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JOURNAL**

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EDITORIAL

The second issue of the *Malaysian Association of Theological Schools (MATS) Journal* is finally out after the inaugural issue was first published in 2004. Seminari Theoloji Malaysia (STM) was entrusted with the task to produce this second volume. The task has since fallen on me to solicit articles from faculty members of the member seminaries of MATS. In spite of their busyness in teaching and writing, some of the faculty members and graduate students have responded positively by sending in their articles for publication.

The *MATS Journal* represents the scholarship and research of the member schools of MATS. It provides a suitable avenue for faculty members of the schools to express their thoughts on relevant and pertinent issues concerning biblical scholarship and pastoral matters. There is no single theme for this issue of the *MATS Journal*, partly due to the constraint which will be placed upon the faculty members in terms of writing around the theme. The articles reflect a rich variety of topics, ranging from pastoral subjects to biblical subjects, and from Christianity to other religions. The richness from the diversity of the articles also reflects the composition of the member institutions of MATS. The articles have been published in order of the participating schools and not for any other reason like priority or importance. A list of participating schools and a list of contributors for this volume are included for the information of readers.

Bill Lawson provides an excerpt from his book *Haggai Build My House*. The passage chosen is from Haggai 1:15a. Bill shows how one should start with a good solid exegesis of the biblical text and then move on to a relevant and contextual exposition of the text.

Vincent Ooi writes on “Story, History and the Old Testament Narrative” where he looks at some reasons why the contemporary biblical

narrative movement tends to distance the Old Testament (OT) narrative texts from its historical referentiality and views the OT corpus with increasing suspicion. He argues that this is the failure of the biblical narrative movement to understand what the OT narratives are as well as to import foreign categories to evaluate them.

Kang Chee Chen writes in Chinese on the topic “On the Views of Perseverance” based on the very familiar text of Hebrews 6:4-6.

Peter Rowan writes on the theme of “Reconciliation: An Integrative Reality for Church and Mission” by looking at Paul’s understanding of reconciliation and how this works out in the Malaysian context.

Tie King Tai writes on “Use of Second Personal Pronoun ‘You’ in Preaching” excerpted from his doctoral dissertation entitled *Essential Elements of Relevant Application in Preaching* from Dallas Theological Seminary.

Lu Chen Tiong continues on the issue of whether we should sing “Amen” at the end of a hymn in his article “Do We Have to Sing ‘Amen’?” This is a follow-up on an earlier article in the *Methodist Message*.

Hoo Sing Hang provides a short reflection on Proverbs 22:6 by looking at some of the Hebrew words used and comments on the fact that the usual English translations of this verse may not be an accurate reflection of what the Hebrew originally intended.

Law Choon Sii, an MTheol student studying in STM, writes in Chinese on the topic of the “New Perspective of Paul” where she provides a good overview of the current debate.

Anthony Loke tackles the issue of the various Islamic responses to the Asian Tsunami in his article “‘Conspiracy, Sign or Silence?’ Some Islamic Responses in the Aftermath of the Asian Tsunami” which was first presented at the 2005 SBL International Meeting in Singapore. The article was subsequently translated into Bahasa Indonesia by Ir Ery Prasadja and published as “‘Konspirasi, Peringatan Atau Kebisuan’:

Beberapa Respon Umat Islam Terhadap Tsunami Yang Melanda Asia”,
Jurnal Transformasi Vol 3.2 (2007) 19-37.

As a contributing editor of this volume, I wish to express my thanks to all fellow contributors for their valuable support. It is the desire of MATS to see strong continual support from the member institutions for the publication of the *MATS Journal* in the years to come.

Anthony Loke
Seremban 2008

Build My House

Haggai 1:1-15a

An Exhortation to Rebuild The Temple

William H. Lawson

Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary

The passages in the Book of Haggai are clearly introduced with the date of each prophecy. This passage is introduced in 1:1 and the subsequent passage is introduced in 2:1. Therefore, 1:1-15 constitutes a passage. However, the final line of verse 15, “in the second year of King Darius,” is probably the beginning of the introduction of the second prophecy. Verses 12-15 could be distinguished as a separate passage; however, I have chosen to include these verses as part of this passage because they describe the response of the people to Haggai’s prophetic word.

STUDY OF THE PASSAGE

Text and Translation

1:1 In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the great priest: **2** Thus says the LORD of Armies: “This people says, ‘Time has not yet come, time for the LORD’s house to be built.’” **3** Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet: **4** “Is it time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses while this house is dried up?” **5** Now thus says the LORD of Armies: “Set your heart upon your ways. **6** You sow much, but bring in little; eat, but without satisfaction; drink, but without effect; put on clothes, but without warmth; and earn wages, but earned for a

pierced bag.” 7 Thus says the LORD of Armies: “Set your heart upon your ways. 8 Go up the mountain and bring down timber and build [my] house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,” says the LORD. 9 “Looking for much, but behold, little. You brought the house and I blew on it. Why?” declares the LORD of Armies. “Because of my house, which is dried up, while you are running each to his own house. 10 Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth has withheld its produce 11 and I called for a drought on the earth, and on the mountains, and on the grain, and on the new wine, and on the oil, and on what the ground produces, and on man, and on beast, and on the labor of [your] hands.”

12 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the great priest, and all the remnant of the people listened to the voice of the LORD their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, because the LORD their God had sent him and the people feared the LORD. 13 Then Haggai, the LORD’s messenger, with the message of the LORD to the people said: “I am with you,” declares the LORD.” 14 Then the LORD roused the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the great priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. So they came and began to work on the house of the LORD of Armies, their God, 15 on the twenty-fourth day, in the sixth month.

Situation and Purpose

The prophetic exhortations in this passage is addressed “to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the great priest.” However, the response to the prophecy suggests that the prophecy was for the remnant of the people. The passage reflects a situation in which the people have delayed the rebuilding of the temple. This situation is clearly reflected in the words put in the mouths of the people in verse 2, “This people says, ‘Time has not yet come, time for

the LORD's house to be built.” Their neglect of the temple seems to have been caused by their preoccupation with their own houses. Their preoccupation is clearly implied in the rhetorical question in verse 3, “Is it time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses while this house is dried up?” Their preoccupation is also clearly implied in God's explanation of their dissatisfaction due to his judgment in verse 9, “Because of my house, which is dried up, while you are running each to his own house.” The purpose of this prophetic word was to exhort and encourage Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the people of Judah and Jerusalem to listen to God and rebuild his temple rather than being preoccupied with their own houses.

Literary Context and Role

The passage is the first in a series of prophecies in Haggai that are arranged in chronological order. This prophecy is dated the first day of the sixth month of the second year of King Darius. However, this passage also relates that the people listened to God's word and began work on the temple on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month of the second year of King Darius. Subsequent prophecies are dated the twenty-first day of the seventh month (2:1-9) and the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month (2:10-19 and 2:20-23). The role of this passage was to encourage God's people to begin God's work. The role of the subsequent passages was to encourage God's people to continue to do God's work in spite of disappointment and discouragement (2:1-9), to repent of their defilement and return to the LORD (2:10-19), and to encourage the leaders of God's people as they direct God's work (2:20-23).

Form and Function

The passage can be generally classified as a prophetic exhortation. Exhortation can be generally defined as commands and/or prohibitions

reinforced with reasons and explanations. The commands and prohibitions indicate the appropriate response. The reasons provide the rationale for obedience. The explanations clarify the appropriate response or rationale. However, sometimes there are no commands or prohibitions or the commands or prohibitions do not fully indicate the appropriate response. In these cases, the appropriate responses must be supplied or supplemented by implication from the reasons or explanations. This passage does contain commands in verses 5 and 7-8. The command in verse 5 that is repeated in verse 7 does not indicate the appropriate response and instead introduces reasons for obeying the commands in verse 8. The three commands in verse 8 clearly indicate the appropriate response. "Go up the mountain and bring down timber and build [my] house." This passage contains numerous reasons for building the temple.

Though the passage can be generally classified as exhortation, the exhortation is placed within a narrative framework that concludes with an account of the response of the people to the exhortation and God assuring them of his presence and rousing their spirits in verses 12-15. Narrative communicates a message as the readers identify with the characters and their situation and learn from their experience as the plot develops. In this passage, the readers are intended to identify with the people and follow their example as they listened to and obeyed the message of God through Haggai. They are encouraged to do so based on the same reasons that the people listened and obeyed as well as the positive benefits that resulted.

Strategy and Structure

The passage is arranged in chronological order. Haggai exhorts the people of Judah and Jerusalem to begin work on the temple and they obey the word of the LORD. This simple strategy confronts the readers with the word of the LORD and challenges them to obey the word of the LORD

like the people of Haggai's time. The date, source, and recipients of the word of the LORD are introduced in verse 1. The heart of the word of the LORD is the command to rebuild the temple in verse 8. This command is reinforced based on the inappropriateness of delaying work on the temple (2-4), the dissatisfaction and disappointment that have resulted (5-7, 9-11), and the possibility of pleasing and honouring God (8). The response of the people to the word of the LORD also reinforces this command not only through their example but also because of their reasons for obedience (12) and the results of their obedience (13-15).

- I. The Word of the LORD (1:1-11)
 - A. The Date, Source, and Recipients of the Word of the LORD (1)
 - B. The Inappropriateness of Failing to Build the Temple (2-4)
 - 1. The excuse of the people (2)
 - 2. The rebuke of the LORD (3-4)
 - C. The Dissatisfaction of the People (5-7)
 - 1. Introductory command (5)
 - 2. Their dissatisfaction (6)
 - 3. Concluding command (7)
 - D. Exhortation to Build the Temple (8)
 - E. Explanation of the Dissatisfaction of the People (9-11)
 - 1. The dissatisfaction of the people (9a)
 - 2. The reason for their dissatisfaction (9b)
 - 3. The reason for God's judgment (9c)
 - 4. The results of their disobedience (10-11)
- II. The People Listen to Haggai and Begin Work on the Temple (12-15)
 - A. The People Listen to Haggai because the LORD Sent Him and They Feared the LORD (12)
 - B. The LORD Assures the People of His Presence among Them (13)
 - C. The LORD Rouses the Spirit of the People and They Begin Work on the Temple (14-15)

Message or Messages

God's people should do God's work because it is inappropriate for them to be preoccupied with their own interests while God's work is not done. Failure to obey God's word results in dissatisfaction; obeying God's word will please and honour him: The LORD their God has spoken and they fear him; God will be with them if they do what he says; and God will rouse their spirits to do what he says.

ANALYSIS OF THE DETAILS

The Word of the LORD through Haggai

The word of the LORD through Haggai is found in verses 1-11. This word of the LORD is a prophetic exhortation. This prophetic exhortation is introduced in verse 1. The command to build the temple does not occur until verse 8. The remainder of this prophetic exhortation reinforces this command with reasons for beginning work on the temple.

The date, source, and recipients of the word of the LORD. The date, source, and recipients of the word of the LORD are introduced in verse 1, "In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the great priest." The date of Haggai's prophetic word is significant. Work on the temple had ceased for a considerable time (Ezra 4:24). God's word through Haggai was the catalyst for the renewal of work on the temple. The source of Haggai's prophetic word is emphasized throughout this passage and the book. On eleven occasions in this passage alone Haggai's prophetic word is identified as a word of the LORD or the LORD of Armies. Indeed, in this verse it is stressed that Haggai was just a channel of God's word ("by the hand of Haggai").

God's word was addressed to Zerubbabel and Joshua; however, it was probably intended for all the people of Judah and Jerusalem and the leaders were supposed to pass the word on to them. Indeed, verse 12 indicates that "all the remnant of the people listened to the voice of the LORD their God and the words of Haggai the prophet."

The inappropriateness of failing to build the temple. The LORD encourages the people of Judah and Jerusalem to rebuild the temple through Haggai by rebuking them for their failure to do so in verses 2-4. He begins by quoting the excuse of the people for failing to complete the temple in verse 2, "Thus says the LORD of Armies: 'This people says, Time has not yet come, time for the LORD's house to be built.'" Referring to them as "This people" rather than "My people" probably already implies God's displeasure with them. He then rebukes them with a rhetorical question in verses 3-4, "Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet: 'Is it time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses while this house is dried up?'" This is the type of rhetorical question that implies an emphatic negative response. Therefore, it is equivalent to the exclamation, "It is not time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses while this house is dried up!" Indeed, this rhetorical question stresses the irony of the situation. Irony describes a circumstance that is contrary to what is expected to emphasize how extraordinary the circumstance is. In this case, the people are living in paneled houses while the LORD's house is dried up. The extraordinary inappropriateness of such a circumstance is obvious. The extraordinary inappropriateness is emphasized in the Hebrew text by doubling the pronoun (translated "you yourselves"). Admittedly, the word translated as "paneled" literally means "covered" (Brown, Driver, Briggs, 706) and may simply mean that their houses have roofs and are habitable. Nonetheless, they were placing a priority on their houses as

opposed to the house of “the LORD of Armies.” The temple is probably referred to as the LORD’s house to correspond with their houses. Through this rebuke, the readers are led to recognize the inappropriateness of their preoccupation with their own interests while God’s work is left undone. Therefore, God’s people should do God’s work because it is inappropriate for them to be preoccupied with their own interests when God’s work is not done.

The dissatisfaction of the people. The LORD encourages the people to build the temple through Haggai by pointing out the dissatisfaction and disappointment that have resulted from failing to complete the temple in verses 5-7 and 9-11. He points out their dissatisfaction in verses 5-6. He begins with a command that compels them to carefully evaluate their experience in verse 5, “Now thus says the LORD of Armies: ‘Set your heart upon your ways.’” This command appeals to them to take their experience to heart (NIV “Give careful thought to your ways”). The adverb translated “Now” is probably included to stress the urgency of carefully evaluating their experience. He then describes their experience of dissatisfaction in verse 6, “You sow much, but bring in little; eat, but without satisfaction; drink, but without effect; put on clothes, but without warmth; and earn wages, but earned for a pierced bag.” This is precisely what the LORD warned would happen to them if they disobeyed when they renewed the covenant on Mount Ebal in the wilderness (see especially Deuteronomy 28:18, 22-23, 38-40, and 51). He repeats his command to carefully evaluate their experience in verse 7, “Thus says the LORD of Armies: ‘Set your heart upon your ways.’” He explains the reason for their dissatisfaction in verses 9-11. First, he describes briefly their experience of dissatisfaction in verse 9a, “Looking for much, but behold, little.” Second, he explains that their dissatisfaction is a direct result of God’s judgment in 9b, “You brought the house and I blew on it.” Though the language is ambiguous,

it clearly indicates God's judgment upon them and that which they placed as a priority above his house. The picture may be that God blew a scorching wind that dried up their houses in accordance with the imagery used in verses 10-11. Third, he explains that the cause of his judgment was their neglect of the temple in verse 9c, "'Why?' declares the LORD of Armies. 'Because of my house, which is dried up, while you are running each to his own house.'" Their busy and self-centred preoccupation with their own interests is emphasized in the Hebrew text. The participle translated as "running" stresses their busyness with their own interests. They were in a hurry when it came to their own interests. Their self-centredness is stressed by a common use of the noun meaning "man" (translated "each to his own house" and literally "a man to his own house"). The inappropriateness of their self-centred busyness is stressed in contrast to their inactivity with regard to the temple. Finally, he describes the results of their failure to build the temple in verses 10-11, "Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth has withheld its produce and I called for a drought on the earth, and on the mountains, and on the grain, and on the new wine, and on the oil, and on what the ground produces, and on man, and on beast, and on the labor of [your] hands." This is again precisely what the LORD warned would happen to them if they disobeyed when they renewed the covenant on Mount Ebal in the wilderness (see especially Deuteronomy 28:18, 22-23, 38-40, and 51). This judgment would certainly be ironically appropriate. They have been preoccupied with their own houses and allowed God's house to dry up. As a result, their houses have dried up. This ironically appropriate judgment is more explicit in the Hebrew text where there is a play on words between the word translated as "dried up" in verses 4 and 9 (*hareb*) and the word translated as "drought" in verse 11 (*horeb*). Through the dissatisfaction that has resulted from their failure to build the temple, the readers are warned of the consequences of failing to listen to God's word and do his

work. Therefore, God's people should do God's work because failure to do God's work results in dissatisfaction.

Exhortation to build the temple. The LORD exhorts the people of Judah and Jerusalem through Haggai to build the temple in verse 8, “Go up the mountain and bring down timber and build [my] house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,” says the LORD.” Two verbs provide motivation for obedience to the commands in the first half of the verse. First, the verb translated as “take pleasure” means “be pleased with, accept favorably” (Brown, Driver, Briggs, 953). As Taylor observes, this word “is part of the theological vocabulary of the Hebrew Bible; it is often used to signify the Lord’s acceptance of persons and sacrificial offerings” (Taylor, 129). Thus, building the temple is an act of service to God that he will accept with pleasure. Second, the verb translated as “be honored” literally means “heavy, weighty” and in a derived sense “honored” (Brown, Driver, Briggs, 457). Thus, building the temple is an act of devotion that expresses their reverence for God and causes others to acknowledge his greatness. Through this exhortation, the readers are also encouraged to listen to God’s word and do his work. Therefore, God’s people should do God’s work so that they will please and honour him.

The people listen to Haggai and begin work on the temple. The response of the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the word of the LORD is narrated in verses 12-15. Through the example of the people, the readers are encouraged to obey the word of the LORD like them based on their reasons for obedience, the LORD’s assurance that he would be with them, and the LORD’s rousing of their spirits to begin the work.

The people listen to Haggai because the LORD sent him and they feared the LORD. The people of Judah and Jerusalem listen to Haggai

because the LORD sent him and they feared the LORD as indicated in verse 12, “Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the great priest, and all the remnant of the people listened to the voice of the LORD their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, because the LORD their God had sent him and the people feared the LORD.” The response of the people serves as a model for later readers of this narrative. Their response was unanimous. Not just the leaders but “all the remnant of the people listened to the voice of the LORD their God and the words of the prophet Haggai.” The verb translated as “listened” often denotes more than just attentiveness to what is being said. In fact, it is sometimes even translated as “obeyed” (see NIV). Indeed, verse 14 relates that “they came and began to work on the house of the LORD of Armies, their God.” They are described as having two reasons for listening and obeying. First, they believed that the words that Haggai spoke were in fact the words of the LORD their God. In fact, the passage emphasizes repeatedly that Haggai is simply passing on the words of the LORD of Armies. Second, they listened and obeyed because they feared the LORD. The verb translated as “feared” is translated in a variety of ways in the Old Testament. It may be translated as “be terrified” or “stand in awe of” or even “reverence” (Brown, Driver, Briggs, 431). A common tendency is to soften the meaning of this word; however, there is a place in biblical faith for a healthy fear of God. Through the response of the people and their motivation, the readers are led to listen to God’s word like them. Therefore, God’s people should do God’s work because the LORD their God has spoken and they fear him.

The LORD assures the people of his presence among them. The LORD assures the people of Judah and Jerusalem, through Haggai, of his presence among them in verse 13, “Then Haggai, the LORD’s messenger, with the message of the LORD to the people said: ‘I am with

you,' declares the LORD." The assurance of God's presence is a recurring theme in the Old Testament. Through God's presence in their lives, the people of the Old Testament were able to endure difficulties and overcome challenges. Indeed, when faced with the prospect of entering into the Promised Land without the Presence of the LORD, Moses beseeched God, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here" (Ex. 33:15). God's presence was so essential to Moses that he did not want to face the difficulties and challenges of Canaan without him. Through this assurance, the readers are also encouraged to obey God's word. Therefore, God's people should do God's work because God will be with them if they do his work.

The LORD rouses the spirit of the people and they begin work on the temple. The LORD rouses the spirit of the people of Judah and Jerusalem and they begin work on the temple in verses 14-15, "Then the LORD roused the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the great priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. So they came and began to work on the house of the LORD of Armies, their God, on the twenty-fourth day, in the sixth month." The verb translated as "roused" implies the image of waking someone from sleep. Indeed, the people had long been dormant in their efforts to build the temple. God also roused the spirit of Cyrus to release the people from exile (Ezra 1:1) and the spirits of those who chose to return to Judah (Ezra 1:5). Though the people had already listened to God, they were evidently hindered by long years of inactivity. This inertia may account for the delay of 23 days between the proclamation of God's word by Haggai and the initiation of work on the temple. Nonetheless, God provided them with the stimulus they needed to overcome their inertia. Through this result, the readers are also encouraged to obey God's word. Therefore, God's people should do God's work because God will rouse their spirits to do his work.

APPLICATION OF THE MESSAGE

Establishing Correspondence

The passage reflects a situation in which the people have delayed the rebuilding of the temple. Their neglect of the temple seems to have been caused by their preoccupation with their own houses. Christians today also delay doing God's work because of their preoccupation with their own interests. This correspondence between the original and modern situation provides a strong basis for applying the message of this passage to the modern context.

Distinguishing the Contextualized

This passage does contain some contextualized elements. God is not telling Christians to "Go up the mountain and bring down timber and build [my] house." Nonetheless, this command can be generalized or related to contextual equivalents. Even within Haggai, the message has been recorded for people for whom the temple was a completed reality. Therefore, the statement of the message of the passage that follows has only been modified slightly.

Adjusting the Message

Christians should do God's work because it is inappropriate for them to be preoccupied with their own interests while God's work is not done; failure to do God's work results in dissatisfaction; doing God's work will please and honour him; the LORD their God has spoken and they fear him; God will be with them if they do his work; and God will rouse their spirits to do his work.

COMMUNICATION OF THE MESSAGE

Title: Build My House

Objective: The objective of this message is to exhort and encourage Christians to do the work of God rather than be preoccupied with their own interests.

Proposition: Christians should do God's work because it is inappropriate for them to be preoccupied with their own interests while God's work is not done; failure to do God's work results in dissatisfaction; doing God's work will please and honor him; God has spoken and they fear him; God will be with them if they do his work; and God will rouse their spirits to do his work.

Introduction

Christians today often delay doing God's work because of their preoccupation with their own interests. Similarly, the people delayed the rebuilding of the temple. Their neglect of the temple seems to have been caused by their preoccupation with their own houses. They were saying that the time had not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD; however, the truth of the matter was that they were busy with their own houses. Haggai proclaims the word of the LORD to them and they respond by listening to and obeying the word of the LORD in Haggai 1:1-15. We need to hear this word of the LORD and follow their example so that we have divine rather than human priorities. *Read Haggai 1:1-15.*

- I. Christians should do God's work because it is inappropriate for them to be preoccupied with their own interests while God's work is not done.
 - A. The LORD encourages the people of Judah and Jerusalem to build the temple by rebuking them for their preoccupation with their own interests and neglect of the temple in verses 2-4.

- B. He begins by quoting the excuse of the people for failing to complete the temple in verse 2.
 - C. He then rebukes them with a rhetorical question in verses 3-4.
 - D. Illustration
 - E. Application
- II. Christians should do God's work because failure to do God's work results in dissatisfaction.
- A. The LORD encourages the people of Judah and Jerusalem through Haggai to build the temple by pointing out the dissatisfaction that has resulted from their failure to do so in verses 5-7 and 9-11.
 - B. First, he commands them to carefully evaluate their experience in verse 5 and again in verse 7.
 - C. Second, he describes their experience of dissatisfaction in verse 6.
 - D. Third, he explains that their dissatisfaction is a direct result of their preoccupation with their own interests and neglect of the temple in verse 9.
 - E. Finally, he describes the results of their failure to build the temple in verses 10-11.
 - F. Illustration
 - G. Application
- III. Christians should do God's work because doing God's work will please and honour him.
- A. The LORD commands the people to build the temple through Haggai in verse 8.
 - B. They are exhorted to build the temple in order to please God.
 - C. They are exhorted to build the temple in order that God will be honoured.
 - D. Illustration
 - E. Application

- IV. Christians should do God's work because the LORD their God has spoken and they fear him.
- A. The people listen to the LORD in verse 12.
 - B. The response of the people serves as a model for later readers of this narrative.
 - C. They are described as having two reasons for obeying. First, they believed that the words that Haggai spoke were in fact the voice of the LORD their God. Second, they listened and obeyed because they feared the LORD.
 - D. Illustration
 - E. Application
- V. Christians should listen to the word of the LORD and do their part to build his church because God will be with them if they do what he says.
- A. One of the results of the obedience of the people to the word of the LORD is described in verse 13.
 - B. Illustration
 - C. Application
- VI. Christians should do God's work because God will rouse their spirits to do his work.
- A. Another result of the people's obedience to the word of the LORD is described in verses 14-15.
 - B. The verb translated "roused" implies the image of waking someone from sleep. Indeed, the people had long been dormant in their efforts to build the temple
 - C. Application

CONCLUSION

Christians today often delay doing God's work because of their preoccupation with their own interests. Similarly, the people of Judah and Jerusalem delayed the rebuilding of the temple. Their neglect of the temple seems to have been caused by their preoccupation with their own houses. They were saying that the time had not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD; however, they were busy with their own houses. Haggai proclaims the word of the LORD to them and they respond with obedience in Haggai 1:1-15. We need to hear this word of the LORD and follow their example so that we have divine rather than human priorities. You should do God's work because it is wrong for you to be preoccupied with your own interests while God's work is not done; failure to do God's work results in dissatisfaction; doing God's work will please and honour him; the LORD your God has spoken and you fear him; God will be with you if you do his work; and God will rouse your spirits to do his work.

Story, History and the Old Testament Narrative

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INTRODUCTION

This essay seeks to address the tendency, whether conscious or unconscious, of the contemporary biblical narrative movement to distance the Old Testament (OT) narrative corpus from its historical referentiality by reconceptualising the narrative as a collection of artistic stories. Despite having done much to invigorate and inform theological reflections on the OT narrative over the last three decades, the narrative approach has, nevertheless, generated much scepticism regarding the historicity of the narrative by propagating the perception that the OT as a narrative literature and as a historiographic literature are two mutually exclusive categories. However, the rise of this modern narrative criticism within the arena of biblical studies is not the only significant factor contributing to the erosion of the confidence in the reliability of the OT narrative as historiography. The historical scepticism of the narrative movement merely reinforces and contributes to the attenuation of the historical confidence that was already in place when the philosophical foundations of modern historical studies were first laid in the 19th century as a scientific-oriented discipline. Past disputes on the historical integrity of the OT narrative have emerged whenever critical methodologies, conceived on the assumptions that do not resonate with the worldview of the Bible, are deployed by biblical scholars to evaluate the biblical text. Furthermore, the philosophical foundations of historical studies have not remained static but have shifted quite dramatically and violently

over the last century to the position where history as an academic discipline is today suffering from an identity crisis. Therefore, the confusions on the historical character of the OT narrative today is not only the aftermath of a clash of worldviews, significant though this may be, but also stemmed from the uncertainties regarding the very nature of history, historiography, and the role of a historian. If this diagnosis is accurate, we need to start our exploration a little further back in order to properly address the story-history issue of the OT narrative. Therefore, an understanding of how “what history is” has evolved from a scientific-oriented discipline into a social-scientific-oriented discipline before mutating into a disorientated-postmodern discipline in the latter half of the twentieth century is indispensable. This brief historiography, together with the insights and challenges from the modern narrative movement, will afford us a context to rethink and redefine a more robust understanding of the character of OT historiography. We now turn our attention to the impact of the narrative approach on the OT narrative.

