ill towards your needy brother and give him nothing. He may then appeal against you, and you will be found guilty of sin*”. Thompson in observance of this verse, asserts that the “*wicked thought*” is the absence of compassion and a degrading reaction towards the needy.³⁶

In verses 10 – 11, it states: “*Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore, I command you to be open-handed towards your brothers and towards the poor and needy in your land*”.

Thompson proposes that, although the Sabbath Year required a release of debt, “*without a grudging heart*” refers to the inner attitude of love and mercy that was to be continually demonstrated towards the poor.³⁷ In observance of this continual attitude of love and mercy, Clarke proposes that, “*there will always be poor in the land*” is a further endorsement of the mercy and compassion that was to be exercised towards the poor. This principle of compassion, was also endorsed by Jesus in Matthew 26:11 and Mark 14:7.³⁸

In further exhortation, the Lord commissioned the Israelites to be “*open-handed*” when giving to the poor, and according to Woods, “*open-handed*” refers to the act of generosity that comes from the heart.³⁹ Exell agrees with this and suggests that “*open-handed*” refers to the liberal extension of charity towards the poor, which flows from a sense of duty and hope in God.⁴⁰ The principle here is also expressed in the New Testament where Paul in 2 Corinthians 9, proclaimed: “God loves a cheerful giver”. Freeing of slaves

In verses 12-18, highlights that concern for the poor within the Israelite community was also related to one’s attitude towards those who had become enslaved due to their poverty. In verses 12-13, states: “*if a fellow Hebrew, a man or woman, sells himself to you and serves you six years you must let him go free. And when you release him, do not send him away empty handed*”. According to Mayes, “*do not send him away empty*” means to give

³⁵ Gaebelein, 104.

³⁶ Thompson, 188.

³⁷ Thompson, 188.

³⁸ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Holy Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977) 216.

³⁹ Woods, 207.

⁴⁰ Exell, 360.

liberally so the freed slave can establish himself as an independent member of society.⁴¹

In verse 14-15, God commanded that upon the release of a slave, the creditor was commissioned to: *“supply him liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and winepress. Give to him as the Lord your God has blessed you. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you.”*

Mayes in his commentary believes that *“supply him liberally”* means to honor or enrich.⁴² Macdonald asserts that *“give unto him as the Lord your God has blessed you”* is a willingness to give freely out of the abundance that God has provided, and to live by the rule of giving to others as God has given you.⁴³ Exell endorses the attitude of giving freely and believes that *“give unto him as the Lord has blessed you”* is an encouragement for an individual to give as they are able to, according to the provision of God.⁴⁴

In verse 18, God exhorts the Israelites by saying: *“do not consider it a hardship to set your servant free, because his service to you these six years has been worth twice as much as that of a hired hand. And the Lord your God will bless you in everything you do.”*

In Exell's commentary, he proposes that *“do not consider it a hardship”* refers to the generous spirit that was to be exhibited with giving and the joyful attitude which was to be demonstrated with the act of giving. He further proposes that the term *“redeemed”* in verse 15, emphasizes the duty of compassion and mercy to be exhibited towards the poor, in reflection of the mercy and compassion shown by God to the Israelites which saw their release from slavery in Egypt.⁴⁵

In Deuteronomy 15, the heart of God towards the poor is evidently displayed and the duty of giving generously towards the disenfranchised is placed on the community of faith. The community of faith in Deuteronomy was exhorted by God to exhibit justice by giving generously and by being compassionate and merciful towards the poor, in reflection of the justice God had shown them as slaves in Egypt. The community of faith were further exhorted to consider the less fortunate with tenderness of heart and to share their possessions liberally, which would alleviate the suffering by aiding them with the necessities to live.

This in practice would have ensured that there was no poor in the land of Israel whilst modelling God-pleasing behavior as a form of worship and gratitude for his abundant blessings upon the nation. This Old Testament law as it pertains to Christian stewardship teaches that God is the sole owner of all that exists. It also affirms that the community of faith being God's covenant people have an inherited mandate for giving generously to those in need which

⁴¹ Mayes, 251.

⁴² Mayes, 251.

⁴³ MacDonald, 214.

⁴⁴ Exell, 368.

⁴⁵ Exell, 368.

is an act of worship in response to God's goodness and ownership of all things.

This biblical mandate emphasized in Deuteronomy 15, asserts that the poor must be met with an open heart and hand within both the global and local community. Whether their poverty is due to a lack of economic opportunities or political oppression, the biblical model displayed in Deuteronomy 15, ensures for a more egalitarian society.⁴⁶ The principles in Deuteronomy 15 provides a leading example of generosity and what it means to love God and one's neighbor, as it provides a series of commands and prohibitive actions pertaining to conventional generosity and Christian giving.⁴⁷

The biblical mandate for giving generously to the marginalized in society outlined in Deuteronomy 15, is also evident throughout other parts of the Pentateuch, wisdom books and the prophets. In the Pentateuch, great emphasis is placed on exploitation, justice and generosity concerning the poor, vulnerable and the marginalized. An example of this prohibited exploitation is highlighted in Exodus 22:21, which states: *"Do not ill-treat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt"*.

An example of justice to be exhibited is highlighted in Leviticus 19:9-10, which states: *"When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien"*. The poor in these contexts are depicted as landless people which has caused their vulnerable and dependent status and the provisions in these laws enable them to cope with their economic situation though acts of Christian charity.⁴⁸

It can be observed that the theological motivation behind these laws and principles is due to the concern God has towards the marginalized group in society. This concern is related to Israel's deliverance from bondage and oppression in Egypt whom at a point in time were landless, aliens, having dependent like status featured in Exodus 22:21. In emphasis of this, God expected Israel to always be generous in their interaction with the poor in gratitude to him which would invoke his blessings.⁴⁹

The wisdom books display a naturalistic illustration of generosity in action which ought to be modelled by God's covenant people. In Proverbs 23:10-11, it states: *"do not move an ancient boundary stone or encroach on the fields of the fatherless, for their defender is strong; he will take up the case against you"*. A similar exhortation is asserted in Proverbs 22:22-23 which states: *"do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court, for the Lord will take up their case and will plunder those who plunder them."* These passages of scripture illustrate a model of generosity with a warning against injustice and oppression of the poor by asserting that

⁴⁶Wafawanaka, 3-7.

⁴⁷Wafawanaka, 56-57.

⁴⁸Wafawanaka, 59.

⁴⁹Wafawanaka, 64.

those who neglect and exploit the poor, disrespect God who is their creator, but those who are kind towards the needy honor Him.⁵⁰

The endorsement of generosity towards the poor is also asserted in Proverbs 19:17 which states: *"he who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done"*. Proverbs 22:9 reiterates generosity by exclaiming that: *"a generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor"*. Proverbs 29:7 further endorses this by stating: *"the righteous care about justice for the poor"* and in verse 14 declares that: *"if a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will always be secure"*, which was the traditional responsibility of a good king.⁵¹ These passages of scripture declare that one who is generous towards the poor is fulfilling his service to God through the use of the term 'lending' and is considered righteous and blessed in the eyes of the Lord. This in practice is a form of worship to God which ultimately invokes divine reward from the Lord.⁵²

This biblical model of Christian generosity is also echoed by the prophets by the characterization of justice and righteousness. The call for justice by the prophets was a reference to the basic human rights of the poor. In Micah 2:8 it states: *"lately my people have risen up like an enemy. You strip off the rich robe from those who pass by without a care, like men returning from battle."* In Amos in chapter 2:6-7, it states *"they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed."* The proclamations of these prophets accentuate that justice and generosity are not solely moral but is centered around correct human to human relationship based upon divine human relationship with God.⁵³

The essence of Micah's teachings regarding justice is comprised in chapter 6:6-8 which states:

(6) *"with what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings with calves a year old? (7) Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for the transgression of my soul? (8) He has showed you, O man what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*

These verses in Micah call for those who are worshippers of God to be just, merciful and generous towards those in need. This call to worshippers was also declared in Amos 5:24 which states: *"let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream"*. Therefore, to act justly means to give of oneself for the establishment of egalitarianism for all with special regard for those who are impoverished.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Wafawanaka, 136.

⁵¹ Wafawanaka, 133.

⁵² Wafawanaka, 133.

⁵³ Wafawanaka, 94.

⁵⁴ Wafawanaka, 98-99.

In Micah's exhortation to love mercy, equates to kindness which is based upon the identification and recognition of the poor and needy which causes one to respond in a brotherly manner. Micah's call for justice and kindness are actions that require a correct relationship between the worshipper and members of society wrought from the conventional relationship a true worshipper has with God.⁵⁵

The principles of generous giving towards the poor is further echoed in the book of Jeremiah calling for Israel to administer social justice for the disenfranchised, poor, vulnerable and the weak and like Amos and Micah Jeremiah asserts this to be a divine mandate for the covenant people. In Jeremiah 5, the prophet is recorded detailing the sins of the nation where he indicts the Judeans for a range of sins including their neglect of the poor and oppressed. In his rebuke Jeremiah contrasts the poor with the rich proclaiming them to be victims of the rich due to their neglect which is displayed in verse 28, which states: *"you have grown fat and sleek, their evil deeds have no limit; they do not plead the case of the fatherless to win it, they do not defend the rights of the poor."*⁵⁶

In chapter 21:12-14 he further states:

(12) "O house of David, this is what the Lord says: Administer justice every morning; rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done – burn with no-one to quench it. (13) I am against you, Jerusalem, you who live above this valley on the rocky plateau, who say, who can come against us? Who can enter our refuge? (14) I will punish you as your deeds deserve, I will kindle fire in your forests that will consume everything around you."

These passages of scripture highlight the mandate the king of Judah had to execute justice towards the oppressed and further acclaim that justice is an essential part of the king's duty as a covenant community member. In addition, these verses also assert the essence of justice to be the deliverance of the poor and marginalized members of society from their situation of oppression and exploitation.⁵⁷

The mandate to administer justice towards the poor, vulnerable and weak is also echoed in chapter 22:1-5, which states:

(1) "This is what the Lord say's: go down to the palace of the king of Judah and proclaim this message there: (2) Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, you who sit on David's throne, you, your officials and your people who come through these gates. (3) This is what the Lord says: do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless or the widow, and

⁵⁵ Wafawanaka, 99.

⁵⁶ Wafawanaka, 105.

⁵⁷ John M. Bracke, *Justice in the Book of Jeremiah*. Word & World 22, no.4 (Fall 2002) Available at: https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/22-4_Jeremiah/22-4_Bracke.pdf Accessed April 19th 2018, 388.

do not shed innocent blood in this place. (4) For if you are careful to carry out these commands, then kings who sit on David's throne will come through the gates of this palace, riding in chariots and on horses, accompanied by their officials and their people. (5) But if you do not obey these commands, declares the Lord, I swear by myself that this palace will become a ruin."

These verses in Jeremiah chapter 22, reiterate the same commands in Chapter 21:11-14, in much of the same language by exhorting the kings of Judah to act with justice and righteousness. They emphasize that such acts of justice and righteousness include delivering the marginalized from their oppressors by generously providing for the alien, fatherless and widow which is a fundamental requirement of obedience to God. In verses 4-5, great emphasis is placed on obedience to execute justice and righteousness in relation to the continual protection of the monarchy.⁵⁸ Essentially extending generosity towards the poor would invoke the blessings of the Lord.

In verses 13-17 of the same chapter, a distinctive example of the principles of justice and righteousness are displayed. In verses 13-17 it states:

(13) "Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his countrymen work for nothing, not paying them for their labor. (14) He says, I will build myself a great palace with spacious upper rooms. So, he makes large windows in it, panels it with cedar and decorates it in red. (15) Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well with him. (16) He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me? Declares the Lord. (17) But your eyes and your heart are set only on dishonest gain, on shedding innocent blood and on oppression and exhortation."

These verses make mention of practices of king Jehoiakim used to build an extravagant royal construction by means of injustice and unrighteousness. The unrighteous means which the king used for his palace construction was the exploitation of his laborers by making them "*work for nothing and not paying them for their labor.*" The laborers in the context of scripture are regarded as the king's neighbors who are in a position of poverty and need and as a result Jehoiakim had not been faithful to his responsibility of extending justice for the poor laborers as a model of right living before God. Jehoiakim is understood to be God's steward who was responsible for administering justice and failing to do so, is considered unfaithful in contrast to his father Josiah who in verses 15-16, is praised by God for fulfilling his responsibility faithfully as a representative of God. God commended him for doing "*what was right and just, he defended the cause of the poor and needy*".⁵⁹ The central teachings of the prophets is essentially obedience to the divine mandate required of worshippers of God in covenant relationship with him, to live out

⁵⁸ Bracke, 388.

⁵⁹ Bracke, 389.

his righteous standards through the compassionate sharing of possessions God had blessed them with those who are less fortunate.⁶⁰

The New Testament continues with the theme for giving generously within the Christian community and in continuity of this theme saw many of the Old Testament teachings re-emphasized and enlarged by Christ and throughout other parts of New Testament literature. The emphasis of this theme sought to instill generosity as a progressive principle as oppose to mere rituals within the Christian community.⁶¹

In Matthews gospel in chapter 19, records the dialogue between Jesus and a young rich man. In verse 16, the rich man is recorded asking Jesus *“what good thing must I do to get eternal life”*. In verse 21 Jesus answers him, after declaring that he had kept all the commandments mentioned with; *“if you want to be perfect, go, sell all your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.”* This statement by Jesus, highlights to right perspective and attitude one must have concerning possessions as one cannot be selfish but must show acts of benevolence toward the marginalized in society. For one claiming to love God, must exemplify his generosity towards the poor as emphasized in the Old Testament, as by doing so, demonstrates generosity toward God who is there creator. In addition, the parable further highlights the willingness to give generously is required to truly be identified as a disciple and follower of Jesus.⁶²

The gospel of Matthew further highlights that sharing one's possessions liberally with the poor and needy is apart of Christian stewardship. In Matthew 25:31-40 Jesus tells the parable of the final judgement where the nations will be gathered before the throne of the Lord where all individual's will be judged on whether they fed the hungry, clothed the naked and ministered to the sick and imprisoned. In verses 35-36 it states: *for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, (36) I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”* Jesus in his parable calls those who fulfilled these acts of kindness towards the marginalized in society 'righteous' and declares such acts of kindness were done unto him, through faithful obedience to God.⁶³

In the gospel of Luke, generous giving also has a prominent place within its narrative. In Luke 14:15-24, records the parable of Jesus about a great feast. In this parable Jesus tells of a banquet set by a person of wealth whom invited guests who were presumably of similar social status, declined for unknown reasons. In verse 21, due to the declined invitations the parable mentions that the host petitioned his servants to go into the streets and bring the poor,

⁶⁰ Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions* (InterVarsity Press: USA, 1999) 71-71.

⁶¹ Annie Wright Ussery, *Christian Sharing of Possessions* (Convention Press: Nashville, 1961) 105

⁶² Leslie J. Hoppe, O.F.M., *There Shall Be No Poor Among You: Poverty in the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004) 154-155.

⁶³ Hoppe, 108.

crippled and the lame. The sharing of a meal was central to social and religious activities in the early Christian community, and Jesus's parable taught that the poor ought to be included in their community meals and that no place of honor ought to be reserved for the elite. This parable endorsed the care and generosity that ought to be extended towards the poor,⁶⁴ which ought to be central to Christian conduct and practice.⁶⁵

In Luke 16:19-31, is the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. In this parable, Luke exploits the economic and social contrast between the rich and poor. This contrast is done through great emphasis being placed on the rich man's fate for failing to be generous to Lazarus, despite being in a state of economic privilege. Due to his neglect of Lazarus the rich man in death suffered in hell whilst Lazarus is displayed as being in a place of comfort.⁶⁶

The name Lazarus is a Hellenized form of the Hebrew name 'Eliezer' meaning 'God is my help' serving as a biblical reminder that God is the helper of the poor and neglectation of the poor is an indictment against God who is their creator as asserted throughout various texts in Proverbs. The parable implies that the kingdom of God belongs to the poor and the rich may share in it if they are merciful, generous and kind towards them. In verse 29 Abraham's response to the rich mans request for Lazarus to go and warn his family so that they might escape his fate, "*they have Moses and the Prophets, let them listen to them*", affirms the requirement to act justly and extend mercy and generosity towards the poor is mandated by God in holy scripture.⁶⁷

Generosity and charity comes with the price of discipleship and belonging to the Christian family of God. When one is born into the family of God, they inherently become apart of a new family which means a new community governed by the love of God who do not consider their possessions as their own but belonging to God. This community awareness causes for the poor to be remembered through Christian giving based upon the love of God, his rich blessings and in response to the gospel.⁶⁸

In Acts 4:32-37, the early Christian church in response to the gospel and Gods rich blessings were generous to each other. In verse 32, it states that: "*all believers were one in heart and mind. No-one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.*" In verses 34-35 as a result of this: "*there was no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales, and put it at the apostle's feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.*" This act of generosity among the early church believers towards those in need, resulted in poverty being eliminated among its members.

⁶⁴ Hoppe, 152.

⁶⁵ Bruce W. Longenecker, *Remember the poor: Paul poverty and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010) 290

⁶⁶ Hoppe, 152

⁶⁷ Hoppe, 153.

⁶⁸ Blomberg, 140.

Generous giving towards the poor is also prevalent in the writings of Paul to the Christian community of faith which is endorsed on the notion that Jesus will return in eschatological glory and that Christian communities ought to resemble the glory of Christ. This notion is emphasized in Galatians 1:4 where Paul professes that believers have already been delivered from the present evil age and received the Spirit of God's Son in their heart, and in Galatians 4:6, where the believers are exhorted to model the teachings of Christ.⁶⁹

In 1 Corinthians 4:10-12, Paul identifies himself with the burdens that often stem from being poor such as: hunger, oppression and marginalization endured for the mission and sake of the gospel. This identification with such burdens enabled him to speak to Christian communities with integrity where he commissioned them with the responsibility to give generously, by exhorting them to "*excel in giving*" in 2 Corinthians 8:7.⁷⁰ In further exhortation of the responsibility to give, Paul refers to the act of Christ solidifying his theological stance in verse 9, where he states: "*for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*" The reference of Christ's act of becoming poor for the sake of the believer, signifies that generous giving is an imitation of Christ.⁷¹

Paul's appeal to the Corinthian church, in verse 8, asserts that generous giving is a test of benevolence and in Romans 15, commended the Gentile church in Macedonia and Achaia for their generous giving to the church in Jerusalem. Paul saw this generous donation without the expectation of gaining something in return, as an act modeled after Christ's gift of his life,⁷² which is an important virtue to be demonstrated in the corporate community of believers.⁷³ In Romans 15:26-27, Paul asserts that "*they were pleased to make a contribution to the poor*" highlighting the cheerful attitude to be accompanied with giving as proclaimed in Deuteronomy 15.

In further contending for this virtue, in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, Paul refers to generosity as one of the gifts given by the Spirit to specific individuals. In 1 Corinthians 12:28, Paul in his teaching of spiritual gifts to the Corinthian church, states that God has appointed "*those able to help others*" and in Romans 12:8 states: "*if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously*". The grouping of generous giving with spiritual gifts further implies giving of one's resources liberally is a spiritual grace, which asserts the lordship of Christ.⁷⁴

In Paul's letter to Timothy, Timothy is advised to teach the church to care for its poor widows and members of families who were in need. In 1

⁶⁹ Longenecker, 138.

