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Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

Published by the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools (MATS), the *Melanesian Journal of Theology* was established to stimulate theological writing in Melanesia and to provide a scholarly forum for faculty and graduate students of the MATS member schools. Article submissions in the areas of applied theology, biblical studies, missiology, and theology are also invited from anyone with an interest in Melanesia and the wider South Pacific.

Melanesian Journal of Theology is committed to the discussion of Christian faith and practice within the context of Melanesian cultures. Article submissions of up to 8,000 words (including footnotes) should be sent to the editor. All submissions are subjected to a double-blind peer-review process involving the editorial board and other international experts, designed to ensure that published articles meet appropriate scholarly standards.

The opinions expressed in the articles published in this journal are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the editor or the member colleges of MATS. All articles have been edited to meet the requirements of the journal.

The journal is published annually. Papers may be submitted to the editor at any time for consideration.

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ABBREVIATIONS

(This list should be used for submission to the journal and will be expanded each year as required)

BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library, Manchester*
CCL	Corpus Christianorum, series Latina
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CTR	*Criswell Theological Review*
ERT	*Evangelical Review of Theology*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	*Interpretation*
IVPNTC	The IVP New Testament Commentary series
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement series
LCNT	Lenski's Commentary on the New Testament
MJT	*Melanesian Journal of Theology*
MTh	*Modern Theology*
NAC	New American Commentary series
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
PL	Patrologia Latina
PNTC	The Pillar New Testament Commentary series
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SC	Sources Chrétiennes

SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series
TJ	*Trinity Journal*
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TS	*Theological Studies*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplement series
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WS	*Wiener Studien*

EDITORIAL

I am pleased to present my first report to MATS since taking over as editor early in 2021. First of all, I want to thank my predecessor, Tim Meadowcroft, who oversaw the publication of volume 34 in 2018 and who handed over the material for the subsequent three volumes. Journal editing is never easy and the situation in the past two years had just added to that difficulty. It has taken me some time to clear some time in my schedule, get a feel for the journal and where things stand, and to work out some of my own priorities as editor.

Let me say something about myself. I completed a PhD at Australian Catholic University in 2000 and worked in the Centre for Early Christian Studies at ACU until the end of 2105, finishing as Senior Research Fellow. I am a specialist in early Christian history, literature, and theology. I have authored/edited 8 books, written a little over 150 peer reviewed journal articles and book chapters, a dozen or so encyclopedia articles, and over 70 book reviews. I was a visiting lecturer at CTI in 2017 and 2018. For details, see my Academia page (https://up-za.academia.edu/GeoffreyDunnFAHA) and my professional Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/geoffrey.dunn.583). In 2019 I was elected a fellow of the Australian Humanities Academy.

My editorial experience is extensive. From 2009 I have been editor of *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association*. From 2010 to 2016 I was associate editor of *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, and have been on their editorial advisory board from 2009. From 2017 to 2019 I was on the advisory board of *Studies in Religion*. I have been on the advisory board of *Scrinium* since 2017, and am deputy editor of *Vox Patrum* since 2020. However, my familiarity with Melanesia and with theological scholarship there is much more limited. So it was with trepidation that I agree to take over as editor.

One of the things that is having an impact on academic publishing is the digital world, together with the ways in which universities are increasingly linking research funding to publication quality and impact as measured by citation indices, h-index (that measures productivity against quality), journal rankings, and other metrics (exemplified by the Australian government's Excellence in Research Australia, a version of which I am sure PNG will adopt in the near future). This has its follow-on in university promotion and

hiring policies, making it important that this journal be an acceptable place for one's research output. In a globalized and interconnected world the individual author of journal articles is ranked against others and the pressures upon disciplines in the humanities, like theology, that find it difficult to justify their national benefit in simple, economically quantifiable numbers, must perform well in terms of the quality of research outputs. Citation databases like Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus (that covers more than 36,000 journals worldwide) are increasingly important to academic research. WoS has 28 criteria by which they evaluate the quality of a journal and whether or not they will include it in their database (https://clarivate.com/webofsciencegroup/journal-evaluation-process-and-selection-criteria). Over time I would like us to meet more and more of those criteria.

In all likelihood, the Melanesian perspective on theology is principally of interest to people in Melanesia. Yet, we cannot avoid being part of a much bigger world. I see it as my particular contribution while editor of *MJT* to help those who reflect on theology in Melanesia to make their insights more readily available to the world and to have those insights respected and valued more.

To that end, I have implemented or want to implement several small steps that can help us bring the journal to the world.

1. I have asked all those making contributions to the 2019, 2020, and 2021 volumes of *MJT* to obtain an ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID). This is a 16-digit number unique to each individual, which can be linked to all the outputs you publish. It distinguishes you from other people around the world who have the same name. Think of it like a book's ISBN or a journal's ISSN. I would recommend everyone involved in publishing their research obtain their ORCID (https://orcid.org). The process of registration is fairly easy; filling in your profile is a little more tricky with all the various symbols and icons and options in categories (what is the difference between an invited position and a distinction or between a membership and a service?) taking a while to become familiar. When your ORCID is listed in a publication it makes it easier for the big citation databases like WoS and Scopus to link a publication with you.

2. I would also recommend researchers create their own profiles on Scopus (https://www.scopus.com). Eventually, once there are enough

mentions of *MJT* in people's ORCID and Scopus accounts, the journal itself could be listed and searched, and its quality and impact thereby increased.

I would like to thank the contributors to this volume and its readers for their patience while I have moved slowly into this new role.

REPORT ON MATS 2019: NATURAL THEOLOGY

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The Melanesian Association of Theological Schools Conference is held annually by its member theological institutions. In 2018, the conference was hosted by Pacific Adventist University, Port Moresby, and the theme was "Inter-Faith and Ecumenical Dialogue in Melanesia." In 2019, the conference was hosted by Christian Leaders' Training College, Banz, and the theme was "Natural Theology."

According to the website introducing the Gifford Lectures on natural theology (www.giffordlectures.org/overview/natural-theology), this branch of theology is generally described as the endeavour to attain understanding of God and God's relationship with the universe by way of human reason. Traditionally, it was a form of theological discourse that attempted to prove the existence of God and divine purposes through observation of nature and the use of human reason. It is a part of a theology that does not depend on revelation. To the extent that revealed theology, which presupposes that God and divine purposes are not open to human understanding, is engaged at all by natural theology it is to address the issue of the possibility that revealed theology can be reconciled with reason. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, attempts were made to establish a natural religion, by which people might respond to harsh charges and actions against doubters of revealed religion. The classic work arguing for a rational derivation of divine purpose is William Paley's *Natural Theology*,[1] but the rational arguments for the existence of divine reason at work in the world can be found as early as the writings of Plato (*c.* 427–347 BC).

The theological institutions that participated in this year's conference were: Catholic Theological Institute (CTI); Pacific Adventist University (PAU); Christian Leaders' Training College (CLTC); Martin Luther Seminary (MLS); Lutheran Highlands Seminary (LHS); Sonoma Adventist College; Good Shepherd Seminary; and other individuals and observers from

[1] William Paley, *Natural Theology or, Evidence of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity* (London: R. Faulder, 1802).

non-member colleges within Jiwaka and Western Highlands Provinces. Two member colleges—Rarongo Theological College and Newton College—could not make it to the conference because of financial constraints.

Our keynote speaker, Associate Professor John Flett, delivered three lectures during the conference. He raised a question in his first lecture: "What is the problem for which natural theology seems a solution?" In asking the question he noted that natural theology invites the question of contextualization and of the significance of pre-Christian custom, religion, and culture for the faith. However, the problem Flett identified, which drives the interest in natural theology, in other words, is the experience of Christianity as a foreign "white man's" religion. Reference to natural theology can be seen as a way of recovering a local culture and custom. However, Flett cautioned, natural theology, as it has been practised, depends upon the idea of a universal knowledge of God that is not informed by culture. As a result, local culture adds nothing of material importance to our understanding of the gospel.

In his second lecture, Flett illustrated this problem with reference to the famous debate on natural theology between Karl Barth and Emil Brunner during the middle part of the twentieth century, and the interaction between the Nazi project and the German missiological approach in the early years of the twentieth century. This included some details of the work of German missionaries in Papua New Guinea during that period. They saw their task as identifying the "primordial ties" that God had left in creation as a permanent witness. This approach was important in the preservation of local cultures but was accompanied by a strong sense of the superiority of European culture. In short, this approach to natural theology proved to be a form of cultural imperialism.

With these concerns regarding the project of natural theology, Flett's third lecture returned to the key concern within world Christianity that the entrance of the faith to Melanesia included also the erasure of cultural memories, the destabilisation of social institutions, customs, and laws, and the resulting disconnect between being Christian and being who we are as children of this place. His response was to argue that a theological account of the validity of each local cultural heritage requires first a revised theology of history. The beginning point, Flett argued, lies in the resurrection, for the resurrection is a story of God redeeming the past, the dead. Using the metaphor of the rhizome plant, Flett concluded that this opens our cultural

heritages to the gospel, because God acts to save. God called us—God calls us as we are—and no people exist without a history. God recognises our histories and saves also those histories. This includes the salvation of our ancestors because we are not who we are without our ancestors. And because it is God who acts, the identity of the community of God is never static. Identity in the Spirit is the following of Jesus Christ into the world and so the encounter of ever new histories in him. Christian identity cannot be possessed, it is an identity directed to reconciliation of the world. It means both a valuing of contexts as the location of God's acting and our own embodiment, and a moving beyond our own contexts in the mutuality of becoming the people of God.

Space does not permit a fuller account of Flett's important argument, but his lectures will be published across the next two issues of *Melanesian Journal of Theology*.

After each day's keynote lecture from Dr. Flett, a variety of papers was presented by the conference participants. The first group of participants—Joseph Vnuk (CTI), Brandon Zimmerman (CTI), Modest Eligi Sangia (CTI), and Paul A. McGavin (Catholic Institute of Sydney)—presented philosophical and theological insights into the theme of the conference.

Vnuk's paper argued the importance of natural theology's ability to help us understand the biblical teaching on predestination. He reasoned that the biblical doctrine of predestination easily can give rise to ideas that are certainly not biblical, either because they depict the merciful God choosing to create people whom he intends to condemn to hell, or because they remove any motive for human action: why preach, or pray, or have any concern about our salvation or the salvation of others if everything has already been decided by God? He argued that understanding predestination requires a close examination of what it might mean to say that God knows of or wills the relationship between time and eternity, and of what it means to talk of God creating a free creature. In these areas, Vnuk believes that the Bible often presumes rather than teaches and suggests that solid natural theology can clarify these issues and provide useful distinctions, not to explain the mysterious depths of God, but to keep the imagination on the straight and narrow way, so that God's free choice to save us, which no natural theology can prove, may inspire us with the freedom of the children of God and boundless energy to work for God's glory.

Zimmerman's paper was based on a Thomistic approach to the question of a Christian doctrine of creation and how this is compatible with contemporary science. Zimmerman reasoned that Thomas Aquinas' investigation of the meaning of creation as a model can be of help in thinking about whether the Christian doctrine of creation is compatible with contemporary science. He noticed Aquinas's threefold distinction regarding how to study creation. First, there is the fact and essential meaning of creation, which is discoverable through natural theology and is a part of metaphysics, which in turn is the branch of philosophy that investigates *being*—both in general and the causes of being. The metaphysical doctrine of creation does not depend on any specific physical (scientific) explanation of the universe. Second, Scripture confirms and clarifies the fact, meaning, and details of God's creative act. Third, the question of interpreting how the world came into existence, which requires an exegesis of Genesis 1, can provide a nexus between metaphysics and the creative act of God.

Modest Eligi Sangia's presentation was based on the concept of God and the nature of humanity. Modest explained that throughout history humans have had a natural desire to know God and studying God has occupied our mind and time. Furthermore, humans alone have the capacity to inquire into God, having the rational capacity that is part of human nature. We are able to comprehend a concept of a being responsible for bringing into being all creatures and understanding the history of philosophical thinking. Modest, therefore, argued that humans are rational; and using this power of reason alone, humans are capable of attaining the knowledge of the existence of God, as the creator of the universe. Yet, without revelation, human beings cannot know the nature and the will of God. Hence, though humanity is capable of knowing the existence of God as the creator of the universe, revelation is important to begin to understand God's will and nature. Natural reason and revelation complement each other in our knowledge of God.

Fr. McGavin discussed natural theology and Christian ethics with applications to Melanesia. McGavin explored natural theology methods for an inductive approach to theological ethics. Against the reasoning approach typically seen in Catholic natural theology, which is syllogistic, McGavin proposed a phenomenological manner of reasoning and focused on the ways that we may discern theological ethics using an inductive approach. He argued that this manner of "doing theology" displays a natural lawfulness in both physical and metaphysical respects—and is then aligned with the

witnesses of Scripture and tradition to show where there is congruity between what can be learnt from a phenomenological approach and the apostolic inheritance of the church. The applications highlighted the danger point where phenomenological ethics may drift into positivist philosophical method, and also where the apostolic tradition requires contextual readings of sources and discerning contextual readings of our own cultures—Melanesian in the case of the Conference context, and Australian in the case of the author's personal culture.

The second group of participants comprised Dr Joses Imona (PAU), Dr Tim Meadowcroft (Laidlaw College), Dr Charles Dufour (Good Shepherd College), and Barrie Abel (Sonoma College). This group presented biblical and theological insights from various books of the Bible and from individual passages that reveal what the Bible teaches about the theme of the conference. Joses Imona reflected on understanding natural theology in light of Paul's theology as seen in Romans 1–3. Paul's writings in these chapters, have been seen as an important basis for and endorsement of natural theology, especially passages like 1:20: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." (KJV) Imona suggested that Melanesian theologians can relate to such important theological subjects.

Tim Meadowcroft reasoned that Psalm 19 can be seen as an apology for "natural theology interpreted." Meadowcroft explained that the switch in focus halfway through Psalm 19 from creation to the Torah has occasioned much debate as to the coherence of the psalm. Based on this observation, he argued that the psalm should be considered as a unity, but that its coherence lies in more than a poetic progression of thought. The coherence is also theological in that it makes an important statement about the nature of God's speaking in revelation of Godself. This speaking is heard both by observation and appreciation of God's creation and by reading and considering the words of God in the Torah.

Charles Dufour looked at a demonstration of phenomenological methodology in the study of God's forgiveness of sins in John 20:19–23. Dufour reasoned that one of the significant issues in natural theology is the belief that God's revelation can be gained through creation, human reason, and experiences. This would imply that theological research can draw from social science methodologies that focus on observation of people's

experiences. Therefore, Dufour asserted that phenomenology can be used to understand God's forgiveness of sins in John 20:19–23.

Barrie Abel presented a paper on God, the natural world, and Jonah's freewill. Abel made a narrative analysis of the Book of Jonah to reveal the prophet Jonah's misconceptions about the God who called him to Nineveh. He discussed whether the notion that the natural world is God's language for reaching humans is true, as presented in the Book of Jonah.

In keeping with the guidelines of the Conference, a third group of participants presented general biblical and theological papers not directly associated with the theme. These presenters were: Rev Dr William K. Longgar (CLTC); Jacklyn Nembai; Lionel Tom (CLTC); Simon Minigamba (CLTC); and Newton Ekoda (CLTC). William Longgar presented a theology of holistic development. Longgar approached the topic based on an incarnational model of development. From this standpoint, Longgar argued that development is holistic, embracing the context of the Melanesian culture and traditional spirituality that perceives nature and the environment as sacred, because nature is as gift from the ancestors to us, their progeny. He believes that the traditional understanding of the sacredness and the spiritual value of nature and the environment is affirmed by the biblical teachings that God created the whole world and everything in it (Genesis 1–2). By virtue of God creating the whole earth, he rightly owns the earth and everything in it (Ps 24:1). This in itself becomes the basis for theologizing, that is, the construction of a development theology that may correct a lop-sided notion and practice of development in Papua New Guinea.

Jacklyn Nembai presented a paper on the "Seven Righteousness Passages" in the Gospel of Mathew. Nembai examined three interpretational positions: 1) a human response and responsibility; 2) God's gift; and 3) both a human response and responsibility and God's gift. She argued that righteousness in Matthew is not exclusively either a "demand" or a "gift." Rather, it is a human responsibility in that a human response is required to God's initiative and salvific activity.

Lionel Tom examined Acts 17:22–23 and especially verse 23. Tom concluded that the ascription to an unknown god was not possibly ascribed to the God of the Bible. He believes that, therefore, it may be erroneous to use this passage to claim that the unnamed gods or supreme beings in Melanesia may be ascribed to the God of the Bible. Simon Minigamba

explored Jesus' teaching in John 17: 1–17 and reasoned that abiding in Christ is important for spiritual growth and maturity.