THE IMPACT OF THE NARRATIVE APPROACH ON THE OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE AS HISTORIOGRAPHY

The study of narrative has overtaken the study of poetry as the dominant branch of narrative discipline by the end of the 20th century. This shift in emphasis occurred not only as a consequence of the changes associated with mass reading habits but also as an increasing realization and recognition of the cultural significance of the narrative genre by narrative scholars and cultural theorists. They argue that narratives or stories are an instinctive and distinctive way in which humans in most cultures recount and interpret the progression of past events. Pure scientific records and descriptions of causality that link and organize events logically simply fail to resonate satisfactorily with our existential realities. In contrast, a story narrated from a point of view with characterizations and a development of plot in time and space

humanizes and earths the chains of events thus giving connection, direction and shape to our past, present and future existence.

Following this recent trend within the field of narrative scholarship, biblical scholars have, particularly in the last couple of decades, begun to recognize the narrative features of the OT narrative and have borrowed liberally the analytical tools of narrative theory to analyse the OT narrative as masterfully constructed Hebrew literature. The former disappointing and unfruitful preoccupation of historical criticism with the genetic and pre-historic “behind the text” issues have now given way to the “new orthodoxy in biblical studies” that is set on analysing how the flow of the narrative and how the different narrative components of the “text as it is” impinge and interact with one another to achieve effective communication of meanings. Features such as focalization, repetition, discontinuity, dislocation, etc in the OT narrative, once dismissed during the era of historical criticism as editorial intrusions or clumsy redactions, are now recognized and exalted as creative and sensitive manipulations of words and phrases of artistic biblical writers. As the result, biblical scholars today are less inclined to amend apparent contradictions and incoherence in the OT narrative. This new narrative perspective has not only reversed decades of fragmentation and atomization of the narrative texts by exponents of historical criticism, it has also recovered and restored the appreciation for the artistry, unity and integrity of the final form of OT narrative. With academically credible and esteemed figures such as Robert Alter, Adele Berlin, Shimon Bar-Efrat, David Gunn, Danna Fewell and Meir Steinberg at the helm of this narrative approach, confessing the OT narrative as a perceptively crafted and well-structured piece of literature is now no longer considered as an act of intellectual martyrdom in academic circles.

However, the elevated sensitivity to the aesthetic and narrative features that reclaimed the integrity of the OT narrative has not secured

a greater affirmation, confidence, and emphasis in its historical trustworthiness. Despite explicit references to geographical sites and historical individuals, for many scholars, the stories of the OT narrative are simply too artistic or good to be accurate or historical. For example, Robert Alter, while not discounting the historicity of biblical characters such as David and Solomon and biblical events such as the civil war between the houses of Saul and David, nevertheless redefines the OT narrative as “historicized prose fiction.” Alter considers the OT narrative not as historiography but a narrative construct of authors with strong ideological biases who liberally embellished the historical figures with fictitious verbal intercourses and internal thoughts to create artificial characters. Alter concludes that “the author of David stories stands in basically the same relation to Israelite history as Shakespeare stands to English history in his history plays.” Similarly, Shimon Bar-Efrat, considering the narrative element of characterization, concludes that it is immaterial whether the characters are imaginary or otherwise. A quick survey shows that apart from Meir Sternberg, who clearly believes that the OT narrative is “neither a product of fiction nor historicized fiction nor fictionalised history, but historiography pure and uncompromising,” recent narrative analyses of the OT narrative by the other major narrative exponents such as Alter, Berlin, Bar-Efrat, Gunn, Fewell and Licht are acutely silent on the historicity of the narrative. In general, what pervades the biblical narrative movement is an agnostic attitude towards the historicity of the OT narrative and the unwillingness to trespass beyond the boundary of the OT as literature.

Even those engaged in the quest for historical ancient Israel are reluctant to admit the historical reliability of the OT narrative. The central dispute in this arena pertains to the relationship between narrative or biblical Israel and historical Israel. Is the biblical text, particularly the narrative corpus with its focus on individuals, events and nations,

historiography i.e. a narrative representation of selected aspects of ancient Israel's history, and therefore, a reliable source for historical reconstruction? Is it predominantly an artistic fictional construct and therefore, an unreliable historiography? For example, Phillip Davies, while not discounting the possibility that the OT "might be historical," nevertheless understands the patriarchal period not as "chronological but genealogical and ideological" and that it is "an epoch in the narrative, biblical story but not in the history of the ancient world." Not surprisingly, considering the cyclical plots of Judges, he labels the judges period as "the most obviously artificial features of the collection of judge story." Agreeing with the dominant conclusion of the biblical narrative criticism, Davies further asserts that the narrative shape of the OT narrative "has virtually everything to do with narrative artistry and virtually nothing to do with anything that might have happened." Similarly, Thomas Thompson who sees the Bible as a corpus of stories reflecting the philosophies and worldviews of its authors writes:

the Bible doesn't deal with what happened in the past. It deals with what was thought, written and transmitted within an interacting intellectual tradition....The tradition gave not Israel but Judaism an identity, not as a 'nation' among the goyim, but as people of God: an Israel redivivus in the life of piety...the Bible relates hardly at all to historical events, to anything that might have happened. It rather reflects constitutional questions of identity.¹

Admittedly, the debate in the arena of OT historiography is heated and complex but what is notable from this brief survey is that story and history

¹ Thomas L. Thompson, *The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past* (London: Pimlico, 2000), pp. 34-35.

(and ideology) are clearly played off against one another. On the basis that the past does not present itself in a narrative form, the OT in narrative form is used as a sufficient testimony to its own a-historicity. In other words, any OT narrative plot with a beginning, middle and end cannot correspond with reality and therefore, must be imaginative or fictive.

The hermeneutical impact of the narrative movement is not insignificant. Once the historiographic dimension of the OT narrative is neglected, various narrative concerns inevitably move in to monopolize and dictate any interpretive endeavours of the narrative. Fuelled partly by the appetite for novelty and partly by the postmodern fever, biblical narrative critics have liberally adopted various philosophical perspectives, e.g. feminism, structuralism, deconstructionism, materialism, etc as reading strategies. This a-historical, if not anti-historical, orientation of the narrative approach, coupled with the obsession with the reader freedom concerns, has produced a barrage of interpretations that are not only bizarre and counter-intuitive but also dangerously non-theological and alarmingly detached from any ecclesial concerns. Narrative artistry and aesthetic concerns have finally eclipsed the theological and historical witness of the OT narrative.

In the midst of this historical impasse, Philip Long is right to observe that much of the current confusion and misunderstanding with regard to terms like “history”, “historiography”, “fiction”, “literature”, and “story” stemmed from the lack of proper and careful definitions when employing those terms. The predominant unarticulated assumption shared among the narrative exponents is the history and narrative dichotomy. At one extreme end of the spectrum, history may be conceptualized as the actual past events themselves or, more commonly, as a scientific discipline whose task is to objectively describe and reconstruct past events. At the other end of the spectrum, literature is set in opposite to history as a pure artful and aesthetic

construction totally devoid of any historical content. Defined in this manner, history-as-science is concerned with facts while story-as-literature is concerned with pure fiction. With this, not only are story and history wrenched poles apart, historical accuracy and narrative artistry are also cordoned off as conflicting genres. This dichotomic assertion implies that the artful verbal reconstruction of the past events necessarily compromises, if not eclipses, the accuracy of the historical representation. It is, therefore, not surprising that the identification and elevation of the narrative dimension of the OT narrative have undermined and underplayed the text as historiography.

IS THE OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE AS HISTORIOGRAPHY IN CRISIS?

We have briefly observed above that recent debates on the historical character of the OT narrative continue to polarize history and story without any proper and careful definitions of the two. This means that “story is played off against history” by the narrative movement within the arena of biblical studies. This dichotomization or differentiation, however, did not exist before the dawn of the Enlightenment. The wedge is the legacy of the institutionalization of the intellectual endeavours during the Enlightenment era that deposited the present compartmentalization, specialization, and insulation of the academic disciplines. Before we attempt to define the character of the OT narrative as a historiography, we need to consider the major shifts in the methodological approaches to history as an academic discipline since the Enlightenment, that have contributed directly and indirectly to the attenuation of the confidence in the historical testimony of the OT narrative. This excursus will provide a context for us to refine a more robust understanding of the OT narrative as historiography literature in the next section.

The first of these shifts came predominantly from the impact of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment paradigms on the continental European intellectual consciousness. As reason began to overshadow faith as the sole arbiter of truth, the European academic community was endowed with an elevated sense of epistemic confidence in human objectivity and rationality. Within this intellectually optimistic sphere, modern historical studies was established and professionalized as a scientific-orientated academic discipline poised, with its array of scientific methodologies, to reconstruct and represent objective knowledge of the historical past. Subsequently, the famous dictum of Leopold von Ranke, the father of modern historiography, “only to show how things really were (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*)” became the predominant paradigm for the nineteenth-century modern historiographic programmes. The ripple from the impact of the Enlightenment scientific objectivity began to radiate beyond the boundary of the historical discipline. Eventually, scientific methodologies became established as the only means by which direct knowledge of reality, whether past or present, can be accessed. In time, biblical scholars also began to gauge the historical value of the biblical text by applying the rationale of the historical-critical approach. Not only did its characteristic insistence and persistence to impose definitions and categorizations fragment and atomize the biblical text, but historical criticism also found itself in conflict with the text it sought to evaluate and scrutinize. This inevitable clash of worldviews resulted simply because the historical-critical notion of reality, conceived and constructed on the assumptions and philosophies of the Enlightenment and therefore predominantly rationalistic and naturalistic, is essentially foreign to the biblical notion of reality that is fundamentally theistic and supernaturalistic. The relentless uncritical employment of the scientific methodologies by biblical scholars within an increasingly secular environment eventually collapsed the biblical or theistic worldview into the deistic or naturalistic worldview in the field

of biblical studies. With this mindset entrenched, any biblical discourses that are irreconcilable with the Enlightenment paradigms, particularly biblical narratives that contain accounts of divine causality where God is portrayed as the divine creator, carer and actor in history, are invariably deemed as unhistorical. With various permutations of these scientific-orientated anti-supernatural grids erected in the field of biblical studies, the supernatural elements of the OT narrative were either filtered out and discarded as unhistorical or reconceptualized to bring it in line with the Enlightenment notion of reality. The OT was further devalued by the narrative insensitivity of historical criticism.

The second of these shifts came as the result of the preference for the social-scientific approach to history. Where the historiographic focus was once on historical individuals, events, and nations as the significant driving forces of history, historical studies eventually turned its focus on the macro-driving forces of history. Industrialization, scientific advancement, and technological development are seen as driving and steering the course of history. With this social science orientation, the testimony of OT narrative – which instead focuses on individuals, events, and nations – declined as a historical source for the reconstruction of Israel's history. However, the negative impact of the alleged driving forces identified by various social scientific theories such as Marxism and the influence of previously ignored forces has done much to debunk the social approach to history as the dominant perspective on history.

Finally, we must also note the postmodern challenge to the historical discipline. The historian Edward Carr, writing in the 1960s, was still able to say: “the belief in a hard core of historical facts existing independently of the interpretation of the historian is preposterous fallacy, but one which is very hard to eradicate.” However, the emergence of the postmodern consciousness in the latter half of the twentieth century has significantly and successfully challenged and discredited the

philosophical foundations of historical criticism. By arguing that all historical discourses are inevitably coloured by the historians' subjectivity and biases since all attempts to represent the actualities and realities of the past by appealing to documentary evidences invariably involve the interpretive processes such as the selection and arrangement of past facts, postmodernism exposes the objective quest of modern history as unrealistic, if not unattainable. From this perspective, all historiographies are past facts refracted through the historians' minds.

However, this scepticism regarding the viability of objective historical enquiry was taken a step further by the postmodern development within the field of narrative and linguistic studies. Ferdinand de Saussure severed the relationship between a word and the object or the idea to which the word refers. For de Saussure, languages do not refer to reality but rather create reality. This was later taken to the extreme by Jacques Derrida whose idea is crystallized by his infamous dictum "there is nothing outside the text." This act of liberating the text from the authorial intention allows the number of reading or interpretation of the text to become boundless. The historical text, therefore, can now be read and interpreted in innumerable ways. Since "there is nothing outside the text," all histories are, by implication, created and fictional. Positively, this perspective has brought the awareness that historians are also necessarily narrative artists. Negatively, with fact and fiction no longer distinguishable and with the need to distinguish them also vanished, all historiographies can now be scrutinized as narrative works. The distinction between history and fiction is no longer apparent through the postmodern grid.

From this short survey, we see that not only is historical knowledge a debated and complex matter, the pursuit of history itself is also in crisis. The continual rejection of past understandings, obsession with categorizations, definitions and novel interpretations, and the ever

widening interest of historians have only added confusion to the discussion and compounded the current impasse. The problems we have with the historical testimony of the OT narrative stem from our failure to acknowledge its uniqueness and its claims. The crux of the matter is that neither the extreme modern scientific objectivity and historical certainty nor the extreme postmodern subjectivity and flight to the imaginative are desirable. Both fail to encapsulate satisfactorily the human experience of reality. Historiography devoid of any didactic purposes, ideological biases, and aesthetic elements as propounded by the scientific critical approach, is as nonsensical as the alleged historiographic impossibility of the extreme postmoderns. The illusive reality lies somewhere in between the extremes. The historical testimony of the OT cannot be understood in terms of our presuppositions. It must be considered based on its own unique characteristics and claims.

RECONCILING STORY AND HISTORY: TOWARDS A BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE

We will now bring together issues we have left unresolved so far by considering the following points. First, does artful representation of the past in a narrative form compromise its actualities? Not necessarily, for V. Phillips Long asserts that narrative artistry and historical accuracies are not two mutually exclusive categories when speaking of the OT narrative. He argues that although the writing strategies or narrative devices employed in historical and fictional compositions may be the same, to regard historiography and fiction as qualitatively identical however, is misleading. The antithesis is not only artificial but one that confuses form and function. The function may remain constant under the most varied forms. Long helpfully illustrates this by drawing a parallel between the art of biblical historiography and that of a painting. Although

a painter has considerable freedom in depicting his or her subject representationally with brush strokes and paints, his or her creativity is nevertheless constrained by the subject. Similarly, although historians are at liberty to employ a wide range of narrative devices in their historiographies, they are nevertheless bound by the actualities of the past events they seek to represent. The major difference between a writer of history and a writer of fiction is that the aesthetic and creative freedom of the former is constrained by the actualities of the subject matter while the latter is not bound by any hard facts.

This notion of a close relationship existing between historiography and literature is not foreign to historians themselves. For example, the historian John Tosh observes that although

[m]odern historians are less self consciously 'literary', but they too are capable of remarkable evocative descriptive writing...historical narrative can create and entertain through its ability to create suspense and arouse powerful emotions...narrative is also the historians' basic technique for conveying what it felt like to observe and participate in past events...The master of re-creative history have always been the masters of dramatic and vividly evocative narrative.²

He adds: "history is essentially a hybrid discipline, combining the technical and analytical procedures of a science with the imaginative and stylistic qualities of an art." The fundamental flaw of the biblical narrative movement is, therefore, its divorce of history from the narrative artistry of the OT narrative – something which historians themselves do not do. Furthermore, OT historiography is delivered not only as succinct

² John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, 3rd Edition (Hallow: Longman, 2000), p. 93.

stories but also as genealogies, reports, poems, songs, wisdoms, prophecies, etc. Through the choices of vocabularies, the manipulations of words and phrases, the dechronologizations and symmetricalizations of events, the inclusions of humour and ironies and even the apparent contradictions, the OT historiographers communicate. In other words, narrative artistry is employed not for aesthetic purposes per se but also for communicative purposes.

Secondly, does the involvement of interpretations nullify the testimonies of the historian? John Tosh observes that the “choice of narrative must be recognised for what it is: an interpretative act rather than an innocent attempt at story telling.” Long also admits that as it is impossible to paint without a point of view, the historian inevitably also writes from a vantage point. The historian is, therefore, an interpreter of history. A neutral perspective from which history can be recounted objectively by a detached observer does not exist. If indeed worldviews, prejudices, ideologies, theological and didactic intentions cannot be vacated from any historical discourse, to label the OT narrative as historically unreliable because it is theologically or ideologically orientated is to ignore the fact that all representations of history are interpretations of the past.

Thirdly, does the involvement of the historian’s imagination create a fictive past? John Tosh again helpfully observes that “any attempt to reconstruct the past presupposes an exercise of imagination, the past is never completely captured in the documents which it left behind.” The task of a historian, therefore, is not only to reconstruct the past but also to transpose it. The historian needs to have not only a vision or a grasp of the past events but also the imaginative ability to encode or verbalize his vision of the past so that he can envision others with this past. In other words, if this communication of the past is intended, then an artistic judgment is required by the historians with regard to a suitable genre not only to accurately represent the past but also communicate the

historiographer's intention. As an impressionist painter seeks to depict and represent a scene with selected brush strokes and paints, so a biblical historiographer needs imagination to employ narrative devices to paint a snapshot of history. In this sense, apart from verbal and narrative skills, imagination is also of considerable importance to a historian.

Fourthly, is the representation of a narrow spectrum of past events in a narrative form with a plot, i.e. with a meaningful chain of events, merely a product of the historian's creative imagination and therefore jeopardizes its historical accuracies? Or is narrative an aspect of actuality or reality? Long's historiography-painting analogy is again helpful here. As no sound-minded painter would include all the subject's details, since it is impossible to do so, the writer of history also must decide to suppress or leave out completely certain minor features of the past in order to emphasize its major features. The historian needs to discriminate between relevant and less relevant information. The process of selection inevitably involves simplification for the sake of clarity and emphasis. Long's conclusion is that "historiography involves a creative, though constrained, attempt to depict and interpret significant events or sequences of events from the past." This perspective is again not foreign to the historical discipline. John Tosh explains "the historian has to be able to perceive the relatedness of events and to abstract from the mountains of detail those patterns that make best sense of the past." As a painter of a landscape who views his or her subject from a spatial distant may be able to discern major contours and features of the landscape not apparent to those in the immediate vicinity of the landscape, so a historian writing as one reflecting on past events from a temporal distance is not in a disadvantaged position. The historian possesses the opportunities to discern, locate, and uncover the narrative shape of the past that was not necessarily conspicuous to historical individuals. A presentation of selected events of the past in a narrative form does not necessarily compromise its historical accuracies. Rather, it brings the past

into sharper focus. Long concludes that “the historiographical impulse implies constraint by the subject, the theological impulse implies point of view, and the literary impulse implies aesthetic choices.”

Fifthly, the fundamental defect of the Enlightenment is its arrogant anthropocentric or egocentric perspective that begins with “I” instead of God. From our survey above, the tendency to privilege the perspective of “I”, whether in historical or biblical discipline, was widespread. This error persists to this day and pervades all spheres of the Western intellectual endeavours. Caution, therefore, must be exercised so as not to privilege our own notion of reality over that of the OT narrative. In other words, the biblical worldview characterized by the relationship between the covenantal God YHWH and his covenantal people Israel – captured predominantly with recurring themes of salvation and judgement in the OT narrative – must not be ignored, rejected, or suspected simply on the basis that they do not resonate with our own cherished worldviews. Our foundational assumptions of the scientific, social-scientific, postmodern, etc perspectives of history, insightful though they may be, are foreign to the theistic worldview of the OT narrative. If we are prepared to interrogate the narrative with our reason, we must also allow the narrative and its unique categories to interrogate our reason and perhaps to bring it in line with the biblical worldview. This is not anti-intellectualism but a posture of openness with regard to the claims of the narrative. Long correctly observes that the remedy for this anthropocentric error involves nothing less than a “radical change of heart and mind (what the Bible calls ‘repentance’).”

Sixthly, the fundamental weakness of biblical studies as an academic discipline is its lack, if not dislike, of theological and didactic concerns. The preference for objectivity and neutrality demonstrates that most modern biblical movements today, including the narrative critical movement, remain firmly in the grip of the Enlightenment paradigms.

Iain Provan reminds us that the OT narrative is both a historiographic and a didactic literature. For example, the Chronicler was not merely recounting the historical rise and fall of the Judean monarchy per se but was also re-appropriating selected historical deposits and communicating them artistically and theologically to a didactic end for his contemporaries. Similarly, the historian George G. Iggers observes that “every historical account is a construct but a construct arising from a dialog between the historian and the past, one that does not occur in a vacuum but within a community of inquiring minds who share criteria of possibility.”

Therefore, the purpose of writing biblical historiography includes the reinterpretation, rethinking, reworking, reordering, re-appropriation, and transmission of traditional materials with the intention of making them function as a sacred text within the community of believers. If the OT historiographic agendum is didactic via narrative artistry, to focus on its aesthetic and informing properties without due attention to its theological dimension and transforming intention is tantamount to distorting and misunderstanding the orientation of the text. The Hebrew narrative is not merely a chronicle of occurrences of Israel’s past but it also interprets history from a theological perspective, recorded with the intention to reform the community of faith.

Finally, the OT narrative as historiography is unique. We will consider two major unique features. First, the OT narrative is not merely the narrative and historiographic product of the human enterprise. It claims to be the vehicle of God’s special revelation. It contains a notion of reality not accessible to the human rational enquiry as well as authoritative divine communications. Its claims, therefore, must challenge us to re-examine our perception of reality so that we may adjust it in order to bring it in line with the biblical theistic reality. Secondly, the OT narrative sits within a Canon, the Holy Scripture of the Church. It is just

a portion of a larger corpus of historiography with a grand plot that stretches from the creation narrative in Genesis to the consummation hope in Revelation. If “the characters are the soul of the narrative,” then attention must be paid to the central character of the grand narrative, the God of Israel, who is characterized in a “fragmentary and varied fashion” in the OT, in flesh in the New Testament, and ultimately in glory in Jesus Christ – the one the grand narrative that claims to be the beginning, middle and the end of the story!

CONCLUSION

The portrayal of the narrative artistry and the historical accuracies of the OT narrative as two contradictory categories have led to the erosion of confidence in the historical reliability of the narrative. We have also considered the evolution of the philosophical foundation of the historical discipline since the Enlightenment as the other major factor contributing to the confusion regarding the OT narrative as historiography. Trouble arises whenever foreign categories constructed on non-biblical assumptions are deployed to evaluate the OT narrative. A fresh understanding that takes the uniqueness of the narrative with utter seriousness is required. The OT narrative must be approached with openness to its claim as a didactic historiography as well as the revelation of God.

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信徒恆忍的探討

On the Views of Perseverance

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引言

基督徒信主得救後會否第二次失去救恩？這是許多信徒關切的神學問題。到底信徒能否恆忍到底？聖經學者們莫衷一是，眾說紛紜，至今仍未能達成一致的共識。由於贊同者與反對者皆有自身的經文根據，因此若要以較中立的姿態來探討這方面的問題，我們就不能先入為主，採取正面或反面的前提來切入。因此，比較可取及可行的途徑乃是先攤開正反面相關的論述，包括主要經文即希伯來書6:4-10與其他相關經文，從中斟酌其論據，再探討有否“正反合”的可能性，然後很謹慎且嚴謹的加以剖析並作出結論。

一、反面論證：可能失去救恩

希伯來書的作者一再重覆的提醒信徒有關離經叛道的危險，似乎顯示當時確有這樣的信徒。再者，希伯來書作者再三提及挑戰信徒之恆忍的不同經文，無疑給予信徒信主後會失去救恩的觀念。這可從2：1-3提醒信徒要鄭重所聽見的道理，恐怕隨流失去。然後3:12-14勸勉信徒要謹慎，免得信徒中間或有人存著不信的惡心，把永生神離棄了。¹更在4:1,6,11警告信徒

¹ 亞米紐斯派人士難以理解，倘若信徒不能墮落，為何還要這樣的警告？艾利克森，《基督教神學》卷三，蔡萬生譯（台北：華神，2003年增訂本），頁219。

別因不順從而被排除在神賜給其子民的安息之應許外。而且於12:1,3,7,12,16亦勸勉信徒放下各樣重擔，脫去容易纏累他們的罪或因著苦難或逼迫而放棄本身的信仰。希伯來書的作者也呼吁信徒別棄絕那從天上來的警告（12:25,29），以免被諸般怪異的教訓勾引了去（13:9）。但是這些經文仍不算是最直接的支持經文。持反面論證者²常引以為據的經文是6:4-10，因為這處經文明顯提到經歷過救恩，卻又離棄它的人。另外，來10:26-29也說：“因為我們得知真道以後，若故意犯罪，贖罪的祭就再沒有了。”有鑒於此，這兩處經文成為他們論點的根基之一。³

來6:4-10如此說：“論到那些已經蒙了光照、嘗過天恩的滋味、又於聖靈有分，並嘗過神善道的滋味、覺悟來世權能的人，若是離棄道理，就不能叫他們從新懊悔了。因為他們把神的兒子重釘十字架，明明的羞辱祂。就如一塊田地，吃過屢次下的雨，生長菜蔬，合乎耕種的人用，就從神得福；若長荊棘和蒺藜，必被廢棄，近於咒詛，結局就是焚燒。親愛的弟兄們，我們雖是這樣說，卻深信你們的行為強過這些，而且近乎得救。因為神並非不公義，竟忘記你們所做的工和你們為祂名所顯的愛心，就是先前伺候聖徒，如今還是伺候。”這處經文從字面意義來看，無疑是闡述叛道的真實性。在6:4-6的所謂“不能叫他們從新懊悔”帶出他們六件屬靈的經驗：⁴

² 反面論證者可分為兩種，一為假信徒現象觀 *phenomenological-false believer view*，意即警告是真的針對那些真實能犯罪的人，只不過犯罪的人並非基督徒；另一為真信徒現象觀 *phenomenological-true believer view*，即所給予的警告是真實的，而犯罪的人有可能是基督徒。Scot McKnight, “The Warning Passage of Hebrews: A Formal Analysis and Theological Conclusions”, *Trinity Journal*, Vol.13 NS (1992), pp. 23-24.

³ 亞米紐斯派以這兩處經文為他們提到人真的會背道之觀念的奠基經文。艾利克森，《基督教神學》卷三，蔡萬生譯，頁219-220。

⁴ 乃從其文中整理而出，筆者強調精簡，並沒有照文全翻。若欲更詳細查證，可參考原稿。Philip E. Hughes, “Hebrews 6:4-6 and the Peril of Apostasy”, *Westminster Theological Journal*. Vol.35(1972-73), pp. 138-142.

1. 他們曾表示懊悔repentance。這應被理解為6:1的闡述，即“懊悔死行和信靠神”。真實的悔改是一次過從舊的生活中轉回，以致“生出沒有後悔的懊悔來，以致得救”（林後7:10）。這是一個決定性且不會重演的死亡轉變為生存之時刻，而它也是在基督裡新生命的基礎之建立。

2. 他們曾蒙光照（同樣的表達也出現在10:32）。此處的動詞φωτισθέντας是用在永生的道進入這世界來照亮人類的行動中（約1:9 φωτίζει），並藉著信者的信心在他們生命最深處照明他們心中眼睛（弗1:18 πεφωτισμένοι參提後1:10）。

3. 他們曾嘗過屬天的恩賜之滋味⁵。這裡的“屬天的恩賜 τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου”有解經家將它解釋為對聖餐eucharist的一種描述，尤其是當句前的“光照”被理解為洗禮時。這表示兩種福音的聖禮被巧妙的並排在一起。⁶但這樣的解釋法有待商榷。更貼切的解釋應是將“屬天的恩賜”視為“一切神在基督裡的自由及滿有恩典的賜與”。⁷

4. 他們曾於聖靈有分。這節經文的“蒙光照”、“嘗過屬天的恩賜”及“於聖靈有分”的順序符合同章第2節的“各樣

⁵ 這句γευσάμενους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου直譯為 to taste the gift of the heavenly, 新譯本譯為“嘗過屬天的恩賜的滋味”。

⁶ 此種解釋法，在初世紀並沒有出現，而是近代由Teodorico所採納，將“屬天的恩賜”連結主耶穌於約6:31的教導，即祂說自己是天父從天上所賜下的生命之糧；FF. Bruce 則認為不應將它只限制在聖餐，它也可以表示一切的屬天福氣；對恩賜的定義也不同，如 Peter Lombard 指“在洗禮中的赦罪”，Lefèvre d'Étaples 指“在罪中稱義”，Thomas Aquinas 指“恩典”，而 Spicq 也認為它幾乎等同於“恩典”。Hughes, “Hebrews 6:4-6 and the Peril of Apostasy”, p. 140.