⁷⁰ Hoppe, 159.

⁷¹ Hoppe, 160.

⁷² Hoppe, 160.

⁷³ Longenecker, 141.

⁷⁴ Longenecker, 282.

Timothy 5:3-4, Paul states: “give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need” (4) “for this is pleasing to God”, which also implies that extending generosity to those in need asserts Christ’s lordship among believers. Timothy is further commanded to instruct the wealthy members of his congregation with the responsibility of giving and to be generous with their wealth. In 1 Timothy 6:16-18 Paul asserts:

(17) “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be ignorant nor put their hope in wealth, which is uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. (18) Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.”

This responsibility to be generous and share is a display of faith in God, as He is the one who provides and blesses an individual with what they have. Therefore, faith in God ought to produce deeds of generosity by sharing with those who are in need. These verses further imply that faith in action produces generous works which is the epitome of a transformed life in Christ.⁷⁵

The illustration of faith and deeds is also expressed in the epistle of James, with the declaration that genuine faith is tested by the production of good works through the power of the gospel.⁷⁶ In James 1:27, it states: “religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” James acknowledges that genuine faith has an outward expression and illustrates sensitivity and generosity towards the orphans and the widows in their economic distress as a display of such faith.⁷⁷

James continues his rhetoric of genuine faith and deeds in 2 chapter of his epistle by proposing question to its readers in verses 14-17:

(14) “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds” Can such faith save them? (15) Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. (16) If one of you says to them, go in peace; keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? (17) In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead.”

James reiterates that genuine faith produces generous action as genuine faith is alive. A person who professes to have faith but is powerless to produce acts of generosity to a person in need is not genuine faith that entrusts the soul with the provision of God’s grace.⁷⁸ James illustratively regards a believer who refuses to extend generosity to his fellow brother or sister in need, is one having no compassion, or mercy as by with-holding generosity one fails to

⁷⁵ Gordon D. Fee, 1 & 2 Timothy Titus: Understanding the Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 1984) 158.

⁷⁶ D. Edmond Heibert, James (Indiana: BMH BOOKS, 2009) 126.

⁷⁷ Homer A. Kent, Jr, Faith that works: Studies in the Epistle of James (Indiana: BMH BOOKS, 2005) 58.

⁷⁸ Kent, 80.

provide a fellow brother in need with the necessities of life.⁷⁹ This illustration of refusing to show compassion and mercy is an act of oppression spoken against by the prophets and correlates to the commission of God to the Israelites concerning the poor among in Deuteronomy 15:7 which states: “*if anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be **hardhearted** or **tightfisted** toward them*”.

Application

In application of Deuteronomy 15 in observance of the sabbatical year principle as a model for generous Christian giving, pastors can design programs that promote churchwide generosity, aimed at developing faithful generous stewards which includes every level of financial income among its members. Stewardship education classes and seminars communicating the churches vision and future goals pertaining to generous giving can also be implemented and made available to the congregation for a unified generous response.⁸⁰

Pastors and leadership teams can include biblical giving in their theological framework and effectively accentuate that giving is an act of faith and worship. Through accentuating giving as an act of worship and faith, pastors and church leaders can further unfold that giving is central to the life of the Christian, which involves both trusting God to provide His resources, and His trusting of believers to utilize His resources in honor of Him.⁸¹

Annual budgets can be established where community members give to a cause which can challenge them to grow in their understanding and practice of generosity. The church can further establish mission projects which train missionaries to work in the field and encourage the community to financially support its operation.⁸²

Periodic reports and stories about generous givers who have experienced the joy and blessings of giving as representatives of God can be shared. The implementation of this will inform Christians that generous giving is a condition of the heart for those living under the lordship of Christ, which will motivate and empower Christians to fulfil their responsibility as stewards and covenant people.⁸³

The target group should involve all members of the church ensuring that children and adolescents are not excluded to emphasize that giving and sharing of one's resources and personal faith is entwined together. Involving children

⁷⁹ Kurt A. Richardson, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (USA: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997) 130.

⁸⁰ Doug M. Carter, *Raising More Than Money: Redefining Generosity, Reflecting God's Heart* (USA: Thomas Nelson, 2007) 74-75.

⁸¹ Carter, 77.

⁸² Carter, 77.

⁸³ Carter, 75.

and adolescents will form Christ-like characteristics and create a habit of giving in them, which will see the impartation of strong Christian values and generous giving for future generations.⁸⁴

Christian communities can further partnership with local organizations and charities that share the same vision of giving by supporting them through prayers, networking and financial assistance. It is important for churches and Christian communities to have the right perspective on giving and not solely perceive it as supplying needs, but as an action moved by the love of God. The generous love of God brings hope to believers, and thus believers actions of generosity can give hope to others and transform lives.⁸⁵

In conclusion, the sabbatical year principle ought to influence believers as the present covenant people of faith to give generously to the marginalized in society which is commissioned by God. The validity of this commission is that God is the sole owner of all wealth, resources and possessions, and in his creativity, gave all that exists generously as an expression of His love. God in his love created man in His image and gave him dominion over all that has been created leaving man with the responsibility of stewardship to use the earth's resources in accordance to His purpose and divine will.

In accordance to the will of God, Christians ought to be mindful of the socio-economic needs of the poor, disenfranchised, vulnerable and marginalized and ought to cultivate a practice of generous giving towards them. Christians ought not to be tightfisted but should be openhearted to the marginalized in society, due to the love, mercy and generosity God has graciously shown to His covenant people and in response to the transforming power of the gospel of salvation. The Christian model for generous giving demonstrates genuine faith which illustrates that one has entrusted their soul to the provisions of God, reflecting His love, mercy, compassion and glory in the earth.

⁸⁴ Carter, 79.

⁸⁵ Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert, *"When Helping Hurt. How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor and Yourself"* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009) 200.

Bibliography

All scriptures quoted within this paper are from the Life Application Study Bible: New International Version (Eastborne: Kingsway Communications Ltd, 2002)

Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Holy Bible*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977)

A.D.H. Mayes, *The New Century Bible Commentary Bible: Deuteronomy*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979)

Annie Wright Ussery, *Christian Sharing of Possessions* (Convention Press: Nashville, 1961)

Bruce W. Longenecker, *Remember the poor: Paul poverty and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010)

Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions* (InterVarsity Press: USA, 1999)

D. Edmond Heibert, *James* (Indiana: BMH BOOKS, 2009)

David F. Payne. *Deuteronomy* (Westminster John Knox Press: Kentucky, 1985)

Doug M. Carter, *Raising More Than Money: Redefining Generosity, Reflecting God's Heart* (USA: Thomas Nelson, 2007)

Edward J. Woods. *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Deuteronomy* (USA: InterVarsity Press, 2011)

Frank. E. Gaebelein, *The Expositors Bible Commentary, Volume 3* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992)

George Arthur Buttrick, *Interpreters Bible: Volume 2* (USA: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952)

Gordon D. Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy Titus: Understanding the Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 1984)

Hiley H. Ward, *Creative Giving* (MacMillan Company: New York, 1958)

Homer A. Kent, Jr, *Faith that works: Studies in the Epistle of James* (Indiana: BMH BOOKS, 2005)

Ian Cairns, *International Theological Commentary: Deuteronomy, Word and Presence* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992)

J. A. Thompson, *Old Tyndale Commentaries: Deuteronomy*, (UK: InterVarsity Press, 1974)

John M. Bracke, *Justice in the Book of Jeremiah*. Word & World 22, no.4 (Fall 2002) Available at: https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/22-4_Jeremiah/22-4_Bracke.pdf Accessed April 19th 2018,

Joseph S. Exell, *The Bible Illustrator: Deuteronomy*, (Grand Rapids: Baker House, 1978)

Kurt A. Richardson, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (USA: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997)

Leslie J. Hoppe, O.F.M, *There Shall Be No Poor Among You: Poverty in the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004)

P.E Burroughs, *The Grace of Giving*, (Nashville: Convention Press, 1957)

Richard Cunningham, *Creative Stewardship: Creative Leadership Series*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979)

Robert Wafawanaka, *“Am I Still My Brother Keeper? Biblical Perspectives On Poverty”* (USA: University Press of America, 2012)

Wayne A. Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998)

Webster’s New World College Dictionary. Accessed April 19th 2018, Available at: http://www.yourdictionary.com/steward#websters?direct_search_result=yes

William MacDonald, *Believers Bible Commentary*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992)

Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert, *“When Helping Hurt. How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor and Yourself”* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009)

Business to the Glory of God

Larissa Maia

Can anyone glorify God in business? Many may think that no, no one cannot glorify God in business. Or maybe they would say no, you don't mix the two together. The mentality that seems to prevail is that the profession of business is almost (if not) impossible to glorify God. But that is exactly what the Word of God declares to be the purpose of all things. By engaging in work and business we glorify God because we are emulating God's own creative work. There is a way that anyone can honor and glorify God by working in the business industry. There will be some challenges along the way such as, financial, decision making, competition, and putting Biblical principles before anything else. "in every aspect of business there are multiple layers of opportunities to give glory to God, as well as multiple temptations to sin".¹

As Christians we constantly face several challenges related to work: being approved in a selective process; identify with a specific area of action; earn enough to maintain a new family nucleus; change cities for a new job; build a new company; be accountable, and etc. Before them, how can you stand firm in the faith? It is necessary to embrace a biblical view of the meaning of work for the faithful in Christ. The attitude of the Christian employee in good or difficult situations in the workplace is observed by all people (manager, boss and customers). What we do and say is an example of good or bad testimony. Taking into account that we generally spend more time in the professional environment than at home or elsewhere, it is worth reflecting on what kind of image we show in the work environment.

What is the meaning of work, as pointed out by the Bible, for Christians? How important is it to those who, once called and justified, expect with faith that their glorification be manifest? If you already have the guarantee that, when Christ returns, you will be forever with the Lord, why face the challenges of work before this time arrives? This message applies in any time and situation. Many believers have taken upon themselves the responsibility of reflecting the Kingdom of God in the professional environment and have made a difference in the lives of many people. The Kingdom of God is not restricted to the walls of a temple, it is within each one of us (Lk 17:21). The Church cannot forget that it is an ambassador for Christ on earth (2 Cor. 5:20). We are the mouth of God for this generation. If we who know the love of God do not speak of Him, who will speak?

The inability to deal with people of different religions in the workplace, can be solved if Christians employees are willing to: First, the Christian should be a good employee. It is no use if you preach, if you do not

¹ Grudem, Wayne A. Business for the glory of God: the Bible's teaching on the moral goodness of business. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003. (p. 171/939)

use slang words, if you say that you are a believer and not have the reputation of being a good employee. In addition, you need to spread your faith respecting people without putting yourself above others. Believers should be balanced in his or her way of speaking the Gospel. Preaching is not the same thing as imposing our beliefs. We cannot negotiate our principles, but we must respect our neighbor, love and respect go hand in hand. We are watched every day and the way we differentiate ourselves shows the love of Christ, serving as an attraction to new opportunities for conversion. "Employer/employee relationships provide many opportunities for glorifying God. On both sides of the transaction, we can imitate God, and he will take pleasure in us when he sees us showing honesty, fairness trustworthiness, kindness, wisdom and skill, and keeping our word regarding how much we promised to pay or what work we agreed to do."²

Some of the Christians in Thessalonica, apparently due to the expectation of Jesus' return, no longer wanted to work (2 Thessalonians 3:11). The way they dealt with the challenges of the work was simple: suppression. For them, there was no meaning for work in a Christian's life. Paul's response to this behavior was categorical: "For even while we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is [a]not to eat, either."³ The apostle presents in this context (3.6-12) some reasons why the Christian must work, despite the challenges faced. The reasons mentioned in the previous letter are added to these: to express love to those who receive, albeit indirectly, the benefits of work (1 Thess. 2: 6-12); to avoid disturbing meddling in the life of others (1 Thessalonians 4:11; 1 Tim 5:13); to give no occasion for slander on the part of unbelievers in regard to conduct (1 Thessalonians 4:12); and, again, liberate others from the weight of sustenance (4.12b). In his letter to the Colossians, Paul emphasizes an even more fundamental motivation: to work as if serving Christ, since, in fact, it is ultimately his eternal reward (Col 3:17, 23, 24). Therefore, denying work, suppressing its challenges, is not a biblical option for the Christian.

The opposite extreme is also not an alternative: to assert unrestrained work, adding unnecessary challenges to it. (It is sufficient to remember the separation instituted by God from the Creation of one every six days for rest.) Dealing with work without imposing limits can be the result of both the anxious concern for the supply of future needs (Mt 6: 24-34) love for the superfluous things of this world (1 Tim. 6: 1-10). In the first case, overwork becomes an externalization of insecurity in the providential care of God; in the second, it expresses infidelity to the Lord, by attachment to transitory values such as money, power and knowledge (Jer 9.23, 24, Mt 6: 19-21).

We must, therefore, understand work as a means of serving God and others and facing their challenges with faith of the benefits it provides. However, we cannot assume it indiscriminately, with the restlessness and

² Grudem, Wayne A. *Business for the glory of God: the Bible's teaching on the moral goodness of business*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003. Page 32

³ 2 Thessalonians 3:10 Amplified Bible (AMP)

greed of those who do not trust in God's provision that much, nor are they willing to overthrow the idolatrous altars still present in their hearts. Let us remember at least every six days the biblical vision of the work and embrace in the week to come its liberating implications!

Moreover, in the business world we have the basic knowledge acquired in college and universities. But in the course of the profession we find and encounter many difficult obstacles that often only the knowledge gained in college and universities is not enough to solve. However, we have a Master Teacher who can give us guidance through His Word, "The Holy Bible". Many might think that this is impossible, but if you are reading and studying carefully the Word of God you will see that the Word has everything we need. Just believe that you will see the glory of God. Whenever we make any decisions, we seek God's guidance through His Word. In addition, everything we do, say, decide or act is to honor and glorify God, and that also includes our money and possessions. "Surely we cannot exclude money and material possessions from the application of the parable, for they are part of what God entrusts to each of us, and our money and possessions can and should be used to glorify God."⁴

In addition, any work done with care, honesty and loyalty is a way to glorify God and witness to the world a lifestyle based on ethics and responsibility. The result of a zealous performance is stated in the Bible in Proverbs 22:29: "Skilled workers will always serve kings. They will never have to work for less important people." Do you know someone who does his job with care and perfection? Soon its value will be recognized and he or she will be called to work for the "king". It's nice when Christians recognizes that their daily activities can be a continuous act of praise to God, an expression of the values that permeate his life, a way to be "salt and light" wherever they are, whether in the church or in the office. We are working for God. So, we should do your best. "And do not be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs], but be [a]transformed and progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you]."⁵

Furthermore, it is interesting to know that God in His Word, speaks clearly about "work". Notice what is written in Ephesians 6:5-8 "Slaves, obey your masters here on earth with fear and respect. And do this with a heart that is true, just as you obey Christ. You must do this not just to please your masters while they are watching, but all the time. Since you are really slaves of Christ, you must do with all your heart what God wants. Do your work and be happy to do it. Work as though it is the Lord you are serving, not just an earthly master. Remember that the Lord will give everyone a reward for doing

⁴ Grudem, Wayne A. *Business for the glory of God: the Bible's teaching on the moral goodness of business*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003. Page 43

⁵ Romans 12:2 Amplified Bible (AMP)

good. Everyone, slave or free, will get a reward for the good things they do.” In the 21st century, our situation is quite different from that experienced by slaves in antiquity. We have benefits, rights, comfort and freedom. Complaints aside, we must pay attention to the principle of Scripture: “In all the work you are given, do the best you can. Work as though you are working for the Lord, not any earthly master. Remember that you will receive your reward from the Lord, who will give you what he promised his people. Yes, you are serving Christ. He is your real Master.” Colossians 3:23-24 “However, it is absolutely important to realize that we should never attempt to glorify God by acting in ways that disobey his Word. And thus we must be careful never to try to imitate God’s character in ways that contradict his moral law in the Bible.”⁶

Still, more important than the boss praise, is that the recognition of God is what really counts. And, indeed, He sees everything. “But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.” Deuteronomy 8:18. We as Christians need to ask ourselves these questions every day: what kind of employee I am? What kind of boss I am? Did Jesus have any priority in my work today? We as Christians should work with all our heart for the Lord and not for men. God is glorified by the way we work! Work is worship! The enemy tried to blind, deceive, and frustrate the perfect plan of God. Working with integrity pleases the Lord!

Finance is one of the main challenge in doing business God’s way. The Word of God is very cleared when it talks about financial life. However, the abuse of certain legitimate points of the Scriptures offers two dangers: to embrace them and to reject them without reflection. The deviations and extremisms, with respect to the financial life in Scripture, have led some to destructive actions and others to reject wise counsels of the Word of God. Both one action and the other must be avoided. One the other hand, we can never forget that “all Scripture is divinely inspired and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly and thoroughly instructed in every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). God has given us in His Word principles that can guide our whole life, including our financial lives. To ignore them is to be doomed to failure. “God did not have to create us with a need for material things or a need for the services of other people (think of the angels, who apparently do not have such needs), but in his wisdom he chose to do so. It may be that God created us with such needs because he knew that in the process of productive work we would have many opportunities to glorify him.”⁷

The problem of avarice, greed, is that it is an attempt against human dignity. The miser does not see the human being, he only sees figures. To achieve his goals, the miser passes over all ethical principles. It does not

⁶ Grudem, Wayne A. *Business for the glory of God: the Bible's teaching on the moral goodness of business*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003. Page 16

⁷ Grudem, Wayne A. *Business for the glory of God: the Bible's teaching on the moral goodness of business*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003. Page 27

matter the means as long as it attains in any way its lucrative aims. And in this there is a distance between Jesus and this businessman. For Jesus, the neighbor is the value - man was the cause of Jesus' business. For the miser, it is his peculiar interests that matter, and for that he uses his fellow man as a stepping stone to his greed. It is not the business that is impure, but the way it is exercised.

In addition, the Scriptures contain many principles for a healthy financial life. "God has nothing against wealth. He made Solomon the richest man in the world."⁸ Here are only four of these principles: First, finance is not the main thing in your life. Anyone who thinks they are and prioritizes them will see their life consumed over the years. Your family, your health, your life with God, everything will decline. Putting financial life ahead of everything generates many pains. If, in your quest for financial prosperity, you lose your fear of God and fill yourself with anxiety and restlessness, you are doing a lousy business. This wealth will steal your life with God and the peace of your heart. "Better is a little with the [reverent, worshipful] fear of the Lord, Than great treasure and trouble with it."⁹

Second, no dishonest wealth compensates. "Men of genius are admired... Men of wealth are envied. Men of power are feared, but only men of character are trusted."¹⁰ Many of those who entered the world of politics have acquired a better economic condition and, at the same time, have impoverished their lives. "It is better to have little in righteousness than much in unrighteousness." (Proverbs 16: 8). Third, wealth that produces strife is not good. If prosperity disturbs your home, destroys your home and erodes your marriage, then it is no good. Many give everything to their family, including themselves, but not the love they need. The unbridled work in search of wealth generates conflicts, wars, divisions and quarrels within the home. There is no balance between work and family. Many households and couples, united in financial difficulty, became divided and rancorous in prosperity. This is not from God. "Better is a dry loaf of bread with peace and quiet than a house where there are feasts and many quarrels" (Proverbs 17: 1).