Newton Ekoda considered the matter of premarital sex among the young people in the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea. He reasoned that a lack of sound biblical teaching, lack of open sex education for young people within the church, and openness in home about the topic of sex before marriage is fuelling the problem of young people turning to sex education elsewhere, and that leads to premarital sex among the young people.

Aside from other theological and biblical papers presented at the conference, there was a general feeling that both natural theology and revealed theology complement each other. But the understanding of the nature of the complementarity may differ based on various theological convictions represented in the conference. Because of diversity within our ecumenical community, this year's conference suggested that the theme for next conference be "Theology and Social Issues." This was endorsed by the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools Annual General Meeting. Rarongo Theological College generously offered to host the next MATS conference in July 2020.

On the second day of the conference, the annual meeting elected a new MATS executive: Maxon Mani (President); Joses Imona (Vice President); Brandon Zimmerman (Secretary/Treasurer); Jenny Tobul, Barrie Abel, and Peter Gigmai (Members at Large); and Newton Ekoda (Student Representative).

At the AGM the editor of *Melanesian Journal of Theology* reported that the 2018 issue will appear in July 2019. He also said that there are enough submissions such that the 2019 double issue will also appear by the end of the year. The plan is to return to semi-annual publication in 2020. He wishes to explore EBSCO providing access to MJT. He has visited five member schools this year and is thankful for hospitality of Rarongo, Sonoma, CTI, PAU, and CLTC.

MALE-CENTRIC BIBLICAL LITERATURE AND MARITAL VIOLENCE: READING THROUGH MELANESIAN INTERPRETIVE LENSES
Part 2

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Abstract
It is explicit, biblical literature is male-centric and its implications on male-female power relations are seen as leading to marital violence. This two-part article examines the male-centric biblical literature through Melanesian interpretive lenses. The article proposes the Melanesian concept of *Nem* as one way of interpreting the male-centric biblical literature. *Nem* plays a central role in the male-centric sociocultural power structures and values that order male-female power relations in Melanesia. Since *Nem* fills this vital role in enabling us to understand male-female power relations in Melanesia, the article investigates whether *Nem* played any comparable role in biblical times. Particularly, it explores whether *Nem*, as a Melanesian hermeneutical tool, can help interpret biblical literature that gives preference to men over women. It examines the Hebrew term *Shem* in relation to *Nem* and argues that the concept of *Shem/Nem* can bring fresh understanding of the male-centric biblical literature and its authors. It examines Jesus' response to the concept of *Nem* in the New Testament, and recommend Jesus' emphasis on "service" as an ideal power relational concept in male-female power relations.

Key Words
Nem, marital violence, big-man, big-name, male-centric, biblical literature, Melanesia, *Shem*

INTRODUCTION

In the first part,[1] the article examined the Melanesian concept of *Nem* and how this relates to male-female power relations in Melanesia. It argued that men's desire to gain *Nem* for themselves and their society underlies the

[1] Maxon Mani, "Male-Centred Biblical Literature and Marital Violence: Reading through Melanesian Interpretive Lenses, part 1," *MJT* 34 (2018): 13–27.

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unequal male-female power relations that lead to violence against women. Since *Nem* fills this vital role in enabling us to understand male-female power relations in Melanesia, part one investigated whether *Nem* played any comparable role in biblical times. Particularly, it explored whether *Nem*, as a Melanesian hermeneutical tool, can help interpret biblical literature that gives preference to men over women.

Part two of the article examines the biblical male-centric literature in relation to *Nem*. More specifically it examines first, the Hebrew term *Shem* in relation to *Nem* and argues that the concept of *Shem/Nem* can bring fresh understanding of the male-centric biblical literature and its authors; and secondly, the article examines Jesus' response to the concept of *Nem* in the New Testament. More specifically, it examines Jesus' emphasis on "service" as an ideal power relational concept in human relationships. It argues that power relations in human relationships, especially between women and men are not for dominating the women, rather they are a means to serve one another—specifically to serve women.

THE OLD TESTAMENT, *NEM*, AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

This section examines the Hebrew term *Shem* as *Nem* and its impact on male-male power dynamics in biblical literature and its effect on violence against women, from a Melanesian perspective. *Shem/Nem* will be used as the term referring to one's status, honour, standing in the community, and so forth.

Shem/Nem as a Theme in OT Literature

The common Hebrew term *Shem* is translated as "name" in OT literature. It appears over eight hundred times in all periods of biblical Hebrew. The cognates of this term also appear in Akkadian, Phoenician, Aramaic, and Arabic texts. It signifies at least four conceptions: 1) It represents a label by which someone or something is identified or called. An example of this is Gen 2:19. Here the term *Shem* is applied as an identity marker. 2) It connotes one's fame or standing in society. For example, in Gen 11:4; 2 Sam 7:23; and Ezek 16:14, *Shem* as "name" may apply to one's honour, fame, and position in society. 3) *Shem* as "name" indicates renown and continuance. An example of this concept is reflected in Num 16:2; Deut 9:14; 25:6; and Ruth 4:5. Here *Shem* as "name" may indicate the continuation of one's reputation through one's heir, or through the nominated person or relative within one's society. 4) *Shem* as "name" signifies memory. For example, in

2 Sam 14:7 and Num 27:4, *Shem* as "name" is probably akin to property or inheritance or continuance of something or someone's name.[2] In sum, *Shem* as "name" represented in these four conceptions may be summarised into two categories: *Shem* as one's appellation (concept 1), and *Shem* as honour and status (concepts 2, 3, and 4).

According to Michael Hundley, in the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East, a name was more than simply a label. It served as a person's identity that differentiated this person from all others. The name incorporated those elements associated with the particular person or being. In other words, persons need a name so that their character, deeds, honour, and authority may be ascribed to them and no other. Since they are ascribed to the person who is individualized by the particular name, they are also ascribed to the name itself. When referring to God, the one who acts in creation and natural events cannot be described with any other name than YHWH because that one is the sole creator and lord of the world. In turn, creation itself and God's historic acts in it are ascribed to God's name.[3]

For Ronald Youngblood, "name" is not merely a label but is virtually equivalent to whomever or whatever bears it. He thinks that "name" often means one's reputation, authority, or character. He reiterates that "the very fact that the word, *name* occurs more than a thousand times in the Bible attests its importance."[4]

Brad Eastman asserts that when "name" is used of persons in the Scriptures, specifically the NT, it is used in the sense of reputation. He contends that to know a person or a deity's name is to know something

[2] Merrill F. Unger and William White Jr, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (rev. ed.; Nashville: Nelson, 1985), 158–59. The Greek equivalent of this term is ὄνομα (*onoma*), which is mostly applied in NT literature. In the NT "name" signals a means by which someone or something is called, or it represents one's character or one's power or one's reputation or one's position in society (p. 425). See also Michael Hundley, "To Be or Not to Be: A Reexamination of Name Language in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History," *VT* 59 (2009): 533–55; Brad Eastman, "Name," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament* (ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davies; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997), 785–87; Ronald Youngblood, "Names in Bible Times, Significance of," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (ed. Walter A. Elwell; 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 812.

[3] Hundley, "To Be or Not to Be," 535.

[4] Youngblood, "Names in Bible Times," 812.

fundamental about him or her and helps one to understand the significance of what a name stands for.[5]

Hundley, Youngblood, and Eastman, although recognising *Shem* as an appellation, argue that in a greater sense *Shem* indicates what a name stands for. The name was used to communicate one's social standing or honour and status. They believe that this is particularly true in the way God's name is used in biblical literature.

Thus, *Shem* as "name" in biblical literature has some similarities with the Melanesian conception of *Nem*, which also stands for one's appellation as well as honour and status. Therefore, two significant biblical names, YHWH and Adam, will be examined based on the Melanesian concept of *Nem*. *Shem*/*Nem* will be used to signal God's honour and status.

YHWH

Western scholarship concerning the theological significance of the name YHWH has been divided between two significant Christian convictions: God as transcendent and God as immanent. Scholars who emphasise that God is distant (transcendent) argued that God's name YHWH in the deuteronomistic history should be conceived as representation. In this hypothesis God's presence is removed from the temple into heaven. He is represented on earth only by the name, YHWH, as an entity through which God maintains a distant relationship.[6] On the other hand, scholars who argue that God's revealed name YHWH is more than representation of God among creation, assert that the name YHWH also signifies God's presence among creation (immanence). They argue that the name YHWH is also applied to divine-mortal relationships in biblical literature. Such relationship is revealed in the divine self-disclosure which the Hebraic name for YHWH represents.[7] These

[5] Eastman, "Name," 785–87.

[6] See, for example, Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 15; Eng. ed.; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 1982); Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (trans. Bernhard W. Anderson; Eng. ed.; London: Prentice-Hall, 1972); and Sandra. L. Richter, "The Place of the Name in Deuteronomy," *VT* 57 (2007): 342–66.

[7] See for example, Ian Wilson, *Out of the Midst of Fire: Divine Presence in Deuteronomy* (SBLDS 151; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 723-25; Thomas E. McMomiskey, "God, Names of. The Divine Names as Vehicles of Revelation," in Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 504–88; Gordon R. Lewis, "God, Attributes Of," in Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology,* 492–99; Emil Brunner, *Christian Doctrine of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1950); James M. Boice, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, vol. 1: *Sovereign God* (Downers

arguments enlighten our minds about two important things about God, nearness and otherness. However, our discussion seeks to examine the question "why YHWH is associated with the male gender and why is biblical literature male-centric?" from a Melanesian interpretative perspective.

This divine designation YHWH ("LORD") is the name by which God disclosed the divine self to Moses and the Hebrews (see Exod 6:2–3). The parallel structure in Exod 3:14-15 depicts the association of I AM with YHWH, the LORD, with a concept of the pre-existing One. This disclosure reveals that there is continuity in the divine activity from time eternal (Gen 2:4) to the patriarchs (Exod 3:15–16) and to the events recorded in Exodus. The I AM formulae in both the OT and NT, therefore, are a recurring theme of the Bible. It is the name through which God chose to reveal the divine self. This disclosure to Moses in the Exodus account (3:14) is often translated as "I AM who I AM," or "I AM that I AM," or "I will be what I will be."[8]

Jesus' application of the name "I AM" to himself (John 8:58) denotes his association with the name YHWH. Here Jesus' claim reveals that humanity is now standing face-to-face with YHWH the eternal One as the Redeemer of humanity. It fulfils the promise given to Abraham (Gen 12:2–3; and John 8:56). In Jesus, the name YHWH is represented not just as the eternal One, but it also represents the divine redemptive character, a character that seeks to bring humanity back to the divine self.

It is like in Melanesian societies, where the revealing of a name reveals a person's position, value, standing, reputation, honour, and status in relationship to the other. When a name is revealed, it is based on a life-contact experience in which one learns to relate to the other in a worthy manner or to challenge the one who reveals their name. Melanesian religions,

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Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978); Donald Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (rev. ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005); Gerrit C. Berkouwer, *Providence of God* (Studies in Dogmatics; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952); James I. Packer, *Knowing God* (2nd ed.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993); and Hundley, "To Be or Not to Be," 533–55.

[8] For example, see Thomas E. McMomiskey, "God, Names of. The Divine Names as Vehicles of Revelation," in Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 504–508. See also Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*; Gerhard von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy* (trans. Davis Stalker; Eng. ed.; London: SCM, 1959); Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, "In Search of the Hidden Structure: YHWH as King in Isaiah 40–55," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretative Tradition* (ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans; VTSup. 70; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill,1997), 1.143–54; Kendall R. Soulen, "YHWH the Triune God," *MTh* 15 (1999): 25–54; and Richter, "The Place of the Name in Deuteronomy," 342–66.

or the so-called Melanesian ancestor worship, is based on these life-contact lived experiences.[9] Hence, for Melanesia, the revealing of the name YHWH in the Exodus account and other OT biblical literature reveals God's position, value, standing, reputation, honour, and status in relationship to the other gods or people. The name YHWH or I AM in biblical literature is translated *Bikpela* or, in alternate translations, *Bikpela God Antap* in the Neo-Melanesian Pidgin Bible. It resonates with the Melanesian conception of "big-man" and "big-name," symbolised in the concept of *Nem* identified in part one of the discussion. However, here *Bikpela* or its alternative translations describe God's position in relationship to the whole of creation. It simply means "over and above creation." Hence, for Melanesians the name YHWH signals that God is above all, nothing can compare with God. God alone has life, alone gives and controls the life of the whole created universe, and all other spirit powers and all humans derive their life ultimately from God. This is the significance of the name YHWH from a Melanesian understanding.

In male-centred societies in Melanesia, when God revealed the *Shem/Nem*, God reveals the exercise of power, especially in the context of male-male power dynamics, censuring any form of challenge from the creatures that set themselves up as deities. It demonstrates God's reaction against any assumed or practical systems or deities that stand to challenge

[9] See H. Hardacre, "Ancestor Worship," in *Encyclopaedia of Religion* (ed. Mircea Eliade et al.; 16 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1987), 1.263–68; Marilyn Rowsome, "Melanesian Traditional Religion," *MJT* 17 (2001): 36–56; Joshua Daimoi, "An Exploratory Missiological Study of Melanesian Ancestral Heritage from an Indigenous Melanesian Perspective" (PhD diss., Sydney, 2004), 60–100. See also R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians: Studies in Their Anthropology and Folklore* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1891); Ennio Mantovani, "A Fundamental Melanesian Religion," in *Christ in Melanesia: Exploring the Issues* (Goroka: Melanesian Institute for Pastoral and Socio-Economic Service, 1977), 23–37; Gernot Fugmann, "Salvation Expressed in a Melanesian Context," in *Christ in Melanesia*, 122–33; Don Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts* (Glendale: Regal, 1981); Richard Hueter, "Conscience and Culture: Sickness and the Spirits of the Dead," *Catalyst* 4 (1974): 3–17; Mary Macdonald, "Melanesian Communities: Past and Present," in *An Introduction to Melanesian Cultures: A Handbook for Church Workers* (ed. Darrell Whiteman; Goroka: Melanesian Institute for Pastoral and Economic Service, 1984), 213–30; and William H. Alkire, "Land, Sea, Gender, and Ghosts on Woleai-Lamotrek," in *Culture, Kin and Cognition in Oceania: Essays in Honour of Ward H. Goodenough* (ed. M. Marshall and John L. Caughey; Washington, DC: American Anthropological Association, 1989), 79–93.

the sovereign right that belongs to the only God.[10] The masculine language may not necessarily demonstrate God's gender as male, but it may be a necessary symbolism in the context of male-male power dynamics. If the biblical writers were using male-gendered language for God because they recognised the way his *Shem/Nem* was working in challenges about YHWH's status, then, from a Melanesian perspective, these biblical writers not only understood the way *Shem/Nem* contributes to God's status, but, we would suggest, God's *Shem/Nem* is an important factor in understanding male-centric biblical literature more generally. Or, in other words, God's *Shem/Nem* plays an important part in the way biblical literature is written.

Adam

The designation "Adam" as the image of God as disclosed in the Bible (Gen1:26–27) describes humanity's special standing or status in the whole creation. The Hebrew term *ha'adam*, transliterated as אדם (*Adam*),[11] means "man" or "humanity" or "people." This term also appears in Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Punic literature. In Arabic literature it applies not only to humankind but also to creation. A similar Akkadian name '*admu* is translated as "child." The name *ha'adam* is also related to the Hebrew word אדמה (*ha'adamah*), which may be translated as "soil" or "earth."[12] These terms paint a picture of a close relationship between "Adam" and the soil or earth. Gen 3:19 explains that close relationship, since from the soil you were taken and to the soil you will return. The view of "Adam" as taken from the soil and who will return to the soil is significant, but, more than that, "Adam" is the image of God, the pinnacle of all God's creation.[13]

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[10] See Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *In Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names* (trans. Frederick H. Cryer; Eng. ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 24–47.

[11] In this section "Adam" or *imago Dei* is applied to mean male and female or humanity, but if applied as a designation for male, it will be specified.

[12] Unger and White, *Vines Expository Dictionary*, 146–47. See also Leon L. Morris, "Adam," in Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 22–23; Ronald A. Simkins, "Gender Construction in the Yahwist Creation Myth," in *Genesis* (ed. Athalya Brenner; A Feminist Companion to the Bible; 2nd series; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 32–51.