⁷ 此乃Hughes的觀點，筆者認同。同上。

洗禮”和“按手之禮”。⁸此處的“於聖靈有分”可以理解為希伯來書的收信者成為“於聖靈有分”者乃是領受“聖靈的恩賜（πνεύματος ἁγίου μερισμοῖς）”，正如早前2:4所述。

5.他們曾嘗過神善道的滋味。此處的“嘗”乃是“體驗或經歷”，如同2:9所提及⁹。因此“嘗”表示一個實在且個人性的體驗或經驗。“嘗過神善道的滋味”按希臘文καλὸν γευσάμενους θεοῦ ῥήμα字面可直譯作“tasted the good word of God”。這裡的“good word (καλὸν ῥήμα)”可解作“好消息 (good news)”即“福音”。¹⁰

6.他們曾覺悟來世權能。此處的“權能power”是複數，可連結2:4a解作“神蹟、奇事和百般的異能”。它們是聖靈內住在信徒群體的有力證據，尤其表現在神蹟醫治與釋放上。也因著聖靈的權能的運行，他們可以見證這“來世權能”的臨在。¹¹

⁸ Teodorico和F.F. Bruce認為這三個順序是指洗禮、聖餐及按手之禮；Delitzsch認為“光照”等同於問答式的指示catechetical instruction，而“屬天的恩賜”乃是在洗禮中所給予的恩典（這兩個合在一起就回答了v.2的“洗禮的指示”），而“於聖靈有分”則是按手之禮。同上，pp.140-141.

⁹ 此節節文提到主耶穌為人人“嘗”了死味，這裡的“嘗”明顯是指為人人“體驗或經歷”死亡（參可9:1；約8:52）。

¹⁰ 此乃Spicq及Teodorico的觀點，將兩者視為同義字。彼得曾參考賽40:8說：“惟有主的道（ῥήμα）是永存的。所傳給你們的福音（εὐαγγελισθὲν）就是這道（ῥήμα）。”（彼前1:25）；另外，彼得在徒10:36的宣告，以及保羅在羅10:8所言皆證明這一點。Hughes, “Hebrews 6:4-6 and the Peril of Apostasy”, pp. 141-142.

¹¹ 關於這“來世權能”，英譯為“the power of the age to come”。從舊約的角度看，這長期所等待的“來世”隨著基督的降臨及祂所完成的救贖工作，跟著由聖靈澆灌在人身上開始。這來世既有始就有終，表明有兩個階段，首先是基督的被釘死及復活昇天，然後是基督的第二次來臨。同上，pp. 142-143.

擁有上述這六種福氣的信徒，顯然是已經得救的人，如果會從恩典中跌倒，似乎令人難以置信。但是希伯來書作者卻接著表達“若是離棄真道，就不能叫他們從新懊悔了。”

(6:6a) 此處的“若 (if)” 在希臘文的經文上是沒有出現的，出現的反而是καὶ¹²。在這καὶ之後的分詞παραπεσόντας離棄道理，表明“背道是可能的”。6:6所描述的“不能 (impossible)”¹³ 乃是指人不能，不是神不能。¹⁴ 若我們將它秩序顛倒的話，就違背主耶穌所說：“在人是不能，在神卻不然，因為神凡事都能。” (可10:27)。然而，鑒於原文並沒有“不能”此字，有必要從另一分詞即“重釘十字架 (ἀνασταυροῦντας)” 著手。此處的ἀνασταυροῦντας應被視為是一種原因，表明這樣的人不能重新悔改及再有一個新的開始。¹⁵ 至於“從新懊悔 (πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν)” 英譯為to restore again (再回復)。那麼，作者這裡的“不能從新懊悔” 是否表示一個人無法回復過去與神密契的狀態？若其他經文還是很模糊的話，10:26-31可作為一個清晰且決定性的證據。希伯來書作者再次警告讀者故意犯罪的後果就是永遠的滅亡。¹⁶ 事實上，信徒不能恆忍的後果不單只在10:26-31提及，甚至在5:11-6:12都有相似記載。因此，若把6:4-10與10:26-31連結在一起來看，所謂“不能從新懊悔” 就不是指不能回復過去與神親密的關係，而是徹底的與神的救恩斷絕，所臨到的他們的乃是“永遠滅亡”。¹⁷

¹² καὶ有and, even及also之意，卻無if之意。參Bible Works 6.0之UBS^{3/4} 經文。

¹³ 此字在希臘文中並無出現，但整句有此含意。

¹⁴ Ambrose, Aquinas, Wordsworth, Spicq 等皆如此認為；但Erasmus和Bengel則認為應作“艱難 (difficult)”。Hughes, “Hebrews 6:4-6 and the Peril of Apostasy”, p. 144.

¹⁵ RSV和NEB聖經都如此思考。Hughes, “Hebrews 6:4-6 and the Peril of Apostasy”, p.145.

¹⁶ 所謂永遠的滅亡，乃是根據經文所說的：戰懼等候審判、烈火 (10:27)、不得憐恤而死 (10:28) 和神的審判 (10:30-31)。此乃McKnight及Toussaint的觀點，筆者亦贊同。McKnight, “The Warning Passage of Hebrews: A Formal Analysis and Theological Conclusions”, p. 34.

¹⁷ 同上, p. 35.

二、正面論證：不可能失去救恩

希伯來書的作者一再重覆的提醒信徒有關離經叛道的危險，並非顯示在當時確有這樣的信徒。有何證據？支持信徒不會墮落，而能在信仰上恆忍者¹⁸認為，反面論證者所提出的希伯來書中的所謂相關經文，其實是採取假設語氣，如2:3和3:14的“若”、4:1,11和12:3,6的“免得”、以及12:25的“何況”，因此並不構成真有背道之事實。這種假設語氣出現在來10:26的“若故意犯罪”，明顯作者不是描述讀者已經犯罪（離經叛道）。而且10:12強調“基督獻了一次永遠的贖罪祭”，既是永遠，就表明這贖罪祭永不失敗。同樣，6:6的這句“若是離棄道理，就不能叫他們從新懊悔了”的“若”亦暗示此類背道事實上從未發生。可是在希臘文法中，“若”這個字是不存在的。因此有必要從παραπεσόντας這副詞性分詞來探討。παραπεσόντας有好多種解釋，可以表示原因、時間、許可及狀況等等。¹⁹因此它可以是解作“若是他們墮落”，也可作“當他們墮落”和“因著他們墮落”應用。²⁰

在這種情況下，就需要從上下文來定其意義。這裡主要的關鍵經文是在6:9：“親愛的弟兄們，我們雖是這樣說，卻深信你們的行為強過這些，而且近乎得救。”（可再參考10:39）²¹這節經文有兩種可能性²²：一是將6:4-6理解為未曾得救的人；另一則是視6:4-6與9所指的人為同一批人，即他們都是真實得救卻

¹⁸ 又稱為假設性觀點 hypothetical view，即警告是真的，但所警告之背道的罪卻永不會在基督徒身上發生。同上，p. 23.

¹⁹ 單是H. E. Dana和Julius Mantey至少就列出10種用法。艾利克森，《基督教神學》卷三，蔡萬生譯，頁223。另參H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), pp. 226-229.

²⁰ 艾利克森，《基督教神學》卷三，蔡萬生譯，頁224。

²¹ “我們卻不是退後入沉淪的那等人，乃是有信心以致靈魂得救的人。”來10:39。

²² 艾利克森，《基督教神學》卷三，蔡萬生譯，頁224。

又可能墮落的人。為解答這經文難題，我們有必要把6:4-6及9放在一處來談。6:4-6提及若他們離棄真道的後果，可是6:9卻說他們將不會跌倒。換言之，希伯來書作者論及他們可能會墮落，但他們不會如此！而他們堅持到底這事實，就證明了這點。而作者也談到他們過往的工作與愛（6:10），又勉勵他們持之以恆（6:11）。²³

這顯示希伯來書作者“不能從新懊悔”的警告是與事實無關，只為了用來嚇嚇他們，激勵他們立志作好基督徒。²⁴ 此種說法難免引起質疑說：“倘若救恩是確定及恆久的，那麼給信徒的警告有何作用？”其實這是神用以確保信徒不會墮落的途徑。²⁵ 這正如一個小孩想要爬上樓梯去，父母為了他安全之故，就用木板做成隔間，阻止小孩過去。這樣的措施儼然對小孩是一種“警告”，使到小孩無法越過界限。又如同為人父母的教導和訓練小孩關於到路上玩的危險，以及謹慎的重要。²⁶ 這並非說神不讓我們有選擇權，以致叫我們根本不能背道。反之，祂藉著各樣恩典的途徑來保守我們，使我們能持守或恆忍自己的信仰。²⁷ 而在6:9及10:39也使人對神在信徒當中的真實工作產生信心。

希伯來書作者將古以色列人所經驗的苦難史重覆地擺在讀者（信徒）面前作為一種警告，以免重蹈覆轍（2:1;3:12;4:1,11;10:28;12:25），同時也力勸他們效法屬靈偉人在信仰上恆忍的榜樣（11章）。²⁸ 另外，希伯來書作者也在其

²³ 同上。

²⁴ Hughes, “Hebrews 6:4-6 and the Peril of Apostasy”, p. 144.

²⁵ 這觀點獲Millard J. Erickson及G.C. Berkouwe所提倡。艾利克森，《基督教神學》卷三，蔡萬生譯，頁225及G.C. Berkouwe, *Faith and Perseverance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), pp. 83-124.

²⁶ 艾利克森，《基督教神學》卷三，蔡萬生譯，頁225。

²⁷ 同上。

²⁸ Hughes, “Hebrews 6:4-6 and the Peril of Apostasy”, p. 148.

他經文裡提及信徒恆忍的積極面，如5:9：“他既得以完全，就為凡順從祂的人，成了永遠得救的根源。”此處的“完全”是指耶穌救贖之工的完全。換言之，因著祂受死而復活，為我們的罪付了完全的贖價，就使凡順從祂的人可以永遠得救。所謂的“凡順從祂”乃是凡順從神救贖旨意，接受祂救贖功勞的人。²⁹至於“根源”原文為ἀΐτιος，意思是形容促成某事之因素 causative of，³⁰可譯作“著者”或“創始者”。³¹換言之，主耶穌是促成為我們永遠得救的因素，祂既在救贖工作上得以完全，就成了我們永遠得救的根源。這亦可從7:25³²及10:14³³得到支持。

希伯來書作者顯然並不認為神在信徒的生命中的工作會有失敗或挫敗的可能性，這可從他對信徒的信心窺之。這信心是建基在神的道和神的工作滿有能力的運行在他們身上的確據，永不搖晃（6:9,17;10:39）。若我們留意作者在13:18的要求收信者為他（們）禱告的舉動，這其實也標記著作者對他們的強烈信心。他所擔憂的是在他們這些已經相信基督，也享受基督徒的團契的基督見證人中，會有人離經叛道，成為假冒為善和基督的敵人。

三、正反合論

瞭解正面及反面的論證及其主要經文根據的解釋後，我們的鐘擺到底是擺左抑或擺右呢？難道這兩個論證沒有絲毫的妥協餘地，以致集正、反兩面而形成一個合面？縱觀上述正反面

²⁹ 陳終道，《是否永不滅亡？》，（香港：天道，1981年增訂版），頁17。

³⁰ Bible Works 6.0之UBS^{3/4}經文。注釋。

³¹ 陳終道，《是否永不滅亡？》，頁17。

³² “凡靠著祂進到神面前的人，祂都能拯救到底；因為祂是長遠活著，替他們祈求。”一和合本聖經。

³³ “因為祂一次獻祭，便叫那得以成聖的人永遠完全。”一和合本聖經。

的意見，我們要思索的是，在基督教會史中真的沒有離經叛道的事件發生嗎？針對這問題，正面論者會很肯定的給予“否定”的答案。就算是有所謂類似的事件，如出賣主的猶大（約12:6）、許米乃和亞力山大（提前1:20）的例子，也只是歸咎於他們未重生（猶大），或是因離棄真道而被管教的信徒（後兩者）。³⁴而反面論者則不然，認為離經叛道確實存在，否則希伯來書作者也不會如此苦口婆心的淳淳善誘。這些正反面論證者在彼此對“信徒恆忍”的主題上劃清楚河和漢界，選擇各據一方，河水不犯井水。

在這場涉及“信徒恆忍”主題的擂台賽，雙方在論述6:4-10經文之支持點時，似乎忽略了兩件事：³⁵

1. 兩造提到離經叛道者時皆指向個別的信徒，而非盟約群體 covenant community 或神的選民³⁶。但這是否是希伯來書作者的原意則有待商榷。

2. 在談到離經叛道時，焦點皆集中在6:4-6，而忽略了6:7-8的比喻或例子。事實上，6:7的“就如（γάρ）”扮演極為重要的角色，表明6:7與上文6:4-6的關連性。換言之，6:4-6的警告提供作者在6:3的決定基礎。在6:7-8作者刻畫出農耕的過程並將它與基督徒道德生命的成長和停滯作比較。到底6:7-8是否純為一個農耕例子？我們發現作者較少使用暗喻（metaphor）、明喻（simile）或例證（illustration）在整本希伯來書上。而且

³⁴ 艾利克森，《基督教神學》卷三，蔡萬生譯，頁226。

³⁵ 作者乃斟酌James K. Solari的觀察。Verlyn D. Verbrugge, “Towards a New Interpretation of Hebrew 6:4-6”, *Calvin Theological Journal*, Vol.15 (April 1980), p. 62.

³⁶ Verlyn D. Verbrugge認為6:4-8主要並非指基督徒個人，而是藉著其舊約背景（賽5:1-7）告訴我們，作者乃是警告拒絕神的一群神的選民或盟約子民。因此，他主張拒絕一個團體非指拒絕每一個人。McKnight稱這樣的觀念為盟約群體觀念covenant community view。McKnight, “The Warning Passage of Hebrews: A Formal Analysis and Theological Conclusions”, p. 25.

這也不是作者伸延其論點或表達真理的慣常方式。³⁷再者，解經家皆同意作者很廣泛的引用舊約經文，有時直接引用，有時則間接引用。為此，我們有必要思考有沒有舊約經文被應用在6:7-8中。這樣的可能性提高，因為確實有相當多的舊約經文是藉著γὰρ提出或引進，如來1:5;2:4;4:3;6:13;7:1,17;8:8;10:15,30,37;12:20,25。³⁸

翻開舊約，我們可發現賽5:1-7這葡萄園之歌所描繪的與來6:7-8相似，皆闡述一塊地若沒有如期待般有好收成，就會如荊棘般廢棄。而且這新、舊約經文亦有一平行，就是兩者都很清楚的說明那田或園是良耕或良種地。³⁹賽5:1-7詳盡的描述葡萄園主苦心經營那園地乃是期待有上等的好葡萄；而來6:7-8則採納較一般性狀態來表達田主對良耕地能有好收成的期待。雖然雙方皆有不同的主要成份（來6:7：有雨水的良好滋潤；賽5:6：不再有雨降下），但結局一樣。另外，我們也可理解6:7-8具有一種祝福（εὐλογίας）與咒詛（κατάρας）的主旨。⁴⁰這正是申11:26-28所用的兩個字，也是神陳明在祂的盟約子民面前的兩種選擇，即聽從神得祝福，反之則受咒詛。我們要特別注意這是摩西對全體的盟約群體或選民說的。因此，若我們將來6:4-6的離經叛教者亦視為舊約中神的選民群體，而非單一的信徒並不為過。

再說，從6:1-10的經文中，可發現6:1-3是用第一人稱複數（我們），在6:4-6則為第三人稱複數（他們），然後6:9卻是第二人稱複數（你們）。這顯示作者在此段經文裡乃是針對不同群體。按照經文的內容，可理解當中的“我們”是指希伯來書作者與同伴及收信者（讀者），而“他們”若按賽5:1-7及申

³⁷ Verbrugge, "Towards a New Interpretation of Hebrew 6:4-6", p. 64.

³⁸ 同上。

³⁹ 同上。

⁴⁰ 同上, p. 65.

11:26-28的解釋應作“神的盟約子民或神的選民”，至於“你們”則明顯是指希伯來書的收信者（讀者）⁴¹。希伯來書作者先論到“我們”都是在基督裡，但不應只留停在基督道理的開端（6:1-3），然後他提到“他們”即神的選民（以色列民）在舊約的負面表現及後果（6:4-6，並以田地為例6:7-8），藉此警惕“你們”即希伯來書的讀者不會重蹈覆轍（6:9-10）。

倘若採取“我們—他們—你們”的立場來看待來6:4-10，無疑作者是在勸勉或警告“你們”（讀者）別效法“他們”（神的選民），而不是揭露讀者群中有人背道。這符合正面論者的觀點。但另一方面，若以舊約神的選民的表現來看，確實背道的事曾經發生，這又點中反正論者的胃口。若希伯來書作者如同正面論者所言：“人是真的會永久被拯救的；他們並沒有失喪，也就是說，他們得救是確實的，而背道是假設的。也就是說，這個“假如或若”的字句並沒有真的發生，作者只是在描寫倘若選民墮落的話（這是不可能的），會有何種結果。”⁴²那麼，作者又何必大費唇舌去警告一群不可能背道者不要背道？這正如太陽本從東邊出來，卻被警告別從西邊出來。

結論

不同信徒看來6:4-10都會有不同看見，而不同的看見所產生的觀點就會產生分歧。分歧的結果就是物與類聚（如加爾文派及亞米紐斯派等）。若果只是持有正確“信徒恆忍”觀點的基督徒才能進天國的話，三邊的支持者之間，有一方可能蒙受被

⁴¹ 陳終道認為6:4-5是否指已經得教的信徒？因為本書是給希伯來人的。對他們而言，已蒙了光照，嘗過天恩的滋味，一點也不希奇，因為他們的祖宗早已蒙了光照，領受神的許多恩惠。陳終道，《是否永不滅亡？》，頁53。

⁴² 其中的“若”是筆者所加的。艾利克森，《基督教神學》卷三，蔡萬生譯，頁223。

拒天國門外的危險。到底我們應當怎樣來看待信徒恆忍呢？是否必需有一清楚的界限，或作一了百了的定論？筆者認為，與其為著彼此的堅持鬥得遍體鱗傷，不如從全新的角度來看待三方的立場。筆者相信希伯來書作者此舉並非空穴來風或畫蛇添足，而是實實在在針對當時教會的景況所發出的勸勉。既然正面論者堅持信徒永遠不會背道，作者只是提出假設性可能背道的警告；反面論者則堅持信徒有可能背道，作者乃提出貼切的警告；而正反合論者立場雖較中立，但亦承認背道的可能性。這提醒我們，既然作者有如斯的背道警告，無論我們是接納正面或反面或正反合論證，都要謹慎過我們的信仰生活。我們要聽取作者的警告，不管有沒有可能背道，都要在有生之日好好的守住真道，與神同工，跟隨祂的話去行。⁴³從牧養的角度來看，牧者一方面可以藉著“背道的警告”作為給那些一直過著屬肉體生活的基督徒警惕，另一方面也可以藉著“信徒恆忍”的教義去安慰和鼓勵那些在生活中遭遇苦難的基督徒，叫他們知道神必保守他們到底。至於有關“信徒恆忍”和“背道”的難題，惟有等到主再來時才會水落石出，正如林前13:9-12所言：“我們現在所知道的有限，先知所講的也有限，等那完全的來到，這有限的必歸於無有了。我作孩子的時候，話語像孩子，心思像孩子，意念像孩子，既成了人，就把孩子的事丟棄了。我們如今彷彿對著鏡子觀看，模糊不清，到那時就要面對面了。我如今所知道的有限，到那時就全知道，如同主知道我一樣。”

⁴³ 基理，《再思救贖奇恩》，陳妙玲譯（香港：天道，1993年），頁120-121。

Reconciliation: An Integrative Reality for Church and Mission

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There is hardly a more integrative theme in Scripture than Paul's vision of the reconciliation of all things. The cosmic mission of God is "through [Christ] to reconcile all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col. 1:20). Ultimately, the mission of God is about the healing of the created cosmos. To be sure, this is a massive theme to contemplate in a brief essay, so we will limit our exploration to a particular aspect of the theology of reconciliation, underlining its relevance to mission in the local church context of Malaysia.

We should begin, however, with the global context. As the global community continues to come to terms with the effects of globalization and the threat of global terrorism, many missionaries and church communities find themselves in situations ranging from simmering ethnic tensions to explosive and life-threatening violence. Amongst Christians and politicians alike, the word "reconciliation" has taken on renewed interest and urgency. "There can be no doubt," says Christoph Schwobel, "that the rhetoric of reconciliation is *en vogue* in the present. Not only in the churches but also in political life reconciliation has become one of the key words of current discourse."¹ Others, reflecting on the world

¹ Christoph Schwobel, "Reconciliation: From Biblical Observations to Dogmatic Reconstruction", in *The Theology of Reconciliation*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (London: T. & T. Clark, 2003), p. 13.

post-September 11, believe that in no other time in history has the world “needed a consciousness of common humanity”² so much so that “the concept of ‘otherness’” is said to have become “the defining theological issue of our times.”³

It is largely the case, however, that theologians and missiologists have not tended to explore the social implications of reconciliation. It is generally found that where the theology of reconciliation is examined, the emphasis almost exclusively falls on the restoration of the vertical relationship between the individual and God.⁴ But in many key works, reconciliation is not even examined. For example, and if we follow the common trend for examining David Bosch’s *Transforming Mission* for what it does not address, we find that reconciliation is not included in the index and receives just a passing comment in the text that it is “a key concept in Paul.”⁵ Robert J. Schreiter tells us, “There have been references and echoes of the theme of reconciliation in the theological discussion of mission throughout the previous century, but it is only in the last decade and a half that it has emerged as an important way of talking about Christian mission.”⁶ So things are changing. A more comprehensive understanding of reconciliation

² Rodney L. Petersen, “Racism, Restorative Justice, and Reconciliation”, *Missiology* XXXII, no. 1 (January 2004): 71.

³ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), p. 9.

⁴ Volf surveys both Protestant and Catholic theological works to show how little attention is given to the social meaning of reconciliation. *The Social Meaning of Reconciliation* Henry Martyn Lecture, (London: EMA Annual Conference, 1997). Surprisingly, the doctrine of reconciliation receives little attention in standard reference works. Surprisingly, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* has no place for reconciliation!

⁵ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 394.

⁶ Robert J. Schreiter, “Reconciliation as a New Paradigm of Mission” Plenary Paper no. 14, *World Council of Churches Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Athens (Greece)*, 9-16 May (2005), p. 1.

has come more clearly into focus mainly as a result of the work of church leaders, theologians and missionaries in a number of major conflict zones in recent years, particularly South Africa, Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Rwanda.⁷ In the world of mission conferences, congresses and consultations, the theme of reconciliation has begun to occupy a significant place. For example, in Athens, 2006, the World Council of Churches' Conference on World Mission and Evangelism took as its theme: "Come Holy Spirit – Heal and Reconcile: Called in Christ to be reconciling and healing communities". And the forthcoming 12th Assembly of the International Association for Mission Studies will devote its attention to "Human Identity and the Gospel of Reconciliation" when it meets in Hungary in August, 2008.⁸

PAUL AND RECONCILIATION

There is therefore much evidence that reconciliation is indeed "one of the key words of current discourse." But how is it used in the New Testament?⁹ At this point, a return to Paul is necessary because Paul is

⁷ On the theme of reconciliation and mission, see Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001); Kirsteen Kim (ed), *Reconciling Mission: The Ministry of Healing and Reconciliation in the Church Worldwide* (Delhi: ISPCK / Birmingham: United College of the Ascension, 2005); Howard Mellor and Timothy Yates (eds), *Mission and Violence and Reconciliation* (Sheffield: Cliff College Publishing / British and Irish Association for Mission Studies, 2004); Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996); and John W. de Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice* (London: SCM, 2002). The need of a thorough treatment of the theme of peace in New Testament studies, ethics and mission studies has been superbly provided by Willard M. Swartley in his book *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 2006.

⁸ See also the 2004 Lausanne Movement sponsored Forum on World Evangelization which included an Issue Group on Reconciliation whose papers are available in *Reconciliation as the Mission of God*.

the only New Testament writer to use reconciliation in a theological sense to describe the cross. Ralph Martin is convinced of the importance of the theme for Paul:

Reconciliation... can be presented as an interpretative key to Paul's theology; and if we are pressed to suggest a simple term that summarizes his message, the word reconciliation will be the 'chief theme' or 'centre' of his missionary and pastoral thought and practice.¹⁰

Paul's understanding of the cross in terms of reconciliation is found in five important passages in the New Testament: Rom. 5:9-11; 11:15; 2 Cor. 5:16-21; Eph. 2:11-22; Col. 1:20-23. It should be noted, however, that Paul does not portray the cross from the perspective of reconciliation to the exclusion of other perspectives. God's saving work in Christ is described variously by Paul as "salvation", "redemption", "deliverance",

⁹ What follows is not nearly substantial enough in its treatment of this theme. My main concern is to point out that something more than the vertical aspect of the individual person being reconciled with God is present in Paul's theology and that this has implications for our understanding of mission and church. For a treatment of the theme of reconciliation in Paul's letter to the Romans, see Haddon Willmer, "'Vertical' and 'Horizontal' in Paul's Theology of Reconciliation in the Letter to the Romans" in *Transformation* 24 (October, 2007): 151-160. Willmer notes the difficulties of using dichotomous language such as "vertical" and "horizontal", and reminds us that "the distinction is no more than a tool of analysis in the attempt to understand an integral reality which is not to be parcelled out." (p. 151).

¹⁰ Ralph P. Martin, *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1981), p. 5. It has been a much-discussed question as to whether reconciliation is at the centre or on the circumference of Paul's theology. There is neither the space nor the necessity to pursue this question here, but for an introduction, see Martin (1981) and I. Howard Marshall, "The Meaning of Reconciliation", in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of G. E. Ladd* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

“justification”, as well as “reconciliation”. But since Paul is the only New Testament writer to use the word to describe God’s saving work, we may have good grounds for asserting that “reconciliation” goes to the heart of the gospel as far as the Apostle is concerned.

The picture Paul gives us of reconciliation is wonderfully comprehensive and yet we find it underplayed in much missiology and ecclesiology. For instance, Paul’s vision of the church as a reconciling community; the relevance of the gospel of reconciliation in overcoming sectarian hatred and ethnic violence; allowing the vision of the ultimate eschatological goal of the reconciling of *all things* to shape the way we live as the people of God “between the times”. In these ways and others, the theology of reconciliation and its social implications has a greater part to play in the shaping of our theology of mission. Are we too bold in suggesting that no other aspect of the atonement, no other picture or concept relating to salvation in the New Testament, can be worked out in quite these kinds of social dimensions? In contrast, say, to the doctrine of justification? One may talk of being justified with God but not of being justified with one’s neighbour.¹¹ There is surely a profound personal and interpersonal character to the doctrine of reconciliation which makes it powerfully relevant in an increasingly fragmented world.¹²

¹¹ We should not perhaps press this too far. It is surely wrong to express any Christian doctrine in such a way that we neglect its relational and ethical dimensions. The following comments from Stephen N. Williams alert us to this danger: “Luther establishes the principle of justification by faith, not as a cold doctrine, but as a life-transforming power as we are led into living union with Christ. But the seed of faith bears the fruit of love towards our neighbour. As Luther strikingly puts it: I must indwell my neighbour by love as I indwell Christ by faith. One needs to ponder this formulation. It is nothing less than a doctrine of total immersion – total immersion in my neighbour now that I live by faith in God, through Jesus Christ.” The quotation from Luther is from “Three Treatises” (Muhlenberg, 1960) and the full editorial by Williams can be found in *Themelios* 22:1, (1996): 2.