Forth, highlighting or almost monopolizing a single biblical principle, which is the consecration of part of our revenues to God, some have turned offerings and tithes into a sort of programmed saving. You deposit regularly and wait to be drawn to become rich miraculously. The Bible does not teach this, it teaches to work; and work with wisdom, diligence, and patience. Eating the bread with the sweat of our face is biblical. Desiring riches without work is unbiblical. "Because of sin, we can also engage in dishonesty and in selling shoddy material whose defects are covered with glossy paint."¹¹ "Poor is he

⁸ Jones, Laurie Beth. *Jesus, Inc. : the visionary path : an entrepreneur's guide to true success*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Crown Business, 2001. (p. 123)

⁹ Proverbs 15:16 Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹⁰ Oster, Merrill J., and Mike Hamel. *The entrepreneur's creed: the principles & passions of 20 successful entrepreneurs*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001. (p. 6)

¹¹ Grudem, Wayne A. *Business for the glory of God: the Bible's teaching on the moral goodness of business*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003. Page 38

who works with a negligent and idle hand, But the hand of the diligent makes him rich.”¹² Anyone who follows this principle will have a chance to thrive. Wealth as the fruit of labor is clearly taught in Scripture. People who do not know God, but believe in the value of hard work, thrive because, even without knowing it, they are obeying a principle of life. The saying "God helps the early bird" may seem like a kind of unbelief at first. However, the Bible is very clear in showing that God does not bless the idle, the lazy, the one who is unwilling to do what needs to be done; but it is the dedicated ones who thrive.

Similarly, Paul's point is especially important for the common Christian worker. It guides those Christians to “and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.” 1 Thessalonians 4:11, 12 (ESV). Paul's word to them is very simple: we honor and glorify God through our lives by doing what God told us to do. We have to choose to work hard, get up early, be loyal and faithful, fearing the Lord, face difficulties and work for people with respect as if we are working for God. “‘Respect: We treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves. Ruthlessness, callousness and arrogance don’t belong here.’ And ‘Integrity: We work with customers and prospects openly, honestly and sincerely.’ These are excerpts from Enron’s sixty-four-page ‘Code of Ethics.’”¹³

In addition, when we have a store or a company, we enjoy the profits that it gives us. We believe we are winning by our ability to manage, because we are intelligent, and prepared technically. We think we're in this position by merit of our abilities, and we forget about who empowers us, the Lord. That nothing belongs to us and that we are merely stewards, administrators for the things of God. If we have a company is to be honest with customers, respectful, suppliers, employees, help them, help the needy, and consecrate it to God. “In every business transaction, we purpose to look people in the eyes, shake their hands when appropriate, give our word, and let them know that we are committed to completing the task with excellence on time”.¹⁴ When God bless our company nothing bad can happen. When we consecrate our work, our company, our business to the Lord, being honest, loyal, being respectful and act with mercy, then we prosper because we are being faithful keepers of God's purpose. “Profit is thus an indication that I have made something useful for others, and in that way, it can show that I am doing good for others in the goods and services that I sell”¹⁵

Furthermore, the Bible says “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead) where you are

¹² Proverbs 10:4 Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹³ Sutton, Robert L. Good boss, bad boss: how to be the best and learn from the worst. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2010.

¹⁴ Lockwood, David. Business Laws from Proverbs. West Bow Pr, 2015. (p. 682/1049)

¹⁵ Grudem, Wayne A. Business for the glory of God: the Bible's teaching on the moral goodness of business. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003. (419/939)

going.”¹⁶ The Bible encourages productivity at the same time, condemns all kinds of idleness (Ec 11: 6; Pv 22: 9; Pv 6.6; 2 Thes 3.4). What the Bible preaches in such cases is ethics that should guide our business. Therefore, aims to point out some of these principles so that we have God as our partner in what we buy, sell, or produce. One of the conditions in order to be successful in our professional activities, it has to do with where we carry out this activity. Robert H. Schuller wrote a book entitled " Bloom Where You Are Planted," where he talks about our duty to be productive in the place God has placed us. This brings us to the story of Joseph in Egypt who, instead of regret being sold to a land that was not his, became the governor of that country. The same can be said about Daniel, in Babylon he became one of the most important men in that country. When God is in our business, even though we work for a profitable purpose -and there is no sin in it- the ultimate goal is to achieve God's favor in order to glorify Him through our activities. God must be present in all his activities, whether is in an individual relationship or in his professional activities.

Another topic in going business God's way is society with God. In the business world there are spaces for different types of societies. The Bible does not condemn the grouping of people to achieve a certain purpose; on the contrary, even encourages: "Where there is no [wise, intelligent] guidance, the people fall [and go off course like a ship without a helm], But in the abundance of [wise and godly] counselors there is victory".¹⁷ In this circumstance, we associate ourselves with people with several purposes: structure for our business, create strategies and logistics, guidelines for the company we want to create and, above all, acquire working capital. This too is not a sin. When we move all this to the Christian life of the dealer there is another strategy that must be taken into account: to associate God with our projects. God does not just want to take care of our spiritual life, our soul; he wants to have control of our entire life, including our business. The surrender of our life to the Lord must have a holistic connotation - to deliver the whole, even the finances. He wants to be our number one partner!

In the book of Acts (16:14) presents the life of Lydia, a purple merchant from the city of Thyatira. She was the first converted by the preaching of the apostle Paul in Europe. She opened her house to house the missionaries. From this attitude formed the Church of Philippi, one of the most beloved and active churches in that region. God needs professional Christians and entrepreneurs who, like Lydia, make their activities an outpost of the Kingdom of God.

In conclusion, all we have or we have to be is for the honor and glory of our God. If we don't give Him the honor and glory, we can pay a high price in any area of our lives. Certainly, we have no part in the Kingdom, if with the worldly things we are not faithful, how can we be faithful in the spiritual? So, let us be faithful to our God, we consecrate all to the Lord, we will help and

¹⁶ Ecclesiastes 9:10 Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹⁷ Proverbs 11:14 Amplified Bible (AMP)

assist our neighbors. By doing that we are showing that we are sons, daughters and faithful servants to Him. “Therefore, in all our ownership of property, and in all our stewardship, if we want to glorify God in business, we should seek to avoid pride and to have hearts full of love and humility towards others and toward God.”¹⁸ Any and all professional activity that is only for profits must be thrown away from us Christians. All avarice and greed deprive our spiritual life. Flower where God has planted you, that is, be a great professional no matter where you are. If you are a businesswoman, a businessman, talented, that grace was God who gave you; therefore, use your profession, your company, for the Kingdom of God’s purposes.

¹⁸ Grudem, Wayne A. *Business for the glory of God: the Bible's teaching on the moral goodness of business*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003. Page 75-76

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Amplified Bible (AMP)

Sutton, Robert I.. Good boss, bad boss: how to be the best and learn from the worst. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2010.

Jones, Laurie Beth. Jesus, Inc. : the visionary path : an entrepreneur's guide to true success. 1st ed. New York, NY: Crown Business, 2001.

Oster, Merrill J., and Mike Hamel. The entrepreneur's creed: the principles & passions of 20 successful entrepreneurs. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001.

Grudem, Wayne A. Business for the glory of God: the Bible's teaching on the moral goodness of business. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003.

Lockwood, David. Business Laws from Proverbs. West Bow Pr, 2015.

Siegel, Jack B. A desktop guide for nonprofit directors, officers, and advisors: avoiding trouble while doing good. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2006.

I Will Build My Church...When the Spirit Comes

Roseline Fequiere

*“I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail
against it
You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes, and you will be
my witnesses
I will pray the Father to give you another Comforter to be with you
and abide with you forever.”¹*

One of the most scholarly debated and denominationally contested topic in the Christian world is the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church. A survey of the Church history shows that the diverging opinions concerning the Third Person of the Godhead have been prevalent since the turn of the second century. This has caused regrettable damages with outcomes that lasted throughout the Church age. Patristic debates, frequencies of Church Councils and their creedal outcomes, social injustices in the name of doctrinal stands, Church schisms and increasing denominational divisions, ... et cetera, are just few undeniable proofs of this ecclesiastic dilemma. It must be acknowledged that there have been many attempts toward breaching this gap. However, they most often succumbed under the power of presuppositions which usually dominates the conversation, thereby hinder any attempts to an effective compromise.

The Lord vowed to build His Church. He ascended to heaven, ordering His disciples to “*wait until they are empowered by the Spirit.*” This command should challenge the minds of Christian thinkers to honestly wonder what would be the function of the forthcoming Spirit in the Church? Should the Spirit, charged to build the Church and empower its workers take a lead role in its functioning, or should He just be a distant observer? This paper will explore the concept of the Church in the Father and Jesus’ perspectives; the activities and function of the Holy Spirit as observed in the birth and expansion of the Church; the historical and socio-cultural contexts of both the Lukan and the Forth Gospel/Johannine believers, the effectiveness of the Pentecost original witnesses towards accomplishing the goals set forth by Jesus; the relevance of the Power and the Paraclete messages for Luke and John’s Christian communities, and the application for the Church today.

“I Will Build My Church”

¹ The Holy Bible, *John Matt 16:18; Acts 1:8; John 14: 16; NIV Translation.*

Caesarea Philippi was the site of the greatest revelation of Jesus to His disciples. The rocky part of the most sinful Palestinian city was the location of two pagan temples built in honor of the dead Roman emperor [Caesar Augustus] and the Greek pagan god [Pan].² The Romans called this place the rock of the gods for the belief that this grot in the rock had access to the underworld. In this worldwide center of pagan worship, lewd and immoral acts were continually being performed in celebration of Pan, the fertility god. “The cleft in the rock was commonly known as the place where the dead go back and forth from the place where they are kept “the *gates of hades*. ”³ In Jewish tradition, the expression שַׁעַר־מָוֶת [Greek *πύλαι ᾗδου*- *Pulai hadou* (gates of hell)]⁴ is an expression that means the realm of the dead (Job 38:17; Isa 38:10; LXX),”⁵ and, therefore, represents the passageway from this life to the grave. Everything concerning that place was repugnant and blasphemous to the spirit of devout Jews who completely avoided it. Jesus, on the contrary, took His disciples there, and it was at that most sinful place that He chose to reveal His identity, and His ultimate plan “*I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.*” (Matt 16:13-18).

What an object lesson of faith Jesus gave to His disciples that day? Death or demonic forces cannot stop His church in its conquest to rescue lost souls. The Church is stronger than the *Pulai* [gates] and power of hell. The gates of hell will not keep Jesus inbound. He will rise, and His Church will thrive and conquer over death, persecution, sin, and paganism (Matt 16:21).

The Church existed for eternity in the mind of God. Lister says, “From Genesis to Revelation, God’s covenant voice calls a people to relationship with the Father who created mankind to have fellowship with Him.”⁶ God began the execution of His plan of fellowship with humanity in the Garden where He dwelled with His special creation, Adam, and Eve (Gen 3:8; 1:28-31), until the fall. G.K. Beale finds “the first temple in Eden”⁷ as God was “walking back and forth”⁸ אֵלֶיהֶם מִתְהַלֵּךְ בָּנֶן] and communicating with Adam and Eve. This fellowship was broken in the garden. Dr. Duguid says: “although the line of Cain was cast away at Babel (Gen11), God restored

² Kevin De Young, “A closer look at the gates of Hell” in *The Talbot School of Theology, Biola University*, (November 2011). *Gospel Coalition.org*. accessed 3/7/2018.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/a-closer-look-at-the-gates-of-hell/>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Septuagint (LXX), in [https://www.academic-bible.com/en/online-bibles/septuagint-lxx/read-the-bible-](https://www.academic-bible.com/en/online-bibles/septuagint-lxx/read-the-bible-text/bibel/text/lesen/stelle/5/40001/49999/ch/ebb15c626cabcd2d304632c70878864f4/)

[text/bibel/text/lesen/stelle/5/40001/49999/ch/ebb15c626cabcd2d304632c70878864f4/](https://www.academic-bible.com/en/online-bibles/septuagint-lxx/read-the-bible-text/bibel/text/lesen/stelle/5/40001/49999/ch/ebb15c626cabcd2d304632c70878864f4/) Accessed 4/21/2018.

⁵ Kevin DeYoung, “The Gates of Hell” in “The Church”, *Table Talk Magazine*, (November 2011).

⁶ J. Ryan Lister, *The Presence of God: Its Place in the Storyline of Scripture and the Story of Our Lives*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Publishers, 2015), 29.

⁷ G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), P576-580

⁸ Iterative participle Hithpael מִתְהַלֵּךְ. Gary Pratico, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew* (MI: Zondervan, 2007), P 386.

a line of true worshippers from Adam son, Seth (Gen 4:26).⁹ From Seth to Abraham- to whom God promised to make a great nation **וְאֶעֱשֶׂה לְךָ גְּדוֹלָה** (*I will make you a great nation*), (Gen. 12:3), God continued working His plan towards creating His worship community among whom He will dwell. However, in Genesis 28:3, when the promise was transferred to Jacob and his twelve sons, the perspective went beyond the sphere of a single nation. It went from one great **גְּדוֹלָה לְךָ** nation, to a community of peoples **לְקָהָל עַמִּים** (קהל qahal: assembly, company, convocation, congregation...is used 116 times in the Old Testament in reference to the House of Israel). The Septuagint-LXX-translated the expression *Qahal amiyim* (Gen 28:3) with the Greek [συναγωγὰς ἐθνῶν]¹⁰ *gathering of peoples* (Strong #6951) translated in NIV as: assembly of peoples, and company of peoples in the ASV. God therefore envisions “a gathering community of peoples, an assembly of *peoples*, from all tribes, all nations, and all languages...” [παῖς ἐθνῶν]) Rev 7:9.

After God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, they camped at Sinai. There, He made a covenant with the Israelites to become His “treasured possession among all peoples ... making them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:5-6). He promised to dwell among them and be their God [וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים: (Ex 29:45)].” There, God gave them the Law as a shadow of things to come. When God ordered Moses to assemble or summon the people to Him in Deut 4:10, 5:1, [הִקְהַלְתִּי אֶת־הָעָם] the LXX translated *Qahal* with ἐκκλησίας [Εκκλησίασον πρὸς με τὸν λαόν] - “ἐκκλησία from ἐκ «out» and «καλεῶ»- to call: a calling out of peoples such as a popular meeting, religious congregation: Synagogue, assembly, church.”¹¹ This was a transitional process designed to prepare the stage for the Messianic fulfilment of the Father’s original plan.

The Prophets describe the nature of God’s relationship with Israel as a recurring cycle of rebellion-punishment-exiles and restoration, as it is with all human beings, due to the depravity of men’s heart since the fall. (Isaiah 1:2; Hos. 1–3; Ezek. 16; 23; Ezekiel 4:4–6). If God’s experience with a single nation, who knew Him and had His Laws, was so disappointing, why then would He persist to go on with an all-inclusive plan for an *assembly of peoples* who has no knowledge of Him? God, however, had an eternal plan to fulfill His eternal desire. In the last days (Heb 1:2), God sent Jesus to activate the first stage of His ecclesiastic plan through His salvific work. Christ resurrected from the dead, He ascended to heaven, and He sent the promised Holy Spirit to complete His work and build the *assembly of peoples* as envisioned by the Father: *The Church*.

⁹ Dr. Iain Duguid, “The Church and Israel in the Old Testament.” In *Table Talk Magazine*, (October 1, 2012). <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/the-church-and-israel-in-the-old-testament/>

¹⁰ Septuagint (LXX), in <https://www.academic-bible.com/en/online-bibles/septuagint-lxx/read-the-bible-text/bibel/text/lesen/stelle/5/40001/49999/ch/ebb15c626cabcd304632c70878864f4/> Accessed 4/21/2018.

¹¹ Strong Greek Dictionary 1537 and a derivative of 2564, 2753. Sword Searcher Bible Software.

It is noteworthy that Jesus is the first Person who introduced the word Church into the religious context as reported only by Matthew. Jesus's pre-crucifixion's conversation about the Church is rightfully reported in future tense as the execution of the plan was only in the mind of Christ and totally misunderstood by the disciples whose minds were fixed on the restoration of Israel's kingdom. Jesus was the first to use the pre-ecclesiastic term *Church* in a religious context: "*I will build my Church*" (Matt 16:18), and in "*tell it to the Church*" where He presents the Church as the final disciplinary authority in dealing with sin and settling disputes among brethren (Matt 18:17). The word returns to the New Testament narratives after Pentecost when the Church had fully existed (Acts 5:11). The word is used one hundred and nine times (109) in the New Testament. "*Church*" continued to be the official name of the Christian community of believers, locally or worldwide, throughout the Church age. It can be said therefore that He (Jesus) who came to redeem a *congregation of peoples*, to the glory of God the Father, has chosen its name. He named it "*Church*," which will be its name through eternity (Rev 22:16). The Holy Spirit, through the empowerment of the *witnesses*, built *the new Temple, Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone*, where God's Presence dwells (Eph 2:20-22). Peter and John use the exact words of Moses describing Israel, to describe the Church: "*a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God's special possession.*"¹² Therefore, they confirm the Messianic work of Christ and the intervention of the Holy Spirit as the realized eschatological plan of the Father.

Contrary to Matthew who rightfully describes Jesus's pre-Pentecostal description of the Church in future tense, Luke makes every effort to bring back to life this thirty-year-old story, through a faithful historical narrative of the realized Pentecostal events, to his Christian community. The book of Acts is attributed to Luke as the follow-up volume to the third Gospel. Alexander argues that "the literary significance of the opening words of both volumes suggests its classification with Luke contemporary Hellenistic historians."¹³ Despite new scholarship skepticism concerning the historicity of Acts, it is important to note that, internally, Luke himself began his two volumes *Luke-Acts* with a claim of authentic and first-generation eyewitness reports from oral tradition and written sources. Luke further claims that both volumes are the product of thorough investigative research of Jesus earthly life and ministry, and that the second volume relates to His post-ascension "*continued work through the coming Holy Spirit.*" (Luke 1).

External evidences include the testimony of classic scholar and Greco-Roman Historian Colin J. Hemer which affirms Luke's accuracy and trustworthiness, therefore confirming Acts as a first-generation work. This confirmation, according to Roman Law, prevents any attempt to classify the narrative of Acts as mythology or fiction. Dr. Hemer supports his

¹² The Holy Bible, Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; Revelation 5:10 (NIV Version).