[13] The image of God will be discussed further later in the section. We will give special attention to this idea because of its association with status and power over other created order. It is also significant in this study because it will help us understand the male-female power relational issues. Other terms associated with humankind include *zakar*, a term that reflects sex differentiation specifically denoting maleness which is signified in Gen 1:27 and Judg 21:11, *Ish* and *Isha* are applied in relation to male-female relationships, which can imply

According to Leon L. Morris, the word "Adam" in the OT overwhelmingly refers to "man" or "humankind" but at points it is used outside the Genesis account as a proper name for the first man.[14] For instance, 1 Chron 1:1 and possibly Deut 32:8 may refer to Adam as a proper name for the first man.[15] Morris' assertion implies that one needs a careful observation outside of the Genesis account to ascertain how the term "Adam" is applied. This means the term could be applied in relation to humanity or it could be applied as a proper name for the first male. This differentiation is an important observation as it deals with male-female identity.

Research regarding the designation "Adam" is mostly tied to the concept of *imago Dei*. Christian scholarship has singled out Gen 1:26–27 as the principal verses that are frequently quoted in relationship to the doctrine of *imago Dei*, a concept that "Adam" or humanity is made in the image of God. The doctrine of *imago Dei* has in many ways broadened our understanding of God and ourselves and at the same time it raises many challenges to Christian theology, especially on what constitutes the idea of humankind being made in the image of God.

husband-wife relationship. These terms can be taken as intimate terms that portray one of a love relationship.

[14] Morris, "Adam," 22.

[15] Morris, "Adam," 22–23.

Generally, most patristic[16], medieval[17], modern, and reformed[18] theological arguments reflect the speculations on what way humans are like God and not like other creatures. Stated differently, the common approach has been to look for some capacities of humans that are analogous to the attributes of God. This view reasons that since Scripture only identifies humans as created in God's image, the image must be something that sets humans apart from animals. One such attribute that clearly distinguishes humans from animals is the capacity for rational thought. Rationality in humans is seen as analogous to divine rationality, except more limited.[19] This can be described as the structural or substantialistic approach to defining humanity in relationship to YHWH as image and humanity's distinction among the creation.

In contrast to patristic and medieval reasoning based mainly on substantialistic or structural interpretations, as well as the reformed ethical-relational modifications of substantialistic views, modern theologians, like

[16] For patristic arguments see, Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adu. haer.* (SC 263, 264, 293, 294, 210, 211, 100, 152, and 153); Gregory of Nyssa, *De opf. hom.* (SC 6); Gregory of Nyssa, *De uir.* (SC 119); George A. Maloney, *Man, the Divine Icon: The Patristic Doctrine of Man Made according to the Image of God* (Pecos, NM: Dove Publications, 1973); Mary Ann Donovan, *One Right Reading: A Guide to Irenaeus,* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997); John Behr, "The Rational Animal: A Rereading of Gregory of Nyssa's *De hominis opificio*," *JECS* 7 (1999): 219–47; E. Ferguson, "Irenaeus," in Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology,* 616; Richard J. Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The* Imago Dei *in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005); and Michelle A. Gonzales, *Created in God's Image: An Introduction to Feminist Theological Anthropology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007).

[17] For medieval arguments see Thomas Aquinas, *Quaest. disp. ver.* 10–20 (ed. A. Dondaine, *Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, t. 22: *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, 3 vols. [Rome: Editori di San Tommaso, 1970–72]); D. Juvenal Merriell, *To the Image of Trinity: A Study in the Development of Aquinas' Teaching* (Studies and Texts 96; Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food for Medieval Women* (The New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987); and Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, UCLA; Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1982).

[18] See the summaries of the interpretations of the Reformers in Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990).

[19] See the above references to Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adu. haer.*; Donovan, *One Right Reading*; Ferguson, "Irenaeus," 616–17; Middleton, *The Liberating Image*; Gonzales, *Created in God's Image*. See also Luther, "Lectures on Genesis 1-5," in *Luther's Works*.

Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Paul Ricoeur, and others, argue that the image of God is related to relationality and freewill.[20] This can be described as the relational approach. It links relationality in humans with the relationships within the Trinity. According to this approach, there are strictly speaking no Christian themes independent of Christology, all Scripture should be interpreted christologically. It means, Christ, as the true image of God, lived in a relationship with his Father, taught the importance of loving relationships between humans, and came to save a people for God by

[20] See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* vol. 3/1–4 (trans. Thomas F. Torrance and Geoffrey William Bromiley; Eng. ed.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956); Clifford Green (ed.), *Karl Barth: Theologian of Freedom* (The Making of Modern Theology 5; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991). Barth roots his argument on the relational reading of *imago Dei* in the Genesis text. He suggests that the key to the meaning of image is referenced to male and female in Gen 1:27, along with the divine, I-Thou presupposed in the text. He postulates two sets of relationships that define the idea of humanity being made in the image of God, the interpretation that links relationality in humans with that within the Trinity. He argues that the two sets of relationships are demonstrated in the person of Christ, the perfect human and perfect God. Although Barth attempted to root his argument from the relationality of humanity to that of triune relationship in his biblical exegesis based on a christological understanding, he is no different from those whom he critiqued. His argument is still based on the redemptive suppositions, much like Irenaeus, Augustine, Luther, and Calvin, over and against the idea that the creation image was given once for all at creation and is conferred in some respect on all the human race. For Emil Brunner's views, see Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption: Dogmatics,* vol. 2 (trans. Olive Wyon; Eng. ed.; London: Lutterworth, 1952). Brunner argues that the formal aspect of human nature, as beings made in the image of God, denotes being as subject, or freedom; it is this which differentiates humanity from the lower creation. He also sees the relationship between God and humanity as a defining part of what it means to be made in God's image. For Paul Ricoeur's views, see Paul Ricoeur*,* "The Image of God and the Epic of Man*,*" *Cross Currents* 11 (1961): 110–28; see also Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt: A Christian Anthropology* (trans. Olive Wyon; Eng. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1947). Ricoeur, known for combining phenomenological description with hermeneutics, argues that there is no defined meaning of the *imago Dei*, or at the very least the author of Genesis 1 certainly did not master at once all its implicit wealth of meaning. He goes on to say that in the very essence of the individual, in terms of its quality as a subject, the image of God, he believes, is the very personal and solitary power to think and to choose; it is interiority. He concludes that the image of God is best summed up as free will. For Pope Benedict XVI's views see, Joseph Ratzinger, *In the Beginning: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall* (trans. Boniface Ramsey; Eng. ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 44–47. Benedict XVI writes that the image of God has to do with relationality. Regarding the *imago Dei*, he argues that humanity's nature as an image has to do with the fact that it goes beyond itself and manifests something that it is not. It is the dynamic that sets the human being in motion towards the totally Other. Hence it means the capacity for relationship; it is the human capacity for God.

bringing them together in relationship as members of the church. Thus, much like the Trinity, men and women in their differential roles complete and reflect the image of God.

Other arguments identify a royal-functional interpretation of *imago Dei* in contrast with substantialist and relational views. The functional approach applies the Gen 1:26 phrase "let them have dominion" to define the "image of God" in terms of what humans do as opposed to what they are. Proponents of the functional view argue that Gen 1:26 applies an ancient belief of surrounding cultures that kings were divine representatives. Thus, human beings serve as God's representative rulers.[21]

Critiques of these popular views (substantialist, relational, and functional) of *imago Dei* argue that these interpretations of the *imago Dei* are misleading and biased against the marginalised people with disabilities, people with limited rationality, the ruled, and women, and can be racially charged.[22]

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[21] For examples see, Middleton, *The Liberating Image*; Marc Cortez, *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark International, 2010); Christoph Barth, *God with Us: A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991). For instance, Middleton argues that for a reassessment of the biblical sources to better understand the original meaning before taking it out of context and applying it, he pushes for a royal-functional understanding, in which the *imago Dei* designates the royal office or calling of human beings as God's representatives or agents in the world.

[22] For example, see Janet Soskice, "Human Dignity and the Image of God," in *Understanding Human Dignity* (ed. Christopher McCrudden; Proceedings of the British Academy; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 229–43, esp. 243, who argues that, "Each individual, whether Christian or not, believer or not, an AIDS sufferer or not, senile or not, and we can add male or female, leader or commoner, slave or free, rich or poor, black or white, is in the image of God and must be respected as such." See also James Hanvey, "Dignity, Person, and Imago Trinitatis," in McCrudden, *Understanding Human Dignity,* 216, for whom the human person is not only summoned to honour and reverence the image of God idea that manifests in a human person, but also anyone who destroys or degrades another human being amounts to dishonour and sacrilege against God. Douglas John Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 55–56, who argues that the dominant historical deployment of popular *imago Dei* is misleading and even—given our current sociological context—dangerous. He states that this has led to the oppression of native peoples, people with mental disabilities, the coloured, and more specifically women. Typically, the problem involves the human tendency to view being in God's image in terms of excellence, manifesting human capacities like reason or human attributes like righteousness or human functions like rulership over the created. John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 4–37, argues that viewing people as God's image fosters magnificent determination to liberate and redeem

In the same way, feminist theologians like Rosemary Radford Ruether and Michelle A. Gonzales have drawn attention to the alienation of the female experience in Christian thought. They argue that for centuries, male dominated theological arguments based on these (substantialistic, relational and functional) historical views were all grounded in a hierarchy that values men over women. Against these male-centric views, they propose that Christian theology should embrace an egalitarian vision of humanity as created in the image of God.[23]

The popular interpretations throughout history, their critiques, and the feminist supposition for an egalitarian vision of humanity give some insight into understanding "Adam" as *imago Dei*. Generally, the advocates of these interpretations base their arguments around the revealed characteristics of

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people and at the same it has also encouraged the destruction of people. He claims that these were simultaneously happening because of a common misconception that being in God's image is about in what way are people like God and not like animals. This view is represented in the historical arguments based on rationality, relationality, and functionality as central aspects of being in God's image, whereby some have claimed absolute power to denigrate whatever is regarded as irrational and not in God's image. He asserts that the image of God idea should not be taken to mean certain attributes that make one more or less than God.

[23] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church," in *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 153. Other feminist theologians and their views and their engagement with patristic, medieval, reform, and modern theologies on the idea of the image God can be accessed in Elizabeth Kari Børresen, "God's Image, Man's Image? Patristic Interpretation of Gen 1:27 and 1 Cor. 11:7," in *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judeo-Christian Tradition* (ed. Elizabeth Kari Børreson; Oslo: Solum, 1991); and Donovan, *One Right Reading*. Ruether, commenting on the male-centred formulation of *imago Dei*, remonstrates that if the biblical text for the creation of man and woman was Gen 1:27, male centred patristic, medieval, reform, and modern theologians would have been happier if the final phrase "male and female he created them" was just not there. Indeed, they often only quoted the first phrase, "God created man in his own image," without the end clause. Therefore, no doubt, in patristic thinking, image has always been man's soul and reason. For more views on this feminist approach, see Mary Aquin O'Neill, "Toward a Renewed Anthropology," *TS* 36 (1975): 725–36; Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Between the Sexes: Foundations for Christian Ethics of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); Mary Ann Hinsdale, "Heeding the Voices: A Historical Overview," in *In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology* (ed. Ann O'Hara Graff; Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995); and Daphne Hampson, *After Christianity* (London: SCM, 1996). Gonzales, *Created in God's Image* arguing against Barth's relational approach to understanding the image of God, reiterates that the relational approach to *imago Dei* divinizes patriarchal anthropology; it is one in which women, in principle, become submissive followers of men.

God-like rationality or functionality or relationality or Trinitarian equality to measure what makes humanity more like God and not like other creatures. However, in the drive to understand how much humanity looks like God, they shy away from what "Adam" as *imago Dei*, male and female, reveals about God's *Shem/Nem*.

From a Melanesian understanding, considering the question why the biblical literature is male-centric' and if the name "Adam" and its association with *imago Dei* is described in relation to God's revealed characteristics, then "Adam" as *imago Dei* may be principally about God and God's *Shem*/*Nem*. In the Neo-Melanesian Pidgin Bible *imago Dei* is described as *olsem yumi yet…. olsem God yet* (Gen 1:26–27). It simply means "Adam," male and female, belongs to God and in some manner reveals God and God's *Shem*/*Nem*. In Melanesian thinking the "belonging to God" picture expresses the idea that "Adam" as *imago Dei* expresses something about God: the unmatched power, honour, status, and the glory of God. That is what Melanesians describe as *Nem*. Hence, "Adam" as *imago Dei* in a way also reveals God's honour and status.

From the beginning God's *Shem/Nem* is a recurring theme. God's dealings with humanity in the garden, after the fall, and mostly through human vessels are about God's *Shem/Nem* that may not have changed in any way. It is almost always applied from a masculine perspective because *Shem/Nem* is about male-male power challenge, a challenge in which women are innocent participants; hence, this might have influenced the biblical authors and their male-centric biblical literature. Therefore, from a Melanesian perspective, these divine and human designations may provide insight into understanding the male-centric character of OT literature.[24]

[24] For further reading relating to this hermeneutical approach to biblical scholarship see Mettinger, *In Search of God*, whose work is an exegetical example of this hermeneutical approach to biblical scholarship. This work is not directed at a purely academic audience, but nonetheless presents the reader with a thorough study of the historical and theological importance of the divine designations in the OT and NT. It aims to offer an exegetical treatment of the most representative divine names, with a view to revealing the underlying theological conceptions. He gives prominence to the dynamic and contextual characteristics of the Old Testament's understanding of God. See also Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*; Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*; and Sandra. L. Richter, "The Place of the Name in Deuteronomy," *VT* 57 (2007): 342–66.

Violent Language Depicting Marital Violence

The violence against women and the violent marital language in OT literature can also be interpreted and understood from a *Shem/Nem* perspective. That almost nothing is said about the female victims and the violent marital language depicting violence against women in the narrative texts such as 2 Samuel 13; and Judges 17–21 supports this perception.[25] While violent marital language and female sexuality appear in nearly all the narrative and prophetic literature, Jeremiah,[26] Ezekiel,[27] and Hosea[28] stand out in their use of sexual and marital imagery to summon a hearing from their audience. These books contain sexual images, nakedness, marital infidelity,

[25] For examples on studies of narrative biblical literature relating to violence against women, see Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 65; Gerald West, "The Contribution of Tamar's Story to the Construction of Alternative African Masculinities," in *Body, Embodiment, and Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (ed. S. Tamar Kamionkowski and Wonil Kim; Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 465; London and New York: Continuum, 2010), 184–200. See also Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church's Response* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1995), 5–7, who argues that the author's focus on the male characters David, Ammon, and Absalom to underscore Absalom's later murder of Amnon is a deliberate act of injustice for Tamar's humiliation. See also Lyn M. Bechtel, "What if Dinah is not Raped? Genesis 34," *JSOT* 62 (1994), 19–36, at 21. See also, David Tombs, "Abandonment, Rape, and Second Abandonment: Hannah Backer in *13 Reasons Why* and the Royal Concubines in 2 Samuel 15–20," in *Rape Culture, Gender Violence, and Religion* (ed. Caroline Blyth, Emily Colgan, and Katie B. Edwards; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 117–41.

[26]For example, Jer 2:1 – 6:30. In 2:1 – 3:5 Jeremiah employs the metaphor of marriage between God and the nation to describe God's frustration with the people and the impending judgement. The wickedness and backsliding of God's people are vividly portrayed in numerous figures of speech; especially sex and marriage are used to that effect. In 3:5 – 6:30 Jeremiah portrays the unfaithfulness of the nation to God as of a wife to her husband (3:6 – 5:31) and the judgement that will follow through a foreign hand (6:1–30).

[27] For example, Ezek 20–23. He describes the southern kingdom as more depraved than the northern kingdom. From Ezekiel's perspective such alliances amount to prostitution against God and they undermine and defile God's sanctuary. See Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Prophetic Literature* (Interpreting Biblical Texts; Nashville: Abingdon, 2005,) 148–49.

[28] Hosea sees disloyalty to God as spiritual adultery (4:13–14; 5:4; 9:1; cf. Jer 3; Exod 34:15). Israel has turned to Baal worship and had sacrificed at pagan altars, which included association with pagan temple prostitutes (4:14) and worshipped the calf images set up by Jeroboam 1 (8:5; 10:5–6; 13:2; cf. 1 Kgs 12:28-29). Yet despite the condemnation brought about by Israel's wayward behaviour and the harshness of sexual and marital violence language with which the unavoidable judgement was announced, the purpose of the book is to proclaim God's compassion and covenant love that cannot finally let Israel go.

imaginations of rape and desolate women, and female sexuality as a rhetorical device to communicate divine judgement against the nation and its people including leaders—not only to communicate judgement, but also to communicate Israel's unfaithfulness in their relation to YHWH as their God. The prophets use some of the explicit, provocative, and sensational images of human sexuality to personify Israel's religious and political tendencies. They used the imagery of rape, abuse, and the battering of women to symbolise the disgraceful fate that awaits the nation and its people and/or the sad spiritual state of the nation and its people.