But the social dimensions of reconciliation have not always gone unnoticed. Writing against the background of the horrors of the First World War, and after 300 pages in which he has set out the doctrine of reconciliation, the Scottish theologian, James Denny, turns to describe the power of the doctrine of reconciliation in terms of its social dimension:

The life of reconciliation is a life which itself exercises a reconciling power. It is the ultimate witness to that in God which overcomes all that separates man from Himself and men from each other. Hence it is indispensable to all who work for peace and goodwill among men. Not only the alienation of men from God, but their alienation from one another – the estrangement of classes within the same society, the estrangement of nations and races within the great family of humanity – yield in the last resort to love alone. Impartial justice, arbitrating from without, can do little for them. But a spirit delivered from pride and made truly humble by repentance, a spirit purged from selfishness and able in the power of Christ's love to see its neighbour's interest as its own, will prove victorious in the class of rivalries of capital and labour, and in the international rivalries that are now devastating the world. It is in its all-reconciling power that Paul sees most clearly the absoluteness and finality of the Christian religion. The centrality and absoluteness of the reconciliation...make it in the New Testament the basis of far-reaching inferences of every kind.¹³

¹² See de Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, p. 46; John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Leicester: IVP, 1986), p. 192.

¹³ Denney, *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, pp. 329-330.

It is to some of these “far-reaching inferences” that we now turn, particularly in relation to the church as an agent of reconciliation.

THE CHURCH AS AN AGENT OF RECONCILIATION

In Ephesians, we find the church to be a multi-ethnic community – God’s new humanity. Commenting on how the doctrine of reconciliation is applied to the Ephesian context and to ethnic problems in the church, Ralph Martin writes:

Bound up with [the] far-reaching prospect of a transnational, multiracial Christian community as a novel entity on the world stage is the promise that this society mirrors as in a microcosm the hope of the world and the universe, at present divided and at odds with its creator.¹⁴

Then in Colossians we are presented with that breathtaking vision of cosmic reconciliation (Col. 1:15-20), echoing themes of Romans 8:19-21, and similar to those comprehensive visions of the Old Testament, found for instance in Isaiah 19:19-25; 65, 66, in Zephaniah 3:9, and in Zechariah 14:6. Such a future vision must be anticipated in the present, specifically in allowing it to shape local churches into communities of hope. John de Gruchy’s stirring words bring together the themes of reconciliation, mission and hope:

The gospel of reconciliation thus leads directly to defining the mission of the Church in the world, namely to proclaim the gospel of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:11-20) and the eschatological hope of God’s restoration and renewal of the whole creation.

¹⁴ Martin, *Reconciliation*, p. 232.

The Church is God's reconciled and reconciling community, God's new humanity, a sign and a witness of God's purpose for the whole inhabited universe... Complete reconciliation is a future hope that shapes the way in which we live our lives.¹⁵

The great eschatological vision in the Old Testament sees not only the peoples of the earth coming to Yahweh, but all their achievements, wealth and glory, being brought purified into the New Jerusalem, the new heavens and new earth (Isa. 19, 60:5; Zeph. 3:9; Zech. 14:6). Somehow, all of our human activity and the whole of creation will share in the liberating rule of God. There is hope for the world! For Paul, the great future vision of reconciliation brings hope for the present. It means we can live transformed lives and be agents of reconciliation as we anticipate the fulfilment of God's promise that all things will be reconciled to God through the blood of Christ's cross. A vision of this magnitude can have a transforming effect on our relationships with the "other". For instance, in divided societies, the diversity of a church community united in Christ is a powerful testimony as to how the gospel transcends ethnic and racial barriers. In other words, a foretaste of God's ultimate reconciling work is already present in creation – in the church. And so we now ask how this might relate to the Malaysian church in particular.

THE MALAYSIAN CHURCH: A RACIALLY RECONCILED COMMUNITY?

Having celebrated 50 years of independence in August 2007, Malaysia has much to be proud of. But substantial racial integration remains illusive. Significant complexities surround this issue but for the purpose of this essay, consider the following question: What role do churches have in a divided society in search of racial integration?

¹⁵ de Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, pp. 55-56.

Since Malaysia's independence, many have pinned their hopes on the education system to provide the necessary foundations for racial integration, and on the local school as a place where such integration can be seen in action, preparing each generation for the reality of *Bangsa Malaysia*.¹⁶ But recent research has shown that in this aspect, at least, the education system may have failed.¹⁷ Of course, it continues to be a worthy goal for a school system to pursue. We need to provide our children with contexts in which they can learn to interact with their peers from other ethnic groups and to appreciate from an early age the rich diversity of Malaysia's multicultural life. Research has shown that people who have experienced significant "prior interracial contact in schools and neighbourhoods [are] more likely, as adults, to have more racially diverse general social groups and friendship circles."¹⁸ But if schools (and neighbourhoods) are providing only superficial rather than significant prior contact, where can the latter occur and where can a racially reconciled community be seen in action? One answer, surely, is the local church. But instead of functioning as models to the wider society of what reconciled communities look like, Malaysian churches are often just as racially segregated as the world around them.

¹⁶ For those unfamiliar with the Malaysian context, the phrase *Bangsa Malaysia* was used by the former Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohammad in 1991, to express the desired goal of national unity. It is the first of nine strategic challenges contained in *Vision 2020* – the vision for Malaysia to reach developed nation status. *Bangsa* is a Malay word meaning "race, nationality; belonging to a race, or nationality". *Bangsa Malaysia* means "Malaysian nationality", "Malaysian People" or "United Malaysian People".

¹⁷ See Lee Hock Guan, "Globalisation and Ethnic Integration in Malaysian Education", in *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges*, ed. Saw Swee-Hock and K. Kesavapany (Singapore: Institute of South East Asian Studies, 2006), pp. 230-259.

¹⁸ Michael O. Emerson, Rachel Tolbert Kimbro, George Yancey, "Contact Theory Extended: The Effects of Prior Racial Contact on Current Social Ties", *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 83 Issue 3 (September 2002): 745.

If we agree that reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel, and since the gospel transcends the barriers of race, ethnicity and culture, and because the church is the most inclusive community on earth, surely the local church is to be a community of hope in a fragmented world. As Denney puts it: "The life of reconciliation is a life which itself exercises a reconciling power." So in Malaysia, the church has the task of not only proclaiming the message of reconciliation to all Malaysians, but of embodying the concrete implications of that message in its community life, so that Malaysians of all races and sections of the community can look at a local church and see the gospel fleshed out in a racially reconciled group of people who can work, worship and witness *together*. But several objections, or at least concerns, may indeed be raised. A response to three of the most common is offered here.

1. *Surely Malaysian society is too diverse for us to expect any sort of multiracial, multiethnic local church to take root and realistically function?*

Has such a phenomenon happened elsewhere? Can solid examples be provided? In response, we would do well to remind ourselves that the first-century Mediterranean world in which the church took root was arguably a more complex and diverse place than twenty-first century Malaysia. We forget the great diversity not just of the first-century Gentile world but of Judaism itself. And yet, in such a diverse world, multiracial and multilingual Christian congregations were planted and grew.

Studies of the New Testament churches have provided evidence to support the view that many early Christian congregations were multiracial and multilingual and that this diversity was intentional rather than

¹⁹ See Paul J. Achtemeier, *The Search for Unity in the New Testament Church: A Study in Paul and Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987). Also, Rene Padilla, *Mission Between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1985), pp. 142-169.

accidental.¹⁹ In terms of its multicultural inclusiveness, Pentecost was no ecclesiastical blip. The Holy Spirit propelled the church in the direction already set in the Old Testament concerning the ingathering of all nations into the people of God (Gen. 12:1-3; Isa. 19:16-25; 60; Jer. 12:14-16; Zeph. 3:9; Zech. 14:6). What Abraham saw by faith was now reality – the multicultural, multiracial church. John Stott says of Pentecost: “Nothing could have demonstrated more clearly than this the multiracial, multinational, multilingual nature of the kingdom of Christ.” Pentecost therefore “symbolized a new unity in the Spirit transcending racial, national and linguistic barriers.”²⁰ In their stimulating book, the authors of *United by Faith* underline how the early Christian churches “produced a movement for social unity across the great divide of culture, tradition, class and race. Ultimately, the unity of the first-century church was the result of the miracle of reconciliation...”²¹ Without mincing his words, Tom Wright believes that “If our churches are still divided in any way along racial or cultural lines, [Paul] would say that our gospel, our very grasp of the meaning of Jesus’ death, is called into question.”²²

2. Does this mean we have to relinquish our cultural distinctiveness? Is not a uniraical congregation the best context for the fullest expression of my God-given culture?

Here we should remember that the reconciling of different racial groups into one congregation does not inevitably have to lead to dull uniformity. Developing a multiracial congregation is not about excluding diversity from the life of the church. The aim is integration, not assimilation.

²⁰ John Stott, *The Message of Acts*. The Bible Speaks Today Series. (Leicester: IVP, 1990), p. 68.

²¹ Curtiss Paul De Young, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, Karen Chai Kim, *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 37.

²² Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone* (London: SPCK, 2002), p. 27.

In speaking about the gospel of reconciliation, we are indeed speaking about a unity in Christ. Nevertheless, reconciliation is not homogenization. Part of the uniqueness of the Christian gospel of reconciliation is that it unites people of all cultures, ethnic groups and languages, while at the same time allowing people to maintain the distinctiveness of their own culture. Biblical reconciliation affirms cultural pluralism.

The African scholar Lamin Sanneh has effectively shown that Christian mission in Africa and Asia has contributed to the preserving of cultures and languages which would otherwise have drifted into extinction.²³ The main factor enabling such preservation was the encouragement given to local people to use the vernacular to express their Christian faith. Dictionaries and grammars were compiled and published with the effect of breathing life into little known cultures and languages. In contrast to Islam, in which Arabic must be accepted as the language of faith, and which entails praying towards Mecca and endeavouring to do pilgrimage to Mecca, Christianity views all cultures as suitable for Christianity to take root in and be expressed through. Cultural diversity is celebrated within the Body of Christ, making the church arguably the most diverse and inclusive community on earth.

This raises the issue of identity which can so easily become sacralized, with cultural and religious loyalties becoming blurred so that one's identity is taken primarily from one's cultural and ethnic group. The Bible clearly recognizes the rich diversity of cultures in God's creation and Christians can celebrate this within the church. However, Christians are also part of the worldwide body of Christ and our local, ethnic identities must come under our allegiance to Christ and our bond with believers around the world. We need to embody what Vinoth Ramachandra describes as "a true

²³ See Lamin Sanneh, "Pluralism and Christian Commitment", *Theology Today*, Vol. 45 (April 1988): 21-33.

globality.” Describing “globalism” as a “false universalism”, Ramachandra proposes both Gospel and Church as “true universalism”²⁴ :

The gospel that creates the Church has a universal scope and intent, simply because its content is universal: it announces the dawn of God’s future for humanity and the non-human creation. But this message is articulated and enacted through particular, local events. ‘The Word became flesh and dwelt among us’ (John 1:14). Through the incarnation (a unique, local embodiment of the global presence of God) and the atoning death of Christ, we are united both to God as the centre and also to one another. The dividing walls of gender, ethnicity, age, economic class and social status are all broken down (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:14-22)... Christian conversion involves a new *belonging* – this new global family takes precedence over our biological, ethnic and national loyalties.²⁵

And Ramachandra’s point can be further employed in response to the third and final objection:

3. Is not evangelism more effective when conducted by a uniracial congregation and when the outcome is the establishment of a uniracial congregation?

There is truth in the oft-quoted observation of Donald McGavran that “men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers.”²⁶ From this, the Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP) was developed: that churches should be planted among people who share

²⁵ Ibid, p. 20.

²⁶ Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans, 1970), p. 198.

significant similarities culturally, socio-economically and linguistically. This kind of thinking continues to influence mission strategies built around the people-group concept. Unreached people are classified into specific people-groups and the aim is to plant churches among each group. But this kind of thinking is flawed both anthropologically and theologically. Not only does such thinking reflect the social anthropological theory of functionalism which tends to view culture in static, bounded categories, failing to appreciate its porosity and how one culture interacts and relates to others,²⁷ but questions have also been raised as to whether ethnically united churches are really essential for evangelism and defensible biblically and theologically.²⁸ Certainly, people-group thinking has brought the needs of diverse peoples to the attention of the church, and many would agree that working with one cultural group is a useful starting point in evangelism. However, in the sharing of the gospel itself, and in the discipleship that follows, new Christians and young congregations need to know that they are part of the multiethnic people of God and, where possible, they should have the opportunity to connect with and give visible expression to what it means to be part of the global body of Christ. And without this deliberate cultivation of “true globality,” we are in danger of hindering the church’s mission of peacemaking.

If church communities are intentionally made up of people who come largely from the same ethnic background, sharing the same cultural identity markers, such churches may end up reinforcing divisions already

²⁷ See Charles R. Taber, *The World is Too Much With Us: ‘Culture’ in Modern Protestant Missions* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1991), pp. 94-108; 140-145.

²⁸ See the Lausanne Movement discussion in “The Pasadena Statement: A Colloquium on the Homogeneous Unit Principle” (1977), contained with other Lausanne documents in John Stott, *Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989* (Grand Rapids / Carlisle: Wm. Eerdmans / Paternoster, 1996), pp. 59-72. Also Wilbert R. Shenk (ed), *Exploring Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

present in society. When a church identifies primarily with one particular culture, it can lack the capacity to speak prophetically against the idolatry of ethnicity. As Chris Sugden somewhere puts it, the gospel is meant to create a community marked by a mutuality of relationship where people have to find their identity in partnership with others who are *different* from them. But in a church community where almost everyone is the same, how effective will that community be in reaching out to those who are different and considered “outsiders”? Indeed, how effective will they be in identifying with those perceived to be the “enemy”? In short, it is difficult for such churches to be agents of reconciliation in divided communities.

CONCLUSION

The fruit of reconciliation is peace. The followers of the Prince of Peace are called to be peacemakers and so to offer the gift of God’s *shalom* to the wider world. The ability of the church to exercise a substantial peacemaking mission in a divided society is in direct proportion to its understanding of the scope of the reconciliation which is at the heart of the gospel. The greater our understanding of the breadth of God’s reconciling work in Christ, the greater our God-given mission of peacemaking will be felt in this broken world. The future vision of the reconciliation of all things not only spurs us on in sharing the reconciling love of Christ in word and deed with all Malaysians, it must also be allowed to shape our present work and witness so that our local churches can be communities of hope in every area of Malaysian life, transcending the barriers of race and ethnicity and so pointing forward to the ultimate reality of the renewed and transformed earth and the recovery of true human community.

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Use of Second Personal Pronoun “You” in Preaching¹

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INTRODUCTION

Many preachers (including this writer) were taught to use the first personal pronoun (“we”) or third personal pronoun (“they”) instead of the second person (“you”) in preaching. The use of “you” was uncommon in the homiletics classes that this writer had attended or taught. This usage is also rare as it can be shown in a literature survey on the topic of homiletics. This paper attempts to demonstrate the need for using the “you” in preaching.

USE “YOU” THROUGHOUT THE SERMON

Adams recommends the usage of the second personal pronoun “you” throughout the sermon from introduction to conclusion. His excellent explanation is given here:

A minister stands before God’s people neither as an objective observer nor in his own right, but as a “man from God” (2 Tim. 3:17). He is a keryx (the Greek word for “herald”)...The herald is a person with authority, one commissioned to deliver messages from God. In the pulpit, therefore, he identifies, not

¹Major parts of this paper are drawn from this writer’s dissertation: Tie King Tai, *Essential Elements of Relevant Application in Preaching* (Unpublished Dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2001).

with the recipients of God's Word, but with God; he also identifies with the writers of biblical books and with Jesus and the apostles whenever they speak in various preaching portions. Identify with the right person and you will know how you ought to preach. Then, only then, will you be in a proper relationship to God and your congregation... The dominant pronoun in his preaching is you... The prevailing tenses he uses are the present and the future. The herald preaches the Bible, not as a book describing what God did or said in time past, but as God's present Word to the people of God gathered before him.²

Adams also gives an excellent illustration on using the second personal pronoun instead of the first person pronoun:

You are driving down the street and run a red light. A police car comes out of nowhere and tails you with light flashing. You pull over. The officer gets out of his car, comes to your window, and says, "We went through a red light, didn't we? Let's have a look at our licenses. I will write us a ticket, and we will have to pay a fine or go to jail."

"Ridiculous!" you say.

Of course. But no more ridiculous than some preachers sound. The policeman comes with authority. He says, "You went through a red light. Let me see your license, etc." He uses the second person "you" throughout the unpleasant experience... Now, tell me, why should you accept the authority of God vested in the state and in the police officer as its agent and not accept the authority of God's Word vested in His church and in its agent, the preacher?³

²Jay E. Adams, *Truth Applied: Application in Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1990), p. 27.

³Adams, *Truth*, pp. 30-31.

Language is the preacher's primary tool, and he should be thoroughly skilled in its strengths and subtleties. A carelessly or wrongly selected word may confuse or mislead a congregation.⁴ The language in preaching is contemporary, everyday speech, vivid, concrete, exploding with active verbs, simple, and straightforward. This language is to be dominated by the second person ("you")⁵ rather than the third ("they")⁶ or even the first ("we").

⁴ J. Stewart Miller, "Effective Preaching: A Cluster of Conditions", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36.2 (1983): 229-241, here p. 239.

⁵ This writer recommends more research to be done on the usage of "you" in preaching. In the humble opinion of this writer, this area of concern in preaching needs to be researched and addressed more for the following reasons:

Firstly, the older people in the congregation may resent the usage of too many "you's" in preaching, especially when the sermon is preached by younger or lady pastors. During one of the classes on Homiletics, in which this writer was teaching, four church members were invited to share their experiences of listening to sermons so that the students might get a feel of what members thought about preaching. The two older members (45-60 years old) voiced out their resentment towards the usage of "you" in preaching, while the other two younger members (late 20's and early 30's) expressed an opposite sentiment. That is, the younger ones liked the straightforward style of using "you."

Maybe a seminar on "The Art of Listening to Sermons" should be conducted in churches in order that church members would understand and realize the authority vested in the pulpits and that they would be more submissive to the Word of God preached to them. Or perhaps another researcher should write a dissertation on "Essential Elements of Relevant Application in Listening to Sermons" after this researcher's dissertation on "Essential Elements of Relevant Application in Preaching."

Secondly, in the Doctor of Ministry project that this writer conducted, the older and lady pastors used less of "you" even after the teaching seminar (compared with the younger and male pastors). Two of them even decreased the number of times they used "you" after the seminar! A research could be done to uncover the reasons behind.

Thirdly, Adams' emphasis on using "you" throughout the sermons should be re-examined and re-emphasized (if found necessary) in order that preachers might exercise the authority vested in them appropriately, powerfully, yet lovingly (Tie, *Essential Elements*, pp. 163-66).

⁶ Adams, *Truth*, p. 107.

Adams' emphasis is biblical. Here are some biblical examples of sermons whereby the preachers used the second person pronoun in the majority. For example, in Matthew 5:12-26 (NIV) of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus used at least ten second-person "you" compared to thirteen first-person and third-person pronouns. In Acts 3:12-26 (NIV), Peter used at least twenty second-person pronouns compared to forty-nine first plus third persons.

Robinson also states that "the personal pronoun 'you' gives both minister and audience a sense of oneness. While 'you' can be effective, at other times the preacher will say 'we' because he means 'you and I.'"⁷

He explains that "sermons use direct address. While a writer may say, 'In their conversations, Christians must be careful of how they speak about others,' a preacher will most likely say, 'You must be careful of how you talk about others.'"⁸

In a more recent book, Robinson emphasizes that after the explanation of the text, "it's appropriate for the preacher to leave behind 'we' in favor of 'you.' No longer is the preacher representing the people to God; he is representing God to the people...it's you – not you plural but you singular – you personally who must decide what you will do with the truth you've heard. For the preacher to say 'you' at that point isn't arrogant; he's standing apart from the congregation. He's simply challenging each listener to make personal application."⁹

⁷ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1980 & 2001), pp. 184, 192-3.

⁸ Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, p. 192.

⁹ Haddon W. Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Eds.), *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2005), p. 299.

A WORD OF CAUTION

However, a preacher needs to be careful in using the second person pronoun by taking note of at least three things:

Firstly, he must be sure that he is not "lording it over the flock."¹⁰ Secondly, he should use examples and illustrations from his own life in which he "goofed," failed, or were the butt of some jokes so that the congregation will recognize clearly how he makes a distinction between him as a person and him as a preacher. Thirdly, he needs to emphasize directly, at times, that he is a herald from God by saying: "Don't think I have invented this stupendous truth out of the whole cloth. This is God's gracious promise!" Or, in regard to rebuke: "Please listen carefully to what God says. He's the One who says this, not I!"¹¹

When the preacher, as a herald, uses "you," he does not want to abuse or misuse it. Especially in an Eastern culture context such as that of the Chinese or Iban, the preacher needs to use it discreetly, humbly, and wisely.¹² Nevertheless, he needs to make good use of it in order to bring across the message directly, personally, and powerfully to the listeners. Also, he needs to take note that the word "you" in English can be singular or plural. However, it is different in Chinese; there are two different Chinese characters for the word "you". The Chinese character

¹⁰ The preacher's relationship with his or her congregation also decides the effectiveness of using "you" in preaching. This writer knows of a lady pastor whose relationship with her church leaders and members is so good that they actually look forward to her scolding or rebuking by using "you." And they serve happily and willingly with her.

¹¹ Adams, *Truth*, pp. 29-30.

¹² It would be most effective to use "you" affirmatively or positively. In doing so, the preacher commends the congregation in their good points such as "you are faithful in your ministry" or "you are most generous in your giving" or "you are most loving in taking care of the poor and hungry" etc.

in singular is “ni.” The plural is “ni men.”¹³ Using the singular “ni” is preferable because, again, it is more direct, personal, and powerful.¹⁴ “Ni” is also preferable because “ni men” sounds judgmental and awkward to the ears of the audience as it covers all who are listening but who might not need that part of the message.

CONCLUSION

Even though many preachers were commonly taught to use “we” or “they” in preaching, this paper has attempted to demonstrate the need to use “you” in preaching so that the preachers may exercise wisely and lovingly the authority that God has given to them in preaching the Word powerfully and personally.

¹³ On July 27, 2007, after this writer presented this paper to the faculty (consisting of both Chinese and Iban lecturers) of Methodist Theological School, the Iban lecturers explained that different pronouns are also being used in Iban, namely “nuan” for the singular “you” and “kita” for the plural “you all.” “Kitai” is “we.”

¹⁴ As this writer was pondering over the usage of this pronoun during the dissertation project, a lady pastor cum qualified trainer of Children Evangelism Fellowship from Taiwan came to Sibul, Malaysia to train the local pastors in writing Sunday School curriculum materials for children. She also emphasized the use of “you” in singular (“ni”) when they wrote the materials and when the Sunday School teachers taught the children. By using “we” or “you” in plural, the children might not be able to receive the gospel message and other messages of God personally. But by using “you” in singular, the children would realize that the materials or the teachers were talking to them directly and personally. Therefore they would apply the truth in their lives personally.

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Do We Have to Sing “Amen”?

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INTRODUCTION

In issue 541 (4/15/2004) of the *Methodist Message*, I wrote an article on the issue of singing “amen” at the end of a hymn. In the article, I made a strong challenge for its discontinuation. Many people have responded either positively or negatively to my conclusion. Some were probably surprised at my conclusion. Have we been wrong all this while in singing “amen” at the end of a hymn? Since the previous article has raised some eyebrows, I would like to make a clearer explanation here in order to provide a better understanding of the issue.

MEANING AND USAGE OF “AMEN” IN THE BIBLE

The word “amen” in Hebrew means “so be it” or “truly.” It is a declaration of affirmation found in the Old Testament (OT), the New Testament (NT), and in the Quran.¹ “Amen” has been adopted in Christian worship as a concluding formula for prayers and hymns, and the English translations of “amen” include “verily”, “truly”, “so be it”, and “let it be”.²

In the OT, “amen” is commonly used in commands, blessings, curses, doxologies, and prayers.³ Fundamentally, it is used to confirm what has

¹ “Amen”, *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amen>>. Date Accessed: 17/01/2007.

² *Ibid.*

³ Geoffrey Chew and Edward Foley, “Amen,” in *The New Grove Dictionary for Music and Musicians*, Vol.1, Edited by Stanley Sadie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 463-64, here p. 463.

been previously said by way of response (Num 5:22; Deut 27:15-26; 1 Kgs 1:36; Jer. 11:5; 28:6; 1 Chr. 16:36; Neh. 5:13; 8:6).⁴ Another common use of "amen" is in the conclusion of a doxology (1 Chr. 16:36; Ps. 41:13; 106:48).⁵

In the NT, "amen" is always used with discretion, purpose, and meaning. It appears in benedictions, prayers, doxologies, and other religious phrasing. There are fifty-four occasions where Jesus used "amen" in the synoptic gospels, and all are translated as "truly" by the RSV. In most cases, Jesus prefaced some important statements with the term, "Truly, I say to you?" (Matt 5:18, 26; 6:5; 10:15; 13:17) while all the twenty-five occurrences of the double form of "amen" ("Amen, Amen") in the Gospel of John (John 1:51; 3:3; 5:19, 24, 25; 12:24; 14:12; etc) signify the force of the superlative⁶ and stress both the authority of his teaching and his majesty.⁷

Paul usually used "amen" in his written benedictions, which appears in the body of his letters as well as at the end (Rom 15:33; 16:27; 1 Cor. 16:24; Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:20; 1 Tim. 6:16); and following a doxology (Rom. 11:36; Gal. 1:5; Eph. 3:21). Both demonstrate a liturgical and a literacy usage.⁸ John used "amen" nine times in a variety of ways in Revelation, and the term reaches its climatic application as a name for Jesus Christ, where Jesus calls himself, "the Amen, the faithful and true witness" (Rev 3:14). An "amen" concludes the NT at Revelation 22:21.⁹

⁴ Bruce Chilton, "Amen," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 1, Edited by David Noel Freedman et al (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 184-86, here p. 184.

⁵ G. B. Funderburk, "Amen," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, Edited by Merrill C. Tenny (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), pp. 127-28, here p. 127.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Klyne R. Snodgrass, "Amen," in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, Edited by Walter A. Elwell (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 69.

⁸ Chew and Foley, "Amen"; and Funderburk, "Amen".

⁹ Funderburk, "Amen"; and "Amen", *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*.