¹³ Loveday C.A. Alexander, *Acts in Ancient Literary Context* (New York: T & T Clarke International, 2005), P.21.

confirmation by reporting eighty-four archeologically and historically confirmed events from Acts chapters 13 to 28: “thirty-five verified miracles, and seventeen reasons to accept the early date for the writing of Acts.”¹⁴ Bruce contributes to the argument in favor of Luke’s authorship by reminding the critics of Eusebius writings, the second century Anti-Marcionite Prologues, and the Muratorian Canon, which all confirm Luke, the Physician, as the author of both the Gospel and Acts volumes.¹⁵ Geisler quotes Hemer’s arguments confirming the historicity and authorship of ACTS with the following words: “Luke’s credentials as a historian have been proven on so many points that it takes more faith not to believe his miracle accounts than to believe them.”¹⁶

The date of composition of Acts is extremely important to show its connection with eyewitnesses and refute the mythological argument of the critics. Some New scholarships argue for a contemporaneous connection between Luke and Josephus which would dangerously place the writing of Acts in the last decade of the first century”.¹⁷ This Luke-Josephus argument relates to the two-volume works by both authors, *Luke-Acts* and *Against Apion*. The similar preface in both works adopted by both authors [Josephus: to *excellent Epaphroditus*, and Luke: to *excellent Theophilus*]¹⁸ is undeniable. However, the pro-early-date contenders challenge the critics’ *Ad Populum* fallacy, by signaling their inability to justify the silence of this meticulous researcher on major first century events that affected the early Church such as: Nero’s persecution, the destruction of the temple, the Jewish war, the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem... If Luke recorded the martyrdoms of Stephen and James- the brother of John, why would he not report the martyrdom of Peter, of James the brother of Jesus, and especially of Paul, having himself been a part of his missionary journeys? Why does the book ends leaving Paul preaching the Kingdom of God “*without hindrance*” (Ch. 28:31)? It is, therefore, widely accepted that ACTS was written in the early 60’s A.D and qualifies as a first generation/eye witness, historical composition.

They are many scholarship debates relating to the purpose or motives for the writing of Acts, by a non-witness historian, thirty years after the facts. A common conclusion is Luke’s connection with Paul, then imprisoned,

¹⁴ Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns Press 1990), <http://www.harvardhouse.com/acts-credible.htm>. Accessed 4/15/2018

;

¹⁵ F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eedermans Publishing Co., 1990), P1-2.

¹⁶ Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist* (Wheaton, ILL: Crossway Books, Good News Publishers, 2004), 409-410; 256-259

¹⁷ Matt Slick, “When was the Book of Acts Written” in CARM – Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry”. Accessed 1/27/2018. <https://carm.org/when-was-acts-written>.

¹⁸ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews, Against Arpion*, Vol I & II, Translated from the Original Greek, according to Havercamp’s accurate Edition. Accessed 3/10/18. Havercamp’s accurate Edition. See also Luke & Acts chapter 1. <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/index.html>

whose trial was not yet over when the manuscript was completed, around, 62 CE.”¹⁹ Others believe that Luke must have been impressed with the desire to write an accurate historiographic apology, to serve as a defense, on behalf of the coming trial of Paul, to a sympathetic Roman official as his name suggests “Theophilus.”²⁰ Others suggest that it was written as an apologetic defense of Christianity in the face of Jewish attacks, “to defend the delay of the Parousia, or for a reassurance to the second generation Christians of the truth of Christianity despite Jewish rejection and persecution.”²¹ For others, the socio-political context and increasing influence of the Roman empire on their conquered territories may have inspired Luke to encourage Christians throughout the Roman empire to stand for the faith by reminding them of the evidences of Pentecost: “the most important feature of the Roman empire for the Early Church was its influence on the religions of the people it conquered”²² The empire’s advocacy of allegiance to Caesar who was venerated as a savior because of his “Pax Romana reforms” was also a concern for Christians. These evidences along with the *we/us passages* serve to support the purpose of the author and the early writing theory of AD 60-62, placing the composition within the lifetime of the first generation eyewitnesses “only about 27 years from the actual events reported.”²³ It is firmly believed that Luke must have been an eyewitness to the facts he reports or, at least, had access to actual eyewitnesses of the events he reported. Whichever case it may be, it can be concluded that the Holy Spirit led Luke to pen the story of His working power in the birth and expansion of the early Church. This story is carefully crafted through the pages of this beloved book of Acts, better known as the *Acts of the Holy Spirit*.

Upon His departure from earth, Jesus commanded His disciples to stay in Jerusalem until the Spirit comes. The Scripture speak for itself about the Person, intervention, and ministry of the Holy Spirit throughout the course of human history. Numerous Scripture passages testify to the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and His attributes, which are common to the Triune Godhead. As it does for the Father and the Son, the Bible speaks of the Spirit’s omniscience (Isaiah 40:13); His identification with the nature of the Father (1 Cor 2:12); His omnipresence (Ps 139:7); His creative and renewal capacity (Ps 104:30); His life giving power (Job 33:4); His association with the Father and the Son as equal (Matt 28:18-19). Scripture also speaks of the Spirit’s imminence in creation (Gen 1:2); after the fall (Gen 6:3); in the patriarchal age (Gen 41:38);

¹⁹ Dr. Daniel B. Wallace, “Acts: Introduction, Outline, and Arguments.” In: *The New Testament: Introduction and Outlines*. In <https://bible.org/users/daniel-b-wallace>. Accessed 1/27/2018

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ David Malick, “Authorship of Acts” in *Introduction to the Book of Acts, Bible.Org.*, (2004).

Accessed 4/19/2018. <https://bible.org/article/introduction-book-acts>.

²² “The Book of Acts” in *Birmingham Theological Seminary*. © 2012 birminghamseminary.org | BTS & IIIM CCM
ccm@bts.education

²³ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologists* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), P.5-8.

and His prophetic work in the Old Testament (Ex 35:31; Ps 51:11). His revelatory function is seen in the Old Testament as He temporarily empowers prophets to reveal the Word of God to Israel. Ezekiel prophesied the glory of God leaving His temple (Eze 10:18), and Jewish history reports a time when there was no prophetic revelation for a period of four hundred years. The Scripture resumes the Spirit's activity, from Malachi to the Messianic incarnation and life of the Messiah, as testified by both Jesus and John the Baptist (Luke ch.1 and 3). Jesus' disciples, while they were waiting for their Master's promise, must have wondered what will be the new mission of the Spirit, *when He comes?*

The Old Testament presents the Holy Spirit, **רוח אֱלֹהִים** as the Third Person of the Trinity "whose work is to complete what the Father has planned and what the Son has begun as seen in Genesis 1:2."²⁴ Grudem compares the Spirit moving over the face of the waters at the beginning of creation to the coming Spirit [**αγιος πνευμα**] at Pentecost, who will begin the new creation in Christ and grant power to the Church (Acts 2:4, 17-18; 10:38). Grudem believes that "the Holy Spirit is the Person of the Trinity through Whom God particularly manifests His presence in the new covenant age; therefore, the work of the Holy Spirit, in the New Testament, is to manifest the active presence of God in the world, and especially in the Church."²⁵ Beale adds that "Christ sending of His Spirit incorporates peoples into the end-time Israel, by receiving the promise of the Spirit as it was promised to Israel (Joel 2:28-32, Luke 24:46-51; Acts 1:8; 2:31-34). This prophecy is fulfilled by Christ through His death and resurrection."²⁶ Max Turner considers Acts 1: 4-8 as the Church being given Israel's prophetic role of Isaiah 49:6, and Joel 2, and therefore must receive the *power from on high, the Father's promise [the Spirit of Prophecy]* whom Jesus will send."²⁷ The Holy Spirit, in Acts, is the power to witness (Acts 1:8), the fulfilment of the promise by John the Baptist (1:5), by Joel (2:17-41), and by Jesus (2:17, 33, 39), to build His Church and empower His witnesses. As in the old creation, the Spirit comes again to complete what the Father has planned, and to finish what Jesus has begun. Before leaving earth, Jesus instructed His disciples to gather in the upper room *until they receive the power....* A closer look at the disciples is important to justify the need of divine empowerment for ministry in building Christ's Church.

As the Synoptic Gospels describe, the disciples were simple and ordinary people. Seven of them were fishermen, a common profession of Galilean men residing by the sea of Galilee. Matthew was a tax collector whose business was to extort money from people. The Scripture shows that the Jews had a special sense of disgust against tax collectors and did not especially

²⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing 1994), P. 635.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 634.

²⁶ G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, P577.

²⁷ Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts*, (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). P. 63-65. Google Books. Accessed 4/19/2018.
<https://books.google.com/books?id=0bRHooQ7pwQC&q=spirit#v=snippet&q=spirit&f=false>

tolerate the stubborn and rebellious zealots (like Simon the Canaanite), et cetera. The Synoptics describe them as prone to arguments among themselves. As John says, they did not understand the teachings of Jesus because “the Spirit was not yet given.” After three years with Jesus, they did not understand His plan as their minds were still on the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. Consumed by fear, upon the arrest of Jesus, they flee from Him, and Peter denied knowing Him. They have seen their Lord being tortured; and they were accused of stealing His body although the proofs of Jesus’ resurrection were overwhelming. The fear of persecution by the Jews or even torture by the Romans because of their association with Jesus is an inevitable reality. Jesus Himself pleaded for them upon His arrest, requesting the guards to let them go, arguing that He, Himself, was the responsible party. The disciples have been in hiding since the crucifixion events (fifty days ago), fearing persecution both by the Jews and the Romans who crucified their Master. The situation became worse when they were accused to have stolen the body of Jesus, making what the Romans believed to be a false claim of His resurrection. They became instant fugitives. Many had returned to their respective homes. Jesus’ post resurrection meetings with them were private. Upon leaving the earth, He instructed the disciples to stay in Jerusalem until the fulfilment of the promise. The Bible reports that they were together praying in the upper room until the Spirit comes. Ten days later, the events of the Pentecost morning permanently changed everything and closed the door to fear, hiding and self-preservation. Could the Spirit Power at Pentecost forever change these fearing disciples and transform them into these powerful witnesses of Acts?

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to ends of the earth. Acts 1:8

The first post-resurrection Pentecost was a phenomenon that shook the world of Jerusalem city. That celebration was different than all the ones seen or heard of before. God-fearing diasporic Jews “from every nation under heaven” were mystified by the sound of the mighty wind coming from the upper room where the disciples were gathered:

Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Acts 2:2-4.

Each visitor heard the voices of these known Galilean natives, speaking in his/her own language. Amid the confused and chaotic crowds, visitors and residents were looking for answer, asking one another what this could mean. For the crowds, it was awe, amazement, great perplexity, or confusion; but for

the disciples, it was great joy, the fulfilment of Jesus' promise. It was the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the *empowerment* [δυναμεις] to become *witnesses* [(μαρτυρες)].

Luke's description of Pentecost events shows the transforming power resulting from the powerful wind and *tongues of fire* that rested on each person (Acts 2:1-4)." All fears were gone. They were ready and eager to testify of what previously caused them to fear: *the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, their Lord*. According to the Biblical narrative in Acts 2, the transformation was immediate and radical. They were filled with the Spirit's power [from Greek δυναμεις: *force, miraculous power; strength, mighty deeds*]."²⁸ They spoke publicly, without consequential fear or martyrdom, declaring they are *witnesses* (Greek μαρτυς, μαρτυρες: *a witness (judicially or figuratively); by analogy, a "martyr"*) of the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead."²⁹ When Jesus introduced the Church to the disciples, He said to Peter "I give you the keys of heaven (Acts 16:19, Luke 11:52, Rev 1:18, Isa 22:22). "A key always implies authority to open a door and give entrance to a place or realm."³⁰ Peter preached his first message, empowered by the Holy Spirit who stirred up human hearts to understand the word of God, three thousand entered the Kingdom that day (Acts 2:41). Following the healing of the lame beggar, Peter preached his second message, and the number of disciples increased to five thousand. The Church was born. (Acts 4:4).

Luke takes no time to announce that five thousand Israelites from various areas of the diaspora, converting from Judaism to Christianity, is a sign of victory and of problems to come. Many of the converts will no longer have a home to return to. They soon become the responsibility of a newborn Church, to live together with their differences. This is a great responsibility that only the power of the Holy Spirit can handle. Besides, immediately following the miraculous demonstrations of God's power, persecution started with the arrest of Peter and John. The Spirit reassured the believers of His presence by a great manifestation of His power- as *the House where they were shakes* while the congregation prayed - affirming that God is in control (Acts 4:20).

The Apostles continued to testify with great power. The numbers were increasing daily, as well as the needs of the congregation. Those who own lands sold them and brought the money to assist in meeting the basic needs of Church members (Acts 4:32-36). Greed and pride were filtering in causing the Holy Spirit to judge Ananias and Saphira for lying, striking them to death amid the people. (Ch 5). Great fear seized the whole Church. The Spirit continues to manifest His power through the apostles by performing great healing miracles resulting in increasing persecution. Peter who previously denied Christ by fear of punishment now, along with John, rejoiced at being jailed and flogged for the cause of Christ. The congregation remained

²⁸ Strong Greek Dictionary #1411

²⁹ Acts 2:33

³⁰ Grudem, Systematic Theology, 889.

steadfast “in prayer, in the word, and in breaking of the bread.” The apostles continued to preach the word of God with power while the Holy Spirit continues to strengthen the believers and manage the external crises as they arise,

Soon, internal problems started to arise amid the new congregation, triggered by prejudice. The Hebraic Israelites overlooked the Grecian widows in the daily food distribution. The Holy Spirit again responded to the crisis through the institution of the deaconate ministry through chosen men *filled with the Spirit*. As the word of God spread, the number of disciples increased rapidly in Jerusalem, and several priests became obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7). The Holy Spirit continued to grow the local congregation by “*adding daily those who were being saved*.” However, the stoning of Stephen that immediately follows the continued success of the local Jerusalem Church (Ch 7) soon triggered great persecutions. As a result, the local Church was scattered.

Through the ministry of the scattered disciples empowered by the Spirit, the Gospel spread throughout Samaria and Judea (Ch 8). In the meantime, Saul, the prime persecutor of the Church met Jesus (Ch 9) as the Gospel was invading the Gentile’s world (Ch 10). Still, through the ministry of the dispersed believers, a large Greek congregation settled in Antioch, where the followers of Christ were first called *Christians* (Ch 11). This Church became the center for the spread of the Gospel worldwide through the ministry of the Apostle Paul and His missionary journeys. The Spirit continues to strategically spread the believers in every corner of Judea and Samaria and continued to perform great miracles through the apostles who now have the added charge to strengthen the scattered disciples and supervise the Churches they were planting all over Palestine. The Holy Spirit continued to direct the activities of the believers and the apostles, strengthening their faith and reassuring them of His presence through Miraculous interventions, for examples: Peter’s miraculous escape from prison, the resurrection of Dorcas, the conversion of the Roman Centurion with all his military household, et cetera were proofs that the Spirit’s work is not localized but was at work wherever he lead the believers.

Step by step, the Power of the Holy Spirit continues to lead and empower the apostles who, in turn, were very faithful in following His leading. The Spirit communicates His will in many ways, sometimes through powerful actions and miraculous responses to needs, or through disciplinary actions amid the assembly. He manifests His presence in congregational deliberations, providing solution to difficult situations such as the Council of Jerusalem as the assembly deliberated on the status of the Gentile converts. The Spirit speaks sometimes through visions by calling Paul to go to Europe instead of entering Asia Minor, or ordering Peter (a Jewish man) to enter the house of the Gentile Cornelius. At times, the Spirit speaks by revelation, through His prophets/prophetesses, in situations such as: prophesying upcoming famine and planning support for the local Church in Jerusalem;

ordering to set apart missionaries; or revealing upcoming arrest and imprisonment of Paul, et cetera. Other times, the Spirit just directs the heart toward His desired direction. Whichever way He chose to speak, the disciples were faithful to listen and compliant to every order, despite persecution. The goal was clear: *they were witnesses to the ends of the world*.

Luke's message is a reminder that the work of the Spirit was not completed at Pentecost. Paul emphasized the eschatological work of the Spirit who is given to "transform the very constitution of our being so that we become glorious."³¹ The companion of Paul, Luke, echoes the message of Paul, reminding His contemporary Christians that the same Spirit who was at work empowering the Pentecost believers is still available to them. His power is still at work and is available to help them overcome the problems and persecution they were facing. The power of the Holy Spirit continues to work towards transforming the believer's lives "from glory to glory" as they gaze upon the face of the Lord (the last Adam), until He comes for His Glorious Church (2 Cor 3:17-18).

By the time Luke wrote his report, many of these original witnesses and believers have walked victoriously to their martyrdom. Others have been scattered in many continents throughout the world [perhaps] reminiscing of the times they all spent together with Jesus. Paul has reached his destination and is now imprisoned in Rome, expecting execution. He continues to preach the Gospel in chains, boldly, and without hindrance, teaching about the Kingdom of God and about the Lord Jesus (Acts 28). Through the pages of Acts of the Apostles, Luke demonstrated to his Christian community and to Theophilus, the transforming power of the Holy Spirit which has been at work for the past thirty years, building up the Church of Jesus-Christ. The Spirit, through empowered disciples, fulfilled the plan of God and the will of Christ: *you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Samaria, throughout Judea, and through the ends of the world.*" The disciples witnessed faithfully to Jews and Gentiles, in court rooms, in prisons, before authorities and kings. They marched faithfully to their martyrdom as their calling implied "*witness.*" Paul confirmed that, through it all "*The Gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world.* The Power came, the Church is built, the Gospel of Christ reached the ends of the earth, and the will of Christ is fulfilled. The Lord's order in *Acts 1:8* is completed. The job is done within one generation, by the Power of the Holy Spirit.

Although scholars may never know the exact motive of Luke's writing, however, the historicity and accuracy of the materials cannot be denied. His meticulous research principles in collecting his data is inspiring. The author's systematic disclosure of the facts relating to the progression of the story captivates the readers' attention to follow the development and progress of the Church. However, Luke leaves his reader hanging by not revealing the

³¹ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit, Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, ILL: Intervarsity Press, 1996), P 250-251.

expected end. The readers of Acts are still wondering what might have happened to Apostle Paul?

Theologically, Marshall states that “the mood in Acts is set at the beginning by the central place given to the powerful descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, identifying the fulfilment of the prophecy (Acts 1:8). Luke’s message accentuates the fact that the gift of the Spirit is given to all believers and not just the original Pentecostal witnesses, as the same Spirit was poured out on Jews and Gentiles, therefore confirming the prophecy of Joel 2 (Acts 2). This reminder must have been comforting to the writer’s contemporary Christians who may have not been eyewitnesses to the events of Pentecost. Luke’s emphasis on mission and the urgency for the believers to continue the spread of the Gospel saturate his book. This burning desire is accentuated through the *I/we* passages, showing the writer’s personal participation in some of Paul’s missionary journeys. These characteristics differentiate Luke’s theology in Acts from the Gospel volume where he focused primarily on the Galilean life and ministry of Jesus. On personal note, the greatest reward comes from his emphasis on the Power of the Holy Spirit whose work is celebrated in Acts more than in any other book of the Bible. The Spirit shows His approval of Luke’s labor of love, by granting it favor before the Canonical Church Fathers who stamped his work as Scripture. Luke demonstrates that the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to build the Church, the body of Christ being Himself the chief cornerstone; this Church is a dwelling place in which God lives through His Spirit. (Eph 2:20-22, paraphrased.).

THE JOHANNINE NARRATIVE

John adopted a different approach in his Gospel presentation from his counterparts in the Synoptics. Whereas Matthew and Luke began their Gospel with the miraculous birth, Mark started with the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, and Luke’s second volume [Acts] begins with the coming of the Spirit, John however introduced his Gospel with an elaborate presentation of the pre-existence of Jesus, *emphasizing* on the deity of the *Logos*. Although both authors [Luke and John] share a more in-depth focus on pneumatology, some differences are identified in their approach. Luke’s primary focus was to report the events of the past thirty years, bringing forth the wondrous story of Pentecost and the birth and expansion of the Church by the Power of the Holy Spirit. John, however, [having lived thirty years later from the days of Luke’s writing], is more selective in his choice of materials.³² John focused more intently on the contemporaneous needs of the diasporic Church by the end of the first century (the Diaspora or Church of the dispersion). He highlights events and words of the Lord that “*could not be understood by the disciples until later.*”³³ With a pastoral focus on his nearing departure and consideration

³²Parallel Gospel, *The Synoptic Gospels Presented Side-by-Side*. ASV. Accessed 8/12/17
<http://www.para-gospel.com>.