Feminist scholarship concerning this prophetic metaphoric language depicting marital and sexual violence argues that the language is a powerful means to incite violence against women. For instance, Trible in her rhetorical and literary criticism approach to the Scriptures from a feminist perspective hints at a fresh way of reading and interpreting them, especially their metaphoric language.[29] Her argument concerns the problem of language and how it is applied in the biblical texts. She suggests that the language crisis will best be solved if we pay more attention to the text's own concerns for language and for speech. She challenges some of the most familiar assumptions about texts like Exod 34:6–7; Nah 1:2–3; and Joel 2:13, and points to aspects of the texts that have been marginalised and neglected. She insists on a sustained reflection on metaphor as a primary form of biblical articulation.[30] Trible's call for a fresh way of reading and interpreting language in prophetic utterances is significant, as it shows there is power play in the way language is used in the prophetic literature. Such power play in language represents challenge and response to gain honour over an opponent.[31]

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[29] Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

[30] Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 1–23.

[31] The power play in the language used in the prophetic literature reflects Mediterranean values of honour and shame that might have influenced the way biblical literature is composed. See John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975); Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (3rd ed.; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, "Honour and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. Jerome H. Neyrey; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 25–65; Bruce J. Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels* (London: Routledge, 1996); Barth L. Campbell, *Honour, Shame, and Rhetoric of 1 Peter* (SBLDS 160; Atlanta: Scholars Press,

Renita J. Weems explores the capacity of prophetic sexist metaphors to legitimise sexist human power. She scrutinises how popular customs and thoughts about women, their bodies, and sexuality, offer themselves to manipulation and exploitation by Israel's prophets as they sought to summon a hearing from their male audience. She points to how the prophets combined the topics of marriage, sex, and violence into a powerful rhetoric of dread and desire.[32] Weems argues that the prophetic construction of the marriage metaphor in the Bible was designed to arouse and sway audiences to a particular way of thinking. This naturally leads to rearrangement of reality by emphasising some aspects of reality at the cost of others. She argues that, although the marriage metaphor was used to relay the message of God's intimacy to Israel as that of marriage, it has painted a picture of power and dominance.[33] Weems' observation on how sexualised metaphorical language can materialise in the way women are seen and treated cannot be disregarded. As she points out, although it was to relay the message of God's intimacy, it can be a means to justifying male power and dominance over women.

The arguments of Trible and Weems may be stated in different ways, but they are pointing to the same end: male power and dominance over woman. They are reading prophetic metaphoric literature depicting marital and sexual violence as one of power and dominance over women based on women's experiences. This we must not dismiss as something that is based on women's experiences, but allow their experience of living under power and dominance to help us see clearly the disastrous impact male-male power challenge in the quest for one's *Nem* can have on the life of women.

Critics of these feminist positions argue that prophetic metaphors describe Israel's religious and political alliances to foreign deities and political powers, events that the prophets see as promiscuous behaviour toward God, like that between a wife and her husband.[34] For instance, John Day argues that the prophetic references to adulterous behaviour depicting

1998); David A. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

[32] Renita J. Weems, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

[33] Weems, *Battered Love*, 12–34.

[34] See Deborah Stienstra, *Women's Movements and International Organisations* (New York: St Martins Press, 1993); M. Daniel Carroll, "The Prophetic Denunciation in Hosea 4–7," *CTR* 7 (1993): 15–38; and John Day (ed.), *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel* (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 531; New York: Bloomsbury, 2001).

women have been much criticised, but the use of this graphic language is not anti-women since it is applied to the whole nation, and presumably in reference to male political and religious leaders.[35]

For Deborah Stienstra, the metaphorical language in the prophets includes both men and women and should not be singled out to mean only women. She argues that:

> It has now become common place to remark that in the broken relationship it is the wife who is always the guilty party. Some authors even go so far as to say that the metaphor serves to depict the sinful as female. It cannot be denied that it is always the wife who is in the wrong, but this is obviously inevitable in the case of a metaphor in which the relationship between God and man is pictured as a marriage. If God were to be female, it would always be the husband who would be in the wrong. The discussion as to the sex (or gender) of the Deity is well beyond the scope of this study, but I would like to point out that the (unfaithful) wife of YHWH includes both the men and women of the people of Israel and in fact any human being is invited to identify with this disloyal wife, who fails to respond to the love of the divine partner. That God was the husband in a metaphor that originated from a patriarchal society where women were not only supposed to be submissive but also very much in need of protection, hardly calls for comment.[36]

The arguments of Day and Stienstra are representative of arguments that are common within the traditional, historical, and contextual approaches to the Scriptures, especially prophetic literature. Stienstra's argument shows that in a culture where God is male, a marriage metaphor will unavoidably present humanity, male and female, as woman. Although woman is presented as sinful, it is a necessary result that should not be taken to imply a negative view of women more generally. However, it should be evaluated in the light of the religious and political context of the nation as a whole.[37] The

[35] Day, "Hosea and the Baal Cult," in *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel,* 202–24.
[36] Stienstra, *Women's Movements and International Organisations,* 97–98.
[37] Those who see prophetic language as a language that not only paints gloom and horror, but a message of a future hope, argue that such language is applied to turn the nation back to a restored relationship. For example, Hans Walter Wolff, "Prophecy from the Eighth through the Fifth Century," in *Interpreting the Prophets* (ed. James Luther Mays and Paul J. Achtemeier; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 14–26, at 19–22, makes an important observation, that one should not preoccupy oneself with just present-day criticisms of the prophetic literature but should also look at the prominence of the coming restoration. However, from a present-day perspective, like that of a feminist, one may see these proposals as too general and argue that these generalisations may obscure interpretation and application of prophetic

traditional approaches to the prophetic metaphoric language that depicts violence against women are important, but such approaches do not necessarily address the feminist question, male-centred language that empowers men over women.

Under such circumstances, in addition to feminist perspectives based on power and hierarchical structural systems and their influences on violent prophetic language, the traditional substitutionary perspectives see prophetic literature as symbolically speaking about Israel's going-after other deities and political powers and God's judgement against them. But it can also be argued that if God is identified as male in these arguments then we should also see God from a Melanesian *Nem* perspective. That makes God a male partner seeking to regain his *Nem* from those who challenged his *Nem* in luring Israel away from her covenant relationship. As Stone points out, "… gendered characters should be considered in their relation to cultural gender norms, this must hold for the character of YHWH as well."[38]

Thus, violent prophetic literature, viewed from the perspective of *Nem*, takes the ideology of sexual practice in relation to gender as an explicit point of departure. This impacts how we can understand the characterisation of God as male in the prophetic literature and also our understanding of prophetic metaphorical language. In light of this inference, it is argued that the prophetic metaphoric language also represents male-male power dynamics symbolised in the concept of *Nem*, a power challenge that seeks the restoration of one's *Nem* by way of restoring a strained relationship. In the restoration of that strained relationship the challenger is overpowered and *Nem* is gained or regained for the affected, Israel, and primarily for the rescuer, God. Again, it portrays the male-male power challenge, a challenge that may involve or lead to domination of the innocent, the women.

The concept of *Nem*, especially that of male-male power dynamics that immerses itself in the victimisation of women, can also be described, as René Girard does, as the "scapegoat mechanism." For Girard, this concept has an important role in the maintenance of social order. It is a mechanism through

literature. These arguments reflect the chasm that was identified earlier, between the traditional and the feminist approaches to prophetic literature. See also Walter Brueggemann, "The Book of Jeremiah: Portrait of the Prophet," in Mays and Actemeier, *Interpreting the Prophets*, 119–20.

[38] Ken Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power in the Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 144.

which violence is channelled inwardly toward an innocent victim to gain access to a desired goal.[39] Though Girard's depiction may not be similar to the argument based on male-male power dynamics in the biblical literature (as much as in Melanesian thinking), it can be imagined that male-male power dynamics do much the same in that women are much like scapegoats in the male-male power dynamics for *Nem*.

Hence, the article argues that the concept of *Nem* can be a key concept for understanding male-centric biblical literature and may contribute to the subjugation of women. Therefore, if *Nem* has an influence on the way male-female power relations are ordered, what was Jesus' response to the concept of *Nem* in NT literature?

THE NEW TESTAMENT RESPONSE

Shem/Nem offers insight into the male-centric OT biblical language. It reveals that male-male power dynamics may have spill-over effects on male-female power relations. However, in NT literature the goal of male-male power dynamics, especially Jesus' engagement with civil and religious authorities, was to reveal the misrepresentation of the cultural perception of power relationship epitomised in the concept of *Shem/Nem*.

New Testament cultural anthropology scholars claim that first-century Mediterranean values of honour and shame were central factors that governed power relationships in NT literature. The scholars' anthropological and sociological approaches to NT background studies present a typical pattern of first-century Mediterranean social life based on honour and shame as core values. They paint a fascinating picture of life, social relations, and the values that governed social interaction in the first-century Mediterranean world and in NT biblical literature. It shows societies that are based not on individuals but on families, clans, and lineages. The primary values are invested in these groups, not in abstract or universal principles. This creates a different system of values and morals from what we know in Western, modern, and postmodern societies. Of course, dynamics of honour and shame play an important role also in many contemporary communal societies, including Melanesia. But demonstrating the nature of the relationship between beliefs and values in different cultures may be difficult.

[39] See Michael Kirwan, *Discovering Girard* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 2004), 38–62.

Comparisons can be too easy to draw based on surface similarities between social customs rather than on the deeper social structures that may have given rise to honour and shame values.

In spite of these cautions, one main tendency that holds true for all cultures is that the application of power in human relationships, though expressed differently, is for the same purpose: to gain honour for oneself and for one's family, clan, and society.

This is the world to which Jesus came and offered a different perspective about power relations in human relationships; one that is contrary to the cultural motif, honour and status, much like Melanesian '*Nem*'. Jesus took up the OT '*Shem/Nem*' that seeks to dominate others for one's honour and status in order to present the servant concept as an ideal symbol of power relations in human relationships.

Jesus' Life and Teaching as an Antithesis to *Nem*

Despite the problematic scenarios demonstrated in the historical Jesus scholarship,[40] the NT documents are the only valid sources for the most reliable information about Jesus' life and teachings about power relationship.[41]

First, Jesus' life as presented in the canonical gospels reveals what is inherently human, but yet different. For instance, there is the claim of the virgin birth (Matt 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–35), the claim to be fully human and

[40]For example, see Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest for Historical Jesus* (trans. Irwin Hood Hoover; New York: Macmillan, 1968); Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (trans. Richard H. Heirs and David Larimore Holland; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); S.G.F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967); John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francesco: Harper, 1991); Burton Mack, *The Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); Burton Mack, *The Lost Gospel and the Book of Q and Christian Origins* (San Francesco: Harper, 1993); and John P. Meir, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (3 vols.; The Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1991–2001). For comment on the historical Jesus views represented in these works, see Craig S. Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

[41] For example, see, Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels*; James R. Edwards, *Is Jesus the Only Saviour?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005); Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View* (trans. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); and William R. Herzog II, *Prophet and Teacher: An Introduction to the Historical Jesus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

yet without sin (Matt 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–12; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15), the claim that he was fully God and yet fully human (John 1:1, 18; 20:28), the claim that he died and rose again (Matt 27:45 – 28:10; Mark 15:33 – 16:14; Luke 23:44 – 24:12; John 19:28 – 20:17), the claim to and application of miraculous powers (Matt 8–9; Mark 1:40 – 2:12; Luke 5:12–26; John 9), the claim of everlasting authority (Matt 28:15–20; John: 8:58), and the declaration of Jesus as the only saviour (John 3:16;10:10; 14:5–14).[42]

These scriptural references lead to two significant proclamations, Jesus is truly human and truly God. However, how these complex proclamations merge in one authentic person, Jesus, will always be a mystery.[43] But, according to James R. Edwards, the gospel evidence contains unique historical claims that set Jesus apart from typical first-century rabbis, prophets, revolutionists, and civil and religious leaders who crave power. He contended that, "in a plethora of ways—in word, deed and bearing—he exuded a divine *exousia* or authority that impressed followers and opponents alike that he understood himself to speak and act for God, indeed as God."[44]

Although there is some form of mystery in the combination of Jesus as both human and God, Edwards' observes that the gospel evidence about the person of Jesus, his life, and work entail a relationship of service, one of honour to God, and of selfless service to humanity. This is reflected in the OT servant concept discussed earlier. The obvious supposition is that Jesus' life was swallowed up in a power relationship that seeks to serve rather than dominate. Hence, it is argued that this is a reversal in a world of power relationships that seek to dominate others.

Second, Jesus' teachings as presented in the canonical gospels stand in direct contrast to human ethics and forms of social power relationships. His teachings engaged with the higher-order norms that legitimised prevailing social power relations in the society. According to William R. Herzog, Jesus' teachings dislodged support for the centrality of the temple as the seat of power through his prophetic reading of the Scriptures. In the process his teachings challenged and undermined the pharisaic higher-order norms that

[42] For further reading and commentary on Jesus' unique characteristics, see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (rev. ed.; Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 529–634; James R. Edwards, *Is Jesus the Only Saviour*?; and Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels*.

[43] See, Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth*, (Leicester, London: Inter-Varsity, 1998), 179–80.

[44] Edwards, *Is Jesus the Only Saviour*? 98.

buttressed their control of the interpretation of the Scriptures, which supported dominant power relational structures of the society.[45]

Malina says that in Palestine at least, one feature of the application of such social relational power was that it was wielded over God's own people and often in God's name and by Israel's civil and religious aristocrats. He posits that, for Israel, the problem was not that of men in authority but the pedigree of men wielding power over others. He said it was against this background that Jesus focused his teaching on proper application of power in interpersonal relationships, one that considers everyone as equally important. In contrast to civil and religious aristocrats who exploited mass support for the purpose of establishing one's power over others, Jesus modeled a life of service to others as an alternate form of power relationship.[46]

Herzog and Malina's arguments present two significant observations: 1) Jesus' teaching confronted the pharisaic ethical norms used as leverage to dominate those who were unable to live up to those norms, such as Jesus' response to the teachers of the law and the Pharisees who accused a woman of adultery, "If anyone of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at the woman" (John 8:3–7); Jesus' ethical teachings in contrast with the pharisaic legalistic ethical codes (Matt 5–7); and Jesus' teaching on purity and impurity contrasted with the pharisaic purity laws (Matt 15:1–20; Mark 7:1–23). Here Jesus engaged with and challenged the biased higher-order norms of the civil and religious leaders that created unfair social relational structures. 2) Jesus' teaching confronted and challenged the social power relational structures of the society that sought to dominate others. By life and practice Jesus demonstrated that power is not about seeking to dominate, the dominant social attitude, but is a means to serve others on an equal footing.

Thus, Jesus' life and teaching were more like an antithesis to all human social power structure systems. They stand in contrast to the Melanesian conception of power relationship, one that seeks to make a *Nem* for oneself and one's society.

[45] Herzog, *Prophet and Teacher*, 71–98.
[46] Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels*, 137–38.

Nem and the Servant Concept of Power Relationship

In contrast to power-oriented titles as shown above, the gospels also identified Jesus as the suffering servant of Isaiah. Since we have looked at Son of God, Son of Man, and second Adam titles, this subsection will reflect on the title, Jesus as the servant.

An Overview of the OT Background of the Servant Concept

The servant figure of Isaiah's famous servant songs (Isa 40–55) and its functions are important for understanding human power relationships as portrayed in the NT Scriptures, especially in the gospels. Historically, Isaiah's servant figure has drawn a range of interpretations. As early as the 1900s, scholars had suggested two interpretational views: one historical-critical and the other as literary-functional.