From the above survey, “amen” is used basically in two ways. The first usage is as a preface to introduce or emphasize what is going to be proclaimed. In this usage, “amen” is always placed at the beginning of the statement, not at the end. The second way is used as an act of response. This is the response to what has been said by someone else. It is not a self-response to what has been said by oneself. Erik Routley¹⁰ commented that this is the only liturgical use of “amen”, and this is of immense importance.¹¹

THE ORIGIN OF SINGING “AMEN”

In the fourth century AD, there were heresies which doubted the deity of Jesus Christ. To overcome this problem, Bishop Ambrose added the Doxology at the end of each hymn to affirm the belief in the Trinitarian God, and “amen” was sung at the end of the Doxology.¹²

During the Middle Ages, when congregational singing lost its birthright to the trained clergies and musicians, the congregation only responded with an “amen” at the end of the hymn to express their accord with what has been sung. However, during the Reformation, Martin Luther restored congregational singing, and he abolished the former practice of singing

¹⁰ Erik Routley, PhD (1917-1982) was an Englishman, an ordained minister of the Congregational Church, and President of the Congregational Church of England and Wales (1970-1971). Erik held positions in the following: first chair of the Doctrine & Worship Committee of the United Reformed Church, visiting professor and director of music at Princeton Theological Seminary, professor of church music and director of the chapel at Westminster Choir College, Princeton, which he joined in 1975. He was regarded as the most influential hymnologist of his generation. See Carlton Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), p. 821.

¹¹ Erik Routley, *Church Music and the Christian Faith* (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1980), p. 96.

¹² Loh I-to and Ling Yi Juan, *Companion to The New Century Hymn* (Taipei: Church Music Committee of Presbyterian Church of Taiwan & Church Music Research Center of Tainan Theological College & Seminary, 2003), p. 27.

"amen." The present implication is that we do not have to reaffirm what we have sung by restating "this is truly" or "I agree" at the end of a hymn. This non-usage continued to the nineteenth century, in both the British and American church traditions. The renowned hymnist, Isaac Watts, the Father of English hymnody, and also the co-founders of Methodism, John and Charles Wesley, never used "amen" at the end of their hymns.¹³

In 1833, the Oxford Movement was interested in medieval hymnody and regarded "the medieval culture alone was the pure, religious culture, and medieval hymnody the proper norm for all other hymnody."¹⁴ Thus, the translation of hymns was done from Latin to English. Without knowing the history, the movement translated the "amen" as well. Also, at this time, the musical style of the hymns were "composed for the meters of the poetry of the texts, and the amens were usually two short syllables added to the final stanza, so the music of the hymn tune did not accommodate them. As a result, the doxological "amen" was added to the final stanza following the completion of its singing, usually set to the familiar IV-I plagal or "amen" cadence.¹⁵

Consequently, even the most well-known hymnal of its time, the *Hymns Ancient & Modern*, included the "amen" at the end of every hymn. Thus, the English Church began singing "amen" again. With this inclusion, other mainline churches also picked up the practice. It was not until 1920 that the Church of England realized its mistake and thus dropped the "amen."¹⁶ Soon after this, the other churches began to drop the "amen" as well.

¹³ Loh and Ling, *Companion to The New Century Hymn*, p. 27; and Routley, *Church Music and the Christian Faith*, pp. 97-98.

¹⁴ Routley, *Church Music and the Christian Faith*, p. 98.

¹⁵ Dean McIntyre, "Why Don't We Sing Amens Anymore?" Available on: <http://www.gbod.org/worship/music/articles.asp?act=reader&item=2773&loc_id=17,387>, Date Accessed: 17/01/2007.

¹⁶ Loh and Ling, *Companion to The New Century Hymn*, p. 28.

SINGING “AMEN” AMONG THE METHODIST CIRCLES

In the circle of Methodist hymnody, Erik Routley’s book *Church Music and the Christian Faith* had a great impact on Dr Carlton C. Young, the editor of the 1966 and 1989 *United Methodist Hymnals*, and other editorial members. Thus, they followed the trend by dropping the “amen” in order to reclaim their Methodist heritage and practise a more Christian way of hymn singing. The practice of adding “amen” to hymns in the United Methodist congregations has almost totally disappeared, and it has ceased to be an issue.¹⁷

Most of the English-speaking congregations of the Methodist Church in Sarawak are using *The United Methodist Hymnal* (1989), thus the singing of “amen” is not an issue. However, the Chinese-speaking congregations are still using the *Hymns of Universal Praise* and the singing of “amen” at the end of a hymn is a common practice. Now with a proper understanding of the meaning and the historical background of singing “amen,” we need to reflect further on this issue. Dropping the singing of “amen” is a sensitive issue, and it could even come as a shock to many congregations. However, we need to be aware of its historical development, and reflect on this issue so as to be able to sing “in spirit and in truth.”

WHEN TO SING “AMEN”?

When should we sing “amen” and when should we drop “amen”? Dr Young recommended the following guidelines in his *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*: “With the exception of the end of prayers and doxological stanzas or where the composer has written the music

¹⁷ McIntyre, “Why Don’t We Sing Amens Anymore?”

¹⁸ Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 139. However, it seems that he does not always follow his own suggestion. There is inconsistency in the use of these guidelines. In the *United Methodist Hymnal*, “amen” is sung only in the Doxology

for an amen, the amen is recommended for deletion.”¹⁸ In my correspondence with Dr Young, he said:

....if you will re-read pages 581 in the *Companion*, you will see in Routley’s and my views there is no theological justification for adding amens to all hymns. In the instance of SE Asian Protestant churches it’s a practice that missionaries at the close of the 19th century and into the mid-20th century thought correct and worshipful, and planted it into the psyche of new Christians.

He further commented that “If adding amens strengthens a church’s congregational singing, and contributes to the growth of corporate and individual piety and prayer life, then they should be sung.”

If so, why sing them at the end of all hymns? For a really bad use of the “amen”, see the penultimate line of “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” that reads in English, “let the amen sound from his people again.” Singing another “amen” at the end of that hymn, dynamic level *mezzo piano* or *piano*, seems redundant and perhaps absurd.

I fully agree with what Dr Young has said. In one of the Methodist Theological School (MTS) Faculty meetings, some of the lecturers also pointed out that the singing of “amen” has become an expression of faith, for it unites people in harmony and reaffirms what has been sung. For Christians who have been singing “amen” ever since they joined the church, they will feel lost or that something is missing or incomplete psychologically and sentimentally if it is dropped. Under these circumstances, we should

(UMH 70,71, 82, 91,95, 651), Lord’s Prayer (UMH 270, 271), and music pieces specially composed for the “amen” (UMH 184, 668, 692). As I corresponded with Dr Young about this inconsistency, he responded in an email on 28/1/2007 admitting that the guidelines are not always observed.

sing “amen” as Dr Young has recommended. However, it is not appropriate for all hymns. So the pastor or worship and music leader should decide when to sing “amen” or and when not to.

The *Hymns of Universal Praise* (1977 edition) indicates that the word “amen” printed in the usual way after hymns of prayer and praise serves as a form of direct address to God; whereas after other hymns, some people consider its use as not so appropriate, and so it is placed in parentheses.¹⁹ However, most of the church members sing “amen” all the time regardless of the suggestions.

The *Hymns of Universal Praise* (2006 edition) which was released recently seems to follow the same recommendation as *The United Methodist Hymnal*. However, there is no explanation on the use of “amen” in the preface. With this new edition of the hymnal, I think the common practice of singing “amen” at the end of the hymns will be changed. However, since most churches might not be using the new hymnal, it means the issue of singing “amen” will continue for some time!

SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO DROP “AMEN”

If you have decided to drop the singing of “amen” at the end of a hymn, you will need to explain the biblical meaning of “amen” and the history of singing “amen” to the congregation before you take any action. You should also convince the congregation why and when they should drop the “amen.” The explanation could be done in the following ways: make the announcement before the worship service, print the announcement in the church bulletin, conduct seminars and workshops to educate the whole church, and teach through the pastor’s preaching from the pulpit.

During hymn singing, when the end of a hymn is reached, the pianist or organist, and the worship and music leader can purposely sustain the

¹⁹ *Hymns of Universal Praise* (Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature Council, 1977), Preface.

last note of the music for an extra two beats or more in place of singing the "amen."

CONCLUSION

"Amen" is a strong biblical expression with different specific usages. Singing "amen" at one time in the church was an act of response. However, as the context has varied, singing "amen" was no longer required after the Reformation period in the Protestant churches. But due to a historical "mistake" that crept in during the time of the Oxford Movement, the practice of singing "amen" at the end of the hymn has continued and persists till today. Furthermore, we have seen that there is no theological basis for singing "amen" at the end of every hymn.

Since we are singing from the bottom of our hearts, we do not have to pronounce again an "amen" which would mean "I agree with what I sing." Today, as we have learnt from its historical development and usage, it is with God's wisdom that I recommend that we learn to drop the singing of "amen" at the end of most hymns and know when to use it at other appropriate times. This will ensure that we return to a more Methodist and more Christian way of expressing our faith through our singing.

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Train Up a Child: A Re-examination of Proverbs 22:6

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This is a familiar verse for many of us, especially when we talk about parenting and how to train up a child from the biblical perspective. The verse is usually translated more or less as follows: “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”¹ As such, this verse seems to say that if parents are able to train their children in the right way (God’s way), then they will not go astray, even when they reach adulthood.

However, in Hebrew, there is no equivalent for the English word “should.” If translated literally, the clause “in the way he should go” should be “according to his way.”²

Furthermore, the verb “train” in Hebrew is literally “dedicate.”³ In this context, the dedication implies continual training with emphasis on

¹ This includes most of the common translations like NIV, RSV, KJV, and NASB.

² Cf. Derek Kidner, *Proverbs* (TOTC; Leicester: IVP, 1964), p. 147; Douglas Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, Kentucky: The Westminster Press, 2001), p. 43. See also a discussion on this issue by Gordon P. Hugenberger, “Train Up a Child”, in Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), pp. 284-5. Bruce K. Waltke translated the clause as “according to what his way dictate.” See Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), p. 194.

³ In other occurrences in the Old Testament, the verb refers to dedicating a house (Deut. 20:5) or a temple (1 Kgs. 8:63; 2 Chr. 7:5).

inauguration and consecration. In the book of Proverbs, this refers to the moral and religious teachings.⁴

Thus, a more literal translation of the whole verse goes like this: “Dedicate a child according to his (own) way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it.” As such, the verse serves more as a solemn warning rather than a promise.⁵ The main point of the verse is that if a child is left on his own, for example, if he is allowed to be selfish in dealing with others, he will remain as such even when he becomes old.⁶

Seen in this light, the teaching is presented in a sarcastic manner, which is not uncommon in wisdom literature such as Proverbs.⁷ In other words, the verse emphasizes the importance of discipline. Another verse has a similar meaning: “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.”⁸

However, as noted by Douglas Stuart⁹, since this involves a familiar verse, usually the modern translations will try not to deviate from the traditionally accepted wording. After all, the traditionally accepted wording is theologically sound. I presume that is one of the reasons why most of the modern translations continue to keep it. Another reason is the fear that people will not buy a Bible in which the wordings of their favourite verses have been changed.¹⁰ If you continue to adhere to the traditional view on this verse, it is alright.

⁴ Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31*, p. 204.

⁵ Hugenberger, “Train Up a Child”, p. 285.

⁶ Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis*, p. 43.

⁷ Hugenberger, “Train Up a Child”, p. 285.

⁸ Prov 29:15. Quoted from the RSV Bible.

⁹ Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis*, p. 43.

¹⁰ See Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis*, p. 43. This is attested by one of my former lecturers, Dr Graham Ogden, a retired Old Testament scholar as well as a translation consultant with the United Bible Society (UBS), who mentioned another similar case in Isa 7:14.

In translating the Bible from its original languages (mainly Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament¹¹) into another language, there are some occasions whereby the translation may not be that accurate; but we should not doubt the authority of the translated Bible as the inspired Word of God, for throughout the different parts of the world, many lives of different people groups have been saved and transformed through the different translated versions of the Bible.

¹¹ Both are quite different from modern Hebrew and modern Greek.

“保罗新观”简介

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引言

一直以来，犹太教都被视为是一个律法主义的宗教，即藉着行律法来赚取救恩的宗教。所以，保罗与犹太教之间的张力在于，保罗觉悟到，对有限的人来说，“因行律法称义”只是一个海底捞月，可望不可求的理想。这也是“传统路德观”认为保罗提倡“因信称义”的原因。然而，自1970年代，这个看法在探讨保罗与犹太教关系的学术论坛上不再独占鳌头。这是因为一个称为“保罗新观”的崭新看法破茧而出，不只否定了犹太教是一个律法主义的宗教，更在学术界的 research 上开始广受欢迎。

然而，可悲的是，对马来西亚华人教会的一般信徒而言，“保罗新观”仍然是一个不太熟悉的词汇。¹究竟“保罗新观”的内容为何？其对犹太教的律法主义又带来一个怎样的挑战？其倡导者为何人？这个新观点是否从此将传统路德的旧观点打入冷宫？抑或仍有学者对旧观点紧握不放，并对之提出有利的辩护？这些学者为何人？他们的论证是否能够击倒“保罗

¹ 在学术界中，那些应用“保罗新观”来解经的亚洲学者仅有 Ezra Hon-Seng Kok, *The Truth of the Gospel: A Study in Galatians 2:15-21* (Jian Dao Dissertation Series 7; Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, 2000); Tet-Lim N. Yee, *Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation: Paul's Jewish Identity and Ephesians* (SNTSMS 130; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). 以中文来介绍或评述“保罗新观”的仅有卢龙光:《保罗新观: 罗马书的主题与目的》(台中: 东海大学, 2007); 吴慧仪:“从保罗新观看圣经研究对福音信仰之贡献与挑战,”《中国神学研究院期刊》,第44期(2008),页13-29; 郭汉成:《加拉太书导论》(香港:基道,2003),页11-18; 冯荫坤:《罗马书(卷壹)》,页127-155.

新观”？本文期待藉着这些课题的讨论为“保罗新观”作一个基本的介绍和评估。本文分为两个主要的部分，即论述“保罗新观”倡导者的主张，以及评估学者们对“保罗新观”所提出的观点。

（一）论述“保罗新观”

1.1 “保罗新观”的先声

“保罗新观”是在1983年由 James D. G. Dunn 所提出来的术语。当然，其先声的贡献是不容置疑的。²早在1914年，Claude G. Montefiore 提出，由于保罗著作中的犹太教与拉比式犹太教（rabbinic Judaism）有出入，因此，保罗在未归信前所信仰的犹太教不是拉比式犹太教，而是散居式犹太教（diaspora Judaism）。³虽然这个看法已经被否定，但其对“保罗新观”的萌芽的贡献是肯定的，因为它提出了解保罗在归信前所信仰的犹太教，即第一世纪的犹太教与了解保罗的著作有绝对密切的关系。接着，在1921年，George Foot Moore 指出，判定第一世纪的犹太教是律法主义的宗教是不恰当的，因为其论据都是取自第二手的资料或护卫基督教的著作。⁴十年后，Albert Schweitzer 声称，保罗提出“因信称义”的原因不在于人无能满足律法的要求，而是为了解决犹太人和外邦人的冲突而提出的论辩学说。⁵1948年，W. D. Davies 提出保罗的思想

² James D. G. Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” in *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SCM, 1990), 183-214. 这篇文章首次发表在: *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 65 (1983): 95-122.

³ 资料取自 Colin G. Kruse, *Paul, the Law and Justification* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), pp. 28-29. 原著是 C. G. Montefiore, “The Genesis of the Religion of St Paul,” in *Judaism and St Paul: Two Essays* (London: Max Goschen, 1914), pp. 1-129.

⁴ 资料取自 Frank Theilman, *Paul and the Law* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), pp. 28-29. 原著是 George Foot Moore, “Christian Writers on Judaism,” *Harvard Theological Review* 14 (1921): 197-254.

⁵ Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (ET: New York: Macmillan, 1955).

与拉比式犹太教的思想有非常密切的关系。⁶接着，在1959年，Johannes Munck 肯定 Davies 的看法，并加上保罗并没有在前往大马色的路上皈依新教，而是被神呼召成为外邦人的使徒。⁷两年后，H. J. Schoeps 提出保罗在未归信前的过失是捉摸不到摩西律法作为实现盟约的管道的真正含义。⁸

当然，Krister Stendahl 对“保罗新观”的萌芽之贡献是绝对不能被忽略的。在1963年其所发表的 *Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West* 一文中，他提出，保罗自责不是因为无法满足律法的要求，而是因为过往逼迫教会的行动。在总结的部分，Stendahl 声称，我们一直以来所看到的保罗的问题，事实上是西方世界的问题，而不是保罗的问题。⁹同时，Stendahl 也提出，大马色路上的事件不是保罗改变宗教，而是保罗被呼召的经历。¹⁰再者，Stendahl 认为，保罗的问题不是“我如何得救？”而是“外邦人如何成为立约群体的一份子？”。¹¹故此，保罗的中心思想不是个人式的因信称义，而是罗马书第9章至第11章所记述的救恩历史。¹²

纵观上文，“保罗新观”的先声对其萌芽所作出的贡献包括：肯定保罗与犹太教的密切关系；质疑犹太教是一个律法主义的宗教；质疑保罗是因为对律法主义感到无助而提出因信称义；提出大马色事件不是保罗皈依新教，而是保罗被呼召的经历；提出外邦人与立约群体的关系。

⁶ W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1948; 4th edition; 1980).

⁷ Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (ET; London: SCM, 1959).

⁸ H. J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish religious History* (ET; London: Lutterworth, 1961).

⁹ Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963): 199-215, reprinted in Krister Stendahl, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," in *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and other Essays* (London: SCM, 1977), 78-96.

¹⁰ Stendahl, *Paul*, pp. 7-23.

¹¹ Stendahl, *Paul*, p. 3.

¹² Stendahl, *Paul*, pp. 84-85.

1.2 “保罗新观”的倡导者

1.2.1 E. P. Sanders

虽然“保罗新观”(The New Perspective on Paul)一词是Dunn所杜撰的,然而,首先奠定“保罗新观”的最根本思想的学者却是E. P. Sanders。在1977年, Sanders发表了至今仍对保罗研究界影响深远的著作, *Paul and the Palestinian Judaism*。¹³在此著作中, Sanders 检视了公元前200年至公元后200年的犹太著作,包括早期的拉比文献、死海古卷及某些相关的典外文献。其所得到的结论是巴勒斯坦犹太教的宗教范式(Pattern of Religion)可以以“恩约行为”(covenantal nomism)一词来概括之,其意是“一个人在神计划中的地位是建立在恩约的基础上,而恩约所要求于人的正当回应乃是顺从它的诫命,同时它为人的过犯预备了救赎之法……。基本观念是神主动采取行动,以色列民接受神的作为;神赐下诫命,以色列民同意遵守。持续遵行律法表示留在恩约或立约群体之内;拒绝遵守便被排除在外。”¹⁴而其基本格式或结构是:

(1) 神拣选了以色列并 (2) 赐下了律法。律法同时意味 (3) 神应许维持(他对以色列的)拣选,及 (4) 以色列人必须顺从。(5) 神奖赏顺从,惩罚过犯。(6) 律法备有救赎之法,赎罪的结果是 (7) 约的关系得以维持或重新建立。(8) 所有藉着顺从、赎罪和神的怜悯而被维持在约内的人,都是属于将会得救的那个群体。¹⁵

¹³ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977).

¹⁴ Sanders, *Paul*, pp. 75, 237. 翻译引自郭汉成:《加拉太书导论》,页12。

¹⁵ Sanders, *Paul*, p. 422. 翻译引自冯荫坤:《罗马书注释(卷壹)》(台北:校园, 1997), 页128。

简言之，Sanders 对传统路德观的“律法主义”提出了强而有力的抨击，不只否定了“靠律法或行为得救”是毫无根据的理论，更指出犹太教的救赎论是建基在神的恩约上。

然而，在检视了保罗书信后，Sanders 却声称保罗的宗教范式不是“恩约行为”，而是契合式的末世观（participationist eschatology）。换言之，保罗的救赎论不是藉着与神立约来进入恩约群体及以遵守律法来维持恩约关系，而是藉着分享基督的死来获得新生命，继而分享基督的身体及圣灵。¹⁶同时，Sanders 也指出，巴勒斯坦的犹太教与保罗的基督教之间的区别不在于前者强调律法，后者强调恩典，而是两者对“义”的不同了解：对犹太教而言，“义”与如何继续留在恩约中有关，指的是持续遵行律法及悔罪；对基督教而言，“义”与如何进入得救群体有关，指的是藉着基督所得到的救恩。因此，当保罗说无人能靠“律法之工”称义时，他指的是无人能藉着律法得以进入救恩的群体。¹⁷值得注意的是，对 Sanders 而言，这二者的区别的自然结果就是，保罗在没有觉悟下已经跟犹太教断绝了关系。¹⁸故此，他认为保罗要建立的不是一个新犹太群体，也不是外邦群体，而是“第三族类”，即一个有共同信仰基础的犹太和外邦群体。¹⁹

至于保罗为何在其书信中严厉批判律法与行律法，Sanders 指出，这是因为保罗的救恩观是排他性的救恩观。传统路德观认为，保罗的救恩观是“从人的困境到解决方案”（from plight to solution）。换言之，保罗是因为发现律法无从为人的困境提供解决方案，而同时又觉悟到基督是得救的不二法门时，他因而批判律法转向基督。²⁰然而，Sanders 认为

¹⁶ Sanders, *Paul*, p. 514.

¹⁷ Sanders, *Paul*, p. 544.

¹⁸ E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983), pp. 207-210.

¹⁹ Sanders, *Law*, pp. 171-179.

²⁰ Frank Thielman, *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul's View of the Law in Galatians and Romans* (NovTSup 61; Leiden: Brill, 1989).

保罗的救恩观是“从问题解决方案来推论问题的根源”（from solution to plight）。换言之，保罗批判律法是因为“既然救恩只是藉着基督而得，遵循任何其他的途径便都是错的。……律法好的，甚至遵行律法也是好的，但救恩只是藉着基督才可得到；因此，律法所代表的整个制度对救恩并无价值”，²¹简言之，保罗批判犹太教的原因，就只是因为它不是基督教。²²

总括来说，Sanders所提出的论点主要有三：犹太教的宗教范式是“恩约行为”；保罗的宗教范式是分享式的末世论，及保罗批判律法的原因是基于其“从问题解决方案来推论问题的根源”的逻辑所推论出的排他性救恩观。

1.2.2 James D. G. Dunn

Dunn是“保罗新观”最具代表性的倡导人。在1982年的“Manson Memorial Lecture”中，他将Sanders所提出的犹太教的宗教范式定名为“保罗新观”，而“保罗新观”也就从此面世。²³同时，Dunn也是首位应用“保罗新观”来解经的学者。²⁴然而，Dunn并没有全盘接受Sanders的主张。他认同Sanders所提出的“犹太教宗教范式 - 恩约行为”。可是，他不赞同Sanders将保罗从犹太教划分出来。他指出，保罗会突然从一个思想体系跳跃进入另一个思想体系是不可思议的。因此，他也反对Sanders对律法的看法，即认为保罗是基于排他性的救恩观，也就是唯独基督救赎论而反对律法。Dunn声

²¹ Sanders, *Paul*, p. 550. 翻译引自冯荫坤：《罗马书》，页129。

²² Sanders, *Paul*, p. 552.

²³ Dunn, “New Perspective,” pp. 183-214.

²⁴ 参James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, 1988); James D. G. Dunn *Romans 9-16* (Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, 1988); James D. G. Dunn, *Galatians* (London: A. & C. Black, 1993); James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). 在Dunn, “New Perspective,” 205 n.36 Dunn将其“保罗新观”中的所使用的“恩约行动” covenant works 的词汇归功于 N. T. Wright, *The Messiah and the People of God: A Study in Pauline Theology with Particular Reference to the Argument of the Epistle to the Romans* (DPhil Dissertation; Oxford, 1980).

称, Sanders 对律法的诠释只不过比传统路德的旧观点所主张的律法主义稍微“好”一些。这是因为虽然 Sanders 提出“犹太教宗教范式 - 恩约行为”, 可是最终他却将保罗描绘成一位不具理智且任意反对其祖先传统的恩约神学及律法的人。²⁵

对Dunn而言, 保罗的思想与犹太教有一定的延续性。他根据加拉太书2:16指出, 保罗反对的不是律法本身或遵行律法, 而是“律法之工”。²⁶他加上, 这也就是Sanders对律法的诠释的偏差, 即将“律法之工”等同于遵行律法。因此, Sanders的结论肯定是, 由于保罗反对遵行律法, 保罗已经与犹太教脱离关系。²⁷Dunn将保罗放置在“恩约行为”的框架中来诠释“律法之工”。²⁸他指出“律法之工”是恩约的语言, 与犹太人在恩约群体中所应有的恩约行动(covenant works)息息相关。²⁹然而, 这些恩约行动指的并不是遵行一般性的律法要求, 而是遵行那些突显犹太人的特殊身份的律法, 包括行割礼、遵守食物的条例及守安息日。³⁰换言之, “律法之工”指的就是犹太人的身份标记。同时, Dunn指出, 这个身份标记有两个重要的社会功能: 一方面向世人宣告犹太人是神的选民, 另一方面也将他们从外邦世界区分出来。³¹因此, 保罗抨击“律法之工”是因为犹太人以行割礼(加2:3, 7-9, 12; 5:2下, 6, 11; 6:12下, 15)、遵守食物的条例(加2:12-14)与守安息日(加4:10)来突显他们是神的选民及拥

²⁵ Dunn, “New Perspective,” pp. 186-188.

²⁶ Dunn, “New Perspective,” p. 200.

²⁷ Dunn, “New Perspective,” p. 201.

²⁸ 有关Dunn所提出的“律法之工”的讨论, 参“Works of the Law and Curse of the Law (Galatians 3.10-14),” in *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SCM, 1990), pp. 215-236; “Yet Once More - ‘The Works of the Law’: A Response,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 46 (1992): 99-117; “4QMMT and Galatians,” *New Testament Studies* 43 (1997): 147-153; “A Response to Peter Stuhlmacher,” in *Auferstehung-Resurrection: The Fourth Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium*, eds. F. Avemarie and H. Lichtenberger (Tübingen: Mohr, 2001), pp. 363-368.

²⁹ Dunn, “New Perspective,” p. 191.

³⁰ James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1991), pp. 28-31.

³¹ Dunn, “Works,” p. 223.

有律法的独特身份与地位，且因此与外邦人划清界限。简言之，“律法之工”代表着犹太人高举民族主义与排外主义的信念。³²更严重的是，这个信念不只导致犹太人在外邦人面前自夸比他们优越，³³而且还将他们排斥在神的恩典与救恩的范畴之外。³⁴当然，最重要的是，Dunn认为保罗抨击“律法之工”的最根本原因是这个民族主义和排他主义的信念完全歪曲了神与犹太人立约的最初意愿，即要使万民藉着犹太人得福（加3:8；创12:3；18:18）。³⁵

至于基督的来临与“恩约行为”的关系，Dunn指出保罗并没有因为相信耶稣是弥赛亚之后，就摒弃其作为犹太人所持有的“恩约行为”观。反之，对保罗而言，基督的来临是恩约的原意得以完全实现的肇始，³⁶而耶稣基督的死与复活所成就的工作，就是将神的恩典从犹太人的民族主义中释放出来，使之成为犹太人和外邦人在基督里所共享的特权。³⁷故此，保罗不但没有摒弃犹太人的“恩约行为”观，而且还以之为基础来挑战犹太人扩充恩约的边界，让外邦人在基督里也成为恩约的一份子。³⁸再者，Dunn指出，这个在基督里的恩约群体不再以割礼、食物的条例与安息日作为神子民的身份标记，而是以信耶稣是基督作为首要的标记。³⁹

此外，基于Dunn坚持保罗与犹太教的延续性，他认为大马色的事件不是保罗改变信仰，而是保罗被呼召的经历。显然，腓立比书3:5-6明言，在保罗前往大马色的路上之前，他逼迫教会的原因是 *zh'lo*（热心）。Dunn指出保罗的这个“热心”是出于犹太人的民族主义与排他主义的自我意识，与教会无视律法为信仰的核心无关。因此，保罗逼迫教会是要巩固并

³² Dunn, "New Perspective," p. 198.