³³ The Holy Bible (John 7:39; 12:16; 14:26).

of the contemporaneous spiritual and socio-cultural needs of the dispersed believers, this disciple remembers the farewell message of Jesus. In three occasions, before His departure, Jesus comforted His disciples with the promise of the coming *Paraclete*. Impressed by the Holy Spirit, the last eyewitness survivor is the only one to disclose the Lord's final message on the *Paraclete*: "*When the Paraclete or Advocate, Helper or Comforter comes... He will teach you all things...John 14:16.*

The uniqueness of John's Gospel has caught the attention of the Church since the second century AD. Smith noted that this has been a lingering problem "not only for two centuries of modern critical scholarship, but for Christian theology and exegesis over a much longer period."³⁴ Bauckham specified that "the greatest gulf of the Gospels still looms between the Synoptics and John."³⁵ Among various critical arguments weighed against the text, the Johannine's historical discrepancies have been the heaviest. This long-term debate shows no sign of consensus among scholars. Blomberg in the *Historical reliability of the Fourth Gospel*, describes a "rise of the Johannine' scholarship skepticism which has reached new height during the 19th and 20th century."³⁶ Brown, however, criticizes the scholarship's intense focus on historicity, and the lack of interest in the intensity of John's Pneumatology. She states: "scholarly research devoted to the comprehensive study of the Johannine pneumatology has been meager in recent years."³⁷

The Gnostics of the early Church develop a sudden interest on the Johannine's text causing the beloved Gospel soon to become the subject of undue criticisms. The heresies of Valentinus and Montanus were the most damaging. Heracleon, a follower of Valentinus, used his book, *Biblical Interpretation*, to spread Valentinus' heresy, claiming that salvation comes from *Gnosis* or secret knowledge. They used the dualism of John's Gospel to support their mysticism.³⁸ According to Burge, "Extensive parallels with the Gospel of John are noted in *The Gospel of Truth*."³⁹ One of these documents has been identified as one of Valentinus' sermons discovered at Nag Hammadi Library.⁴⁰ Montanus, in turn, claimed to be the *Paraclete* of John's Gospel. He and his followers began the prophetic movement, "speaking in a frenzied

³⁴ D. M. Smith, "John and the Synoptics: Some Dimensions of the Problem," *NTS* 26 (1980): 425.

³⁵ Richard Bauckham, *The Johannine Jesus and the Synoptic Jesus*. Accessed 8/11/2017. <http://richardbauckham.co.uk/uploads/Accessible/Johannine%20Jesus%20&%20Synoptic%20Jesus.pdf>

³⁶ Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 19

³⁷ Tricia Gates Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John: Johannine Pneumatology in Social-Scientific Perspective* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2003), 1.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 94-96.

³⁹ Burge, *Interpreting the Gospel of John*, 16-19.

⁴⁰ Marvin Meyer, *Author of the Gospel of Thomas, The Gnostic Discoveries: The Impact of the Nag Hammadi Library* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005), 1-4.

ecstasy, proclaiming that the Promised Paraclete was talking through them.”⁴¹ Because of this, said Burge, “some leaders were reluctant in promoting this Gospel and some even refuted it.”⁴² Despite the rebuttal arguments of John’s supporters such as Irenaeus who argued that “John, the disciple, preached his faith . . . to remove error which had been disseminated among men,”⁴³ John’s Gospel began a long journey of severe scrutiny and continued to endure fierce criticisms throughout the ante-Nicene life of the Church.

The historical discrepancies in the Gospel of John constitute an area most criticized by today’s scholars. A parallel reading of the Gospels quickly highlights the selectiveness of John’s choice of materials. Therefore, in many instances, the narrative does not line up in textual parallel as do the Synoptics. However, no other Gospel writers or disciple of Jesus reports the message of the Spirit-Paraclete as does John in both his Gospel and his Epistles. Blomberg, in the *Historical Reality of the Fourth Gospel*, associates the choice of materials to the writer’s intent and theological view⁴⁴ and not to historical discrepancies. In defense of the Johannine, Grant, in *The Origin of the Fourth Gospel*, claims to rely on support of the “*patristic traditions*” from the original Churches of Alexandria, Rome, and Ephesus, to strengthen the arguments against modern day skeptics. Grant maintains that the patristic traditions “are likely to be more accurate than modern theories, because the Fathers lived nearer to the events of the New Testament times than we do.”⁴⁵ Grant notes that Clement of Alexandria, relying on the tradition of certain elders before him “stressed the positive purpose of the Fourth evangelist and his message.”⁴⁶ Whereas many critics continue to bring forth arguments against the major discrepancies of the Johannine narratives, most scholars, however, instead of dwelling on the historical discrepancies, are more interesting on the *theological approach* to highlight the theological focus of the writer and his unique pneumatology.

Some Johannine defenders use what scholars call: “the theological approach,” to justify the Johannine’ historical discrepancies. Blomberg in *Historical Reliability of John Gospel*, justifies the selectiveness in the choice of materials to the theological view and intent of the writer stating: “most details important to the Synoptics are not found in the Fourth Gospel, and likewise, John has many lengthy discourses or dialogues, none of which to be found in the Synoptics.”⁴⁷ Bauckham contends that “only by reducing the ‘literal’ story to key moments and indispensable sequences, has John allowed himself space to expound the ‘symbolic’ meaning of it all.”⁴⁸ Lindars in *The*

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book III, Chapter 11, verse 1.

⁴⁴ Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John Gospel*, 18- 19.

⁴⁵ Robert M. Grant, “The Origin of the Fourth Gospel.” *JBL*, 69, (1950), 305-322

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Blomberg, *Historical Reliability of John Gospel*, 18.

⁴⁸ Ibid

Fourth Evangelist supports this argument by quoting the Church Father, Clement, who designated John's writing as the "Spiritual Gospel."⁴⁹ and Barrett in the *Gospel According to John* clarifies the theological argument by stating that "It was not John's intention to write a scientific history, but John's interests were theological rather than historical. . ."⁵⁰ Origen, in his *Commentary of the Gospel of John*, celebrated John's theology saying: "of the Gospels, John is the first fruits. No one can apprehend the meaning of it except he who has lain on Jesus' breast."⁵¹ The theological approach did not however offer convincing arguments justifying the Johannine's distinctiveness from the Synoptic Gospels. Could it be that John purposely departed from the earlier texts, to write a Gospel that answers to the needs of the believers in the socio-cultural context of their community? Could it be that he intended to supplement the Synoptic Gospel's and Acts' messages with an emphasis on the importance of the Promised-Paraclete? To answer these questions, this paper will investigate the uniqueness of John's message through the loops of his social cultural context, the needs of the Church of the Diaspora, and the mission of the Spirit-Paraclete in the lives of the believers and in the world.

THE JOHANNINE PARACLETE

The years that follow the Luke's narrative and his generation have been increasingly difficult for the Church. The opposition to the Church gradually increased from Palestinian anti-Christian Jews to Roman imperial persecution. Major events such as Nero's persecution, the Jewish revolt (A.D.64-70), et cetera, resulted in the burning of the Jerusalem temple, the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem. By the end of the first century, the Church became entirely diasporic. Lawrence Schiffman commented that these events contributed to "the end of Jewish prospects of an independent homeland until modern times"⁵². Bright added that "the last Jewish revolts effectively ended the life of the Jewish community in Palestine...they provide a logical terminus of the history of Israel... as various historians have seen the matter."⁵³ Everett clarifies, in favor of the Church, that "by the end of these

⁴⁹ Ibid. 18.

⁵⁰ Charles Kingsley Barrett, *The Gospel According to John* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1978), 5, 141-142.

⁵¹ Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. Book 1.8, Translated by Allan Menzies. From *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 9. Edited by Allan Menzies. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/101501.htm>>. Accessed 7/7/2017.

⁵² Everett Ferguson, *Church History*, Volume I (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). 30.

⁵³ John Bright, *A History of Israel, Fourth Edition*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 458-460. Google books, accessed 1/1/2018.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=0VG67yLs-LAC&pg=PA415&lpg=PA415&dq=seleucids+and+Israel&source=bl&ots=v1GkLzVB3&sig=Z9mc6PI0brjxJOzXyMcj166XVD0&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewiPu7aXo7fYAhUKNSYKHYMDcXAQ6AEIoAEwFQ#v=onepage&q=Roman&f=false>

events, the early Christian movement was already well under way.”⁵⁴ By the Power of the Holy Spirit and the sacrificial work of the Apostles and the disciples, the Church has conquered the world. Persecutions, martyrdom, and the forces of evil *had not prevailed against it*, as predicted by Jesus. The Apostle John, now in Ephesus, is the only surviving, eyewitness of Jesus and of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the empowered post Pentecostal disciples. He is now in Ephesus, the Elder of the Church in the Roman Diaspora.

The term scattered comes from an ancient Greek word *διασπορα*, meaning "to scatter about." The Jews of the Diaspora have scattered from their homeland to places across the world (Acts 1:8, James 1:1, 1 Peter 1:1). This was not entirely a new concept for the Jewish people. The Bible spoke of the exiled Jews from the Babylonian Diaspora in the Old Testament time. By the end of the first century A.D. the whole Jewish household, expelled from their homeland, was living in the Roman Diaspora. The Gospel's message has spread in the known world by breaking through the domain of paganism. Persecutions, martyrdom, and the forces of evil *had not prevailed against it*, as predicted by Jesus. Now, scattered throughout the Roman empire, it continues in its fight against imperialism, paganism, persecutions, and against Gnosticism.

The reality of the Johannine Church of the Diaspora is far different than that of the Lukan or the Apostolic believers who lived about half a century ago since Jesus left the earth. For example, the long-expected *Parousia* has not occurred. The excitement of Christianity, the dramatic manifestation of the Holy Spirit through powerful deeds and healing miracles, the glory of the Temple, and the hope of a return to the national homeland, are completely erased from Jewish and Christians' perspective. The Church is now in total dispersion, and the believers are scattered throughout foreign lands, totally embedded into the Greco-Roman culture. Christians are suffering from all sorts of mistreatment and discrimination from the Romans, the pagans, and even the Jews who denied Christianity, as noted in the General Epistles (James, Peter, and Jude) which were addressed to the Church in dispersion. The word *Aramaic* is a dream of the past, as the common language is now exclusively *Greek*. Is the memory of Jesus also fading away?

It is therefore obvious that John had a totally different perspective for his writing than did his earlier counterparts. It is also clear that the believers had already gained considerable knowledge of the Galilean life and ministry of Jesus from the circulating Synoptic Gospels and had already acquired definite conclusive knowledge about the historical Jesus. (John 12:16). John's disciples needed more for their spiritual survival. John must have felt their pain and their need of a deeper understanding of the Lord's provision for them, His reality in their lives, and His provision for their time. At Ephesus, the last living Apostle and eyewitness of Jesus will soon be leaving the earth. More

⁵⁴ Ibid.

than ever before, the believers needed the assurance of the presence of Jesus and a guarantee for the future of the Church. John, as a Pastor, understood the need to comfort these Christians as he, himself, experienced the pain of separation during His Master's farewell discourse. Tradition reports that, encouraged by friends and elders of his Church, he decided to write the Fourth Gospel, with an emphasis on the ministry of the Spirit Paraclete, through Whom they can experience the advocacy, comforting and everlasting presence of Jesus although He was no longer physically with them. They needed to know about the Comforter, the Promised Paraclete.

The word Paraclete comes from the Greek word *Paráklētos*. According to the King James Greek Dictionary #3875, 3844, 2564, this is a compound word: from *pará*, "close-beside", and *kalēō*, "to call". It refers to a legal advocate who makes the right judgment-call, because he is close enough to the situation. "Advocate, advisor-helper" are the regular term in the New Testament times referring to an attorney, a lawyer or someone giving evidence that stands up in court."⁵⁵ James Orr added that there was more in the work of the *Paráklētos* than comfort in sorrow. The word "*Intercessor*" comes nearer to the root idea of the term. "Advocate" is a closely related word and is also suggestive of the work of the Spirit. "Perhaps there is no English word broad enough to cover all the significance of the word *Paraclete* except the word "Helper."⁵⁶ The word *Paráklētos* is translated in the New Testament as: Advocate (NIV); Helper (ESV); and Comforter (KJV) versions. John 14:16-17.

*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate
to help you
and be with you forever (New International Version-NIV).*

As noted above, *Paráklētos* has been translated as: *Comforter*, *Advocate*, *Helper*. Of its five occurrences in the Bible, four of them occur in the farewell discourses of John's Gospel referring to the Holy Spirit. The fifth one appears in his epistles of John, referring to Jesus.⁵⁷ We can say therefore that *Paráklētos* is John's exclusive revelation of the work of the Spirit for his time and to meet the need of his believers. That was the ultimate concern of the last and soon to be deceased Apostle. Because of the complexity and intense debates surrounding the Hebraic and Hellenic history behind the word *Paraclete*, the theological debates it creates, and the size constraint of this paper, the research will limit itself to only explore the relationship of the

⁵⁵ Discovery Bible Software, copyright © 1987, 2011 by Helps Ministries, Inc. Accessed 8/13/2017. <http://biblehub.com>

⁵⁶ James Orr, M.A., D.D. General Editor. "Entry for 'PARACLETE'" "International Standard Bible Encyclopedia". 1915. Accessed 8/12/17.

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/encyclopedias/isbe/paraclete.html>

⁵⁷ 1 John 2:1.

Paraclete with Jesus, His function in the lives of the believers, and the continuation of the work of Christ in the world.

A Closer look at the farewell passages reveals that the Paraclete will perform everything that Jesus did. He will continue the work of Jesus by being “another advocate” for the disciples (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; Ac 2:33) to help them and be with them forever. He will remind them of everything Jesus had said. In fact, Jesus promised that “He will be with his disciples always and the Father will be with them as well, through the ministry of the Spirit-Paraclete. The Spirit Paraclete will have a ministry so similar to that of Jesus that the disciples will experience the presence of Jesus through the Paraclete. The fourth century Nicene Fathers in their Nicene Creed (325 AD), attempted to justify the similitude of the of Jesus and the Spirit by explaining that they both proceed from the Father, using the word “ὁμοούσιος” [*homoousios*] meaning they are of the same substance.”⁵⁸ Both are referred to as the truth; both will be with the believer and both will dwell in the believer. While the world cannot see the Paraclete, yet the believer can. The teaching and testimony of the Paraclete will be exclusively of Jesus.

Therefore, the Paraclete as portrayed in the Johannine, will function as the successor to Jesus and as His mediator, He will assure His ongoing presence among the believers. Although Jesus and the Paraclete will be performing similar function, they remain, however, different in persons. Sheridan explains it best in her statement “Their intimacy is such that the Paraclete can be understood as one who makes the presence of Jesus felt in the period of Jesus' absence.”⁵⁹

“Jesus referring to the Spirit as “*another Paraclete*” indicates hat the Spirit will take over the position He has held with His disciples while He was on earth.”⁶⁰

The Spirit Paraclete will be sent by the Father after Jesus' departure and upon His request. He will fulfill the function of Jesus in the lives of the disciples to comfort them and be a helper to them. Unlike the revelatory function of the Spirit in the Old Testament whereas He uses only certain people for a specific function, Jesus promised the disciples that for the first time, the Spirit Paraclete will remain universally with the believers and will dwell in them for ever! D. A. Carson, in his article *The Function of the Paraclete in John 16: 7-11*, sums up the ministry of the Paraclete to two primary functions: convicting the world and completing the revelation of God

⁵⁸ www.theopedia.com

⁵⁹ Ruth Sheridan, “The Paraclete and Jesus in the Johannine Farewell Discourse” in *Australian Theological Discourse, Volume: 20 issues: 2, page(s): 125-141*
Issue published: June 1, 2007. Accessed 8/5/2017.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1030570X0702000201>

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1030570X0702000201>

⁶⁰ Cosby, *Portraits of Jesus*, 180.

in Jesus Christ.⁶¹ He will “extend the ministry of the disciples in ways they could not imagine.”⁶²

Although it sounded encouraging, the reality is that Jesus was leaving and they were sad!

It is clear that in His farewell discourses, the Lord was especially concerned with the sadness his disciples were experiencing. We can safely assume that He was also thinking about the future believers who will also confront difficult times and persecution throughout the Church age. It is obvious that the *Paraclete* (Comforter; Advocate, Helper) and His multifaceted ministry was in John’s mind as he was thinking about the needs of the disciples of his time who soon will have to deal with his own departure. He wanted to reassure them of the ministry and availability of this Comforter who was promised to be with them and for the first time in the history of humanity, would take permanent residence in them. John wanted to remind the believers just as Christ reminded him and his fellow disciples, that “Christ was the source of the Spirit...and His Spirit is the Spirit that sustains ...”⁶³ Joubert, in her *Theological assessment and interpretation of the Johannine Paraclete-Spirit*, summarizes beautifully the Paraclete’s ministry in these words:

The vitality of Christian experience does not cease because the historical Jesus has faded into the past and the coming of Jesus has faded into the future; it retains its vitality because the Spirit is at work here and now as the other Paraclete.⁶⁴

In the third (John 15:26-27) and the fourth (John 16:8-11) Paraclete sayings, Jesus declares that the Spirit of truth will guide the disciples in all truth, testify about Christ even as the disciples must bear testimony about Him as well.” *He will convict the world of sin...*” 15:26; John Aloisi in *The Paraclete's Ministry of Conviction*, explains that “this testifying ministry of the Holy Spirit involves what he identifies as *ελεγχω* which is sometimes used in the LXX to convey the thought of “making a decision or a judgment about something, or to communicate the idea of exposing sin.”⁶⁵ John message projects the idea of urgency toward evangelism, convincing the world of its

⁶¹ D. A. Carson, “The Function of The Paraclete in John 16:7-11” in *JBL* 98/4 (1979) 547-566. Accessed 8/5/2017.

http://s3.amazonaws.com/tgc-documents/carson/1979_function_of_the_Paraclete.pdf

⁶² D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 537.

⁶³ Gary M. Burge, *The Anointed Community, The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), xvi.

⁶⁴ Johann Joubert, “A Theological assessment and interpretation of the Johannine Paraclete-Spirit” In *die Skriflig* 41(3) 2007:505-521

⁶⁵ John Aloisi, “The Paraclete's Ministry of Conviction: Another Look at John 16:8-11” in *JETS* 47/1 (March 2004) 55-69. Accessed 8/5/2017.

http://poenitzmentoring.com/uploads/The_Paraclete_s_Ministry_of_Conviction.pdf

sin, which the disciples are commanded to do. Jesus states that it is the Holy Spirit who will convince and convict the heart. However, the disciple must perform the human aspect of this ministry in collaboration with the Paraclete, in furtherance of His soteriological work.