First, the historical-critical interpretation suggested that the servant is the nation of Israel or the remnant of Israel (e.g., Isa 41:8; 44:1–2, 21; 45:4; 48:20), or the unnamed servant could refer to Cyrus, the prophet Isaiah, or the collective prophetic community (Isa 50:4–9). The immediate question for scholars of this view between the 1900s and 1970s was whether the Christian church reinterpreted the suffering servant of Deutero-Isaiah by associating the suffering servant in Isaiah with Jesus of the NT. Hence, they argued that associating Jesus with the suffering servant of Deutero-Isaiah is a later work of the church, based on the facts of Jesus' passion. Thus, Jesus as the suffering servant might not represent Isaiah's servant. They maintained that the Deutero-Isaiah servant songs possibly refer to the nation of Israel, the remnant of Israel, Isaiah the prophet, the prophetic community, or Cyrus.[47]

[47] For example, see F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (eds.), *The Beginning of Christianity,* part 1: *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1: *Prolegomena I: The Jewish, Gentile, and Christian Backgrounds* (London: Macmillan, 1920), who argued throughout this work that the traditional view that Jesus is the fulfilment of the Deutero-Isaiah depiction of a suffering servant creates two distinct difficulties in connection with NT words about the sufferings of Jesus. First is the NT depiction of the "Son of Man" idea in association with Jesus' sufferings, whether spoken by Jesus himself, or representing the interpretation of Jesus' words by a later work. Second, the amplification of the connotation of the "Son of Man" to include the idea of suffering in it is due to literary influence or is it based on the facts of Jesus' passion. Pointing to these difficulties, they contended that the explicit references to Jesus sufferings are not consistent with the disciples' behaviour. The disciples' context suggests that they did not understand the meaning of NT depictions of the "Son of Man" idea in association with Jesus' sufferings. Based on this assumption, they concluded that, while Jesus did speak about his rejection, it was not with the details ascribed to him. Therefore, it was not the interpretation

Second, the literary-functional interpretation suggested that the Deutero-Isaiah servant passages refer not only to the nation, the prophet Isaiah, or Cyrus, but literarily and functionally they link Jesus to the suffering servant of Isaiah. Scholars like G.C. Workmann, I. Engnell, and C.R. North link the unnamed speaker in Isaiah 61 with Jesus and argue that, in a limited sense, Isaiah 61 refers to a prophet, but the messianic servant is the main figure (Isa 42:1; 48:16; 50:4–5, 7, 9). They argue that Jesus regarded himself as the servant, drawing from Isaiah 53. Therefore, there is indication that Jesus foresaw his destiny and thought of himself as the OT Messiah—a concept for him which included both the Son of Man and servant from the very beginning of his ministry.[48]

Though these historical positions might have been addressed adequately in the last fifty years, they are important for Melanesian. A Melanesian will search the Scriptures to ascertain Jesus' position in relation to history and determine whether and where the work Jesus stands in relation to that history. Hence, both, the historical-critical and literary-functional concerns for the correct historical understanding of the Deutero-Isaiah servant passages and their functional continuity in the person of Jesus are significant. The overlaps in these interpretational views are recognisable, in that, on the one hand, the literary-functional may fail to notice the historical identity of the suffering servant of Deutero-Isaiah, and on the other, the historical-critical perspective

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of the servant songs of Isaiah that connects Jesus to the servant songs, but interpretations based on facts of Jesus' passion. See Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (trans. L.P. Smith and E. Huntress; Eng. ed.; London: Scribner, 1935); and Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. K. Grobel; Eng. ed.; London: Scribner, 1952). Like Jackson and Lake, Bultmann argued that the association between Jesus and the suffering servant of Deutero-Isaiah in the gospels is a later work of the church. He argued that the predictions of suffering servant and attributes of such a character attributed to Jesus in the gospels originated in the faith of the church. See also Morna D. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant* (London: S.P.C.K, 1959); Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Opening the Sealed Book: Interpretations of the Book of Isaiah in Late Antiquity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

[48] See G. C. Workmann, *The Servant of Jehovah* (London: Longmans, 1907); Ivan Engnell, "The Ebed YHWH Songs and the Suffering Messiah," *BJRL* 31 (1948): 54–96; Edwyn Hoskyns and Noel Dave, *The Riddle of the New Testament* (3rd ed.; London: Faber & Faber, 1947); Christopher R. North, *The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah: An Historical and Critical Study* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956). See also William H. Bellinger Jr and William R. Farmer (eds.), *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998); and Holly Beers, "Servant of YHWH," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospel* (ed. Joel B. Green; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 855–59.

may overlook the functional continuity of the suffering servant tradition. But from a Melanesian holistic view, both the historical identity and the functional continuity belong together. Based on the opinion that the suffering servant concept is applied in contrast to dominant power relational structures in the NT, it is important to acknowledge that both positions are significant in understanding Jesus' standing in relation to history and the ongoing functions of that servanthood history.

From the 1980s into the 2000s in the West, the interpretational concern has been with OT and NT intertextual methods of approaching the Deutero-Isaianic servant passages. For instance, Holly Beers said from a literary and functional perspective, this figure in Isaiah 61 speaks with a voice and takes on the role of the servant from Isaiah 42 and 49. She argued that both passages proclaim that the servant is anointed by YHWH's spirit for a specific purpose and mission, to proclaim freedom for prisoners and to console the faint-hearted. She asserts that even if traditional historical-critical distinctions are held, and Isaiah 61 is thus seen as part of "Third Isaiah," it may be argued that the plural servants (Isa 65:8) as a community have claimed servant traits and experiences (from "Second Isaiah" Isa 40–55) for themselves. Therefore, she argues that if it happened already in this early period, then, there is a historically later group that utilises the servant figure in the service of its own identity. This is an important reality that must be noted in studies of the servant motif in the NT.[49]

Though Beers overlooked the identity of the servant in Deutero-Isaiah and its historical-critical perspective, the intertextual approach based on the functions of the servant portrays the ongoing tradition of the servant motif. However, one significant oversight in this argument is that an intertextual approach based on functions of the servant may obscure the servant identity, which is of importance to Melanesian understanding. One's identity plays an important role in the way one understands his or her role as a servant. Without an identity, service itself can become a means to further one's own desire.

The NT Portrait of the Servant Concept

Among the "reflection citations" of the gospels' portrait of the servant concept that identify Jesus as the suffering servant of Deutero-Isaiah, the

[49] Beers, "Servant of YHWH," 855–59.

Gospel of Mathew alludes to Isa 42:1–4 and Isa 53. It is to be noted, however, that in each case Matthew relates these passages to Jesus' identity as the chosen servant in Matt12:18–21 and to Jesus' mission and purpose as the servant in Matt 20:25–28. They both reflect Jesus' connection to the historical identity and the functional continuity that is reflected in his own life and ministry of service.[50] For instance, J. B. Payne posits that the identity, purpose and mission of the Isaianic servant are fulfilled in Jesus as Mathew demonstrated in these passages (Matt 12:18–21; 20:25–28).[51]

The gospel of Mark alludes to Isa 53:2–4 and 53:11–12. First, Mark 9:12b alludes to Isa 53:2–4 in reference to Jesus as the "Son of Man" and connecting this title to Jesus' suffering servant identity. Second, Mark 10:45 and 14:24 (the "giving of his life" and the "pouring out of his blood for many") reflect Isa 53:11–12. Here Mark refers to Jesus' mission and purpose relating to the Isaianic servant's mission and purpose.[52] For example, Scot McKnight proposed that Mark's reference to Jesus from a suffering christological perspective cannot be understood until Jesus is understood as the suffering Son of Man (Mark 10:45) and the suffering, crucified "Son of God" who will be vindicated by God the Father (Mark 1:11; 8:38 – 9:7). He argued that the prominence of the cross in Mark's gospel, with its special urgency to show that Jesus is heading toward his suffering on the cross, as

[50] For example, see J. B. Payne, "Servant of the Lord," in Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1095–96; Blenkinsopp, *Opening the Sealed Book*; Beers, "Servant of YHWH," 855–59; and Stanley E. Porter, *Sacred Tradition in the New Testament: Tracing Old Testament Themes in the Gospels and Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 97. See also Clarence Tucker Craig, "The Identification of Jesus with the Suffering Servant," *JR* 24 (1944): 240–45. For Beers, these passages (Matt 12 and 20) identify Jesus as the suffering servant. 12:18–21 directly quotes Isa 42:1–4 in reference to the identity of Jesus as the servant and 20:25–28 alludes to Jesus' purpose and mission. She argued that the direct quotation here strengthens the probable servant background to Jesus' baptism and transfiguration scenes (Matt 3:17; 17:5). She asserts that the pronouncement on the baptismal occasion (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22), and pronouncement at the transfiguration (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35), though not explicit, implicitly allude to the Isaianic servant (Isa 42:1, 6–7).

[51] Payne, "Servant of the Lord," 1095–96.

[52] See Beers, "Servant of YHWH," 856–57; Porter, *Sacred Tradition in the New Testament*, 96–103; Scot McKnight, "Introduction," in John Riches, William R. Telford, and Christopher M. Tuckett, *The Synoptic Gospels* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 20–21; and James D.G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*, vol. 1: *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 809–18.

well as the space given to the passion week, dramatically reveal Jesus' mission and purpose as the suffering servant.[53]

Regarding Luke's portrait of the servant concept, it is commonly acknowledged that Luke used Mark's Isaianic servant portrait.[54] For instance, Robert F. O'Toole thinks that Luke's passion narratives (Luke 18:31–33; Acts 8:32–33) reflect Mark's use of the Isaianic servant background. He asserts that though Luke did not explicitly apply suffering servant ideology, Luke's portrait of Jesus is that of *Ebed YHWH* of the Deutero-Isaiah servant songs.[55]

John portrays the servant concept with several servant portraits. First, John 1:29, 36 portray Jesus as the Lamb of God. The primary background to this portrait is probably the sacrificial Passover lamb (Exod 12) and a link with other christological titles like the suffering servant of the Isaianic servant songs is feasible, especially Isa. 53.[56] The sacrificial Passover lamb is employed to demonstrate Jesus' identity as a servant whose mission is not for himself but for the other, in this, to deliver people from their sin.[57] Second, John 3:13–14; 8:28; and 12:32–34 portray Jesus as the Son of Man. The background to this title is probably Daniel 7, which was looked at earlier. Mark and the other synoptic gospels also referred to this christological title, Jesus' favourite reference to himself. The background to John's references, however, may also have the "lifting up of the Serpent" (Num 21:8–9) as its background. It may be applied here to demonstrate Jesus' mission as the one who is "lifted up" on the cross, a possible connotation to Son of Man being judged not for his own wrong but bearing the judgement on behalf of the other and the many. Again, it correlates with the sacrificial lamb idea, an innocent for the guilty, and is a significant portrayal of the servant concept.[58] And third, in John 12: 37–38 a quotation is made from Isa. 53:1 in reference to Jesus' association with the Isaianic servant, a demonstration of suffering servanthood. In the following chapter (13) Jesus demonstrates the servant

[53] McKnight, "Introduction," 20–21.
[54] For example, see Robert F. O'Toole, "How Does Luke Portray Jesus as Servant of YHWH," *Biblica* 81 (2000): 328–46; and Beers, "Servant of YHWH," 856–57. See also Craig, "The Identification of Jesus," 240–45; and Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant*, 62–102.
[55] O'Toole, "How Does Luke Portray Jesus," 328–46.
[56] For example, see Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003).
[57] Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 452–56.
[58]See Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 563–70; and Beers, "Servant of YHWH," 858.

concept in the washing of his disciples' feet, a lowly task taken up only by a household servant.[59] Here suffering service is not seen as only a means to glory but glory in itself, a significant portrayal of the servant concept.

Despite some difficulty in reconciling the Isaianic servant songs with reference to Jesus in the gospels, the servant concept is rooted in Isaiah and other OT scriptural passages that allude to the historical servant identity and the functional continuity of the messiah. From a Melanesian view, this is a significant inference because the authenticity of the present status must stand in relationship to the ancestry of the history to be authentic. Hence, Jesus' relationship to the historical identity and the servant's functional continuity authenticate Jesus' status as the servant. That in Melanesian thinking gives Jesus the absolute right to represent God fully and to command a certain way of life from his adherents.

Among the reflective citations of the epistles' portrayal of the servant concept that identify Jesus as the suffering servant of Deutero-Isaiah, Pauline Letters especially Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Philippians, make reference to Isa 52 and 53. However, in each case Paul relates these passages to Jesus as the "sent one" (messiah) in Rom 10:15–17, and to the messiah's restorative mission in Rom 11:25–29 (for Israel) and 15:21 (for Gentiles) quoting Isa 52:7 and 53:1.[60] For example, for J. M. Scott, Paul's use of the

[59] For example, see Leon L. Morris, "The Theology of John," in Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 633–35; and Craig S. Keener, "John, Gospel of," in Green, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospel*, 419–36.

[60] For example, see James M. Scott, "Restoration of Israel," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 796–805; Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007). See also Charles H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Moffatt New Testament Commentary Series; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932); Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant*, 116–23. Some earlier scholars like Hooker argued that Paul's use of these Isaianic references was for the support of his preaching. She argued that, first, Paul's use of Isa 52:7 and 53:1 were to describe the nature and reception of his preaching. Thus, the reference to Isa 53 does not mean that the Isaianic servant was in mind; rather Paul's point is the failure of the Israelites to believe the gospel. Second, again the rendering of the fourth servant song in Rom 15:21 is about the justification of his preaching. This may not be necessarily referring to the Isaianic servant. For Hooker, Paul's references to Isaianic passages may not be about identifying Jesus with the Isaianic servant; rather Paul used it to support his preaching. This and other earlier arguments based on this way of thinking may have been adequately addressed in the last fifty years, but the complexity to this supposition is that if Paul is making reference to support his preaching then who is Paul preaching about? If Paul is preaching about Jesus' restorative work as the

OT Scriptures provides a framework for Paul's thinking. Scott argues that the Deuteronomic tradition emphasised in Romans 9–11 is associated with Israel's restoration and Israel's task to enhance the restoration of the rest of the human race. This was a task in which Israel failed, but God maintained faithfulness, as revealed in the person of Jesus for the restoration of both Israel and the rest of humanity. Scott contended that based on this tradition, Paul identifies Jesus as the messiah (Rom 10:15) quoting Isa 52:7 and 53:1 and his mission of restoration (11:25–29; 15:21).[61] J. D. G. Dunn thinks that the mystery of God's faithfulness in the restoration of both Israel and the Gentiles cannot be understood without a trace of the Deuteronomic restorative tradition that finally culminates in Jesus as the messianic servant as Paul understood. Paul's identification of Jesus as the messianic servant in his epistle to the Romans points to this fact. It is in Jesus that both the Jews and Gentiles have a restored relationship with one another and with God.[62]

In 1 Cor 15:3 Paul alludes to Isa 53 and identifies Jesus as the crucified messiah. Here Paul shows that the central message of the gospel is that Jesus died for our sins and not for his own sin (cf. Heb 7:27), that he was buried and that he was raised from the dead, according to the Scriptures. Scholars have claimed that in the phrase "according to the Scriptures" Paul probably had in mind Isa 53: 5–6 and 11–12, but he might also have had in mind the Passover sacrifice (Exod 12) and other sin offerings of the OT sacrificial system. Thus, it is assumed that Jesus is the suffering messianic servant of the Isaianic servant songs.[63]

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messianic servant, then is it fair to argue that the reference was not made about Jesus' identity and work.

[61] Scott, "Restoration of Israel," 796–805. See also J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1959), 107–31; Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984); Bruce W. Longenecker, "Different Answers to Different Issues Israel, the Gentiles and Salvation History in Romans 9–11," *JSNT* 36 (1989): 95–123.

[62] Dunn, "Romans," 848–49.

[63] For example, see Marion L. Soards, "Christology of the Pauline Epistles," in *Who Do You Say that I am?* (ed. Mark Allan Powell and David R. Bauer; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 88–109; Julius J. Scott Jr., "Cross, Crucifixion," in Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 309–10; and Fee, *Pauline Christology*. See also, Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice*; Archibald M. Hunter, *The Unity of the New Testament*, (London: SCM, 1944); Lionel S. Thornton, "The Body of Christ in New Testament," in *The Apostolic Ministry* (ed. K. E. Kirk; London: SCM Press, 1946), 53–111. The earlier historical-critical scholars argued that the conclusion that Paul had the Isaianic servant in mind in this passage

In Phil 2:6–11 Paul alludes to Isa 52:13 – 53:12. Here Paul identifies Jesus as the suffering servant. Scholars who have commented on this passage agree that the voluntary humiliation and subsequent exaltation of Christ is based on the fourth song of the Isaianic servant songs (Isa 52:13 – 53:12).[64] For instance, L. S. Thornton makes reference to these phrases "the form of a servant" and "emptied himself … unto death" and interpreted that this passage is based on the fourth servant song. He thinks that Paul's identification of Jesus as that servant in this passage brings to fulfilment the Isaianic anticipation.[65]

Therefore, the Pauline portrayal of the servant concept based on the OT and the gospels is a dominant theme that unites and runs through the OT and NT, seen especially in the Pauline epistolary references to Jesus' identity and mission as a servant.