³³ Dunn, *Romans* pp. 1-8, 185, 191; Dunn, "Yet Once More," pp. 110-111.

³⁴ Dunn, "New Perspective," p. 198.

³⁵ Dunn, "New Perspective," p. 197.

³⁶ Dunn, "New Perspective," p. 197.

³⁷ Dunn, "New Perspective," p. 198.

³⁸ Dunn, "New Perspective," p. 197.

³⁹ Dunn, "New Perspective," p. 196.

阻止教会拆毁犹太人与外邦人之间的围墙，以免犹太人的特殊选民身份与地位遭受侵袭。⁴⁰对当时的保罗而言，被挂在木头上的耶稣是被神所咒诅的（申21:23），而耶稣被咒诅是因为他违犯神的恩约，即让外邦人成为恩约群体的一份子。可是，在前往大马色的路上，保罗的观念完全被扭转过来。他觉悟到原来神认同耶稣的所作所为，而神使耶稣从死里复活就是神已经将耶稣身上的咒诅挪开的最好明证。换言之，保罗觉悟到耶稣的复活显明神的恩典必须扩充到外邦人的境界。所以，他毅然回应神的呼召，成为外邦人的使徒。⁴¹

再者，既然Dunn坚持保罗与犹太教的延续性，同时又指出保罗从来没有批判律法本身或遵行律法，那么，Dunn如何诠释律法肯定是一个不能被忽略的问题。首先，Dunn承认保罗在其书信中对律法持有模棱两可的态度：一方面说律法的权势等同于罪（林前16:56）；另一方面又说律法是圣洁及属乎灵的（罗7:12, 14）。⁴²接着，他指出律法有三种不同的功能：一，律法为罪下定义，帮助人意识到罪的存在，并且为审判设定标准；⁴³二，律法是以色列民的保护扇，其功能包括保护、命令和管教，同时也为罪预备赎罪的方法；⁴⁴三，律法引导以色列民过一个顺畅的人生。⁴⁵同时，Dunn也声称，这后两者的功能的有效期只是在“应许”与“实现”期间，当“应许——基督”来临时，这两个功能也随之告一段落。⁴⁶Dunn强调以色列人的问题就在于没有觉悟到这个事实，且将律法在基督来临后的次要功能看为是首要的。⁴⁷更重要的是，他指出律法之所以带来问题，不是律法本身有任何欠缺之处，而是因为律法为罪提供了一个可以发挥其果效的场所，让罪可以诱骗软弱的肉

⁴⁰ Dunn, *Partings*, pp. 119-122.

⁴¹ Dunn, *Partings*, pp. 122-123.

⁴² Dunn, *Theology*, pp. 129-130.

⁴³ Dunn, *Theology*, pp. 133-137.

⁴⁴ Dunn, *Theology*, pp. 137-143.

⁴⁵ Dunn, *Theology*, p. 154.

⁴⁶ Dunn, *Theology*, pp. 143-144.

⁴⁷ Dunn, *Theology*, pp. 144-145, 153.

体跌进其圈套中。⁴⁸故此，保罗从来没有谴责律法本身，因为真正的问题不在于律法，而是罪恶。

当然，Dunn 的称义观也是其“保罗新观”的重要观点之一。他指出保罗的称义观必须从“义”（dikaiosunh）的观念来了解，而这个“义”指的不是某种可以测量的理想素质，而是一种关系的理念。换言之，“义”指的是，在一个互动的关系中，其中一方对另一方履行所当尽的责任。⁴⁹故“神的义”包含两个意义，即神履行他对造物，尤其是全人类的责任，及神履行他对恩约子民的责任。简言之，“神的义”指的就是神对其子民的信实。⁵⁰因此，从这个对“神的义”的诠释来看，保罗的称义观就是处在神对全人类的拯救行动与神对选民的信实的一个动态的状态中。换言之，神会采取行动让人类开始与他建立关系，并在这个关系中不断支撑他们。⁵¹因此，“称义”的意义不仅包括“被看为义”，也包括“被成为义”。这是因为在一个互动的关系中，神看其不完美的立约对象为义，同时，神也在这个关系中改造其立约对象渐渐成为义。⁵²同样的，对Dunn而言，“因信称义”也必须从神与人的关系中来理解。因此，“因信称义”指的就是在神人关系中，人对信实的神的完全信赖和依靠。⁵³

总括来说，Dunn 对“保罗新观”作出了许多重要的贡献。首先，他肯定Sanders所提出的“犹太教宗教范式——恩约行为”。再者，他强调保罗的思想与犹太教有一定的延续性。同时，他也指出保罗所抨击的“律法之工”指的是高举犹太人的民族主义与排外主义的身份标记，与律法本身或遵行律法无关。当然，这个观点也就解决了保罗在其书信中时而拥护律法，时而抨击律法的张力。然而，Dunn 并没有否定保罗在其书信中偶尔对

⁴⁸ Dunn, *Theology*, pp. 155-159.

⁴⁹ Dunn, *Theology*, p. 341.

⁵⁰ Dunn, *Theology*, p. 342.

⁵¹ Dunn, *Theology*, p. 344.

⁵² Dunn, *Theology*, p. 344.

⁵³ Dunn, *Theology*, p. 379.

律法的负面描述。他指出问题不在律法，而是罪恶。换言之，律法有负面的一面完全是因为其被罪恶利用来作为发挥功效的场所。此外，Dunn也指出保罗在前往大马色路上的经历不是皈依基督教，而是被神呼召来延续与深化其祖先与神所立的恩约，即要将神的恩典扩充至外邦人的境界。最后，Dunn对保罗的称义观的贡献在于以神人关系作为诠释的框架。

1.2.3 N. T. Wright

Wright是“保罗新观”的重要倡导人之一。在1978年，Sanders对他的影响已经可以从其丁道尔的演说(Tyndale Lecture)中看出。⁵⁴自此，Wright的作品都反映出他的“保罗新观”点。⁵⁵与Dunn一样，Wright赞同Sanders所提出的“犹太教宗教范式—恩约行为”，但不赞同他将保罗从第一世纪的犹太教抽离出来。⁵⁶同时，他也赞同Dunn对“律法之工”的诠释，即指的是犹太人的身份标记。⁵⁷然而，Wright认为Dunn的称义观有许多不足之处。因此，在其“保罗新观”中，他特别针对“称义”作出进一步的阐释。⁵⁸这些有关“称义”的课题包括福音、神的义、神称人为义、按照行为审判，因“信”称义，及救恩的秩序(Ordo Salutis)。

⁵⁴ N. T. Wright, "The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith," *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978): 61-88.

⁵⁵ Wright, *Messiah*; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of Covenant: Christ and Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991); *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); "Putting Paul Together Again: Towards a Synthesis of Pauline Theology (1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Philemon)," in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 1: *Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon* ed. J. Bassler (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), pp. 183-211; "Romans and the Theology of Paul," in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 3: *Romans*, eds. D. M. Hay and E. E. Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), pp. 30-67; "The Law in Romans 2," in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 131-150; *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Oxford: Lion, 1997).

⁵⁶ Wright, *Paul*, 18-20; N. T. Wright, "New Perspectives on Paul: 10th Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference (25-28 August 2003)," available from <http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_New_Perspectives.htm; Internet>. Date Accessed: 19 July 2007.

⁵⁷ Wright, "New Perspectives," p. 3.

⁵⁸ Wright, "New Perspectives," p. 3.

针对“福音”，Wright指出福音不是任何得救的方法，而是“耶稣基督是主”的宣告。更准确的说，福音是宣告被钉十字架的拿撒勒人耶稣已经从死里复活，且成为以色列的弥赛亚与全世界的主。⁵⁹再者，他指出这个宣告有双重的意义，包括显明神的义及推翻罗马政权。“推翻罗马政权”无疑是因为宣告基督是主也就间接否定了凯撒是主。⁶⁰至于“显明神的义”，其与Wright对“神的义”的诠释息息相关。Wright声称神的义指的是神对亚伯拉罕恩约的信实，即要解决罪恶的问题及建立普适性的家庭。⁶¹故福音显明神的义意味着在耶稣基督里，神已经兑现了亚伯拉罕恩约的应许。⁶²

再者，对Wright而言，“神的义”与“神称人为义”的“义”是有区别的。他指出“神称人为义”是希伯来人的法庭语言。在希伯来的法庭中，当一个人被法官宣判为义时，这不是道德的宣判，而是法庭宣判的结果。显然的，这个宣判的结果与法官的义是没有关系的，因为法官的义意味着他维护正义，而不是他会将他的义注入被宣判为义者的身上。⁶³故此，“神称人为义”是神宣判某人有益的新的地位，与“神的义”无关。

同时，Wright指出“神称人为义”不只是法庭语言，也是恩约语言。换言之，神是在恩约的框架中宣判某人有益的新的地位。⁶⁴这个宣判有两个意义：一，他是义的，因为他的罪已经因着耶稣基督的死得着赦免；二，他是恩约子民的一份子。⁶⁵当然，Wright所谓的恩约子民不是犹太选民，而是由所

⁵⁹ Wright, *Paul*, pp. 45-46; Wright, “New Perspective,” p. 5.

⁶⁰ Wright, “New Perspectives,” p. 5.

⁶¹ N. T. Wright, “The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter's Bible, vol. X: Introduction to Epistolary Literature: Acts, Romans, First Corinthians*, ed. Leander E. Keck, et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), pp. 395-770, here p. 398; Wright, *Paul*, p. 96; Wright, “New Perspective,” p. 6.

⁶² Wright, “New Perspectives,” p. 5.

⁶³ Wright, *Paul*, pp. 97-98; Wright, “New Perspective,” p. 7.

⁶⁴ Wright, “Romans,” p. 468.

⁶⁵ Wright, “New Perspective,” p. 12.

有信基督的人所组成的新恩约群体。这个新恩约群体就是神向亚伯拉罕所应许，而如今在基督和圣灵里被建立起来的群体。⁶⁶当然，这个新群体的标记不是割礼、食物的条例或安息日，而是“信”。⁶⁷值得注意的是，Wright 强调“神称人为义”与某人如何进入恩约群体无关，而是与某人知道谁属于恩约群体有关。⁶⁸简言之，福音和“神称人为义”是两个不同的概念：前者属于救恩论的范畴；后者属于教会论的范畴。换言之，福音宣告耶稣基督是主，称义讲述福音所带来的意义。

再者，Wright 也指出“神称人为义”不只是法庭语言和恩约语言，也是末世天启语言。换言之，称义与末世的判决有关。在末世的判决中，神会还其子民清白，同时也会揭露其隐藏已久的计划。⁶⁹以此观念为基础，Wright 声称“神称人为义”有三个不同的阶段，即过去的称义、现在的称义和将来的称义。过去的称义指的是耶稣在十字架上所成就的救恩，且在耶稣复活时已经完成；现在的称义指的是神宣判某人是恩约子民，且在其受洗归入基督时完成。再者，现在的称义也同时将过去的称义和将来的称义连贯起来。换言之，现在的称义包含两个涵义：相信过去的称义和期盼将来的称义；⁷⁰将来的称义指的是神在末日时按照一个人在圣灵里的行为表现来审判的结果。⁷¹简言之，现在的称义是因“信”称义，而将来的称义是因“行为”审判。

针对因信称义的“信”，Wright 认为这个“信”指的是

⁶⁶ Wright, "New Perspective," p. 13.

⁶⁷ Wright, "New Perspective," p. 133.

⁶⁸ Wright, *Paul*, p. 119.

⁶⁹ Wright, *Paul*, p. 99; Wright, "Romans," p. 401.

⁷⁰ Wright, "New Perspective," pp. 9-10. 引用Wright自己的话：“Justification by faith... is the anticipation in the present of the justification which will occur in the future, and gains its meaning from that anticipation.”

⁷¹ N. T. Wright, "The Paul Page: The Shape of Justification," available from <<http://www.thepaulpage.com/Shape.html>>, Date Accessed: 14 June 2007; James D. G. Dunn and N. T. Wright, "The Paul Page: An Evening Conversation on Paul with James D. G. Dunn and N. T. Wright," available from <<http://www.thepaulpage.com/Conversation.html>>, Date Accessed: 14 June 2007.

恩约子民的身份标记。⁷²同时，这个“信”也包含了“顺服——人对福音的正面回应”⁷³和“诚信——人对恩约的正面回应”⁷⁴两个层面。再者，Wright强调这个“信”指的不是某人得着新地位之后所作出的工作，而是某人因圣灵的呼召所结出的初果。同时，他也强调圣灵的工作不仅于此，反之，圣灵会持续在信徒的生命中结出善果，直到末日的审判。⁷⁵

至于救恩的秩序，Wright指出救恩的第一个阶段是呼召。他强调这个呼召指的不是被呼召去完成一项任务，而是福音的呼召，即圣灵在一个人的生命所作的工作，包括引导他离弃偶像和罪恶，并藉着信基督归向神。接着，Wright指出救恩的第二个阶段是称义，即神宣告这位被神呼召的人是恩约群体的一份子，而救恩的第三个阶段是得荣耀。这个阶段指的是每一位信福音并受洗的信徒与基督共享他荣耀的生命及他对世界的统治。

最后，值得注意的是，Wright不赞同Sanders所说的“从问题解决方案来推论问题的根源”，而是认为“从人的困境到问题解决方案”。然而，Wright为“困境”下了一个新的定义。他指出“困境”指的是恩约子民的被掳状况。他进一步说明，虽然在保罗时代的犹太人已经从被掳之地回归，可是，就他们仍在罪恶中的状况而言，他们仍旧处在被掳之地，期待神兴起其在恩约中所应许的使者来拯救他们。故此，Wright指出耶稣基督的来临就是这个困境的解决方案。换言之，因着耶稣基督的救赎，神与所有信基督者重新立约，让所有在基督里的人可以从被掳之地回归，且成为恩约子民。⁷⁶

总括来说，Wright对“保罗新观”的贡献包括：一，区分“福音”与“称义”，前者指宣告耶稣基督是主，后者指神

⁷² Wright, "Romans," p. 468.

⁷³ Wright, "Romans," p. 664; Wright, *Paul*, p. 160.

⁷⁴ Wright, "Romans," p. 420.

⁷⁵ Wright, "New Perspective," p. 11.

⁷⁶ Wright, "Law," pp. 141-142, 147.

宣称某人是恩约子民；二，将“神的义”诠释为神对亚伯拉罕恩约的信实；三，区分“现在的称义”和“将来的称义”，前者指因信称义，后者指因行为审判；四，“信”是恩约子民的标记，包含对福音的“顺服”和对恩约的“诚信”两个意义；五，圣灵在信徒生命中所结的初果是“信”，且会继续结出善果，直到审判之日；六，从被掳的观念来看未信者的状况。

小结

纵观了三位“保罗新观”的主要倡导人对“保罗新观”所提出的观点之后，必须承认的是，他们之间的观点并不完全一致：有者彼此认同，有者彼此否定，也有者彼此补充。当然，显而易见的是，他们都认同犹太教是一个“恩典”的宗教，而其宗教范式是“恩约行为”。再者，Dunn和Wright都认同保罗的思想与犹太教有一定的延续性，及保罗在其书信中所反对的“律法之工”指的是犹太人的民族主义及排他主义。

当然，“保罗新观”有其支持者和拥护者，⁷⁷但同时也有

⁷⁷ 如Neil Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990); Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1987); Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University, 1994); Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 但是，在Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective*, revised and expanded edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 改变立场。Mikael Winninge, *Sinners and the Righteous: A Comparative Study of the Psalms of Solomon and Paul's Letters* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1995); Kari Kuula, *The Law, the Covenant and God's Plan: Paul's Polemical Treatment of the Law in Galatians* (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999); Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997); John M. G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988); William S. Campbell, *Paul's Gospel in an Intercultural Context: Jew and Gentile in the Letter to the Romans* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991); Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994); Kent L. Yinger, *Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to Deeds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

许多批判者和反对者。⁷⁸接下来，本文将集中讨论与评估反对者对“保罗新观”所提出的观点。

（二）评估“保罗新观”

反对“保罗新观”的学者都各自提出他们对“保罗新观”的不同看法。在接下来的篇幅中，本文不会逐一列出学者们的各自看法，而是将他们的看法归纳为不同的主题来讨论之。这些主题包括“恩约行为”、“律法之工”、保罗在大马色路上的经历、按照行为审判及称义观。

⁷⁸ Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993); Thomas R. Schreiner, “‘Works of Law’ in Paul,” *Novum Testamentum* 33 (1991): 217-244; Douglas J. Moo, “‘Law,’ ‘Works of the Law,’ and Legalism in Paul,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983): 73-100; A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law and the Covenant* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001); Peter Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul’s Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001); Donald A. Hagner, “Paul & Judaism: Testing the New Perspective,” in *Revisiting Paul’s Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective*, ed. Peter Stuhlmacher (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), pp. 75-105; Timo Laato, *Paul and Judaism: An Anthropological Approach* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995); Mark A. Seifrid, “Blind Alleys in the Controversy over the Paul of History,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 45 (1994): 73-95; Mark A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000); Glenn N. Davies, *Faith and Obedience in Romans: A Study in Romans 1-4* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990); Colin G. Kruse, *Paul, the Law, and Justification* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997); Richard H. Bell, *No One Seeks for God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 1.18-3.20* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1998); Vincent M. Smiles, *The Gospel and the Law in Galatia: Paul’s Response to Jewish-Christian Separatism and the Threat of Galatian Apostasy* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1998); Brad Eastman, *The Significance of Grace in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999); Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The ‘Lutheran’ Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004); Simon Gathercole, *Where is Boasting: Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); D. A. Carson, P. T. O’Brien and Mark A. Seifrid eds., *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, 2 vols (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004); Guy Prentiss Waters, *Justification and the New Perspectives on Paul: A Review and Response* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2004); J. Ligon Duncan, *Misunderstanding Paul?: Responding to the New Perspective* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2006).

2.1 “恩约行为”

针对 Sanders 所提出的“犹太教宗教范式 - 恩约行为”，在检视了有关的拉比文献之后，Friedrich Avemarie 指出传统的犹太教有两种不同的救恩观，即以恩典为主的救恩观及以行为为主的救恩观。⁷⁹再者，Solomon Schechter 进一步引用犹太拉比 Akiba 的话（Aboth 3.20）：“这个世界是被恩典来审判，但是一切都依据行为”来证实这两种救恩观同时并存在保罗时代的犹太教中。⁸⁰同时，Avemarie 亦指出这两种的救恩观在犹太教中平起平坐，且共存在一种无法解决的张力中。⁸¹Mark A. Seifrid 认同 Avemarie 的看法，且声称第一世纪的犹太教不是以“恩约”作为“行为”的大前提，而是“恩约”与“行为”并肩而行。⁸²显然，这些观点都说明“恩约行为”不等同于犹太教的宗教范式，而只是犹太教的其中一部分救恩观。换言之，Sanders 低估了第一世纪的犹太教对顺从的要求。

针对“顺从”的课题，冯荫坤指出，由于 Sanders 没有检视强调顺从的约瑟夫作品、福音书及使徒行传，他确实低估了第一世纪的犹太教对顺从的要求。⁸³C. K. Barrett 亦指出 Sanders 忽略了那些反映出顺从之重要性的保罗书信。⁸⁴再者，Seyoon Kim 更从其他学者的研究中得到保罗时代的犹太教确实鼓吹绝对顺从的证据。⁸⁵同时，他亦指出昆兰群体也寻求行在“完全

⁷⁹ 资料取自 Hagner, “Paul,” p. 86; 参本书注40所列出的 Avemarie 的原著。

⁸⁰ 资料取自 Hagner, “Paul,” p. 86. 原著是 Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (London: Macmillan, 1909; reprint, New York: KTAV, 1968), p. 15. 引用的话是作者的自译，Akiba 的话是：“The world is judged by grace, and yet all is according to the amount of work.”

⁸¹ 资料取自 Hagner, “Paul,” 86; 请参阅此书注40所列出的 Avemarie 的原著。

⁸² Seifrid, *Christ*, 16.

⁸³ 冯荫坤：《罗马书（卷壹）》，136。请参阅原著 W. Horbury, “Paul and Judaism,” *Expository Times* 90 (1978-1979): 116-118.

⁸⁴ Barrett, *Paul*, p. 80.

⁸⁵ Kim, *Paul*, pp. 144-152. Kim 所查阅的研究有 Martin Hengel, “E. P. Sanders’ ‘Common Judaism,’ Jesus und die Pharisäer,” in *Judaica et Hellenistica: Kleine Schriften I* (WUNT 90; Tübingen: Mohr, 1996), pp. 392-479, especially p. 394; Mark Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme* (NovTSup 68; Leiden: Brill, 1992), pp. 78-135; Friedrich Avemarie, “Erwählung und Vergeltung: Zur Optionalen

的道路”(perfection of way)上。⁸⁶Klyne R. Snodgrass更严厉指责Sanders在选择文献上有严重的偏差,即由其论点来决定所要检视的文件,而不是从其所检视的文件来决定其论点。⁸⁷同样的,Seifrid亦指责Sanders先带上“恩约”的眼镜后才来重建犹太教的救恩观。⁸⁸

然而,要注意的是,Sanders并没有否定在其所检视的犹太文献中,如以斯拉四书确实声称绝对的顺从是得教的必备条件。但同时,他也说明他将之排除在考虑范围之外是因为它“不是犹太教特别好的代表”。⁸⁹显然,Sanders已经说明其目的是要重建具有代表性的犹太教宗教范式,而不是要列举所有与犹太教的救恩观有关的思想。因此,若指控Sanders忽略了反主流派的犹太思想是不公平的。⁹⁰当然,学者们继续重解Sanders没有深入探讨的某些记载,如Charles L. Quarles重解Sanders所忽略的m.Aboth 3.16⁹¹肯定多多益善,但其是否因此而推翻Sanders所发现的“犹太教宗教范式—恩约行为”仍然是一个大问号。这是因为Sanders所检视的资料之广泛性是铁定的事实,⁹²也因此,其所得到的结论的代表性也是不言自明的。

Strukture Rabbinischer Soteriologie,” *New Testament Studies* 42 (1996): 108-126; Charles L. Quarles, “The Soteriology of R. Akiba and E. P. Sanders’ Paul and Palestinian Judaism,” *New Testament Studies* 42 (1996): 185-195; Graham N. Stanton, “The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ,” in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (WUNT 89; Tübingen: Mohr, 1996), pp. 99-116, especially pp. 104-106; Mark Adam Elliott, *The Survivors of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

⁸⁶ 冯荫坤:《罗马书》,137。

⁸⁷ Klyne R. Snodgrass, “Justification by Grace – To the Doers: An Analysis of the Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul,” *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 72-93, here 77.

⁸⁸ Seifrid, *Christ*, p. 15.

⁸⁹ Sanders, *Paul*, pp. 421-422.

⁹⁰ 冯荫坤认为纵使以斯拉四书有反主流的迹象,它仍是当时的犹太教思想之一,因此不应该将之排除在考虑范围之外。参冯荫坤:《罗马书》,137。

⁹¹ Sanders没有深入探讨m. Aboth 3.16是因为他认为这段记载不只与b. Sanh. 81a有明显的张力,而且没有系统性,甚至难以捉摸;参Sanders, *Paul*, 139, Charles L. Quarles认为Sanders的观点有疑点,因此重解这段记载;参Quarles, “Soteriology,” 185-195.

⁹² Sanders所检视的犹太文献包括圣经、次经和伪经Ben Sirach, I Enoch, Jubilees,

再者，“恩约行为”观对“顺从”也是有一定的要求。这是因为“恩约行为”观主张“恩典”是进入恩约的途径，而“行为”则是保留在其中的不二法门。因此，“恩约行为”观肯定没有否定“顺从”的重要性。这可以从Dunn在其罗马书注释中明言“强调行律法肯定是犹太教的典型特征”得到明证。⁹³此外，笔者不认为“绝对的顺从”对“恩约行为”观会造成重大的威胁。这是因为即使“恩约行为”观主张律法备有赎罪之法，但这也不意味着“恩约行为”观鼓吹随意犯罪或草率的顺从。因此，笔者相信“保罗新观”的支持者也不会反对Kim对腓立比书3:6的诠释，即未经历大马色路上的事件的保罗对律法之顺从的要求是“要达到最完美的境界以致悔罪与献祭的需要性达到零点”。⁹⁴

当然，Donald A. Hagner的看法也是不容忽略的。他说：“旧约的宗教...确是一个论恩典而不是论基于行为之义的宗教；不过，在被掳后的时期，...犹太人对于律法的信奉达到了新的强度，...而在这种新发展内，律法取得中心位置是不足为奇的。当然，犹太教与旧约一脉相承，犹太教对律法加剧的着重不一定排除恩典，但是对律法的强调使恩典蒙上阴影确是很可能的。”⁹⁵简言之，Hagner一方面不否定犹太教是一个恩典的宗教，但另一方面却以犹太教为“实践”而非“理论”的宗教否定之。换言之，从理论或神学来说，犹太教与恩典的关系是肯定的，可是，从实践来看，无人可以确定犹太人不会因为

The Psalms of Solomon and IV Ezra死海古卷及拉比文献the Mishnah, the Tosefta, the Babylonian Talmud, the Palestinian Talmud, the Mekilta of R. Ishmael, Sifra, Sifre Numbers, Sifre Deuteronomy, Reconstructed Tannaitic Midrashim, Aboth de Rabbi Nathan and later Midrashim.

⁹³ Dunn, *Romans*, pp. 1-8, 97; 引用的话是笔者的自译，Dunn的话是：“Emphasis on doing the law was of course characteristic of Judaism”。

⁹⁴ Kim, *Paul*, p. 151. 引用Kim自己的话：as perfectly as possible so as to need repentance and sacrifices as little as possible.

⁹⁵ D. A. Hagner, “Paul and Judaism: The Jewish Matrix of Early Christianity: Issues in the Current Debate,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 3 (1993), 111-130, here 117. 翻译引自冯荫坤：“罗马书”，136，注9。

某些因素而歪曲宗教精髓甚至本末倒置。⁹⁶因此，Hagner引用C. K. Barrett的话讥讽Sanders，说：“他是一个假设自己比第一世纪的犹太教更了解保罗的勇者。”⁹⁷然而，基于Sanders的结论是有凭有据，而不是凭空想像，故此，这样的指控是不公平的。

值得一提的是，A. Andrew Das对“恩约行为”所作出的回应：一方面，他认同“恩约行为”是犹太教的宗教范式；另一方面，他却认为保罗观念中的犹太教是一个律法主义的宗教。他指出当保罗信基督之后，其所接受的以恩典为主的犹太思想框架也随之瓦解了。因此，对他而言，犹太人的得救之法不仅是遵行律法，更是绝对遵行律法。换言之，在保罗的观念中，犹太教是一个律法主义的宗教。⁹⁸可是，对笔者而言，即使保罗在信基督后撇弃犹太人的“恩约行为”观，这也只是他个人观念的改变，而Das的推论似乎说明了保罗在信基督之后，立刻患上失忆症，完全忘记了其同胞也是他本身曾经拥有的观念与思想框架。

另一方面，由于“保罗新观”的倡导者，尤其是Dunn和Wright强调保罗的思想与犹太教有一定的延续性，一些接受“保罗新观”的学者皆被指控提倡两约进路（two-covenant approach）。换言之，犹太人与外邦人各有不同的得救之道，前者依靠“恩约行为”，后者依靠耶稣基督。事实上，这个两约进路也正是Stendahl、Markus Barth、John G. Gager和Lloyd Gaston所接受及采纳的。⁹⁹然而，可以肯定的是，这不是Dunn的立场。这是因为两约进路与“保罗新观”所要达到的目标背道而驰。前者加深犹太人和外邦人之间的隔阂，后者则强调保

⁹⁶ Hagner, “Paul,” pp. 87-88.