According to Aloisi, despite the feeling of comfort projected through the Paraclete sayings, we see here a verdict of conviction and judgment “It appears more likely that Christ is describing the Paraclete's work of convicting the world with regard to its own impending judgment by God.”⁶⁶ Aloisi quotes Luetkemeyer's article who states that “ἐλεγχω appears fifteen times in the NT and, in every instance, its use implies the action of a friend, trying to make someone see his mistake or fault or duty or opportunity.”⁶⁷ The apostle John wanted to impress to his disciples the importance and urgency of the evangelistic ministry which is very high in Christ's agenda for the Church. This is a work the Paraclete can only accomplish through the involvement of the believers.

The fourth Gospel continues to stir up hearts and minds and trigger many controversies throughout the Christian era. The Johannine stays one of the most beloved, attacked, challenged, and defended Gospel by people of all creeds, from Christians, to Gnostics, skeptics, and scholarships of our days. However, it is proven that the contribution of John's writing to the overall Gospel narratives, as well as his unique pneumatology, cannot be denied. It is true that many of its passages are not found in the parallel Gospels, that the historical account is very vague, and the chronological differences of reported events are different than those presented in the other Gospels. John however “still portrays Jesus as a historical figure anchored in time and place.”⁶⁸ It has been proven that the writer was selective and purposeful in his choice of materials because they were intended to convey a specific message to a specific people, facing a specific situation. It is addressed to the new generation believers of the Diaspora, a scattered Church as mentioned by Peter and James (1:1), which is facing imperial persecution and absence of leadership. John's message was unique and written for a unique purpose. The deity of Jesus is more forcefully conveyed in the Johannine's prologue on the *Logos* than in all the Synoptic Gospels combined. Although a face-to-face relationship with Jesus is no longer possible, the Spirit-Paraclete sent by Jesus make His presence available to all believers who will continue to have access to Him.

Conclusion

This paper conducted an overview of the story of the Church, tracing it back to the Father's original vision for a special people, before the

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Lawrence J. Luetkemeyer, "The Role of the Paraclete (Jn. 16:7–15)," in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (8, no. 220-9 1946), 221-2.

⁶⁸ Class Notes. Dr. Esa Autero, New Testament Theology Professor (South Florida Bible College and Theological Seminary, 2017)

foundation of the world. It followed the trajectory of God's strategy from Adam to the Church, from the earth to the eschatological destination of the Church in heaven (Rev 7:9). As the story unfolded, the paper highlights the activities of the Holy Spirit in the Church to draw lessons for believers and Churches everywhere, especially in these last days. The reader can see the Holy Spirit responding to various crises affecting the newborn Church, such as persecution of leaders; financial crisis in a rapidly growing congregation; unmet basic needs; prejudice against foreigners, et cetera. The reader can see the Spirit's intervention, taking disciplinary actions against sin; organizing orderly service (diaconate) to support the under-privileged; and to reach out to other local Churches in needs. The Spirit strategized the spread of the Gospel by allowing the Church of Jerusalem to scatter, and by ordering to set apart world missionaries. He intervened in Church deliberation on issues relating to the spread of the Gospel (Church Council). The study highlighted the obedience of the disciples as faithful witnesses, following uncompromisingly the leading of the Spirit to fulfil the will of Christ, "*witnessing to the ends of the earth*," even at the cost of their own lives.

The Church in Luke and John's days, though a long way past the events of Pentecost, must have experienced the reality of these events through the pages of these anointed writers. They were able to draw comfort in their time of persecution, loneliness, and sorrows, as it should be for Christians of all ages. It is the hope of this research that the Lukan and Johannine pneumatology resonate even louder to the ears of the leadership of the Church as well as believers today. Christians are living through exceeding moral decay and difficult situations in every area of life. One cannot ignore the crucial situations such as: refugees' displacement worldwide, human trafficking, church persecution, financial distress, injustice, physical slavery, discrimination, and prejudice like never.... But worse of all, the slumbering state of the Church, due to the absence of the Power of the Spirit at work. May Luke's message be an encouragement, and a reminder that there cannot be a successful Church or a victorious Christian life without the *Power* of Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that the Father will give the Spirit to whoever asks in His Name. He also vowed to His disciples that *the power of hell will not prevail against His Church*. Likewise, let the message of John serve as a reminder of the continued presence of Jesus through the ministry of the Paraclete, the other Advocate on earth, while Jesus Himself is advocating in heaven for His brethren before the Father "*I will send you another **advocate**, the Spirit Paraclete*" (John 16) and "*we have an **advocate** with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Son*." (1 John 2:1). Although a face-to-face relationship with Jesus is no longer possible, the *Spirit-Paraclete* sent by Jesus Himself will make Him available to the believers who will continue to have access to His Presence.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aloisi, John. "The Paraclete's Ministry of Conviction: Another Look at John 16:8-11." *JETS* 47/1 (March 2004): 55-69. Accessed 8/5/2017.
http://poenitzmentoring.com/uploads/The_Paraclete_s_Ministry_of_Conviction.pdf
- Autero, Esa. "New Testament Theology." Lecture. South Florida Bible College and Theology Seminary. Deerfield, Florida. 8/11/2014.
- Bauckham, Richard. "The Johannine Jesus and the Synoptic Jesus." PDF Article, 1-11.
<http://richardbauckham.co.uk/uploads/Accessible/Johannine%20Jesus%20&%20Synoptic%20Jesus.pdf>. Accessed 8/11/2017.
- Beale, G.K. *A New Testament Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011
- Blomberg, L. Craig. *The Historical Reliability of John Gospel: Issues and Commentary*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001.
- Brown, Tricia Gates. *Spirit in the Writings of John: Johannine Pneumatology in Social-Scientific Perspective*. New York: T & T Clark International, 2003.
- Bruce, F.F. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1990.
- Burge, Gary M. *The Anointed Community, The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.
- *Interpreting the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 1992.
- Carson, D. A. "The Function of The Paraclete in John 16:7-11." *JBL* 98 no. 4 (1979): 547-566.
Accessed 8/5/2017

.
http://s3.amazonaws.com/tgdocuments/carson/1979_function_of_the_Paraclete.pdf
- *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991.
- Casey, Maurice. *Is John's Gospel True*. New York: Routledge, Thomson Publishing Co. 1996.
- De Young, Kevin. "A closer look at the gates of Hell" in *The Talbot School of Theology, Biola University*, (November 2011). *Gospel Coalition.org*. Accessed 3/7/2018.
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/a-closer-look-at-the-gates-of-hell/>

- Duguid, Iain. "The Church and Israel in the Old Testament." *In Table Talk Magazine*,
(October 1, 2012). <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/the-church-and-israel-in-the-old-testament/>
- Ferguson, Everett. *Church History, From Christ to the Pre-Reformation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic Press, 2005.
- Geisler, Norman L. Frank Turek. *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*. Wheaton, ILL: Crossway Books. Good News Publishers, 2004.
- Geisler, Norman I. *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologists*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999.
- Grant, Robert M. "The Origin of the Fourth Gospel." *JBL*, 69, (1950): 305-322.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing 1994.
- Hemer, Colin J. *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns Press 1990, <http://www.harvardhouse.com/acts-credible.htm>. Accessed 4/15/2018.
- Irenaeus, St. "Against Heresies. Book III, Chapter 1.1." In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers vols.1-10: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*. Roberts, Alexander; James Donaldson, A. Cleveland Coxe: Oak Harbor Logos Research Systems, 1997.
- Josephus, Flavius. *Antiquities of the Jews, Against Arpion*. Vol I & II. Translated from the Original Greek, according to Haver Camp Accurate Edition. Accessed 3/10/18. Haver camp's accurate Edition. <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/index.html>
- Joubert, Johann. "A Theological assessment and interpretation of the Johannine Paraclete-Spirit." In *die Skriflig* 41 no.3 (2007):505-521
- Kingsley Barrett, Charles. *The Gospel According to John*. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1978.
- Lister, Ryan, J. *The Presence of God: Its Place in the Storyline of Scripture and the Story of Our Lives*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Publishers, 2015.
- Loveday C.A. Alexander, Acts in Ancient Literary Context. New York: T & T Clarke International, 2005.
- Luetkemeyer, Lawrence J. "The Role of the Paraclete (Jn. 16:7–15)." In *Catholic Biblical*

- Association of America*. Quarterly no. 8. (22-09-1946): 220-229.
JSTR.
Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4371989>. Accessed 8/13/2017.
- Malick, David. "Authorship of Acts" in *Introduction to the Book of Acts, Bible.Org.*, (2004).
Accessed 4/19/2018. <https://bible.org/article/introduction-book-acts>
- Marshall, Howard. *New Testament Theology, Many Witnesses, One Gospel*.
Downers Grove,
IL: IVP Academic, Intervarsity Press, 2004.
- Mathews, Revi John, "The Spirit-Paraclete in the testament of Jesus according to Saint John's Gospel" (1993). In *ETD Collection for Fordham University*.
AAI9313766. Accessed 8/5/2017.
<http://fordham.bepress.com/dissertations/AAI9313766>.
- Meyer, Marvin. *The Gnostic Discoveries: The Impact of the Nag Hammadi Library*. San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005.
- Mounce, Robert H. and William D. Mounce. *Mounce Reverse-Interlinear New Testament*
(MOUNCE) Copyright © 2011.
<https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/Mounce-Reverse-Interlinear-New-Testament/>
- Origen. *Commentary on the Gospel of John. Book 1.8*, Translated by Allan Menzies. From
Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 9. Edited by Allan Menzies. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight.
<<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/101501.htm>>. Accessed 7/7/2017.
- Orr, James. M.A., D.D. General Editor. "PARACLETE." In *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. 1915. Accessed 8/12/17.
<http://www.biblestudytools.com/encyclopedias/isbe/paraclete.html>
- Powell, Mark Alan. *Introducing the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009.
- Rishell ,C.W. "Baldensperger's Theory of the Origin of the Fourth Gospel." In *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Vol. 20, No. 1 (1901): 38-49. Published by: The Society of Biblical Literature Stable URL:
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3268991> Accessed: 29-07-2017.
- Sanday, William. "The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel. Principals of Criticism 263." *Eight*

Lectures on The Morse Foundation. Delivered in The Union Seminary. New York: Charles Scribner & Sons (1905). The Preface, vi. Accessed 7/22/2017.

https://archive.org/stream/criticismoffourt00sanduoft/criticismoffourt00sanduoft_djvu.txt

Septuagint (LXX) Bible Online.

<https://www.academic-bible.com/en/online-bibles/septuagint-lxx/read-the-Bible-text/bibel/text/lesen/stelle/5/40001/49999/ch/ebb15c626cabc2d304632c70878864f4/>

Sheridan, Ruth. "The Paraclete and Jesus in the Johannine Farewell Discourse." In *Australian*

Theological Discourse. Vol. 20 issues: 2. (June 1, 2007): 125-141. .

Accessed 8/5/2017. DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1030570X0702000201>

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1030570X0702000201>

Slick, Matt. "When was the Book of Acts Written." *CARM – Christian Apologetics and*

Research Ministry". Accessed 1/27/2018. <https://carm.org/when-was-acts-written>

Smith, D. M. "John and the Synoptics: Some Dimensions of the Problem." *NTS* 26 (1980): 425.

Turner, Max. *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts*.

England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000. Google Books. Accessed 4/19/2018.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=0bRHooQ7pwQC&q=Spirit#v=sippet&q=Spirit&f=false>

Vine, W. E. *Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, ed. by F.F. Bruce (United

States of America: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1981.

Wallace, Daniel B." Acts: Introduction, Outline, and Arguments." In: *The New Testament*:

Introduction and Outlines. In <https://bible.org/users/daniel-b-wallace>. Accessed 1/27/2018.

David Wenham, "John's Gospel: Good news for Today."

TheologyNetwork.org, UCCF: The

Christian Unions ©2017 UCCF.

<https://www.theologynetwork.org/christian-beliefs/the-bible/getting-stuck-in/johns-gospel--good-news-for-today.htm>. Accessed 7/6/2017.

An Analysis of Revelation 13:11-18

Nadet Jean Baptiste

Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666 (NIV).

The Revelation of St. John may be the most cryptic book in the entire Bible, although the apocalyptic passages in the Book of Daniel from the Old Testament rival it. Many of the references not only frustrate attempts to read them for a literal interpretation and understanding, and this fact means that commentators have come back with a wide variety of views on what Revelation may or may not mean. When Martin Luther translated the New Testament in 1522, his introduction opened with this caveat: "About the Book of the Revelation of John, I leave everyone free to hold his own opinions. I would not have anyone bound to my opinion or judgment...I miss more than one thing in this book" (Luther 1522, p. 398). Because of the frustrations that Luther had in his attempts to understand Revelation, he concluded that it was "neither apostolic nor prophetic" (Luther 1522, p. 398).

Why was Luther so skeptical about the interpretive possibilities of this book? His doubts about the value of the book do not just stem from his own difficulties with the text. He also notes some inconsistencies with the revelation that God provides in other parts of the Bible. He notes that "the apostles do not deal with visions, but prophesy in clear and plain words, as do Peter and Paul, and Christ in the gospel" (Luther 1522, p. 398). Luther also notes that many of the early church fathers, with the notable exception of St. Jerome, rejected Revelation outright.

The reference in this passage from Revelation 13 to the mark of the beast, and the number of the beast (666), has attracted all sorts of interest throughout the history of the interpretation of the Bible. Given the dread role that this beast is supposed to play in the lore of the New Testament, it makes sense that believers might have anxiety when phenomena show up in culture that appear to signal the arrival of this sort of sign. Earlier this year, a company in Wisconsin started a pilot program in which they would plant microchips into the hands of employees who were willing to have them embedded. The purpose of the chips was to allow employees to enter the building without swiping an access card and to use company computers without having to type a login and password. The chips did not have GPS tracking. There were some who viewed this as an attempt to implant the sort of marks that the passage indicates will be identification for those who ally themselves with the beast (Meyer 2017). Several religion professors spoke out against this interpretation, although Randall Balmer, the religion chair at Dartmouth, said that many evangelical Christians run into challenges like this when they attempt to interpret Revelation literally (Meyer 2017). While there are many parts of the Bible that can pose difficulties when one tries literal interpretation, this is a passage that can lead to confusion. However, given advances in this sort of technology, it makes sense that this sort of technology might cause anxiety for those who are watching for the end times. There are many admonitions in the New Testament for the faithful to be watchful for the return of the Messiah, and so it makes sense that some would be attentive to this sort of sign.

So how can one approach this passage in a way that provides spiritual meaning? As one might expect with a passage that has so much interpretive flexibility, there are quite a few different views of the best way to come at an understanding of this passage about the beasts.

This paper will look at the preterist, historicist, idealist, futurist and eclectic views on this passage. One of the richest aspects of the Christian faith is the wide variety of interpretations and understandings of Scripture that can all fit within the shadow of the Cross. It is important to remember that belief in the Gospel and the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross is all that a believer needs in order to establish himself or herself as part of the faith. There are many times when differences of opinion about questions about everything from the role of predestination in salvation to the proper age at which a believer should receive the sacrament of baptism have separated the body of Christ into a wide spectrum of denominations. While explorations of this sort are theologically interesting, and looking at different views can provide insights that one may not already have derived, this should not mean that divergence in views about passages such as this one should cause division among members of the faith.

A preterist view of this passage concludes that the prophecies that appear in this passage have already been fulfilled; in fact, preterists hold that these prophecies were fulfilled during the first century after the birth of Christ.

Commentators in this school of thought believe that there were three emperors acting around the time of Israel's conflict with Rome whose actions match those suggested by the passage. Taking the numerical values that Greek and Hebrew letters have, according to this view, preterists point out that when you transliterate Nero Caesar from Greek into Hebrew characters, those numerical values add up to 666. The same results from transliterating Vespasian and Titus' names, two of the emperors who came after Nero on the throne of Rome. The actions of these three Caesars, whom preterists term the beast trinity, fulfill the prophecies that take place in this passage, according to this view.

It is true that the emperors in Rome attempted to attach a sort of divinity to their own identities. However, in regions that the Empire conquered, the indigenous people were basically left to their own devices when it came to religion, so long as those regions did not cause any trouble and paid their taxes in a timely manner. This was what made the task of Pontius Pilate such a difficult one. According to Roman law, Jesus Christ had done nothing wrong and did not deserve execution. However, it was clear that the Jewish leadership saw the claims that Christ made as Messiah as so disruptive that they needed the Romans (who were the only ones who could carry out death penalties) to get rid of Christ. Pilate's charge from Rome was to preserve order and keep anything from happening that might disrupt the peace.

Preterists argue that the issue goes a little bit further. They note that Vespasian considered himself the Jewish Messiah. Two members of the beast trinity are father and son, and Vespasian's son was Titus, so one could see him as a son of a god, analogous to the relationship that appears in the passage. When the Romans besieged Jerusalem and shot flaming arrows over the walls into the city in order to wear down the resistance, one could look at this as the emperor Titus calling flames down from heaven (Morais n.d.). When it comes to the mark of the beast, preterists look at the spiritual mark of sin as well as the physical mark of the charagma, which was the image of those three emperors that appeared on Roman money as well as deeds of purchase (Morais n.d.).

Historicist commentators view Revelation as a listing of the major events of the history of the Church, beginning during the time when St. John would have recorded his vision and ending at the point in time when the interpreter is writing. The problem that this view creates, of course, is that as time goes by, interpretation is likely to change with the elongation of history.

This led, of course, to some flexibility in the targets that one assumes are holding the identity of the beast trinity. Early historicists tended to look at the Pope as the Beast, particularly during the Protestant Reformation. Figures as diverse as Sir Isaac Newton, William Whiston and Wycliffe all held to variants as this approach (Walvoord 1983). The rise of historicism has largely been a Protestant phenomenon and has resulted in the interpretation of the Beast and other negative figures in Revelation as stand-ins for the papacy. The historical arc that began with expansion but then led to downturn and disaster

in Revelation is often seen by this school of thought as the trends in the papacy that led to its downfall.

The problem with turning the interpretation of this sort of passage into allegory. Fitting different figures from the history of the Church into the various slots in Revelation, including the identity of the beast trinity, means that each interpreter could come up with his own set of individuals to identify, without much in the way of significant proof to indicate which set is correct. Also, the insistence among early Protestants that the papacy was the institution under reference in this passage means that other people who may actually be the symbolic referents would be mistakenly identified. Also, this leads to considerable relativism in interpretation. There is scant information in the passage that would really allow for ruling out one particular set of figures in favor of another.

The idealist view of Scripture takes a less literal look than the historicist look. Instead of trying to assign specific people into identities within this passage, the idealist looks at the imagery from Revelation as a series of symbols that should not be interpreted literally. This also means that no specific individual(s) have to be placed into each role for a cohesive interpretation of this passage to take place.

Under this view, the beast is not just the Roman Empire, or the papacy, but any human regime or nation that opposes God. The Roman Empire could fit on this list, but so could any empire that fights against the dictates of God (Johnson 2004). In Daniel 7, the apocalyptic beasts are referred to as kingdoms. Idealist interpreters of Revelation 13 then make a similar conclusion about the beast here, suggesting that it could be an amalgamation of kingdoms that oppose the work of God.