The non-Pauline letters of the NT, especially Hebrews and 1 Peter, make reference to Isa 53 identifying Jesus as the servant of the Isaianic servant songs. Hebrews 9:28 reads "so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to

(1 Cor 15:3) is not clear, therefore cannot be conclusive. (Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice*; Hunter, *The Unity of the New Testament*; Thornton, "The Body of Christ in New Testament," 53–111). For example, Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant*, 117–20, argued that the phrase "according to the Scriptures" is not definite but a general reference to the fulfilment of Scriptures in Jesus' life and work. She believes that, to refer specifically Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection to the Isaianic servant based on this phrase cannot be supported. She notes that, although it is justifiable, this phrase is of a general nature, and it is the equivalent of similar expressions elsewhere in the gospels and the letters. These issues may have been adequately addressed, however, but Hooker's argument on the generality of the phrase is justifiable because it is a common phrase traceable to other scriptural passages (i.e. Acts 2 and 13). However, at some point specificity is important based on the context to which the phrase is reworded and applied, for specific audience and for a specific issue at hand. Presumably, Paul's application here is specific; it is on the issue of resurrection that Paul refers to the Scriptures. Thus, Paul's identification of Jesus as the suffering messianic servant is specific, in that it provides an example and an encouragement to that specific audience.

[64] See Soards, "Christology of the Pauline Epistles," 88–109; and Fee, *Pauline Christology.* See also J. H. Michael, *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians* (Moffatt New Testament Commentary Series; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1928); Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*; and J. Moffatt, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Moffatt New Testament Commentary Series; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938).

[65] Thornton, *The Dominion of Christ*, 95. See also Michael, *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians*, 90; Carpenter, *Primitive Christian Application of the Doctrine of the Servant* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1929).

bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." This verse seems to echo Isa 53:12, which portray the servant's identity as that of a priest and his work of atonement.[66] Scholars argued that Heb 9:28 identifies Jesus as the high priest who offered up his own life as atonement for sin, in fulfilment of OT Scriptures like Isa 53:12. Unlike the Levitical high priest who entered the most holy place with the blood of goats and calves once every year, Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary with his own blood. It is argued that, in pointing to the priesthood of Jesus and his mission of atonement for the sins of many, the author of Hebrews points away from the Levitical priesthood that was only a shadow of the reality that is fulfilled in Jesus.[67] For instance, D. L. Hurst asserts that Aaron's role in the Levitical ritual has to be seen as a helpful sketch, ahead of time, of Jesus' work as a high priest who offered up his own life for the sin of many. Readers of Hebrews, who fail to see this, are in danger of slipping away from the reality that Jesus is the high priest. He asserts that the Isaianic servant's identity as that of a priest and the priestly function of atonement are fulfilled in Jesus' priesthood and his death on the cross as atonement for sin.[68]

In 1 Peter, Peter makes reference to Jesus' identity and mission in a few passages (1 Pet 1:10, 18–19; 2:21—25) that resemble Isa 53. Some common conclusions based on these Petrine passages include: first, 1:10 may refer to

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[66] See William Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Theological and Historical Reconstruction* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1951); Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant*, 123–24; Frederick F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964); F. L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Douglas M. Hay, *The Epistles to the Hebrews* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989); L. D. Hurst, "Priest, High Priest," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament* (ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 963–67; Charles K. Barret, "The Christology of Hebrews," in Powell and Bauer, *Who Do You Say that I am?*, 110–27. Some earlier scholars argued that the fact that Jesus "bears the sins of many" depends not on Isa 53, but upon his work as high priest. For example, Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant*,123–24, argued that, whilst the author may well have derived the concept of Jesus being the Isaianic servant of Isa 53, which also speaks of one who "bore the sin of many", not as a priest, but in his own death. She asserts, therefore, that while there is no identification of Jesus with the suffering servant, the concept of Isa 53 probably lies behind the passage, but there is no explicit connection between Jesus and the suffering servant of Isa 53.

[67] See Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*; Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant*, 123–24; Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*; Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition*; Hay, *The Epistles to the Hebrews*; Hurst, "Priest, High Priest," 963–67; and Barret, "The Christology of Hebrews," 110–27.

[68] Hurst, "Priest, High Priest," 963–67.

general prophetic traditions, but its link to chapter 2 suggests that it is more likely the author had Isa 53 in mind. For the author, this is probably the outstanding example of the prefiguring of Jesus' suffering and glory. Second, in 1 Pet 1:18–19 the author makes reference to Isa 53:7, which correlates with John's identification of Jesus as the sacrificial lamb or the Passover lamb of the Exodus account (Exod 12). Here the author sees Jesus' redemptive work that led to his humiliation and suffering as set within these prophetic expectations. Third, in 1 Pet 2:21–25 the author assumedly makes reference to Isa 53:3–9. Here Jesus is identified with the figure of the Isaianic suffering servant. Jesus' humiliation and suffering are portrayed here, as the suffering servant Isaiah anticipated.[69] For Instance, Paul J. Achtemeier argued that in these verses, even a cursory reading makes apparent the extent to which the author depended directly on Isa 53. He argued that there may be variations in the wordings or application of relative pronouns, but the point of Isa 53 is deliverance from sin by a redemptive act of a servant. Jesus' identity as a servant and his redemptive act on the cross in these Petrine verses is set against that background. Thus, a Christ-centred reading of the

[69] For example, see Paul E. Deterding, "Exodus Motif in First Peter," *Concordia Journal* 7 (1981): 58–65; Larry W. Hurtado, "Christology," in Martin and Davids, *Dictionary of the Later New Testament*, 173–74; Paul J. Achtemeier, "The Christology of 1 Peter," in Powell and Bauer, *Who Do You Say that I am?*, 140–54. See also Edward G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St Peter* (London: Macmillan, 1946); Randy Hall, "For to this You have been Called: The Cross and Suffering in 1 Peter," *Restoration Quarterly* 19 (1976): 137–47, at 140–41. Textual-critical scholars between the 1940s and 1970s argued that these verses do not relate to the OT servant functions. For example, according to E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St Peter*, 145–47, these verses do not correspond to how the OT prophets described the functions of the servant or in any way correspond to the Jewish thought. First, in 1:10, the author intended to refer to the Christian prophets searching of the OT prophets in an attempt to find references to the gospel of Jesus. Second, in 1:18–19, the author makes reference to animal sacrifice. He thinks that this is in connection with Israel's redemption and this belongs to a series of redemption formulae based on the traditional Jewish exegesis of Exod 12–14. Third, in 2:21–25, the author is referring not to the sufferings of Jesus, rather it is intended to portray the Christward sufferings involved in following Jesus. For Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant*, 124–25, in these verses, there is a blending of Deutero-Isaiah in the historical events of Jesus' passion. But these passion events should not be distorted to agree with Isa 53, they should be interpreted in the light of the Petrine chapters. Selwyn and Hooker believe that, though, there is reference to Isa 53 in these verses, these verses should not be forced to agree with Isa 53, but it should be interpreted in the light of these Petrine chapters.

OT is the author's christological contribution for later theological reflection.[70]

Much like the gospels, the epistles' portrayal of the servant concept cannot be missed, confirming the servant concept as a major uniting factor that holds together differing views, and also unites the two testaments. As argued earlier, for Melanesians, Paul's and other epistolary references to the OT Scriptures demonstrate Jesus' standing in relation to the historical identity of his status as the servant.

Biblical Terms that Portray the Servant Concept

Hebrew terms like *sarat* (שרת; "to serve" or "to minister") describes what one does for the benefit of another, mostly used in terms of service rendered to God or rendered to a fellow human; *abad* (עבד) also denotes service or ministry; however, this term specifically describes the Levitical priestly service rendered only to God; *avodah* (עבודה) means "to work" or "to labour"; it relates to hard labour and describes what one does not as a free person but as a slave; *ebed* (עבד) means a servant, it could also be described as a bondservant.[71] The Greek equivalents of the Hebrew terms that are widely used in the Greek version of the OT and NT Scriptures that portray the servant concept include: *doulos* (δοῦλος) and the associated verb form *douleuo* (δουλεύω), a bondservant or a slave. In Greek, *doulos* and *douleuo* both refer to a slave who has no freedom, someone who has been forced into slavery. However, in the biblical literature following Jesus' example, the gospels and the Pauline epistles pick up the OT "willing slave" ideas of Exod 21, and make *doulos* and *douleo* refer to a positive, willingly accepted condition.[72] *Diakonos* (διάκονος), which is transliterated as "deacon," means servant or minister. The associated verb form, *diakoneo* (διακονέω), signifies an act of service rendered to or to minister to the needs of others. Other terms that depict the servant concept include *pais* (παῖς) meaning "servant" akin to the idea of being a child, *oiketes* a household servant (οἰκέτης), *huperetes*

[70] Achtemeier, "The Christology of 1 Peter," 140–54.

[71] See Unger and White, *Vine's Expository Dictionary*, 223–25

[72] For example, see Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ* (NSBT 8; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 133–38. See also Keith R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*; and Wayne G. Rollins, "Greco-Roman Slave Terminology and Pauline Metaphors for Salvation," *SBLSP* 123 (1987): 100–10.

(ὑπηρέτης) an officer in charge of someone else's possessions or a custodian, and *sundoulos* (σύνδουλος) meaning fellow servant or co-worker.[73]

Generally, these terms and their association with the servant concept in the Scriptures connote various power relational archetypes. The most notable is *doulos* and its verb form *douleo* as applied in the NT, which is of special interest in this study. These terms frequently indicate Jesus' identity as that of a bondservant or a slave without the idea of force or bondage.[74] In the synoptic gospels, the terms were at times applied together, especially in Mark 10:44–45 and Matt 20:26–27. The object lesson was demonstrated in the fourth gospel, especially 13:1–20, as the NT model for power relations.[75]

According to J. C. Thomas, whatever else may be in view in terms of Jesus' identity, his identification with a servant's role is prominent as demonstrated in John 13:1–20. He claims that the lowly task, foot washing, Jesus performed does not in any way reduce his identity as the Son of God or as the Jewish messiah and in this case as the servant of God, rather the lowly task he performed reveals the true intention of his claim as the Son of God, the messiah, and as the servant of God.[76] Keener notes that Jesus' servant attitude is significant in understanding his restorative mission in terms of power relationships. He posits that it was commonplace in first-century Palestine for followers to be the servants of their master. Thus, it is obvious that Jesus' disciples are portrayed as servants of Jesus (John 15:20)

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[73] For examples on how these terms were defined and applied in the NT literature see John M. Hitchen, "Confirming the Christian Scholar and Theological Educator's Identity through a New Testament Metaphor," *ERT* 35 (2011): 276–87. See also Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, "Hupēretēs, hupēreteō", in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 8 (ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans.Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972); Unger and White, *Vine's Expository Dictionary*, 562–63; Andrew D. Clarke, "Slave, Servant," in Green, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 869–74.

[74] For textual-critical scholars like Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant*, 74–75, the terms were used together in the Isaianic servant songs which are reflected in Mark 10: 44–45. She claims that the usage in v. 44 reflects lowly service rendered to other members of the community as a slave which is presumably demonstrated in Jesus' foot-washing ceremony (John 13) and the usage in v. 45 does not relate to lowly service but is only used of the relationship between the servant and God. Thus, it is highly unlikely to argue from v. 45 that Jesus is the Isaianic servant of God. Hooker's reflection depicts the difficulty to reconcile Jesus' dual relationship, that of God's servant (a position of power) and that of slave-like relationship to humankind.

[75] See C. J. Thomas, "Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine community," (PhD diss., Sheffield, 1990), 70.

[76] Thomas, "Footwashing in John 13," 70.

and of God (John 12:26). However, when Jesus takes on the role of a slave, he radically inverts the conventional roles of masters and servants in the society. Jesus reverses the societal power relational values, from ones that seek to dominate to ones that seek to serve.[77] For Thomas and Keener, because the washing of another's feet symbolized the subjugation of one person to another in the first century, those who received foot washing were the social superiors of those who performed the task. Given this background, Peter's question, "Do you wash my feet?" in v. 6 is an important question. DeSilva argues that Peter's question and the refusal that followed as stemming from a misunderstanding of Jesus' servant attitude because foot washing was considered too low even for Jewish slaves.[78] Leon Morris views Jesus' humble actions as programmatic for his disciples: If their Master and Sender does lowly actions, then they, the slaves and the sent ones, should not consider serving others in menial tasks as beneath their dignity. Thus, the example that Jesus' disciples should follow is an invitation to mutual service.[79] Carson contends that Jesus' act of humility is at once a demonstration of love, a symbol of salvific cleansing, and a model of power relationships in Christian communities. He thinks that rather than viewing the foot washing as a symbol of Jesus' death or an example of servanthood, the better approach is to avoid the dichotomy and accept that the section explains both the salvific necessity of being washed by Jesus and how the foot washing works as a model for his disciples to serve each other.[80] F. D. Bruner suggests that the foot washing scene reveals both what God has done to humanity in Jesus and how Jesus' followers should live in mutual service, forgiveness, and patience. As such, the pericope represents a demonstration of a dual relationship, to honour God in and through the lowly task of serving others.[81]

For these scholars, the object lesson in the fourth gospel provides a model of power relations, a relation that seeks not for one's own gain but the gain

[77] For example, see Keener, *The Gospel of John*. See also, Beasley-Murray, *John.*
[78] D. A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004). See also, Beasley-Murray, *John*.
[79] Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 552. See also, J. J. Kanagaraj, "Johannine Jesus, the Supreme Example of Leadership: An Inquiry into John 13:1–20," *Themelios* 29 (2004): 15–26.
[80] Carson, *The Gospel according to John*.
[81] Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

of another. Generally, their theological and interpretative position is representative of the biblical terms that portray the dual servant concept, servant of God and servant of others. Hence, it can be argued that Jesus' object lesson is a reversal to the cultural conception that servanthood belongs to the lowly of the society.

Conclusion

Since *Nem* fills this vital role in enabling Melanesians to understand male-female power relations in Melanesia, the article investigated whether *Nem* played any comparable role in biblical times. The article inferred that *Nem* played a similar role in the male-centric biblical literature. In contrast, the NT portrayal of the servant concept as an ideal power relational concept in human relationships as exemplified and embodied in Jesus' own life and mission is an example for his community, the Christians. In the world marred by the power challenge for *Nem* and the abuse of power at the cost of others, Jesus introduced the servant model of power relations as an ideal for human relationships in his community, one that recognises the inherent value of the other and is willing to lovingly stoop to serve as a servant. To adhere to Jesus' command and to function as a servant is to identify with Jesus in the history of servanthood. Thus, the emulation of the servant model of power relations in human institutions can be beneficial in marital relationships.

THE SEVEN ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ-PASSAGES IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

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Abstract
There are three main interpretations of what "righteousness" means in the Gospel of Matthew. Righteousness is: (1) a human response and responsibility; (2) God's gift; and (3) both a human response and responsibility and God's gift. The latter view is commonly accepted in recent scholarship. This paper will argue that righteousness in Matthew is not exclusively either a "demand" or a "gift." Rather, it is a human responsibility in that a human response is required to God's initiative and salvific activity. It will also be argued that human responsibility is explicit in Matthew, while God's salvific activity is more implicit. In addition, it will be demonstrated that righteousness in Matthew is a distinguishing quality that describes the righteous disciples, who are considered to be and are treated as "outsiders" by the scribes and Pharisees and those who follow them, all of whom are portrayed as religious "insiders." For Matthew, outsiders are always subject to persecution. The "greater righteousness" expected of the disciples is exemplified by the life of the prophets, in whose footsteps John the Baptist and Jesus walked. Finally, these findings will be discussed in relation to Christianity in Melanesia.

Key Words
Righteousness, Gospel of Matthew, obedience, insider-outsider, conversion

INTRODUCTION

This article examines the seven δικαιοσύνην or "righteousness" passages in the Gospel of Matthew (3:15; 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33; and 21:32). The first section deals with righteousness in relation to Jesus and John the Baptist (3:15; 21:32). The second section deals with righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount, along with other related texts and relevant OT books, especially Malachi and Isaiah. It will be argued that Matthean righteousness is connected to a greater kind of righteousness, that is, righteous obedience based on a relationship with God. Like John and Jesus, the lives of righteous disciples are identified with the prophets of the OT and NT who were badly treated and persecuted as outsiders by the religious insiders. By way of definition, the term "outsider(s)" refers to the righteous disciples in Matthew,

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both those who accompanied Jesus while he was alive, and those who will become followers after his death. The term "insider(s)" refers to those who are considered to be members of the Jewish religious community, particularly religious leaders who are the main perpetrators of persecution, but also ordinary people who submit to their leadership and persecute the righteous. The righteousness of the righteous outsider(s) is a greater kind of righteousness, an internalised righteousness, that goes beyond mere outward obedience.