⁹⁷ Hagner, “Paul,” p. 88; C. K. Barrett, *Paul: An Introduction to His Thought* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), p. 78.

⁹⁸ Das, *Paul*, pp. 6-7.

⁹⁹ Stendahl, *Paul*, p. 2; Markus Barth, *The People of God* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1983); John C. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Gaston, *Paul*.

罗要建立的是一个由犹太人和外邦人共同组成的新恩约群体。再者, Dunn也在其*The Partings of the Ways*一书中明言其立场不是两约进路, 而是单一进路。¹⁰⁰所以, Hagner指控Dunn的看法与其所声称的单一进路不符, 简直令人费解。¹⁰¹

最后, 要注意的是, 许多反对“保罗新观”的学者, 包括上文所提及的Hagner都必须承认第一世纪的犹太教是一个恩典的宗教。然而, 他们却以这不是保罗所接触的犹太人之思想来抨击“保罗新观”。举例来说, Thomas R. Schreiner指出旧约从来不鼓吹律法主义, 只是保罗时代的犹太人将之扭曲, 诠释为律法主义。¹⁰²再者, Colin G. Kruse也声称, “恩约行为”观确实是第一世纪的犹太教宗教范式, 但“在保罗的观念中, 许多与他同时代的犹太人...已经跌进相信可以靠行律法来称义的陷阱中”。¹⁰³换言之, 这些学者抨击“保罗新观”是因为保罗所反对的犹太教不是恩典的宗教, 而是律法主义的宗教。这也就直接涉及“保罗新观”所提出的另一个重要课题, 即“律法之工”。

2.2 “律法之工”

在“保罗新观”提出了“律法之工”的定义之后, 许多反对“保罗新观”的学者纷纷提出他们的见解。Peter Stuhlmacher认为“律法之工”指的是按照妥拉所作的工 (works performed in accordance to the Torah), 而保罗反对“律法之工”是因为它不能作为称义的途径。他解释这是因为罪恶的权势导致人无能绝对遵行律法, 所以, 在末日审判时, 一些靠遵行律法所得到的义都会被判决是徒然的。¹⁰⁴ C. E. B.

¹⁰⁰ Dunn, *Partings*, p. 250.

¹⁰¹ Hagner, “Paul,” p. 83, note p. 34.

¹⁰² Schreiner, *Law*, p. 93, n.2.

¹⁰³ Kruse, *Law*, 241;引用的话是笔者的自译, Kruse的话是: “In Paul’s view, many Jews of his day... had fallen into the trap of believing that justification could be attained by carrying out what the law required”.

¹⁰⁴ Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting*, p. 43.

Cranfield 持有同样的看法。他指出“律法之工”是因顺从律法所赚到的特殊地位 (a privileged status earned by obedience to the law), 而保罗反对“律法之工”是因为人在堕落后就失去了完全顺服律法的能力。¹⁰⁵简言之, 他们都认为“律法之工”与行律法有直接的关系, 而保罗是基于“数量”(quantitative) 的原因而反对“律法之工”的。¹⁰⁶此外, Schreiner 指出“律法之工”指的是行律法所命令的 (doing what the Law commanded)。但他认为保罗不只是基于“数量”的因素而反对“律法之工”, 他同时也基于“性质”(qualitative) 的因素而反对“律法之工”。换言之, 保罗反对“律法之工”的原因是: 一, 无人能守住所有的律法; 二, 行律法有积功德的危机, 与因信称义背道而驰。¹⁰⁷再者, 吴慧仪认为“保罗新观”对“律法之工”的定义过于狭窄, 因为“一, 不是所有提到‘律法之工夫’的经文都可以这样圆满地解释; 二, 这词并不涵盖保罗针对律法的所有争论”。¹⁰⁸

然而, 这些看法都忽略保罗首次提及“律法之工”的用意。加拉太书2:16不只是保罗首次提及“律法之工”, 也是保罗首次提及“因信称义”之处。要注意的是, 这节经文的直接文脉要讲述的不是“我如何得救?”, 而是“犹太人和外邦人可以如何在一个群体里一同生活和敬拜?” 换言之, 保罗的关怀是外邦基督徒与犹太群体关系的问题, 而不是救恩的

¹⁰⁵ C. E. B. “The Works of the Law’ in the Epistle to the Romans,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 43 (1991): 89-101, here pp. 96, 100.

¹⁰⁶ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 214, 217; Stephen Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), pp. 109-130; Robert H. Gundry, “Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul,” *Biblica* 66 (1985): 1-38, here pp. 12-13; Frank Thielmann, *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul's View of the Law in Galatians and Romans* (NovTSup 61; Leiden: Brill, 1989), pp. 28-45, 59-72, 115-122; Martin, *Christ*, pp. 24-25; Davies, *Faith*, pp. 115-127.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, “Works of the Law,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, eds. G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), pp. 975-979, here pp. 977-978.

¹⁰⁸ 吴慧仪: “保罗新观,” 页27。

问题。¹⁰⁹再者，这节经文的直接上文所涉及的课题是割礼（加2:1-10）、食物的条例和共同用餐（加2:11-14），而从来不是人毫无能力遵行所有的律法，抑或遵行律法有赚取功劳的危机。因此，很显然的，“律法之工”正是Dunn所说的犹太人高举民族主义和排他主义的自我意识。¹¹⁰

然而，针对加拉太书的事件，Kim认为若保罗的关怀仅是要外邦人成为恩约子民的一份子，他就无需在加拉太跟那些犹太主义者起如此大的争执，反之他大可迁就他们要求外邦人行割礼以成为恩约子民的成员。然而，这样的论述明显误解了“保罗新观”。对“保罗新观”而言，保罗反对“律法之工”是因为犹太人歪曲了神设立恩约的最初意愿，即要让万民因亚伯拉罕得福，而不是要万民藉着成为犹太人得福。既然亚伯拉罕是在未受割礼前已经因信称义，那么保罗就不可能对外邦人必须行割礼方可成为恩约子民一事上有任何的妥协。

再者，Hagner虽然不反对“律法之工”指的是犹太人的身份标记，但却认为Dunn将“律法之工”局限在犹太人的身份标记的看法过于狭窄。换言之，他认为保罗反对“律法之工”并不仅是因为其社会性的负面功能，也包括反对犹太人的律法主义。¹¹¹Schreiner认同Hagner的看法，且声称犹太人的排外主义与他们的律法主义是并肩而行且不能分开的。他进一步指出，任何简化了社会学与神学之间的关系，并将它们之间的界限划分得过于清楚的作法都是不可取的。¹¹²然而，明显的，Dunn从来没有将“律法之工”局限在其社会功能，反之，其所强调的是从社会学的角度来诠释犹太人的律法观。再者，当犹太人视割礼、食物的条例和安息日作为他们所独有的身份标记时，他们肯定会以行这些律法为荣。故，这两者并肩

¹⁰⁹ James D. G. Dunn, "The Incident at Antioch (Gal. 2.11-18)," in *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SCM, 1990), pp. 129-182, here pp. 130-131. 另参 Ezra Hon-seng Kok, *Truth*, pp. 61-79; 郭汉成:《加拉太书导论》，页21-46, 86-97。

¹¹⁰ Kim, *Paul*, p. 61.

¹¹¹ Hagner, "Paul," p. 100.

¹¹² Schreiner, *Law*, p. 103.

而行是在所难免的。可是，若说他们是以此作为赚取救恩的途径，则未免过于强词夺理，显然是要将旧观点强加在新观点之上。

同时，Hagner亦指出Dunn对“律法之工”的诠释实际上已经把因信称义在保罗神学中的中心地位挤到了边缘地带，使之仅作为外邦人可以加入恩约群体的管道。¹¹³然而，Hagner也承认这个指控是不公平的，因为Dunn已经声明其对“律法之工”的诠释完全没有排挤因信称义在更正教中的地位。¹¹⁴

2.3 保罗在大马色路上的经历

一般上，“保罗新观”的反对者并不反对保罗在前往大马色的路上被神呼召成为外邦人的使徒。然而，他们却认为这样的说法不够全面。他们声称保罗的这个经历不只包括被呼召成为外邦使徒，也包括领悟到福音的真义。这可以从Kim引用加1:15-16作为其论证看出。他指出此处经文一方面说明保罗被呼召成为外邦使徒，但另一方面也说明，保罗向外邦人的宣讲内容中心不是外邦人可以成为恩约子民的一份子，而是耶稣基督。因此，保罗被呼召成为外邦使徒及保罗领悟到福音的真义是两件不能分开的事件。¹¹⁵然而，这样的解释明显忽略了加1:15-16所强调的。在这里，保罗明言神在大马色事件中将耶稣启示在他心里，他“把神传在外邦人中”。¹¹⁶

另一方面，Kim也指出Dunn将保罗前往大马色的路上之经历局限在领受向外邦人宣教的呼召，也就说明了耶稣的死只对外邦人有意义。更关键的是，Kim认为这个说法也直接让Dunn本身跌进了其所拒绝接受的两约进路。¹¹⁷当然，这样的

¹¹³ Hagner, "Paul," pp. 104-105.

¹¹⁴ Hagner, "Paul," p. 104.

¹¹⁵ Kim, *Paul*, pp. 10-13.

¹¹⁶ James D. G. Dunn, "A Light to the Gentiles', or 'The End of the Law'? The Significance of the Damascus Road Christophany for Paul," in *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), pp. 89-107, here p. 89.

¹¹⁷ Kim, *Paul*, pp. 20-21.

指控对Dunn是不公平的，因为Dunn从来没有宣称耶稣的死只对外邦人有意义，反之，Dunn认为耶稣的死乃是跟神的恩典得以从犹太民族主义的捆绑中被释放出来息息相关。因此，其有效性肯定不只局限于外邦人，而是所有的恩约子民。

再者，Kim不同意Dunn将保罗的因信称义观的发展延后至其被呼召/皈依的14或17年后，即安提阿事件之前。¹¹⁸他认为保罗的因信称义观的发展紧接于大马色路上的经历。这是因为这个事件完全击垮了保罗对律法的zh'lo"。甚至，Kim讥讽Dunn“将这个真实的皈依事件变成一个造成保罗部分失忆的现代交通意外。”¹¹⁹然而，这样的指控只是Kim本身的推论，没有圣经的支持，也不是保罗本身的证词。加2:1-10清楚说明信基督的外邦人与行割礼的问题只发生在大马色事件的14或17年之后。换言之，信基督与守律法之间的张力只发生在大马色事件的14或17年之后。¹²⁰也就是说，保罗思想中的因信称义与“律法之工”的对立也是在这段期间发展出来，而不是在大马色事件中顿悟的道理。

2.4 按照行为审判

针对Wright所提出的按行为审判，有人指控其思想为伯拉纠或半伯拉纠主义。¹²¹Dunn为其辩护，他指出保罗强调，按行为受审判乃是期望信徒行善并且结出圣灵的果子。他加上，在末日审判时，保罗肯定是期盼可以将“完美无缺”的信徒呈现在基督的审判台前。因此，若一个人认为，保罗相信一个罪人在信基督时的恶性与在末日审判时的恶性是不相上下的

¹¹⁸ Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).

¹¹⁹ Kim, *Paul*, p. 29. 引用的话是笔者的自译，Kim的话是：“to turn this genuine conversion into something like a modern-day car accident that resulted in Paul's partial memory loss”.

¹²⁰ Dunn, “Light,” pp. 98-99.

¹²¹ 请参阅Phil Johnson, “A Defence of the Old Perspective on Paul,” *Lecture at London Reformed Baptist Seminary*, January 10, 2004.

话，其神学肯定是有所偏差的。¹²²Wright认为反对者误解了他所提出的现在的称义与将来的称义之间的区分。现在的称义是指在“现在”的“因信称义”中已经预先看到将来按照行为的审判的称义。换言之，保罗并没有在时间上对这两者作清楚划分，反之保罗让它们处在一个绝对又适当的张力中。¹²³

同时，Wright也声称按照行为受审判绝对有圣经的支持。这些经文包括罗2:1-12与帖前2:19-20等。罗2:1-12清楚说明一个人的生活行为表现是末日审判的标准，而帖前2:19-20则说明帖撒罗尼迦的那些“行事对得起那召你们进他自己的国，得他荣耀的神”的信徒是保罗在基督的审判台前的盼望、喜乐和所夸的冠冕，而不是基督的宝血和公义。¹²⁴再者，Dunn加上，保罗在他处也声称他要克制己身，使它完全顺服，免得他传福音给别人，自己反而被淘汰了（哥林多前书9:24-27），以及行不义的人（哥林多前书6:9-11）和行情欲的事的人（加拉太书5:19-21）不能承受神的国。¹²⁵

2.5 称义观

Wright所提出的称义观遭到第259届的美国改革宗的大会（259th Synod of the Reformed Church of the United States）严厉抨击。在提出了Wright的所有错谬后，此大会作出了如此的建议：“我们判决N. T. Wright对因信称义的教导是另一类的福音，故此呼吁他为其过悔改。”¹²⁶基本上，此报告提出了五个主题来抨击Wright的主张，这五个主题是：一，“义”的定义；

¹²² Dunn, “Paul Page”.

¹²³ Dunn, “Paul Page”.

¹²⁴ Dunn, “Paul Page”.

¹²⁵ Dunn, “Paul Page”.

¹²⁶ The 259th Synod of the Reformed Church of the United States, “Report of the Special Committee to Study the New Perspective on Paul,” May 16-19, 2005, 35; available from <<http://www.rcus.org/main/pdfs/NPP%20Report.pdf>>, Date Accessed: 24 July 2007. 引用的字是笔者的翻译，此报告所用的字是：“We judge that the teachings of N. T. Wright on justification by faith are another gospel and call upon him to repent of his errors”.

二，保罗的称义观；三，因行为审判；四，“注入”的义；五，称义与“信”的关系。

首先，对于“义”的定义，大会反对 Wright 将其定义局限在恩约的框架中。在检视了旧约所提出的“义”的观念后，大会提出三个理由来指证 Wright 的“义”与旧约的观念有出入：一，旧约的“义”是法庭与伦理的用语，而非恩约的用语；二，旧约的“义”的法庭用语与惩罚有关，而不是如 Wright 所说的，与民法有关；三，在旧约，法庭是按照某人之“义”的行为来宣判其为“义”者。¹²⁷换言之，大会认为 Wright 所提出的“义”与圣经不符。

至于保罗的称义观，大会对 Wright 提出两个批判：一，大会不认同“称义”是法庭宣判某人成为恩约子民的一份子，反之认为“称义”意味洗脱被称义者的所有罪名。¹²⁸二，大会指出“称义”与救赎论有关，并引经据典指出全世界都在罪恶下（罗3:19），而其解决方案不是恩约，而是基督。换言之，被称义者之所以被称义，不是因为他们恩约之中，而是因为他们恩约里（罗8:1）。所以，大会认为称义的问题，不是“我是否是恩约的成员”，而是“神是否定我有罪”。大会也因此否定 Wright 认为称义与教会论有关的看法。¹²⁹

再者，对于 Wright 的“因行为审判”，大会提出三个与之不同的观点：一，大会指出称义是一次完成永远完成的事件，所以坚决否定有第二次的称义，并指出末日的审判与称义无关，而是对 Wright 所谓的第一次称义的公开宣告和肯定。¹³⁰二，大会不认同 Wright 认为现在的称义只是对将来的称义的期盼，反之现在的称义意味着已经开始享有永生的福分；三，大会不认同“在圣灵里所结出的善果”是末日审判的标准，反之

¹²⁷ Synod, "Report," p. 19.

¹²⁸ Synod, "Report," p. 25.

¹²⁹ Synod, "Report," pp. 25-26.

¹³⁰ 参 Waters, *Justification*, p. 210.

认为善果是恩典及与基督联合的记号和结果。¹³¹大会从罗马书5:17-18及罗马书5:1-11指出称义是现在已经完成的事件，否则信徒就不能在今世享有生命及与神和好的关系。¹³²再者，大会也否定Wright对罗2:13的解经，大会认为这节经文与末日按照行为审判无关，而是重述律法的规范（criterion of the law）。其原因是这节经文不是指向基督徒而言，而是要指出全人类的困境，即无人能靠行律法称义。¹³³因此，大会的总结是，最后的称义的教导与保罗及耶稣的教导（约5:24）背道而驰。¹³⁴

至于“注入”的义，大会指出这个观念对保罗来说并不陌生。同时，大会亦指出保罗不是一个死板板借用希伯来法庭的审讯框架来表达其观念的人。最好的证据是，保罗指出神称“不义”的为“义”的，而这肯定不是希伯来法庭的法官的作风。再者，大会指出若Wright否定保罗有“注入”的义的观念，他也必须接受保罗没有世人的过犯可以注入基督身上的观念。可是，这正是保罗在哥林多后书5:19-21清楚表达的观念。基于此，大会断定Wright的看法是非保罗的。

最后，针对“信”与称义的关系，大会否定“信”是恩约子民的标记。反之，大会指出恩约子民的标记是洗礼。再者，大会也反对Wright将“信”等同于诚信的观点，并指出保罗从来没有说明一个人是因为“信”而称义，反之，保罗的观点是藉着“信”而称义。因此，“信”指的不是诚信，而是将焦点放在基督的身上且是与工作对立的。更重要的是，“信”将信徒与基督联合起来。

事实上，上述这些第259届美国改革宗大会所提出来抨击Wright的观点，也即代表了反对“保罗新观”的阵容（尤其是持“传统路德观”者）的观点。¹³⁵显然，他们的观点出自于

¹³¹ Synod, "Report," p. 27.

¹³² Synod, "Report," p. 28.

¹³³ Synod, "Report," p. 28. 参Waters, *Justification*, p. 177.

¹³⁴ Synod, "Report," p. 30.

¹³⁵ 参John Piper, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007); Waters, *Justification*; Michael Beasley, *Indeed, has Paul Really Said? A Review of*

背后的三大关怀与顾虑，即“保罗新观”低估了“罪”和“个人”在称义中所扮演的角色，以及“保罗新观”威胁了“清楚的教义”的重要性。¹³⁶显然，反对的阵容否定从“恩约”的框架来理解“义”与“称义”，并坚持它们是法庭用语且与赏善罚恶与救赎论有直接的关系，就是担忧“罪”和“个人”的层面被排挤到“称义”的门框外。同时，他们对“注入”的义的坚持，以及对“信”不能作为恩约子民的身份标记，而是将信徒与基督联合起来的因素的坚持，也表露了同样的关怀。至于他们反对“保罗新观”的“因行为审判”的观点则表露出他们对所谓的“清楚的教义”的坚持与执着。

然而，笔者认为，与其说“保罗新观”低估了“罪”和“个人”的层面在称义上的地位，不如说“传统路德观”误解了“保罗新观”。这可以从Dunn和Wright的言论得到凭证。Dunn声称“保罗新观”“不是要取代传统观的重点。我们所要说的是那一个已经‘失去’而需要‘复得’的层面”。¹³⁷同时，Wright也声称“这是完全不对的，有人一而再，再而三地指出，我拥护群体教会论而否定或低估了个人的层面。是的，我反对西方文化猖狂的个人主义，也尝试坚决以圣经为本的在基督里的群体合一观来对抗它。但是，这决不削弱每一个个人面对福音的大能，以及每一个个人需要从偶像转向神，从罪恶转向圣洁，和从死亡转向生命的重要性”。¹³⁸再

N. T. Wright's Book: *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Logos Christian Research Ministries, 2007).

¹³⁶ 参Simon Gathercole, "What Did Paul Really Mean?" *Christianity Today* (August 2007): 22-28.

¹³⁷ Dunn, "Paul Page". 引用的话是笔者的自译，Dunn的话是："Not to replace the traditional emphases. What we're saying is that there is a dimension that has been lost and needs to be recovered".

¹³⁸ Wright, "New Perspective". 引用的话是笔者的自译，Wright的话是："it is simply not true, as people have said again and again, that I deny or downplay the place of the individual in favour of a corporate ecclesiology. True, I have reacted against the rampant individualism of western culture, and have tried to insist on a biblically rooted corporate solidarity in the body of Christ as an antidote to it. But this in no way reduces the importance of every person being confronted with the powerful gospel, and the need for each one to be turned around by it from idols to God, from sin to holiness, and from death to life."

者，Wright也指出“一些作品经常两极化一方面论及‘我如何得救和我如何进入一个个人与神的关系’的因信称义观，和另一方面论及犹太人和外邦人如何在一起，以及外邦人不需要受割礼的事实。它们不是两件分开且二分化的事情。这是因为二者有连带关系。他们绝对同行而不是二者择其一”。¹³⁹更重要的是，Wright也声称“立约本是为着对付罪的问题...一旦我们能全然掌握住保罗立约神学的本质，对于害怕保罗书信中立约的语词会有损于十字架和罪之神学的正当性，变属无稽之谈。立约的目的，就是在解决世上罪恶的问题，并且已在主耶稣基督的十架上成就了”。¹⁴⁰至于“因行为审判”的观点是否否定了“清楚的教义”。笔者认为Dunn的一席话值得深思：罗马书第8章给信徒肯定无比的得救确据，可是在他处，他又对信徒的得救表示焦虑，并警告他们要坚忍到底。这说明保罗二者并重。虽然我们常常无法让二者在一个包裹中融洽共处，但我们无需为之感到焦虑。更应该让我们焦虑的是，我们对没有重视保罗所重视的观点。¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Dunn, "Paul Page". 引用的话是笔者的自译，Dunn的话是：“Some recent writing continues to polarize justification by faith in terms of ‘how I get saved and how I get into a personal relationship with God,’ on the one hand, and on the other hand, how Jews and Gentiles come together, and the fact that Gentiles don’t have to get circumcised. These are not two separate things to be polarized in Paul. It is because of the one that the other is true. They go absolutely together and it’s not an either-or.”

¹⁴⁰ Wright, *Paul*, p. 128. 翻译取自汤姆·赖特 N.T. Wright: 《再思保罗神学争议》(中译; 台湾, 校园, 2000), 页194。

¹⁴¹ Dunn, "Paul Page". Dunn的话是：“On the one hand Paul can speak with unshakeable assurance. I am thinking of Romans 8...But he can also say the other things – all these warnings and expressions of concern for his converts, that they persevere right to the end. So it’s holding both emphases in balance. Often we’re not able to tie them all together into a neat package or a grand narrative or whatever, but that shouldn’t worry us. What should worry us is that we’re not giving weight to things that Paul gave weight to.”

小结

显然，“保罗新观”的反对者所提出的论点有两个方向：一，完全否定“保罗新观”所提出的观点，坚决“传统路德观”的旧观点；二，接受“保罗新观”所提出的观点，但认为其观点不够完全，必须由旧观点来补足。然而，不能否定的是，反对者的声音常常与其所背负的神学包袱息息相连。当然，这也导致他们无法以较客观的眼光来正视“保罗新观”。

总结

总括来说，“保罗新观”的内容可以由其三位倡导人所提出的三个术语来代表之，即Sanders的“犹太教宗教范式－恩约行为”、Dunn的“律法之工－身份标记”及Wright的“以恩约神学作为框架的称义观”。乍看之下，“保罗新观”与“传统路德观”的重要区分在于前者强调群体与恩约关系，后者强调个人与神的个别关系。然而，要注意的是，“保罗新观”并没有否定后者，而是要突显这个必须“失而复得”的前者，好让信徒能够以一个较全面和平衡的角度来诠释信徒与神的关系。

当然，从上文众多学者对“保罗新观”的反弹与反击来看，“保罗新观”确实在研究保罗的学术界中带来很大的冲击。然而，明显的，“保罗新观”的反对者，不论他们仍然坚决反对“保罗新观”，抑或采取妥协的立场，即将二者的观念融合在一起，他们都只有一个目的，即竭尽所能维护传统路德的旧观点。至今，“保罗新观”仍然屹立不倒，而反对者仍然坚持己见。不论最后那一方将脱颖而出，笔者认为，那不是最重要的。反之，最重要的是，正如吴慧仪所说的“圣经研究的重要性不一定在于持守信仰传统，而在于为信仰传统背后的历

史求真”。¹⁴²故此，那些继续以“历史”及“圣经文本”为依据来探讨“保罗新观”的努力肯定是多多益善的。

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¹⁴² 吴慧仪：“保罗新观，”页23。

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“Conspiracy, Sign or Silence?” Some Islamic Responses in the Aftermath of the Asian Tsunami¹

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INTRODUCTION

The tsunami that hit many parts of Asia on 26th December 2004 naturally evoked different responses from the adherents of the various faiths represented in the region, namely, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and, to a small degree, Christianity. This paper will focus only on the Islamic response to the disaster which can be conveniently classified into three main categories: conspiracy theory, sign, and silence. Some of the reasons for the differing responses from Islam will be explored. As Malaysia was one of the countries in the path of the Asian tsunami, particular focus will be placed on the Malaysian Islamic response which attempts to give a more balanced view of interpreting the disaster. The paper will consider a reading of selected texts from the Quran quoted by some key Malaysian Islamic scholars in their response to the tsunami.

CONSPIRACY THEORY

The first category of response is the conspiracy theory that arose in many Islamic quarters, stretching from Egypt to Turkey. The concocted theories generally put the blame on America, Israel or India for testing underground nuclear devices in the Indian Ocean and hence disturbing

¹ An earlier version of this paper was first presented at the 2005 SBL International Meeting in Singapore.

the earth’s tectonic plates.² For example, *Al-Jazeera.com* reported that many people put the blame, not on Mother Nature, but on “government cover-ups, top secret military testing in the waters of the Indian Ocean and even aliens attempting to correct Earth’s ‘wobbly’ rotation.”³ The Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ushu* and the Turkish newspaper *Yeni Safaki* both said it was all caused by a US/Israeli/Indian nuclear test.⁴

Writing in his article on 1st January 2005 in the *Al-Ushu*, Mahmoud Bakri suggested that “it was some kind of human intervention that destabilised the tectonic plates, an intervention that is caused only in nuclear experiments and explosions – the three most recent tests appeared to be genuine American and Israeli preparations to act together with India to test a way to liquidate humanity.”⁵ He continued, “... although so far it has not been proven that secret Indian-Israeli nuclear testing is what caused the destructive earthquake, there is evidence that the recent nuclear tests, the exchange of nuclear experts between India and Israel, and the American

² Conspiracy theories also abound among others in the West. See, for example, Joe Wallis, “Did New York Orchestrate the Asian Tsunami?” <<http://www.viallis.com/sublimalsuggestion/tsunami.html>>, Date Accessed: 14th February 2005; and Cindy-Lou Dale, “The Asian Tsunami: Another Manmade Disaster” <<http://www.etherzone.com/2005/dale040805.shtml>>, Date Accessed: 29th April 2005. Wallis lays the blame on Wolfowitz and the company of Wall Street bankers who sent a large American thermonuclear weapon to the bottom of the Sumatran trench to trigger the tsunami; while Dale suggested either induced seismic activity from Australia or repeated American nuclear testing triggered the Asian tsunami. The *India Daily* voiced similar sentiments in its 29th December 2004 posting but blamed the earthquake on the testing of an eco-weapon by its own government.