This interpretation does not have to be limited to kingdoms, though. The beast could stand for any entity that opposes God. It could stand for social injustice; it could stand for socioeconomic oppression; it could stand for racism. It could stand for all of these forms of injustice. What these interpretive possibilities have in common is the fact that the beast stands in opposition to the teachings of Christ.

When it comes to the number 666, idealists look at that in a symbolic way also. There are so many ways to add up numerical values for letters and other phenomena to reach 666 that there is no meaningful way to reach some sort of consensus. Many idealists look at the number of seven as having an association with completeness, leaving six as a sign of a lack of completion. By writing that number three times, one gets a more complete sense of lack, which means that the mark of the beast refers to spiritual incompleteness (Beale 2013). Those who possess the mark, then, lack spiritual completeness.

The futurist view of the Book of Revelation moves back to a literal sense of history emerging from the text, but it is a literal history that has not yet happened. Futurists view the apocalyptic literature as literal but still yet to come.

So a futurist view of the beast looks at that recovery from the deadly injury to the head as a new Roman empire that emerges to oppose the faithful in the times of the last days. Futurists point to the symbolism that suggests the Roman Empire and either suggest that the beast as the Antichrist, or the ruler of this new empire as the Antichrist. Those who view the ruler as the Antichrist consider that the beast would be the emperor. As far as the beast from the earth goes, this would stand in for some future leader who emerges with false religious teachings. It could be false prophecy or some sort of church leader (Walvoord 1989). Given that the Catholic Church continues to headquarter out of Rome, it would be interesting to see how this would end up emerging in real practice. When it comes to the number of the beast, futurists take the same view of some of the other schools of thought, considering that six would stand for imperfection, being one shy of seven, which is seen as perfection or completeness.

An eclectic view of Revelation 13 does not have a consistent philosophical viewpoint, which differentiates it from the other four schools of thought under consideration in this essay. Instead, an eclectic view seeks to take the best from other schools of thought and produce a coherent and cohesive interpretation that fits together the most neatly. One advantage of this approach is that it allows for critical thinking instead of simple adherence to a philosophy. One disadvantage of this approach is that one has to be careful establishing the criteria that one uses when selecting the ideas that one finds most attractive.

When it comes to Revelation 13, eclectic thinkers, as one might imagine, tend to pull several different elements out as their choice. However, one area of commonality appears to be the sense that Revelation was not only relevant to events and people who would have read it in the first century, as part of the Church. It is easy to forget, sometimes, that the first audience of the New Testament was a group of believers who were still living in a time when many believers either had seen Jesus Himself or either had parents, friends or acquaintances had seen Him. In an absence of codified doctrine, the movement known simply as The Way was still in a great deal of flux, with different interpretations about just about every theological question imaginable popping up all over that part of the world. The writings that emerged from St. Paul, the authors of the gospels, the other writers of the epistles, and in this revelation were the first writings on the faith and the first attempts to bring some sense of durability to the ideas that Jesus had come down from heaven to spread.

In addition to relevance to the existing Church, though, Revelation also has value of prophecy, according to the eclectic view. This perspective looks at the book as containing a symbolic detailing of the never-ending battle between good and evil, which means that Revelation will always have some sort of spiritual relevance for believers throughout the ages. As one might imagine, though, there is considerable variety among the eclectic views, as some emphasize aspects that reflect one of the other four schools of thought

more thoroughly than others. There can be as many different views, one could argue, among the eclectics as there are eclectic believers.

One area in which all believers can unite is the truth of the work of the Cross, and the truth that Jesus will return to usher in the end of time. With those truths set, there is reason for people to take hope from the message of Revelation. The warnings about avoiding spiritual error and temptation will always be relevant for believers; those who approach the end times with an attitude of self-discipline and expectation will likely find the blessings that God intended.

Bibliography

Beale, G.K. *The Book of Revelation*. Nashville, TN: Wm. B. Eerdmans, c2013.

Johnson, Darrell W. *Discipleship on the Edge: An Expository Journey through the Book of Revelation*. New York: Regent College Publishing, 2004.

Luther, Martin. "The 1522 'Preface to the Revelation of St. John' in Luther's Translation of the New Testament." In *Luther's Works Volume 35: Word and Sacrament I* (ed. E. Theodore Bachmann). Philadelphia: Fortress, 1960.

Meyer, Holly. "'Mark of the Beast?' Microchipping Employees Raises Apocalyptic Questions."

USA Today 4 August 2017.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2017/08/04/mark-beast-microchipping-employees-raises-apocalyptic-questions/541869001/> (accessed 4 November 2017)

Morais, Daniel. "Revelation 13: A Preterist Commentary." *Revelation Revolution*.

<http://revelationrevolution.org/revelation-13-a-preterist-commentary/> (accessed 4 November 2017).

Walvoord, John F. "Revelation." In John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1983, Vol 2: 925-991.

Walvoord, John F. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1989.

Psalm 34:17-20 as it Relates to Mental Illness

Marta De Souza

From panic attack to deep depression, many people suffer from the most different mental illnesses. According to all current statistics, it is very likely that at some point in our lives we will meet someone who is suffering from a mental illness. Mental illness in a family is a real struggle that hurts the relationships, and the church should provide a safe space for those individuals to share their struggles in a time of need. Churches of any size and in any location can find among their member's families that are crying for help, and the most church leaders do not know to step into this territory. Usually, those who have mental illness are not embraced by the church. The followers of Jesus, the great healer, should be equipped to help those many families that are devastating due to the pain created by mental illness. The afflictions may be frequent and painful in Christians who struggle with mental illness since the church frequently connects mental issues with punishment for sin besides a physiological reality. Christians should seek to understand and differentiate between sin, spiritual struggle, personal weakness, and mental illness (Clinton & Pingleton, 2017, p.3). As Christians, we believe that prayer can set us free, and the Lord can deliver his children out of all their trouble, but a combination of prayer, counseling, and medication are necessary to help who suffer from mental illness.

According to the National Institutes of Health, anxiety is the most common mental health disorder in the U.S. More than 5,400 young people in grades 12 and under attempt suicide in our nation. Each year, over three million children abused reports are filled. Some of those children come from a Christian home, but they did not find any help in their environment. The church has an important role in reach out people with mental illnesses (Clinton & Pingleton, 2017, p.1).

- 76% of pastors know someone with bipolar disorder and 74% with clinical depression.
- 22% of pastors do not want to counsel people having a mental illness, because take up time and resources: yet, 59% of pastor's report having counseled a person with some form of mental illness.
- 49% avoid speaking about the acute mental illness to their congregations.
- 68% of pastors indicated that their churches provide referral lists to connect mentally ill individuals or their families to local experts, yet only 28% of attendees believed that such a list existed (Clinton, 2016, p.77).

Families with mental illness stand to benefit from their involvement within a congregation, but our findings suggest that faith communities fail to adequately engage these families because they lack awareness of the issues

and understanding of the important ways that they can help. Mental illness is not only prevalent in church communities but is accompanied by significant distress that often goes unnoticed. Partnerships between mental health providers and congregations may help to raise awareness in the church community and simultaneously offer assistance to struggling families (Rogers, Edward B., Stanford & Garland, 2012. pp. 301-313).

The scriptures from the beginning to the end are full of passages that offer healing and hope for anyone who struggles with mental illness, and the body of Christ must avoid thinking they have nothing to offer to them. The family that is dealing with the effects of mental illness most of the time the first place they indeed seek in a crisis is a church. However, what should be the Christian's response to them? Galatians 6:2 states, carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. That is what we expect from the church of Christ "To carry each other's burdens" acting with love that reflects the heart of our creator, who knows far more than we do about how wretched we all are. Katy Warren stated that the Church could speak into the soul and personhood of the individual in ways that medical professionals cannot (2015). The church can be a tremendous blessing for those who are facing mental illness among family members, since everyone will face lifelong difficulties, having someone to trust through the hard times is a blessing. God is more than enough to help those who have a mental illness. Nevertheless, He encourages his children to help others who are in need. By the word cry we are taught, that although God defends the righteous, they are not exempt from adversity (Calvin's Commentary on the Bible).

God has promised deliverance, and we must wait patiently for that deliverance. Like Israel in Egypt, they cry out under the heavy yoke of oppression, both of sin, temptation, care, and grief. And the Lord hears; he is like the night watchman, who no sooner hears the alarm bell than he flies to relieve those who need him. And deliverers them out of all their troubles (The treasury of David Spurgeon). It is essential that people who suffer from mental illness know that God can hear their cry for help and will not forsake them. The church should embrace counseling's ministry as embraces the ministry of preaching the word to adequately demonstrate the power of the Gospel in the lives of those who face mental illness. His promises are not indeed, that they shall be delivered from all trouble on earth, but the idea is that God can rescue them from trouble here; that He often does it in answer to prayer; and that there will be, in the case of every righteous person, a sure and complete deliverance from all trouble hereafter (Barnes). Every person who struggles with mental illness needs to know that God gives strength to the weary and he increases the power of the weak (Isaiah 40:29 New American Version), even when their behavior cannot be understandable or pleasant to be around. The Life of who suffer from mental issues as well as their family members are complicated, and the church needs to be equipped to receive them. We stick our heads in the sand, add the person to the prayer list and continue ministering to the 'normal' people. However, it is real, and it is not going away (Stetzer,2013). There are people in the church every week struggling

with mental issues, and we need to minister to them with compassion and not criticism.

According to the Word of God, the spirit is broken by sorrow of heart (Proverbs 15:13 New American Standard Version). The Bible also states that the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities (Proverbs 18:14 New American Standard Version). Infirmities are physical or mental weaknesses. So, if our spirit is weak or broken, it cannot fight against physical and mental weaknesses or infirmities (Bolden, 2015, p.32). The heart of Christ is to proclaim freedom for the prisoner, but to notice that someone is suffering can be rough, and many times even the closest friend does not want to help. "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit (Psalm 34:18 New International Version). The church of God should proclaim and live the message of hope and grace. The leaders of the church should learn how to accept individuals and families dealing with mental illness as well as the symptoms that come with it. The congregation should be a safe place full of love and compassion to the brokenhearted. The words we speak have the power to build and destroy. Every situation that occurs in our lives, we can find a similar situation in the bible. Those who prayed diligently saw things change and miracles happened. Those who were sick were healed. Those who were depressed, oppressed, stressed and broken-hearted were healed and restored (Thompson, 2017, p.96). The church can do the same thing today. We can speak life to every dead situation. The reality today in our churches, is that hurt people are coming every week in the search for healing and hope, but what they find is a cold church, full of judgments, and focused in good people. The body of Christ needs to understand that our human vision is limited, and we only can see the appearance of others, because only God can see the heart of men. Even though many people have come to church in search of God himself, many of them are suffering from mental health issues. The church needed people with knowledge and prepared to embrace this field of mental health illnesses, which is a reality in our spiritual communities. It is the right time to the church stand up and let the world know that the God we serve is the almighty God, who gave Jesus Christ to die for those who were dead in trespasses and sins, lost and without hope. So, let the world know that there is power in the name of Jesus to bring a new beginning to all those who draw near to him.

"News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them (Matthew 4:24 New International Version). The causes of mental illness could be social and psychological including genetic factors, characteristics of a person, stressful life events and early life experiences. Still, many Pastors and leaders of the church view mental illness as an evil spirit that should be prayed away. Survey results from the Southern Baptist-affiliated nonprofit Lifeway Research, released in September (Smietana,2013) found that close to half of evangelical, fundamentalist and born-again Christians believe prayer and Bible study alone can solve mental illness. Science and faith are always at war.

There is a huge battle between faith and psychology inside the church, and it is bringing more damage than a solution for who are struggling with mental health issues. Individuals that have a diagnose of mental illness are told them to pray more and repent of their sins. Mental illness is equated with demon-possession, weak faith, and generational sin (Stanford, 2008). Of course, as a result of the man's disobedience at the beginning of the world the sin is part of all our lives, however not all peculiar behavior stems from specific acts of sin (Powlison, 2010, p.108); there are situations that have a physical factor that should be considerate and treated *physically*. Many believers are too ashamed, guilty, or uncomfortable to take the risk of revealing their battles with mental health issues. What can be done? Whatever wrong somebody has done the role of the church is to show them compassion and mercy, just as Jesus showed to us. We must find the mind of Christ in helping those who suffer. If someone comes to a church struggling with mental illness, we should be prepared to help them to get proper treatment. The Body of Christ needs to be prepared to help the people to clear up common myths and overcome the stigma. The church of Jesus Christ is called to bring light to dark places, love to damaged souls, and truth to people in pain (Clinton & Pingleton, 2017, p.225).

Mental illness steals more time and quality of life from sufferers than heart disease, diabetes or cancer. The burden of suffering usually falls on those who, almost always alone, struggle against this invisible disease. In addition to the difficulty of overcoming illnesses that lead them out of social life due to delusions, phobias, manias, mood swings, anxiety, addictions, depression, and disconnection with reality, the sufferers of these disorders must live with the terrible stigma of social distancing of people. Research suggests that the majority of people hold negative attitudes and stereotypes towards people with mental illness. From a young age, the child will refer to others as "crazy" or "weird"; these terms are used commonly throughout adulthood as well. Often the negative stereotypes involve perceptions that people with mental illness are dangerous (Friedman, 2014).

On February 14, 2018, a mass shooting occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida (Burch & Mazzei, 2018). Seventeen people were killed by a young man that has a history of behavioral issues making it one of the world's deadliest school massacres. There are continuous reports of occurrences of many innocent lives have being lost by someone with a mental disorder. Frequently these reports increase the stigma attached to mental illness in the minds of the entire community. These massive shootings have caused many to wonder what can be done. There are going on many discussions about the improvement in the mental health care, also gun control walkout, but they are only part of the problem. The church must change the negative stigmas connected with mental health disorders by learning how to respond to the needs of these hurting people. Many people who deal with mental issues refuse to get treatment due to the stigma attached to it. The world may not be ready to eliminate the stigma surrounding mental illness, but in our churches, we should believe in wholeness and building relationships. We can be the ones who begin to shatter the stigma of mental illness which is

a mental health condition not different from a physical one. Our brains are the most important organ in our bodies and can get sick just like our hearts, lungs, and livers (Bryant, 2018). God is the ultimate healer and does he uses his people and his Word to be the agents of healing too. However, Pastors and leaders should have the understanding that even there are spiritual dimensions relates to mental illness some people also may have chemical imbalances that should be treated with medicine. Preaching this way about mental illness from the pulpit reduces the shame associated with it. Openness amongst leaders allows the congregation to understand better than talking about mental issues is no more shameful than talking about cancer or any other disease. Even Jesus faced questions concerning it. When a blind man was pointed out, the disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus said "Neither this man nor his parents sinned (John 9:2 New International Version). Dr. Stephen Grcevich states that most pastors and church leaders are unaware of the extent to which the experience of a mental health disorder "serious" mental health conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia and more common conditions, including anxiety disorders, ADHD, and PTSD impacts attendance and engagement in worship services and church programming (2018, p.189). The church needs to get to know the people who suffer from these tormenting illnesses to help them to find healing solutions. Churches talk openly about much physical cancer, diabetes, heart attacks, and other health conditions they should do the same for mental illness and relationship issues, to reduce the sense of stigma (Clinton & Pingleton, 2017). The Christian church needs to abandon its fear and stigma toward those with mental illness and own the responsibility that human suffering extends beyond that of the physical, financial, and relational realms. Healing must start with Jesus Christ, so the Church must open its doors to make it happen. Sometimes people who love Jesus with all their heart suffer due to physiological or psychological disabilities beyond their control. Accepting it does not mean spiritual failure or that disorders are someone's identity, it means that it is a condition affecting that individual. On the other hand, God can use doctors to help the sick to be heal from physical wounds, as well as psychologists to heal the person 's nervous system so that person can be free to continue the process of transforming and healing.

God does not turn his eyes from his children, yet he delivers them out of their afflictions. However, there is no promise that faith in God would make things easier. We are afflicted, but not crushed, perplexed, but not despairing (2 Cor.4:8 New International Version). We will face trials and troubles but when the "righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their trouble." Amy Simpson states in her book troubled minds that suffering from mental illness, whether for the afflicted or for their families, is typically marked by isolation (Simpson, 2013, p.16). Some of the best medicine for mental health issues is a supportive community who sees people not as mental health problems to be fixed, but as children of God waiting to be loved. Do we ask our brothers and sisters struggling with mental illness how we can support them? Are we willing to have conversations we have never had before to show

Christ's love? The church is the body of Christ, a community of believers. We gather together to worship God, bear one another's burdens, and build relationships. We must make sure anyone is welcome. In a church, we should be able to talk about our brokenness, our struggles (2018). The ministry of Jesus is about preaching, teaching, and healing. Just as Jesus healed people struggling with mental, emotional and physical ailments, the church should have an open policy to reach out those who are searching for healing. The church needs to become wise in the face-to-face care of souls, committed to Bible's distinctive model of understanding persons and change (Powlison, 2010, p.297). We are called to be a place where it does not matter if we are a Jew or a gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us (Simpson, 2013, p.31). Jesus has promised to stand with us through the good and bad, even when our moods lead to say and do things that we would not normally do. The body of Christ should be the first in line to offer a support ministry to help those hurting people to keep their faith in Jesus and live abundant and eternal lives.

It is time for the church of Jesus Christ to offer a place of refuge, love, and compassion for those who need it most. As Christians, it is necessary to acknowledge the facts and embrace the many people who are scattered throughout the church all year around suffering from mental illness. So instead of assuming every mental health problem is only spiritual, pastors should encourage those hurting people to understand that things may seem hopeless, but God has a purpose for their suffering. It is time to change the way we as Christians think about mental health. The church should be a place where anyone struggling with mental health problems can find a helpful and supportive community to embrace them. It should be a strong tower where the love of God is demonstrated in a person's time of need. Although those who suffer mental illness may not have a desire to engage in conversation regarding their struggle, it is vital for the church to respect where they are and love them in that place. Churches need to be ready to meet the needs of those that are suffering. When people come into our churches, we need to make sure they know that they do not have to walk through their dark valley of mental illness alone. Because the body of Christ decided to honestly be a welcoming place and a real family of believers, compassionate, and caring. There is not a quick fix regarding mental illness. People who have mental illness could be in for a long-term battle. The church is the one that must be ready to embrace these families perhaps for months if not years. A counseling ministry may not be ready for many churches, but the church of Christ always can do something. Support groups can be a great suggestion on the warning signs of mental illness. Also, training in Bible counseling and a network of competent professionals. Moreover, everyone can serve someone walking down the steep road of mental illness. Silence is not an option. The problem of mental illness is a huge one, and the church has been to far in addressing the issue. Education and teamwork are our best tools to overcome this problem and now is the time to act.