RIGHTEOUSNESS: JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS (MATT 3:15; AND 21:32)

Apart from the five δικαιοσύνη texts in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1 and 33), the remaining texts (Matt 3:15; and 21:32) are associated directly with John the Baptist and Jesus. The answer of Jesus to John's question (πρέπον ἐστὶν ὑμῖν πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην, "it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness") of 3:15 and to question of the chief priests and elders concerning John (ἦλθεν … ἐν ὁδῷ δικαιοσύνης, "he came … in the way of righteousness") of 21:32 are loaded with meaning. As Davies and Allison rightly point out, to understand what these answers mean it first requires an understanding of John and his role in Matthew's Gospel.[1] The teachings and role of the Matthean Jesus, in relation to righteousness and other themes of the gospel, also need to be correctly understood. This is because both Jesus and John came "to fulfil all righteousness" (3:15) and they both came "in the way of righteousness" (21:32). Although Jesus indirectly associates himself with John (21:32), he also declares that God has given him all authority on earth and in heaven (28:18–20). Thus, the best place to begin to understand the Matthean theology of righteousness, especially in relation to John, is Matt 21:32 and not Matt 3:15 or 17:10, which many scholars have claimed, are the two key passages for understanding John's role.[2] Matthew 21:32 captures John and Jesus' identity, authority, and mission. All of these are summarised in the phrase "he came in the way of righteousness." Only when one understands who John and Jesus truly are,

[1] William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (ICC; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clack, 1988–97), 1.324.
[2] Morris M. Faierstein, "Why do the Scribes Say that Elijah Must Come First," *JBL* 100 (1981): 75–86, at 75.

and what their mission entails, will one understand what "to fulfil all righteousness" means.

Coming "in the Way of Righteousness" (Matt 21:32)

> ἦλθεν γὰρ Ἰωάννης πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐν ὁδῷ δικαιοσύνης, καὶ οὐκ ἐπιστεύσατε αὐτῷ· οἱ δὲ τελῶναι καὶ αἱ πόρναι ἐπίστευσαν αὐτῷ· ὑμεῖς δὲ ἰδόντες οὐδὲ μετεμελήθητε ὕστερον τοῦ πιστεῦσαι αὐτῷ.
>
> "For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the harlots believed him; and even when you saw it, you did not afterward repent and believe him."[3]

These words are a response to the questions of the chief priests and the elders of the people concerning Jesus' authority to teach and the source of his authority (21:23). Jesus does not answer their questions directly but points them to the authority by which John came (21:24–25). Only sinners, tax collectors, and prostitutes believe and repent. In doing so, these unacceptable religious "outsiders" were more righteous than religious "insiders." Jesus shifts the focus to John instead of himself because John was his forerunner and, if they had believed John's message and repented, they would have been prepared to believe in Jesus, since his and John's authority and mission were related.[4] But because they did not believe John, they could not believe in Jesus. In other words, it is implied that Jesus himself also came in the way of righteousness, just like John. As M. Eugene Boring states, "[t]his text puts John and Jesus in the same category. Those who reject John also reject Jesus. Their question about Jesus' authority is restated—not avoided—as the question of John's authority."[5] So the question is, what does it mean to have "come in the way of righteousness" in relation to both John and Jesus?

John the Prophet

The Greek words ἔρχομαι and ἥκω are associated with prophets both in the LXX and NT and occur frequently in Matthew. John (3:1; 11:14, 18; 17:10–

[3] Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of the Hebrew Bible and Greek New Testament are taken from the *Revised Standard Version* (except for changing "thy," "thee," and "men" to "your," "you," and "people" respectively, etc.).
[4] John H. Hughes "John the Baptist: The Forerunner of God Himself," *NovT* 14 (1972): 191–218, at 211.
[5] M. Eugene Boring, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NIB 8; Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 411 and Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–*28 (WBC 33b; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1995), 614.

12; and 21:32) and Jesus (2:6; 5:17; 9:13; 10:34–35; 11:3; 11:19; 16:17; 18:11; 20:28; and 25:10) are announced as the ones who came or come in the name of God. As David Jensen says, the theme of "coming" in the NT "can also announce a Messianic appearance."[6] Matthew seems to be intentional in using the word in relation to Jesus and the prophets. Thus, these words are "more redactional" in Matthew than in the other synoptic gospels.[7]

Matthew introduces John as the one who "came preaching" (3:1). Jesus also declares John to be the one who "came … in the way of righteousness" (Matt 21:32), and as the Elijah who is to "come" according to prophecy (Matt 11:14; and Mal 4:5). Ὁδός can mean a "way," "road," "path," or "journey" (Gen 48:7; Deut 8:6; Job 9:26; Isa 59:8; Matt 2:12; Mark 11:8; and Luke 3:5); and a "way of life" or "conduct" (Gen 6:12; Prov 21:16; Matt 7:14; and 10:5).[8] In Matthew (7:14; 10:5; and 21:32), the latter meanings are intended. Matthew seems to be saying that John the Baptist ``came" in a righteous manner, just as the prophet Elijah did, but as a forerunner of the messiah.

John's identification with Elijah is more explicit in Matthew 11:14 and 17:11–13 and Luke 1:17 than in Mark 9:13, where it is only implied. Matthew announces John as the fulfilment of the one prophesied by the prophets; he is the Φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, Ἑτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου ("voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord." Matt 3:3; cf. Isa 40:3–6).

The Matthean Jesus presents John as the fulfilment of the prophecy. Ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδόν σου ἔμπροσθέν σου ("Behold I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you." Matt 11:10; cf. Mal 3:1). He declares that John is the Elijah who is to come before him (11:14; 17:10–13). Jesus further explains that he is not just a prophet but "more than a prophet" (11:9) and that none greater was ever born of women (11:11). He was greater than

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[6] David Jensen, "Come, To," in *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 1: *A–C* (ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld; Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006),706–707, at 706.

[7] Robert Banks, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law: Authenticity and Interpretation in Matthew 5:17-20," *JBL* 93 (1974): 226–42, at 227.

[8] Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (rev. ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), s.v. ὁδός; W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian literature*, trans. W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrinch, rev. and expanded F.W. Danker (3rd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. ὁδός (henceforth BDAG).

others because he was not only the forerunner announcing the presence of the object of the messianic prophecy, he also baptised the messiah in the waters of the Jordan.[9] He belonged to the "new era of God's reign, inaugurated by Jesus."[10] His greatness has nothing to do with "personal greatness."[11] The Matthean Jesus concludes that "John is the eschatological Elijah who stands at the turning of the ages" (Matt 11:12–15);[12] the fulfilment of prophecy, whose coming and mission is from God and is authentic.

The context of this announcement (Matt 11–12) is John sending two of his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the coming one" (11:3). The question of identity and authority is at issue. Jesus does not give a yes or no answer but points them to his healing ministry and preaching of the gospel to the poor (11:4–5). When the disciples had left, Jesus turns to the multitude and declares that John is a prophet, but more than a prophet (11:9–12). John creates an opportunity for Jesus to state who he is (11:3), and Jesus responds by pointing to messianic prophecy of Isaiah (11:4–5; 42:1–4; snd 61:1). Jesus then goes on to tell the multitude who John is.

John's Prophetic Characteristics

Although John was the greatest of all the prophets, he did not come in earthly greatness and reputation, but as a servant like the other prophets before him. As Craig Evans rightly puts it, John's coming was modelled after Elijah.[13] He dressed like Elijah (2 Kgs 1:8; and Matt 3:4),[14] and his food resembled that of desert dwellers.[15] Blomberg observes that both his "clothing and food point to an austerity and asceticism appropriate to his stern calls for repentance."[16] This is based on the fact that the multitude went out to see a

[9] D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8 (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 3–599, at 264.
[10] Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," 268.
[11] Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," 268.
[12] Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," 268; and R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Guernsey: Paternoster Press, 1989), 197.
[13] Craig A. Evans, "John: The Baptist," in Sackenfeld, *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3: *I–Ma*, 345–51, at 348.
[14] Craig L. Blomberg. *Matthew: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (NAC 22; Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman1992),75
[15] Blomberg, *Matthew*, 75.
[16] Blomberg, *Matthew*, 75; and Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," 268.

prophet, not a man clothed in soft clothing, but one dressed in camel's hair (Matt 11:8), implying that prophets do not appear in soft garments nor eat their fill, because soft garments and abundant foods are for the kings' court. As Boring says, Jesus' point is to affirm that John was a prophet.[17] Not only his physical appearance and diet affirms his identity as a prophet, but his message of repentence. Evans notes that:

> [h]is call for repentance, as well as his dress, argues that John saw himself as a prophet (Compare Zec 13:4, "put on a hairy mantle"; 2 Kgs 1:8, "a hairy man", with a leather belt around his waist"). Israel's classic prophets called on the people to repent (Isa 1:27; Jer 5:3; Ezel 14:6; compare Ezek 18:30; Joel 2:14; Jonah 3:9).[18]

The Message of John

John's message directly parallels that of Elijah and Jesus.[19] Elijah's message was a message of repentance for Israel at a time of apostasy and idolatry. The nation together with its king and leaders were offering sacrifices to and worshiping Baal (1 Kgs 18:1–40). The king, Ahab, had built an altar in the temple of Baal and Israel had forsaken the commandments of the Lord to follow Baal (16:31–33). Like Elijah, John's message was μετανοεῖτε, ἤγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ("Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matt 3:2), and further that the messiah was coming who would baptise with fire and Holy Spirit (3:11).[20]

John's message was also eschatological. Seeing the scribes and Pharisees come to him, he rebukes them for impenitence and warns them about the coming judgment (Matt 3:10–12). He calls for repentance because the kingdom of God is at hand (Matt 3:2). The religious leaders did not repent, but instead hardened their hearts, despised the truth, and persecuted God's messengers.

John is also, like Elijah, an outsider. He comes calling apostate Israel and their leaders to repent and be baptised. Many respond to his message and are baptised, but he rebukes the scribes and Pharisees as they come, "calling them a brood of vipers" (3:7) and accusing them of not bearing fruit worthy of repentance. John the Baptist did not only come to call Israel to repentance

[17] Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," 267–68.
[18] Evans, "John: The Baptist," 347.
[19] Evans, "John: The Baptist," 347; and Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," 268.
[20] Evans, "John: The Baptist," 345.

but the religious leaders as well. The purpose of John's coming is to prepare the way for Jesus's coming, and his kingdom. Thus, to come in the way of righteousness is to come in the way that the prophets and Elijah, in particular, came.

Jesus as the Servant of God

For Matthew, if John was the greatest of all the prophets who stands at the turning of the age to prepare the way for the Messiah, Jesus' coming was the fulfilment of the messianic prophecy (Isa 7:14; 9:6–7; Jer 31:15; and Mic 5:2) about the coming of a saviour of the lost (Matt 1:1, 21; and 15:24), Both John and Jesus "came … in the way of righteousness" (21:32), that is, in the way that the prophets came. The Matthean messiah also comes in the manner of a prophet because that is the way of righteousness. In this he sets a righteous example for the Matthean disciples in their conduct.

One of Matthew's motives for writing is to prove that Jesus has authority like John (Matt 21:32). Matthew, at the beginning of his account, immediately sets out to show that Jesus is the fulfilment of the long-awaited messianic prophecy (Matt 1:1; cf. Isa 9:6–7; Isa 11:1; cf. Jer 23:5; and 33:15–17). He uses titles like Christ (Χριστός), son of David (Matt 1:1; Zech 9:9–10; and Jer 23:5–6), "Son of God,"[21] and "Son of Man" [22] to refer to the divinity and royalty of Jesus. Matthew also stresses that Jesus is the servant of Isaiah.[23] Isaiah 42:1-4 is quoted in full to make that point (Matt 12:18-20).[24] Although this passage is too long to analyse, it is important to note that Matthew declares that Jesus is the child/slave/servant (παῖς) of God.[25] As Luz says, instead of using the word "son" he uses "slave/servant" because "of the Christological interpretation" in earlier chapters.[26]

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[21] Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew* (Holman New Testament Commentary 1; Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2000), 27; Peter M. Head, *Christology and the Synoptic Problem: An Argument for Markan Priority* (SNTSMS 94; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 200; and France, *Matthew*, 292.

[22] Karkkainen, *Christology*, 26.

[23] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 310.

[24] Richard Beaton, *Isaiah's Christ in Matthew's Gospel* (SNTSMS 123; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 17.

[25] Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v., παῖς; BDAG, s.v., παῖς.

[26] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20* (trans. James E. Crouch; Eng. ed.; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 192.

The word "beloved," which is redactional, "enforces the closeness of the relationship in a way which reminds us of [Matt] 11:27."[27] The same word is used in two of the most significant events in Jesus' life where the Father speaks and declares that he is beloved: at Jesus' baptism (3:17) and at his transfiguration (17:5). As France states, "Matthew's readers would have had no difficulty in identifying the mysterious 'servant' of Isaiah with the promised anointed one."[28]

The servant of Matthew is the suffering but obedient servant of God (Matt 11:12-20; and Isa 42:1–4) and the sin-bearing servant (Isa 53). Towards the end of Isaiah 53, the sin-bearing righteous servant "will make many to be accounted righteous" (53:11; Matt 27:39–44, and 63). Despite the oppressive treatment of the servant in Isaiah 53, his obedience to the will of God is uncompromised. This lived response to the same kind of treatment is what Jesus has in view in the Sermon on the Mount, especially concerning the Beatitudes and rejoicing in persecution (5:1–12). Only through such a righteous life can judgement and victory come.[29] As Luz concludes, Jesus "is increasingly persecuted and threatened as he travels through Israel."[30] Only those who see the future glory of Jesus and heaven will endure the present.[31] Jesus' ultimate mission is to give his life for the righteousness of many.

Parallels between John and Jesus

Jesus' message, μετανοεῖτε, ἤγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ("Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is a hand." Matt 4:17), is, according to Matthew, the same as the message of John (3:2). As Evans says, Matthew is intentional in providing a strong link between their messages.[32] The only difference between the life and mission of the two is that John is subordinate to Jesus.[33] Like John, Jesus comes as an outsider calling on backsliding Israel to repent because the kingdom of God has come and the ultimate consummation is very imminent. As Boring notes, the "eschatological reality is the basis for

[27] France, *Matthew*, 472.
[28] France, *Matthew*, 472.
[29] Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 196.
[30] Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 195–96.
[31] Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 195–96.
[32] Evans, "John: The Baptist," 346.
[33] Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1–7*, 289; Walter Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition* (SNTS 7; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 37.

Jesus' call for repentance (as it as for John earlier and will be for the disciples later)."[34] As France correctly states:

> [b]oth of them preach in the same words (3:2 with 4:17; 3:7 with 23:33; 3:10 with 7:19); the authority of Jesus' mission is the same as that of John (21:23–27; cf. v. 32); both suffer the same violent response (11:12), and both are (for different reasons) unacceptable to "this generation" (11:16–19). John, as the returning Elijah (11:4), represents the beginning of the age of fulfilment which succeeds the age of "prophesying" (11:13).[35]

The religious leaders questioned Jesus' authority (21:32) because they did not see him as part of their religious sect or community. Jesus' act of embracing John puts them both in the same category. Matthew's Jesus says, "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners'" (Matt 11:18–19). Both are rejected because they are outsiders. So, their coming "in the way of righteousness" is not merely to do with food or clothing, but with their authority and mission, the internal religion that annoyed the religious leaders so much. It is the authority of Matthew's Jesus and John that causes the leaders to be concerned.

John and Jesus "coming in the way of righteousness" means that their coming is in obedience to the will of God and according to prophecy, and that they faithfully accomplish the task entrusted to them. This is the way of righteousness.

To Fulfil All Righteousness (Matt 3:15)

> ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν, Ἄφες ἄρτι, οὕτως γὰρ πρέπον ἐστὶν ἡμῖν πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην.
>
> "But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.'"

This passage is considered to be controversial, especially as regards πρέπον ἐστὶν ἡμῖν πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην ("it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness").[36] Jesus does not give an explanatory response to the

[34] Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," 175.
[35] France, *Matthew*, 198.
[36] Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 142.

question raised by John in v. 14, but only responds, "let it to be so now," simply meaning that the baptism should proceed at that point,[37] because it was "fitting" for John to baptise Jesus, and also because by doing so they were to "fulfil all righteousness." What is not clear is how by the act of baptism both should fulfil all righteousness.[38]

Several different interpretations are possible. The phrase "fulfil all righteousness" could mean that Jesus is looking forward to his death as the sin-bearing servant of God,[39] because then he as the righteous servant would justify many (Isa 53:11).[40] It could also mean that Matthew's Jesus is setting an example for those who would decide to follow him, or it could be referring to the fulfilment of biblical prophecies.[41] Some also say that since Jesus is not the only one "fulfilling all righteousness" in this context, it is inappropriate to conclude that this righteousness refers to the righteousness that results from Jesus' death and resurrection because, if it were, John would also fulfil righteousness for all. Thus, they claim that this righteousness refers to fulfilling God's demand or will.[42] However, instead of focusing on what righteousness means, it is important to look at "all righteousness" and whether that only includes the baptism or more.