³ See Julie Stahl, “America, Israel, India Caused Tsunami, Conspiracy Theory Says”, *Cybercast News Service*, 7th January 2005.

⁴ Steven Edwards, “Tsunami was ‘Allah’s Revenge’: Mainstream media spin bizarre theories”, *The National Post of Canada*, 12th January 2005.

⁵ Ross Clark, “Tsunami was All Allah’s Doing” <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/main.jhtml?xml=/opinion/2005/01/16/do1604.xml>>, Date Accessed: 16th January 2005.

pressure on Pakistan regarding its nuclear cooperation with Asian and Islamic countries — all these pose a big question mark regarding the causes of the severe earthquake in Asia.”⁶ He went on to theorize that America’s nuclear tests were also responsible for the devastating Turkish earthquake in 1999 that killed 18,000 people. As the columnist Ross Clark in the *Daily Telegraph* pointed out, “If they were, the Americans clearly still have to perfect the technology: presumably they were aiming for Iraq or Iran rather than one of their allies.”⁷

The basis for many of these controversy theories is not based on any particular interpretation of the Quran but often on the volatile situation in the world, especially the West-East divide, hatred for the US and Israel, a locked medieval mindset, and the great philosophical divide between Islam and the West. Whenever something goes bad and it affects the Muslims, the tendency has been to put the blame on the perceived “enemies” of Islam, and in this case, the US and Israel. Such bizarre conspiracy theories will continue to be rife in the minds of many Muslims as long as they remain suspicious of the aims of the US and Israel, and in general, the West. These conspiracy theories will also continue to find resonance in the minds of those who are the educated elite of a part of the world deliberately locked into a medieval mindset. This medievalism, often in the guise of Islam, rages in fury at the world beyond itself. It extols the virtues of suicide bombers, blames Jews and infidels for the ills of the world, and declares war on the West. These conspiracy theories are sometimes concocted and propagated by well-educated Islamists who give a certain measure of legitimacy to their theories, which are then well received by the general public. Such ravings, seen as not from “in misguided madmen” but part of respectable thought, are more likely to

⁶Salim Mansu, “Were waves the fault of ‘infidels’?” *The Toronto Sun*, 12th January 2005.

⁷Clark, “Tsunami was All Allah’s Doing”.

increase donations for anti-Western and anti-Israeli terrorism than buy humanitarian relief for tsunami survivors, most of whom live in Indonesia. Unfortunately, these anti-Western diatribes are also routinely delivered by traditional news outlets across the Middle East. Such a medium also provides a measure of legitimacy that at best encourages hate and at worst facilitates terrorist recruitment.

SIGN

The second Islamic response is a spectrum of responses ranging from interpreting the tsunami as a sign of natural disaster ("an act of God"), or a sign of the impending End Times (*Hari Kiamat*), or a sign of punishment from God for the sins of humanity. The idea that the tsunami was a form of punishment from God is prevalent. There are numerous examples coming from Muslim imams commenting on the tsunami in recent sermons stretching from Saudi Arabia to the Palestinian territories. In the wake of the disaster, Islamic television stations, newspapers and chatrooms were full of theories as to why Allah should have targeted the beaches of South-East Asia. "Don't these countries have witchcraft, sorcery, deceitfulness and abomination?" asked Ibrahim al-Bashar, the advisor to the Saudi justice minister, on the State-controlled religious satellite television, *Al-Majd*. He emphasized that the countries that were struck "refrain from adopting Allah's law, which is a form of heresy... Whoever reads the Koran, given by the Maker of the World, can see how these nations were destroyed. There is one reason: they lied, they sinned, and (they) were infidels."⁸

A Saudi Cleric Muhammad Al-Munajjid concludes that the tsunami was caused by Christian holidays "accompanied by forbidden things, by immorality, abomination, adultery, alcohol, drunken dancing and revelry.

⁸ Mansu, "Were waves the fault of 'infidels'?"

A belly dancer costs 2,500 pounds a minute, and a singer costs 50,000 pounds an hour, and they hop from one hotel to another from night to dawn. Then they spend the entire night defying Allah.”⁹ He expanded this idea: “Those celebrating spent (the holiday) in vacation resorts, pubs, and hotels. At the height of immorality, Allah took revenge on these criminals. Allah struck them with an earthquake. He finished off the Richter scale. All nine levels gone. Tens of thousands dead.”¹⁰

Likewise, preaching on Palestinian Authority TV in his Friday sermon in Gaza on 31st December 2004, Sheik Ibrahim Mudeiris, a Palestinian prayer leader, reasoned that the waves struck Indonesia because of “Zionist and American investments.”¹¹ He said, “When oppression and corruption increase, the law of equilibrium applies. I can see in your eyes you are wondering what is the ‘universal law of equilibrium’. This law is a divine law. If people are remiss in implementing God’s law and in being zealous and vengeful for His sake, Allah unleashes his soldiers in action to take revenge.”¹²

A Saudi professor from the Al-Imam University in Beirut, Sheik Fawzan Al-Fawzan, said also on *Al-Majid*, that the earthquake and tsunami in south Asia were punishment from Allah for homosexuality and fornication committed by residents and visitors of affected countries at Christmastime.¹³ “These great tragedies and collective punishments that are wiping out villages, towns, cities and even entire countries, are Allah’s punishments of the people of these countries, even if they are Muslims...

⁹ <<http://memri.org/bin/media.cgi?ID=115905>>, Date Accessed: 17th January 2005.

¹⁰ Arnaud de Borchgrave. “Commentary: Allah Off The Richter Scale”, *United Press International*, 4th January 2005.

¹¹ Clark, “Tsunami was All Allah’s Doing.”

¹² de Borchgrave, “Commentary: Allah Off The Richter Scale.”

¹³ “Homosexuality, Fornication Cause of Tsunami?” <http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=42242>, Date Accessed: 5th January 2005.

Some of our forefathers said that if there is usury and fornication in a certain village, Allah permits its destruction.” The professor singled out beach resorts as places of sexual sin. “We know that at these resorts, which unfortunately exist in Islamic and other countries in south Asia, and especially at Christmas, fornication and sexual perversion of all kinds are rampant...The fact that it happened at this particular time is a sign from Allah. It happened at Christmas, when fornicators and corrupt people from all over the world come to commit fornication and sexual perversion. That’s when this tragedy took place, striking them all and destroyed everything. It turned the land into wasteland, where only the cries of the ravens are heard. I say this is a great sign and punishment on which Muslims should reflect.”¹⁴ Al-Fawzan urged Muslims to atone for their sin. “All that’s left for us to do is to ask for forgiveness. We must atone for our sins and for the acts of the stupid people among us and improve our condition. We must fight fornication, homosexuality, usury, fight the corruption on the face of the earth, and the disregard of the lives of protected people.”

As Paul Marshall noted, “These are not isolated rants by errant preachers: They reflect official government positions. Al-Bashar is an adviser to the Saudi justice minister, and Al-Fawzan is a professor at the Al-Imam Mohamed bin Saud Islamic University, a position that he, like Al-Munajjid, cannot hold without government approval. All their sermons were shown on the state-controlled *Al-Majd* TV channel and reflect the *Wahhabi* ideology that is the state religion of Saudi Arabia...(which) is assiduously propagated around the world, including in the United States.”¹⁵

The basis for such claims is often from a rather literal or liberal interpretation of the Quranic texts. Even though the tsunami is recognized as a form of punishment, there are divergent views here: The tsunami

¹⁴ Stephen Schwartz, “Allah and the Tsunamis”, *Tech Central Station*, 12th January 2005.

¹⁵ Paul Marshall, “Saudis and Tsunamis” <<http://memri.org/bin/media.cgi?ID=115905>>, Date Accessed: 17th January 2005.

has been perceived variously as punishment for homosexuality and sins committed during Christmas; for judgement on the non-*wahabi* Muslims; judgement on the sex-tourist trade in Thailand; judgement for the war between the extremist Muslim south in Thailand and the Buddhist majority Thai government, as well as for the Thailand government supporting “the Christian crusaders in the war on terror”; judgement for the sins of war between Acehese rebels and the Indonesian government (because the *Kufr* (non-Islamic) government of the apostate Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is fighting against the *mujahideen* in Aceh who want to establish an Islamic Sultanate where the *Syriah* (Islamic laws) prevail); judgement for the war between the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan government (as well as for Sri Lanka giving “its full backing to the Christian Crusaders inside the White House”); and judgement on India for its *Shirk* (polytheism).¹⁶ It is easy to see the convoluted logic of some of the arguments: For example, because the tsunami struck on the 26th December, it is convenient to associate the recently concluded Christmas celebrations as the immediate cause of the disaster (hence, the arguments of Al-Munajjid and Sheikh Fazwan).

SILENCE

There is a third Islamic response from some quarters, especially the Islamic extremist groups of *Al Qaeda* and other terrorist-linked groups. This response is a strange, restrained and muted silence. Osama bin Laden had issued a statement on the Iraqi election a day after the tsunami occurred but did not mention anything about the tsunami. In his message,

¹⁶ The prominent Islamist website *Jihad Unspun* maintains that the tsunami struck for these above reasons. The website does not explain why Aceh, the most Islamist of any Indonesian province, suffered the worst damage. See Dr Abu Ziyad, “Important Lessons from the South Asian Tsunami” <http://www.jihadunspun.com/intheatre_internal.php?article=101163&list=/home.php>, Date Accessed: 3rd March 2005.

he asserted that “jihad in Iraq was a duty and that those who fail to engage in such activities were committing a grave sin.”¹⁷ In the weeks following the tsunami, the only words attributed to bin Laden on *Al-Jazeera*, the Arabic television station that broadcasts the champion of terror’s views, had to do with his prevailing mission – to kill and, in this case, spawning more deaths in war-torn Iraq.¹⁸ Neither were there any messages of condolences from bin Laden or any *Al-Qaeda*-linked terrorist leaders or those who identify themselves as *mujahid fi sabilillah* (the true crusaders for the religion of Allah). Bin Laden’s silence and repeated disregard to this humanitarian emergency is all the more amazing since the worst hit country is Indonesia, the world’s most populous Muslim nation and the province of Aceh which has a higher percentage of Muslims than other parts of Indonesia.

The silence in the face of the tsunami tragedy has drawn some comments from the affected region. In Indonesia, Zakiyuddin Baidhaw, a presidium member of the *Muhammadiyah* Scholars Network (JIMM), argues that bin Laden would have a more positive impact on the Muslim world if his “jihad” was related to the reconstruction and rebuilding of infrastructure in Aceh and North Sumatra. Baidhaw also noted that bin Laden “had done nothing to respond to this greatest of natural disasters” or “helped emergency operations to reduce the misery of the tsunami victims.” It seems to show that the *Al-Qaeda* leader and his cohorts appear to be strangely out of touch with reality and this reveals them as “political opportunists.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Zakiyuddin Baidhaw, “Tsunami Calls for ‘Jihad’” <<http://www.thejakartapost.com/Archives/ArchivesDet2.asp?FileID=20050127.E02>>, Date Accessed: 4th February 2005.

¹⁸ Marwaan Macan-Markar, “TSUNAMI-IMPACT: Muslim Solidarity Missing in the Aftermath of Killer Waves Analysis”, *Inter Press Service News Agency*, 31st January 2005.

¹⁹ Baidhaw, “Tsunami calls for ‘Jihad.’”

Thailand's *Bangkok Post* noted on Tuesday, 25th January 2005 that "the fastest, biggest aid providers to the staunchly Muslim victims of Aceh, Indonesia, were the Australian and U.S. military."²⁰ "The regional arms of al-Qaeda spared not even a message of condolence for those who suffered in their own countries, let alone abroad...the man who has called for the proclamation of a new caliphate said nothing about the plight of millions of distressed Muslims." The *Bangkok Post* expressed the hope that the "heartless lack of response," contrasted with Western generosity, would refute anti-Western propaganda and expose terrorists' true values.

While the Islamic extremists elsewhere in the world showed a muted silence concerning the tsunami, at the ground level in Indonesia, where the Muslims in Aceh are more conservative and some elements of the *Sharia* law are already in vogue in this province, the presence of radical groups such as the Indonesian *Mujahideen* Council, Islamic Defender's Front and *Laskar Mujahideen* were seen in Banda Aceh mobilizing their cadres, though with the ostensible aim of providing aid and offering "spiritual guidance and strength."²¹ Some of these organizations are known for their anti-Western sentiments and their violent activities against night clubs and places where Westerners gather. These extremist groups purport to have a humanitarian mission but their history suggests otherwise. They would like to see Western aid fail so that the foreigners will exit and that they can take a leading role in filling the void and have greater influence in the province.²²

²⁰ Patrick Goodenough, "No Comment from Bin Laden on Tsunami Disaster", *CNSNews.com*, 26th January 2005.

²¹ C. S. Kuppusamy, "Indonesia: Aceh – Hopes for a Better Future!" <<http://www.saag.org/papers13/paper1281.html>>, Date Accessed: 20th March 2005.

²² James Van Zorge, "High Stakes in Post-Tsunami Aceh", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 2005, pp. 41-43.

THE ISLAMIC RESPONSE FROM MALAYSIA

The Islamic response from the countries directly affected by the tsunami like Indonesia and Malaysia was more sympathetic and considerate when compared with the vitriol rhetoric of some of the Islamic voices from elsewhere in the world. Instead of casting stones at “whoever was deemed responsible” for the killer waves as espoused in the conspiracy theories, the customary response was to interpret the disaster as a sign from God which was then subsequently understood as a call to self-searching and repentance. The disaster that also struck Malaysia with a loss of 66 lives drew immediate response from the King to the Prime Minister to key religious leaders of the various faiths in the country. All stood united over the loss of lives and property. The coming 2005 New Year celebrations were cancelled. The Prime Minister also directed all mosques in the country to conduct sermons on Friday related to the catastrophic event, to focus their prayers of request (*solat hajat*) and *tahlil* prayers for those affected by the tsunami, and to reach out to the tsunami victims to help them overcome their grief and hardship. They were also to make prayers for the country against future calamities. Request was also made to the other religious groups to conduct similar prayers and to pray for whatever would be for the best of the people and the country according to their own practices and beliefs.²³ Immediately, the nation’s major newspapers launched a relief fund to help the disaster victims. *The Star*, together with the Malaysian Red Crescent Society (MRCS) and Mercy Malaysia, launched the *The Star* Earthquake/Tsunami Relief Fund. The next day, the Fund received RM 1 million from the Public Bank.

²³ <<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v3/news.php?id=111197>>, Date Accessed: 30th January 2005.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on 30th December 2004 said the public should refrain from pointing fingers at anybody for the tsunami. Abdullah said, "We had least expected a Tsunami to strike with such devastating effect and nobody should be blamed for it. What is important for us now is to learn from such an occurrence."²⁴ The 28th December edition of the country's English newspaper *The Star* did not carry any condemnation or explanation of the tsunami's origin from any religious leaders in the country. Instead, the mood expressed was, "This is a natural disaster of tragic proportions for our country and others in the region are even more severely hit. We share in the anguish of those who have lost their loved ones... We do not point fingers or apportion blame."²⁵

For the common man in the street, the major response of Muslim family members and relatives who had lost their loved ones was to blame themselves for being holidaymakers and picnickers at the beachfront in Penang as it was a Sunday. Many had planned the trip for their families, as it was a public holiday. Another response by the Muslim families was to hope that the bodies of the victims would at least be quickly recovered so that a proper burial according to Muslim rites could be carried out. A third response by the many Muslims who lost their loved ones was to accept the tragedy as fate. "I do not regret allowing my wife and children to go picnicking because it is beyond my power to change what is predetermined by God," said Hassan Harun who lost his wife and four children to the tsunami which hit the Penang shores.²⁶ Three other children of his who were also picnicking at the Miami Beach in Batu

²⁴ <<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v3/news.php?id=111536>>, Date Accessed: 27th January 2005.

²⁵ Soo Ewe Jin, *The Star*, 28th December 2004, p.6.

²⁶ <<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v3/news.php?id=110868>>, Date Accessed: 20th January 2005.

Feringghi survived the killer waves. “My family was not keen on recreational activities but they had gone picnicking anyway, and so I accept everything that has happened as fate which cannot be changed.”

The response from some key Malaysian Islamic scholars revealed a more sombre and cautious approach. Dato Dr Harun Din, in his article “Bala Bencana – Apakah Sebab DiSebaliknyanya?” (“Disaster and Trouble – What is the Real Reason?” *Translation mine*), argued that disasters and troubles have visited humans since early times.²⁷ For example, *Surah Hud* tells us there were floods from the time of Noah, with “waves towering like mountains” (The Prophet Hud, 11:42). *Surah al-Ankabuut* reads, “Each one of them We seized for his crime: of them, against some We sent a violent tornado (with showers of stones); some were caught by a (mighty) Blast; some We caused the earth to swallow up; and some We drowned (in the waters): It was not Allah Who injured (or oppressed) them: They injured (and oppressed) their own souls” (The Spider, 29:40). *Surah al-Haqqah* reads, “But the Thamud – they were destroyed by a terrible Storm of thunder and lightning! And the Ad, they were destroyed by a furious Wind, exceedingly violent; He made it rage against them seven nights and eight days in succession: so that thou couldst see the (whole) people lying prostrate in its (path), as they had been roots of hollow palm-trees tumbled down!” (The Sure Reality, 69:5-7).

Al-Quran has given several examples as *iktibar* (signs) to guide humanity towards the *hidayah* (guidance) of Allah for the good of humankind. The fact is that earthquakes have already been mentioned in the Al-Quran publicly as a *isyarat* (warning) or *petunjuk* (guide). Thus, *Surah al-Thaariq* reads, “And by the Earth which opens out (for the gushing of springs or the sprouting of vegetation)” (The Morning Star,

²⁷ Dato’ Dr Harun Din, “Bala Bencana – Apakah Sebab Disebaliknyanya?” <<http://www.partipas.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=493>>, Date Accessed: 4th February 2005.

86:12) and *Surah Abasa* reads, “And We split the earth in fragments” (He Frowned, 80:26). *Surah Al-Zalzalah* reads, “When the earth is shaken to her (utmost) convulsion, And the earth throws up her burdens (from within), And man cries (distressed): ‘What is the matter with her?’– On that Day will she declare her tidings: For that thy Lord will have given her inspiration. On that Day will men proceed in companies sorted out, to be shown the deeds that they (had done). Then shall anyone who has done an atom’s weight of good, see it! And anyone who has done an atom’s weight of evil, shall see it” (The Earthquake, 99:1-8). It is believed that there will be an earthquake greater in magnitude which will usher in the Judgement Day and this will be the supreme world-shaking event.

Two questions are raised by Harun: why did the event happen and who or what is the cause behind it? He believes that human knowledge sometimes reaches a *cul-de-sac* and that there are no physical explanations possible. The only way is to look at the Al-Quran from the angle of Allah’s *ilmu* (knowledge). From the stories of the prophets, it is clear that there is one consistent teaching: troubles and disasters occur because of the evil and sinfulness of humanity which causes Allah to be angry towards them. This raises another question: why is Allah angry towards his servants when he is *ar-Rahman* (the All-Compassionate) and *ar-Rahim* (the All-Merciful)? *Surah as-Syura* reads, “Whatever misfortune happens to you, is because of the things your hands have wrought, and for many (of them) He grants forgiveness...Or He can cause them to perish because of the (evil) which (the men) have earned; but much doth He forgive” (Consultation, 42:30, 34). Allah allows these disasters on humanity because of their sin. We are to study these signs in the right spirit. Even though Allah forgives their sins, he allows disasters to befall them to ensure that they return to the true path. Thus disasters, small or large, are given to humanity as a reminder, for disasters can never happen without a cause or reason.

In *al-Maraghi juzuk 26 halaman 87*, it reads, “Allah’s army in the sky and on earth are angels, humans, Jinns, voice from the sky, thunder, rain, typhoons, earthquake and many others.” These are used by Allah to act against humanity that is cruel in order to awaken and make them realize their acts. Thus, these natural disasters are a result of the sins of humanity (*Surah Ghafir* 40:21, *Surah Al-A’raf* 7:100-101).

However, not everyone who is affected by the disaster has committed sin. Within the community there will be those who are *soleh* (upright), who obey Allah, people who did not commit sin, the little ones who do not understand what sin is, animals and other created beings that have not sinned. Yet, sometimes these innocent ones also suffer the same fate as the evil-doers. *Surah Al-Anfaal* reads, “And fear, tumult or oppression, which affecteth not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong: and know that Allah is strict in punishment” (Spoils of War, 8:25). Good people are also everywhere but when the good are with the evil, when Allah brings the disasters, everyone will receive the same fate.

In another online article, Harun pointed out that the word “tsunami” could stand as an acronym:

T(uhan) S(udah) U(ji) N(amun) A(da) M(anusia) dan I(ngkar) [God has Tested, if there are Humans who are Disobedient].²⁸

He believed that the tsunami was for all humanity to experience. We have to realize that when the disaster strikes, it does not select only those who do evil but even the upright will be affected. He quoted some data of previous earthquakes and their measurements on the Richter scale:

24th December 2003, earthquake with a 4.1 magnitude near New Zealand

²⁸ Harun Din, “Rahmat Allah Terputus, bala Pula Diundang” <<http://www.parti-pas.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=494>>, Date Accessed: 4th February 2005.

26th December, whales died in Tasmania believed to be caused by a strong undersea earthquake

26th December, earthquake of 9.1 magnitude

26th December, earthquake in China

26th December, earthquake in Turkey

26th December, earthquake in Bam, Iran

26th December 2004, the Asian tsunami

He queried why these earthquakes occurred on those dates – before and after 25th December. Is this a *isyarat* (warning) of a *petunjuk* (guide) that must be reflected upon? Does the Al-Quran give any indication that on that date a huge disaster will occur as has happened recently? He went on to quote *Surah Al-Maryam* which reads, “They say: ‘(Allah) Most Gracious has begotten a son!’ Indeed ye have put forth a thing most monstrous! At it the skies are ready to burst, the earth to split asunder, and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin, That they should invoke a son for (Allah) Most Gracious. For it is not consonant with the majesty of (Allah) Most Gracious that He should beget a son. Not one of the beings in the heavens and the earth but must come to (Allah) Most Gracious as a servant” (Mary, 19:88-93). Harun did not say anything further on this matter but one can see what he was implying: these earthquakes all occur around the date of 25th December which is of course the commonly accepted date for Jesus’ birth, hence his quoting from *Surah Al-Maryam* on how even the earth “will split asunder” to even consider the possibility that Allah can have a son!

He raised another question: can mortal men hope to prevent disasters from Allah? From a scientific and technological point of view, we can set up sophisticated equipment to foresee and prevent possible disasters. But what if the disaster is not a tsunami but something which occurs on land like storms, landslides, fire, and chronic diseases? *Surah Al-A’raf*

reads, “To those who inherit the earth in succession to its (previous) possessors, is it not a guiding, (lesson) that, if We so willed, We could punish them (too) for their sins, and seal up their hearts so that they could not hear?” (The Heights, 7:100). The argument is that the stories which have been related before should give ample warning to present and future generations.

In a similar vein, Nik Aziz, the Menteri Besar (Chief Minister) of the state of Kelantan ruled by the Opposition party PAS, commented that the tsunami was a reminder for humans about their conduct before this.²⁹ The event has a direct connection but humans do not understand it. *Surah Al-An'aam* reads, “Say: ‘He hath power to send calamities on you, from above and below, or to cover you with confusion in party strife, giving you a taste of mutual vengeance – each from the other.’ See how We explain the signs by various (symbols); that they may understand” (The Cattle, 6:65). Here, the calamities can be understood as storms, blizzards, torrential rain or earthquakes, floods and landslides.

Dr Shafie Abu Bakar also argued that the tsunami was a sign that our earth is caught up in the process of decay and destruction that we are heading towards the day of what Muslims commonly term as *Kiamat* (the Judgement or the End).³⁰ Humanity is to live in agreement and harmony with nature but when humanity upsets and destroys nature and becomes unfaithful to Allah, the result will be to bring disasters upon themselves and upon nature, so reads *Surah Al-Rum* (The Romans, 30:41). He believed the tsunami was not a “nature disaster” but a reminder, threat,

²⁹ Tuan Guru Dato' Nik Aziz, “Bencana Besar adalah Peringatan Dari Allah” <<http://www.parti-pas.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=487>>, Date Accessed: 4th February 2005.

³⁰ Dr Shafie Abu Bakar, “Tsunami: Noktah Keinsafan” <<http://www.harakahdaily.net/print.php?sid=11395>>, Date Accessed: 17th January 2005.

and punishment from the physical, mental, spiritual and psychological aspects so that all these become a lesson to bring humanity to consciousness and awareness. The tsunami is a *petanda hari Kiamat* (sign of the Judgement). The destruction that leads to the End will come when there will be *gegaran* (shaking) and *perlanggaran* (collision) among the planets and stars as prophesized in *Surah Al-Infitar* (The Cleaving Asunder, 82:1-19) and *Surah Al-Inshqaq* (The Rending Asunder, 84:1-25). It is a reminder that a similar or larger disaster can happen anywhere and at anytime. The tsunami, on the other hand, is to bring humanity ever closer to Allah.

CONCLUSION

While Islam has constantly sought to portray itself as a monolithic entity, the varying and far-ranging responses to the tsunami show it to be otherwise. Why is it that there is a strikingly contrary and discordant note in the responses from Islam from around the world, from bizarre controversy theories to muted silence, from signs of God of the coming End times to a vitriolic attack on the sinfulness of humanity? Why is it that many of the Islamic responses seem cold and distant and lacking in empathy for the victims of the tsunami, especially since the majority who died were Muslims from Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim nation? Part of the reason was that the disaster occurred far from the Middle East and what was seen on television could only remain a distant event in the minds of many people. That the destruction was also widespread, inundating two continents and many countries as diverse as India to Sri Lanka with a Hindu and Buddhist majority, from Somalia and Tanzania to Kenya with a folk religion background, from Myanmar and Thailand to Malaysia and Indonesia with a Buddhist and Islam majority, also somewhat watered down the Islamic response, if compared with the scenario where Indonesia alone was affected by the tsunami.

Thankfully, all is not merely denunciation. The Beirut-based newspaper *Dar al Hayat* lamented in an editorial that conspiracy theories and the initial poor Arab response to tsunami relief efforts would, in the long run, cause the rest of the world to forget about Arab struggles.³¹ The paper asks, “Why was Europe concerned about a disaster that has hit primarily Muslims before we even cared? While the world grows closer we intensify our isolation and separation.” Writing in the Kuwaiti newspaper *Al Watan*, Saudi columnist Jamal Khashoggi advised Saudi charities to focus on “moderation and tolerance” and resist being “hijacked” by extremists.³² The Malaysian Islamic response has a lot to teach us on how to respond to disaster. Generally, the response is one of heart-searching and generosity to help those in trouble. For the Malaysian Islamic scholars, their response was to understand the tsunami as a result of the sins of humanity and that the tsunami was given as a *isyarat* (warning) and *gejala* (omen) to us. Thus, humanity is to take heed of disasters like the tsunami and to realize that humanity and nature are subjected under *kefanaan* (transitory). Humanity is to refrain from acts that are unhelpful but to be eager to help to do good.

³¹ Edwards, “Tsunami was ‘Allah’s revenge’: Mainstream media spin bizarre theories.”

³² *Ibid.*

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The mission of the Association is to:

- Promote cooperation among theological institutions in Malaysia;
- Enhance the spiritual and academic standards of the institutions concerned;
- Strengthen the bond of relationship within the theological fraternity for the benefit of the Christian movement in the country and beyond.

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