References

- American Psychological Association*. (2016, March 23). Retrieved from Data on Behavioral Health in the United States: <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/data-behavioral-health.aspx>
- Birchett, C. (2006). *God's Power to Help Hurting People*. Chicago: Urban Ministries Inc.
- Bolden, D. A. (2015). *Destroying Mental Illness in the Church*. Kalamazoo, MI: Bolden Publishing.
- Bryant, F. (2018, March 30). *Nami National Alliance on Mental Illness*. Retrieved from You can't Pray Away a mental health condition: Bryant, F. (<https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/2017/03/30/You-Can-t-Pray-Away-D-a-Mental-Health-Condition/>)
- Calvin, J. (n.d.). *StudyLight.org*. Retrieved from Commentary on Psalms 34:4. Calvin's Commentary on the Bible: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cal/psalms34.html>. 1840-57.
- Clinton, D. T., & Pingleton, D. (2017). *The Struggle is Real: How to care for mental and Relational Health needs in the Church*. Bloomington: WestBow Press.
- Clinton, T. (2016). Breaking the silence. *Counseling Today*, 77.
- Friedman, M. (2014, May 13). *Psychology Today*. Retrieved from The stigma of Mental Illness is making Us sicker: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/brick-brick>
- Grcevich, S. (2018). *Mental Health and the Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Lindsay, R., & Kerr, S. S. (2018, February 14). *New York Times*. Retrieved from Parkland School Shooting: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/14/us/parkland-school-shooting.html>
- Powlison, D. (2010). *The Biblical Counseling Movement*. Greensboro: New Growth Press.
- Rogers, E. B., & Garland, M. S. (2012). "The effects of mental illness on families within faith communities. *Mental Health Religion and Culture*, 301-313.
- Simpson, A. (2013). *Troubled Minds Mental Illness and the Church's Mission*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.
- Smietana, B. (2013, September 17). *LifeWay*. Retrieved from Half of evangelicals believe prayer can heal mental illness: <http://bloglifeway.com/newsroom/>
- Spurgeon, C. (n.d.). *Christianity.com*. Retrieved from Psalm 34 Bible Commentary: Treasury of David: <https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary>
- Stanford, M. (2008). *Grace for the Afflicted viewing Mental Illness through the eyes of faith*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity.

Stetzer, E. (2013, April 07). *CNN Belief Blog*. Retrieved from My Take: How Churches Can Respond to Mental Illness: <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/>

Warren, K. (2015, August 27). *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from Hope for mental Illness: <https://www.huffingtonpost.com>

Whalen, S. (2016, May 11). *Next Sunday Resources*. Retrieved from The Church's insufficient Response to Mental Illness: The Church's Insuf<https://www.nextsunday.com/the-churchs-insufficient-response-to-mental-illness/>

Ministering to those with Bipolar Disorder

Allegra Joffe

The Church is called to love and minister to a world of many diverse individuals. How should the Church respond and minister to individuals with Bipolar Disorder? Bipolar disorder is a common mental health disorder that is acknowledged throughout the world. Many stigmas are attached to Bipolar disorder, which make it even harder to counsel or minister to an individual. Many with the disorder may be stigmatized as angry, lazy, moody, crazy, lonely, mean, possessed, weak, in sin, lost etc. Breaking free from stigmas are an important part of being able to reach someone where they are at. As well as education about Bipolar Disorder being a key to use. We will discuss the definition of what Bipolar Disorder is, as well as treatments, how the disorder affects the individual's life, and how to minister to them and their family.

Bipolar disorder is a mental health disorder which has two different forms. They are Bipolar Disorder Type I and Type II according to the findings of Strakowski, which also can affect up to 2-3 % of the general population worldwide. A basic and brief definition of Bipolar Disorder is "episodes of mood and energy changes that range from high to low and are extreme enough to interfere with a person's ability to function." (Krayank, 13). The disorder is also seen in "early in childhood or as late as the forties and fifties." (Jan, 28). Bipolar Disorder Type I is explained as, "you must experience at least one bout of mania sometime during your life. The manic episode must last at least one week, or it must be serious enough to require a hospitalization. And the episode must negatively affect aspects of your life, such as your marriage, your career, or your life savings, to some degree." (Fink, C., & Kraynak, 31). In comparison, "Bipolar II is characterized by one or more episodes of major depression with at least one episode of hypomania during a lifetime. The depressive episode must last at least two weeks, and the hypomania must at least last four days." (Fink, C., & Kraynak, 31). Understanding what mood and mania is also critical to understanding bipolar disorder. "Our mood includes our happiness or sadness, our state of optimism or pessimism, our feelings of contentedness or dissatisfaction with our situation, and even physical feelings such as how fatigued or robust we feel." (Mondimore, 5). Mania can be defined as "grandiosity, decreased sleep, increased activity, excessive talking, racing thoughts, distractibility, pleasure seeking behavior, impulsivity, lack of judgment, and risky behavior are symptoms of mania." (Brock, 66) Whereas depression symptoms can look like, "change in appetite or weight, a change in sleep, a change in activity level, a loss of energy, difficulty concentrating, and suicidal thinking." (Brock, 66). The definition of bipolar disorder can be overwhelming for many. It is clear that support is needed for the individual.

There are a variety of social stigmas that are attached to Bipolar Disorder. It has been noted that “fear and ignorance can even affect the attitude of people who might otherwise seem educated or sophisticated. Like clinical depression, bipolar disorder is frequently attributed to a weakness of character” (Jan, 28). Stigmas also may be that the person is lazy, crazy, possessed, a bum, over sensitive, and wild. These stigmas can attribute to the reason why some individuals don’t seek help for treatment. They may feel trapped and misunderstood, even scared of themselves. Due to stigmas and misunderstandings individuals are often isolated, alone and left without hope.

Bipolar Disorder has an interesting history that is explained to go back to ancient times. According to Stephen M. Strakowski who authored the book *Bipolar Disorder* he discussed the history of the disorder is seen in the Bible, through people who had manic and depressive rages, as well as the Greek giving terminology to people with manic moods and depressive moods at the same time. Throughout the years psychiatrists had several names they used to define bipolar Disorder, and in 1957 Leonhard came up with the term Bipolar Disorder which we use today.

Causes of Bipolar Disorder have been researched to many extents, with professionals looking at neurotransmitters, ion activity, brain structure, and genetic factors. According to Comer he explained that mania is related to “high norepinephrine activity along with a low level of serotine.” (Comer, 251). Haycock described many causes one of them being that the functioning of the neurotransmitters having problems functioning properly which can lead to the mood swings because it imbalances the levels of the chemical messengers. Other researchers also say the cause can be a deficiency of key proteins, the transporting of ions from the neurons membrane not transporting improperly, and that overall there is a predisposition to Bipolar Disorder biologically.

As stated previously bipolar disorder greatly affects the individual’s life in all aspects. Mondimore explains, “To say that persons with Bipolar Disorder simply have more extreme ups and downs of mood isn’t even nearly right. The symptoms of bipolar disorder which seem to be caused by a defect in the brains regulations of mood, also spill over to other areas of functioning.”(Mondimore, 6). The areas may bring about “the role transitions: job loss resulting from inappropriate manic behavior and marital breakup resulting from either depressive or manic symptoms that are intolerable to the spouse.”(Johnson, S. L., & Leahy, 172). Jobs and careers may become harder to get, due to not being able to use references due to behavior at previous jobs. Which then can leave a person jobless. Without work, if the individual is an adult, and cannot provide for themselves, this leads homelessness, dependence on others for housing and basic needs, anger, shame and guilt. As far as relationships, those with bipolar have been noted to have high divorce rates. The pressure, stress, care tasking and emotional toll on the spouse and family may become unbearable and seem never ending. So the disorder now not only affects the person but also those closest to them.

Parenting also is very difficult for a person with the disorder. It has been noted that not a lot of research has been placed with parenting, "Research on parental role functioning by those with bipolar disorder is even more sparse than studies of marital adjustment...It is safe to say that depression is associated with significant impairments in parental functioning....It is evident that depressive symptoms may impair a parents ability to sustain calm, patient, and positive engagement with a child." (Johnson, S. L., & Leahy, 25). Children living with parents who are unstable, may suffer from trauma, fear, anger, guilt, worry, resentment, and confusion.

Adolescent's relationships and functioning also take a toll on their lives in similar but different ways than adults. Instead of work and marriages being a prevalent issue, it would include relationships with parents, siblings, peers and school performance. For example,

"In young people, bipolar disorder can be severe enough to interfere with school. It may also cause its victims to miss the usual social and identity development associated with adolescence. Adolescent development can also be distorted by episodes of depression, nonfunctional, crises resulting from impulsive behaviors, bad judgments made during manic mood swings, and repeated hospitalizations."(Jan, 30)

An adolescent with bipolar disorder has many hurdles to battle as they develop and face more trials than their peers. Making and keeping friends may become harder, completing school work can be difficult and through all the obstacles they may feel alone. It would also be difficult for another adolescent to understand and empathize at a young age. Families and siblings may struggle with episodes and crises that occur, which can lead to more obstacles for the family. Parents feeling isolated, alone, depressed and anxious themselves. Siblings not able to comprehend or feeling put aside due to someone else's needs. Another obstacle that is found is the adolescent may also be in denial about their disorder, "Even if the parents are convinced that adolescents have bipolar illness, the adolescents have to be convinced. Ultimately it is their illness and their cooperation is the most essential factor in the success if the treatment."(Brock, 90). This continues to lead to more complications, if the adolescent doesn't want help or won't accept help. "The implications of not treating BD in adolescence can be tragic. Bipolar disorder has high mortality rate because of suicide, and teenagers, being more impulsive than adults, are more likely to attempt it. Suicide is the third leading cause of death in young adults." (Grieco, R., & Edwards 91). The adolescent and family need a support system, plans in place for treatment, and hope.

There are treatments available for adolescents and adults who have been diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder. In the past medication were used as a main form for treating the disorder and still is presently used, except the medication has changed with the research that continues. Questions were raised about what medications and doses are most effective and with what

other treatments should be used with medications as well. The questions of what would work best for children, pregnant women, or other patients who have more than one mentally ill diagnosis was raised as well. Through new scientific research more medications came out that are now used for Bipolar Disorder as well as newer therapies to utilize with the medications. Such as using cognitive therapy, art therapy, equine therapy, drama therapy, play therapy light therapy, family therapy, group therapy and more. According to Stokowski,

“Psychotherapies, particularly CBT, FFT, educational approaches, and IPRST, a key role in the treatment of bipolar disorder. Namely psychotherapies complement psychopharmacology to maximize behavioral outcomes and function. A state-of-the-art programmatic approach of psychotherapy with sophisticated psychopharmacology to maximize treatment benefit and outcome.” (Strakowski, 82).

There are several treatments used to treat Bipolar Disorder such as psychotherapy and psychopharmacology being the most utilized. Each treatment has grown throughout the years and are often used together while treating. It has been seen that treatment is often most successful when using both psychotherapy and psychopharmacology as well. New Hope for People with Bipolar Disorder explains to the reader that even though Bipolar is thought to be a chemical imbalance in the brain, “it is expressed through thoughts, mood, social interactions, physical wellbeing, behavior and sense of self.”(Golden 92). So overall the medication will help the brain, but the individual needs to process their illness and make decisions on how to help minimize the impact the disorder has on their own lives.

Psychotherapy is used in many ways to help individuals learn to deal with life challenges and cope with their illness. They could learn skills about how to understand the differences of when they are in mania and depression. Psychotherapy can also teach the client not to allow the disorder to define them, but to work hard to manage their lives and not give up. It also addresses self-esteem, dependency, optimism, and free will. Psychotherapies have developed throughout the years, some therapies for bipolar that are used are cognitive behavioral therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, dialectical behavioral therapy, cognitive behavioral analysis systems of psychotherapy, interpersonal and social rhythm therapy and mindfulness based therapy; just to name a few. Along with these therapies, medication compliance is often discussed, which is another key to help the individual thrive with a treatment plan.

Medication or psychopharmacology is a key component to treatment for Bipolar Disorder. For many years medications were limited for Bipolar, but with further research more medications have come out to manage the disorder depending on the phase. Medication is not used to cure the disorder but to manage the disorder, and the correct medication and dosage is found in

trial and error. Strakowski notes that even through medications are necessary and critical for Bipolar, the best outcomes still come when used with other therapies as well.

Some may say there is hope for those with bipolar disorder. There are treatments for the disorder, but there are so many who struggle with this diagnosis and don't see hope. Bipolar Disorder is a chronic disorder, which is different from a short term problem. A short term problem is a problem that can affect a person for a short period of time. Whereas a chronic disorder occurs for over three months in a person's life and is consistent in throughout a life span or a longer amount of time. Bipolar Disorder, does not go away, disappear or is treatable to get rid of completely. It is a disorder that will remain chronic in a person's life.

Due to the nature of the disorder, it can be very hard for the individual to stay persistent with a treatment plan, which may include taking medicine and continuing therapy. Many medications have side effects that may persuade some not to continue medications, which then would lead to their symptoms coming back into their lives. Unfortunately stigmas and labels may prevent healthy relationships. Brock states that, "Bipolar is a serious chronic, incurable disease...Medication is the foundation of bipolar treatment...Many chronic disease, including bipolar disease, require a lifelong medications...The longer the disease remains untreated, the worse it get and the harder it is to treat...Hope for remission but expect relapse."(Brock, 117). That quote, may not seem uplifting to many, but a fact that so many live with every day. As of now bipolar disorder in the eyes of the many in the medical world is incurable. It has been stated as a disease, condition, disorder, and curse. How then should the church minister to those with this diagnosis?

The church should be educated about Bipolar Disorder, by understanding the symptoms and effects of the disorder. It would be wise for staff, pastors, and those who work for the church to be aware and educated of common mental health disorders. Education is a key to break stigmas and false beliefs of those who suffer with disorders. As well as equipping staff with the knowledge of how to empathize and have compassion for individual's suffering with this specific disorder.

Since Bipolar disorder is common throughout the world, there are definitely individuals throughout churches who are struggling with this disorder. They may be silently struggling due to the fear of how they may look or be perceived. Different denominations have varying opinions on mental health. Some may dismiss mental health stating it is spiritual bondage, possession, or sin. Which then isolates those with mental health struggles. The Church should be a place of known for acceptance, love, guidance, and counseling. A place free of condemnation, shame, guilt and rejection. Throughout the scriptures, Jesus shows us how He goes away to pursue us all. In Luke 15:4 "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them? Doesn't he leave the ninety nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?" (NIV, Luke 15:14). Christ left this example for us, that each

member of the body is important and worth it. Shouldn't we go out of the way for our brothers and sisters with bipolar disorder?

There are several practical ways that a Church can minister to an individual with bipolar disorder. Seminars could be offered for the congregation to learn more about mental health disorders in general. Support groups and bible studies that have leaders who are sensitive to the needs of those with the disorder and their families. Equipped counselors and references available to refer someone out to possible community health. Mentorship and discipleship programs that are also sensitive to the special needs. Visitations and accountability to help the, individual and the family. Open prayer lines and communications for times of crisis.

Hope can seem far away for those with Bipolar disorder. Due to the studies, it has been stated as incurable disorder. But this mindset must also change. God is completely able to heal the brain and restore and redeem. But that is not always the plan He has in store for us. He often allows our trials to bring us closer to Him and pursue Him. In 2 Corinthians 12: 7-9 Paul was given the thorn in the flesh and it was something that caused him anguish. He prayed for the Lord to take it away from Him, and the Lord answered, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." (NIV, 2 Cor. 12:9). The Lord has and will use Bipolar Disorder to bring Him glory, and there is Hope in Him.

The Church should also always be pointing to the power of the Cross. And yes, therapy, medication, support groups, etc. are great tools, but they cannot compare to a relationship with Jesus Christ. While ministering to those suffering with mental health disorders, it is easy to point to people to help, which is still important but cannot overshadow the Gospel. The Gospel that brings healing, redemption, truth, love, acceptance, and wholeness with the Creator. In 2 Corinthians 4:7 it states, "We now have this light shining in our hearts. But we ourselves are like fragile clay jars contain this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves." (NLT, 2 Cor, 4:7). The power of God must not be forgotten in the midst of the trial, always point those you minister to His power not just what you can do for them.

Bipolar Disorder affects so many around us. The diagnosis and definition can seem very overwhelming and hopeless. But as ministers of the Gospel we are called to bring hope and light to dark places. The causes and history show how much research has developed over time to help manage their quality of life. We have seen the cause and effect on the lives of those bipolar disorder through their daily functions and relationships which can be a struggle at times. There are many treatments available and resources that the Church should be aware of to refer to if needed. Treatment should not be looked down on but used as a tool to help manage their lives. Love, acceptance, and genuine relationship with the family and individual walking this out is essential to minister to them. Meeting someone where they are, not judging, breaking free from stigmas is also necessary in ministry. How will a person trust the Lord if they can't trust or feel rejected by His people? As

noted through the education, suicide has been an outcome or symptom of the disorder. It should never get to this point. So many with bipolar disorder express the feelings of being alone, ostracized, and thrown away by the Church. What these individuals need, is support, friends and hope in Christ. Prayerfully bringing awareness and education will be a step forward in welcoming more people to get help and not be alone in their struggle with mental health disorders. If every Church can adopt a new frame of thinking, become more educated and equipped on Bipolar Disorder, how many more lives would come to the foot of the cross?

REFERENCE

Brock, K. R. (2014). *Living with bipolar disorder: a handbook for patients and their families*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., .

Comer, R. J. (2015). *Abnormal Psychology*. New York: Worth Publishers.

Haycock, D. (2010). *The Everything Health Guide to Adult Bipolar Disorder, 2nd Edition: Reassuring advice for patients and families*. Cincinnati: F W Media

Strakowski, S. M. (2014). *Bipolar disorder*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Mondimore, F. M. (2006). *Bipolar: A guide for patients and families*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.

Johnson, S. L., & Leahy, R. L. (2005). *Psychological treatment of bipolar disorder*. New York: Guilford.

Fink, C., & Kraynak, J. (2015). *Bipolar disorder for dummies*. New Jersey: For Dummies.

Fawcett, Jan, et al. *New hope for people with bipolar disorder: your friendly, authoritative guide to the latest in traditional and complementary solutions*. Three Rivers Press, 2007.

Grieco, R., & Edwards, L. (2010). *The other depression: bipolar disorder*. New York, NY: Routledge.

The NIV Study BibleBarkerKenneth (General Editor): The NIV Study Bible.Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Bible Publishers (1987). *The Bible Translator*,

T. (2016). *Holy bible: Life application study bible nlt*. Place of publication not identified: Tyndale House.

ABSTRACTS OF RECENT SFBC&TS THESES & DISSERTATIONS

Possessing What One Professes

David J. Franks
Master's Thesis
2018

This paper is to serve as a guide to ministers, lay leaders, congregational members and all who profess a faith in Christ. It is to help people recognize by the chapter titles and content that those who claim to be Christians, or who are Christians, what expectations are laid upon them from God and His Word, and what they can expect from God when they fulfill those expectations. To accomplish this I majored mainly on the small epistle of 1 John along with other portions of scripture. My aim was to bring forth the many powerful truths which John shared to help keep true believers from being enamored and led astray with certain popular teachings of their time. They are to always center their attention on Christ "God's one and only Son" as He revealed Him. They are to gain understanding of what they possess through Him and how it is to be reflected in and through their lives. It is to be a conscious effort of seeking His guidance and relying on the Holy Spirit to accomplish this and bring forth a non-legalistic commitment.

This thesis is constructed relating what those who profess Christ are to possess biblically, spiritually, and practically in character and reflect. It deals with the focus of the believers' possession, purpose, criteria and other facets which I believe can strengthen their faith. When they recognize that even though there are a number of criteria involved in Christianity, it is not accomplished in their own strength but the strength which Christ has provided to "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:15). I believe the content of this paper can help others as it has helped me focus on what is close to Christ's heart and what He is concerned with.