Luz argues that πᾶσαν (all) is not specific to the baptism but refers to "everything that is righteous." The fulfilling of "all righteousness" is not for Jesus alone, but includes every Christian from whom Jesus demanded the "greater righteousness" (5:50), and the demand to obey "everything I have commanded you" (28:20). [43] Thus, he concludes that:

> [a]ll righteousness" does not consists of John's baptism; it merely belongs to it. The sentence takes on a programmatic character. The Jesus who is obedient to the will of God becomes the Christian's prototype and model.[44]

However, "it is fitting for us" appears to contradict what Luz is saying. As France rightly points out, the word "us … indicates that Jesus is thinking of

[37] Morris, *Matthew*, 64.
[38] Morris, *Matthew*, 64; and Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 325.
[39] Oscar Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament* (trans. J. K. S. Reid; Eng. ed.; Studies in Biblical Theology 1; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 19.
[40] France, *Matthew*, 120.
[41] Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 141–42.
[42] Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 141–42.
[43] Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 141–42.
[44] Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 141–42.

something specific to his own and John's role rather than of a great principle." [45] To "fulfil" refers specifically to the baptism, but also includes future events—the death and resurrection of Jesus—of which it is symbolic. It does not refer to "everything that is righteous" for "all Christians," as Luz argues.[46]

As mentioned in the first section, although they worked side by side and both are identified as sent by God with a mission, their individual missions were different. John came to "prepare the way" for the messiah, and Jesus as messiah came to save the world. Therefore, fulfilling of righteousness can mean both fulfilling God's will (John baptising Jesus, and Jesus submitting to John's baptism), and the salvation/righteousness that Jesus provided through his death and resurrection (symbolised by the baptism).

Since the word fulfil, as used by Matthew, has a "scripturally authenticated pattern" (cf. 5:17), the fulfilling of all righteousness could also mean everything involved in the prophecies, especially the messianic prophecy, Jesus sacrificial death, and John as the forerunner. [47]

As discussed in the first section, both Jesus and John are working side by side. Jesus does not separate himself from John, both in authority, message, and mission. Now at this crucial point in their ministry, both John and Jesus must first fulfil "all righteousness." John as a prophet and a human obeying God by completing this part of his mission, the baptism. It is the climax of John's mission, one part of preparing the way for Jesus.[48] For Jesus, the baptism is not just preparing him for ministry, but is a symbol of the climax of his ministry, his death and resurrection. John as a prophet fulfils righteousness as a prophet, and Jesus as the obedient servant of God.

The Meaning of Righteousness in Relation to John and Jesus

According to Matthew, although John was subordinate to Jesus, they both had the responsibility to fulfil all righteousness, which is to faithfully fulfil the will of God in terms of living the life prophesied of them and faithfully carrying out the mission given to them. John was fulfilling his ultimate mission by baptising Jesus, while for Jesus it was his baptism which marked the beginning of his mission, a symbol of his ultimate mission of the

[45] France, *Matthew*, 120–21.
[46] Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 141–42.
[47] France, *Matthew*, 120.
[48] France, *Matthew*, 120–21.

crucifixion and resurrection.[49] John could not have fulfilled Jesus' mission, but he did what was given to him to do. Likewise, Jesus was to submit to John as God willed. Although both gave their lives to God, Jesus' fulfilling of the law could mean more than John's did, because John only came to prepare the way of the Lord (Matt 3:1–3), while Jesus came to give his life a ransom for the sins of the world (Matt 1:1 and 21).

Thus, it is apparent that John's "coming in the way of righteousness" "and fulfilling all righteousness" (3:15) means that both he and Jesus came according to the will of God and lived their lives and fulfilled their missions even at the cost of their lives. They come just like the prophets of the OT who came in the name and authority of God with a specific mission for Israel. They are characterised as humble slaves/servants whose only duty is to do God's will and remain faithful to their duty when the insiders to whom they are sent persecute them. No matter the rejection and persecution, the prophets endure fulfilling God's will and mission.

Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, and 33): The Righteousness of the Kingdom of God and Discipleship

A typology of the Sermon on the Mount derives from the OT, where Jesus is presented as the new Moses.[50] A number of commentators argue that the introductory narratives of the gospel clearly imply the new Moses imagery.[51] The infancy narratives and the mission of Jesus and Moses are parallel. Both kings, Pharaoh and Herod, plotted to kill every male child because their kingdom and kingship were threatened, but both Moses and Jesus survived through the providence of God (Exod 1–2; and Matt 1–2).[52] When those kings died, God instructed them to return, Moses to Egypt (Exod 4:19), and Jesus to Israel (2:20). Like Moses, at the end of the birth narrative Matthew's reader anticipates the rise of a new leader and a new exodus. After Jesus' baptism, he goes into the wilderness and remains there forty days and nights

[49] Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition*, 37–38.
[50] Dale C. Allison Jr, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 97.
[51] Johann P. Lange, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, vol. 1: The Gospel according to Matthew (trans. Philip Schaff; Eng. ed.; New York: Charles Scribner, 1865), 106; Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 107–109; and Allison, *The New Moses*, 140–65.
[52] Wayne S. Baxter, "Mosaic Imagery in the Gospel of Matthew," *TJ* 20 (1999): 69–83, at 70.

(Matt 4:2), and then appears on the mount, like Moses, to teach (Exod 24:18). He sits on a mountain, a teacher figure, giving the law like Moses did (Matt 5–7).[53] The Matthean messiah then reinterprets the OT law and the prophets in the light of the imminent eschaton.[54]

Matthew presents the new Moses, Jesus, an outsider and a radical teacher, who has authority to reinterpret the law and the prophets. He is about to turn the familiar religious system of his time upside down with his teaching. The insiders, religious leaders and those who will not accept Jesus, will turn on him. Jesus contrasts himself with Moses, and with the scribes and Pharisees. He reinterprets the Abrahamic covenant and parts of the Mosaic law and calls those who believe to repentance.

However, Matthew does not provide a clear introductory statement or statement of intent at the beginning of this extensive discourse. Scholars have seen related but different themes in the discourse. France suggests that discipleship is the theme.[55] Westerholm puts it as "the righteousness demanded of the disciples,"[56] and Luz proposes that it is best summarised as the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven.[57] All, however, agreed that Matthew 5:20 encapsulates the theme of the entire discourse.[58] The verse focuses on the righteousness needed to enter the kingdom of God.[59]

Throughout the discourse Matthew keeps his theme in view: "righteousness" and "the kingdom of God," and the character of the disciples who will be part of the kingdom of God. Jesus' first words in the Gospel of Matthew are about the need "to fulfil all righteousness" (3:15), and his eschatological message is to "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (4:17). Both serve as the introduction and theme of his message and the mission ahead of him. In chapter 5, Matthew mentions "righteousness" five

[53] John W. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple* (SOTSMS; Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 21.
[54] Stephen Westerholm, "The Law in the Sermon on the Mount: Matt 5:17-48," *CTR* 6 (1992): 43–56, at 44.
[55] France, *Matthew*, 153.
[56] Westerholm, "The Law in the Sermon on the Mount," 48.
[57] Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 177.
[58] Westerholm, "The Law in the Sermon on the Mount," 48; France, *Matthew*, 177–78; and Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 177.
[59] Robert A. Guelich, "Interpreting the Sermon on the Mount," *Int* 41 (1987): 117–30, at 126.

times (5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, and 33), and this is done in light of the eschatological kingdom of God (5:3, 10, 12, 19-20, 6:33; and 7:21).[60]

All the other δικαιοσύνη-passages in the sermon contribute, in one way or another, to explaining the greater righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees.[61] The message also echoes that of John and Elijah's messages of repentance and preparation for the kingdom of heaven. It is directed to the disciples and those who would follow Jesus throughout his ministry and then that of his disciples. Thus, it is appropriate to assign the following title to the sermon: "Discourse on the Righteousness of the Kingdom of God and Discipleship."

Greater Righteousness: Reinterpretation of the Law as an Internal Religion by an Outsider (Matt 5:20)

> λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ περισσεύσῃ ὑμῶν ἡ δικαιοσύνη πλεῖον τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν.
>
> "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

The new Moses, Jesus, is about to reinterpret the law and the prophets, and condemn the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees. Before doing that, he has to lay a clear and solid foundation with respect to his authority and the continuity and validity of the law in order to avoid any potential misunderstandings or doubts. He does this in the first three verses (5:17–19).[62]

"I have come" (ἦλθον, 5:17) has a thematic connection to "John came (ἦλθεν) to you in the way of righteousness" (Matt 21:32). Jesus is seen not only as the Messiah, but as sent by God in the way of the prophets like John and OT prophets who were persecuted. Having been sent by God, as seen above, both John and Jesus had to "fulfil all righteousness" (3:15). So ἦλθον implies authority (a prophet-like messiah sent by God) and mission (to fulfil the law and the prophets).[63] So, in the Sermon on the Mount, the Matthean new Moses affirms the continuity and validity of the law and the prophets.

[60] Guelich, "Interpreting the Sermon on the Mount," 126.
[61] Guelich, "Interpreting the Sermon on the Mount," 126.
[62] Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," 185.
[63] Morris, *Matthew*, 107.

ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν (v. 18) and other "I say to you" phrases in the rest of the discourse (5: 22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44; 6: 2, 5, 16, and 25) also show Jesus' authority to validate, fulfil, and reinterpret the law and prophets (23:4).

In 5:18 Jesus reiterates his statement in v. 17 with the addition of "not an iota, not a dot." The ἰῶτα is the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet, and κεραία is a stroke in the Hebrew alphabet to distinguish words that are similar. The phrase μίαν τῶν ἐντολῶν τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων ("one of the least of these commandments", v. 19) links back to the iota and dot of v. 18. Verse 19 states the "practical explication" of this principle by making reference to the minutest particulars of the law.[64] The iota and dot and the explanation in v. 19 form "a very emphatic assertion of the validity of the scripture."[65] This is the reason why those who desire to be part of the kingdom of heaven must conform to even the least of the commandments. The Matthean Jesus has no intention of undermining or disregarding the Mosaic law or causing confusion, but he intends to validate (vv.17–20), internalise, and expose the depths of the law and the prophets (vv. 20–48).[66] For Matthew, Jesus did not only come to "fulfil the law," but to fulfil both the "law and the prophets" (5:17). As France rightly observes:

> [t]he law is thus linked with the prophets as looking forward to a time of fulfilment which has now arrived. The Torah, then, is not God's last words to his people, but it is in a sense provisional, looking forward to a time of fulfilment through the Messiah.[67]

So, Jesus is the new Moses who has the power and authority to sit on Moses' seat and declare that "unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Verse 20 is the link between the preface, validation (vv. 17–19), and how a righteous disciple ought to have "greater righteousness."

What did it mean for one to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? As Boring says, the meaning of the "greater righteousness" is presented in a refined "essay abstract" and explicated "by six concrete

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[64] Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 82; and Brice L. Martin, *Christ and the Law in Matthew* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 148.
[65] Morris, *Matthew*, 107; and Gundry, *Matthew*, 82
[66] Don Garlington, "The 'Better Righteousness:' Matthew 5:20," *BBR* 20 (2010): 479–502, at 481; and Westerholm, "The Law in the Sermon on the Mount," 47.
[67] France, *Matthew*, 182–83.

examples."[68] However, the explanation does not end with the six antitheses, but continues throughout the discourse. Keeping of the law and the prophets, for Matthew, was not just about an outward conformity, but about an inward conviction that was manifested in love and compassion.

Within the immediate context (5:21–45), Matthew presents the six antitheses that model "greater righteousness,"[69] each of them being introduced with the juxtaposition of ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη, ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ("you have heard that it was said, but I say to you").[70] He contrasts the Mosaic with the messianic interpretation of murder (is anger) (vv. 21–26), adultery (is lust) (vv. 27–29), divorce (only for adultery) (vv. 31–32), swearing false oaths (or not swearing at all) (vv. 33–36), proportionate retribution (or turning the other cheek) (vv. 38–42), and hating (or loving) one's enemies (vv. 43–48).[71] By doing this the Matthean Jesus internalises the law of Moses, promoting an inner attitude that manifestes itself in obedience and acts of righteousness, and condemns mere outward conformity. According to the first anthesis, the Mosaic law said "you shall not murder" (Matt 5:21; and Exod 20:13), but Jesus says whoever is angry with and insults his brother will be liable to the council (v. 22). Words like anger, reconciliation (v. 24), and lust (v. 28) are associated with the thoughts and inward attitudes. The Mosaic law was focused on actions, the final manifestation of one's internal condition and intention. Thus, Jesus' interpretation focuses on the internal rightness that results in genuine conformity to the law of God without hypocrisy. This is the kind of righteousness that Jesus expects.

Jesus does not condemn the scribes and the Pharisees for keeping the law, but he does condemn their mere outward conformity and hypocrisy,[72] and also the alteration and perversion of the law of God (because their hearts are far from their righteousness).[73] As Ziesler observes, Matthew is not in opposition to law-righteousness, but is concerned with its fulfilment, with

[68] Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," 188.
[69] Westerholm, "The Law in the Sermon on the Mount," 47.
[70] Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," 188
[71] James A. Brooks, "The Unity and the Structure of the Sermon on the Mount," *CTR* 6 (1992): 15–28, at 27.
[72] Morris, *Matthew*, 107.
[73] Dale C. Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination* (Companions to the New Testament; New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1999), 110.

something "more demanding and thoroughgoing"[74] The second thing the Matthean Jesus condemns is incorrect motive for keeping the law (Matt 6).

Motives and Righteousness (Matt 6:1)

> Προσέχετε [δὲ] τὴν δικαιοσύνην ὑμῶν μὴ ποιεῖν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι αὐτοῖς· εἰ δὲ μήγε, μισθὸν οὐκ ἔχετε παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ ὑμῶν τῷ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.
>
> "Beware of practising your righteousness before people in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."

The theme of "greater righteousness" is further explained in Matt 6:1–18. In Matt 5:21–48 Jesus reinterprets the Mosaic law by internalising it when conduct or action is in view;[75] but in Matt 6:1–18 he moves to selfish motives and hypocrisy in keeping the law.[76] As Dale Allison notes, Matt "6:1–18 has remarkably close parallels in 23:1–2."[77] Although 6:1–18 may refer to scribes and Pharisees, the subject of Jesus' rebuke for hypocrisy is not clear. In contrast, in Matt 23 Jesus says over and over again, "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees!" Matthew often identifies hypocrisy with the scribes and Pharisees, and there are also continual confrontations between Jesus and the Pharisees. As Douglas Hare argues, "anti-Pharisaism is an inherited part of Matthew's religious outlook."[78] According to Allison:

> Matthew speaks of "hypocrites." Throughout his Gospel they are usually identified with the scribes and Pharisees etc. … and those groups are probably the implicit subject of 6:2-6, 6-18 as well. The scribes and Pharisees are hypocrites because they say one thing and do another (23:23–28), and because their hearts are wrong even when they outwardly observe the Torah (23:1–15, 23–28).[79]

In Matt 6:1 Jesus pays close attention to outward demonstrations of righteousness. He rebukes wrong motives in three areas of religious

[74] J. A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Enquiry* (SNTSMS 20; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 134.
[75] Banks, "Matthews Understanding of the Law," 242.
[76] Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 107.
[77] Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 108.
[78] Douglas R. A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel according to Matthew* (SNTSMS 6; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 84.
[79] Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 110.

practice: almsgiving (6:2–4), prayer (6:5–14), and fasting (6:18). Jesus condemns the hypocrisy of the religious leaders in the synagogues and streets (6:2), where their religious acts are done to be seen and praised by people (6:2, 5, and 16). Hypocrisy is mentioned fourteen times in Matthew and seventeen times elsewhere. Most occurrences are in the seven woes of Matt 23.[80]

Jesus, according to Matt 23, saw the scribes and the Pharisees sitting in the metaphorical seat of Moses (23:2). As a type of Moses, he assures the people that what the scribes and Pharisees teach is acceptable, but what they do is hypocritical and must not be practised, because they pretend only for an outward show, and are not converted from the heart. As Powell says, if the disciples do what the scribes and Pharisees teach, the "disciples will fulfil the will of God to a degree that the scribes and Pharisees themselves do not."[81] That is, there is nothing wrong with the law or the teachings of the teachers of the law, but their practice is at fault because they do not live according to what they teach. Here is another pointer to the "greater righteousness" of Matthew 5:20.

They want to be seen by people (23:5), given the best seats at feasts and in the synagogue (23:6), greeted in market places (23:7), and called rabbi (23:7). But in the sight of God their good deeds are hypocritical and lawless. Their righteousness is in fact self-righteousness (23:28). They are like whitewashed tombs appearing to be beautiful on the outside, but full of dead bones and uncleanness on the inside (23:27). Thus, Jesus distinguishes the true (i.e., righteous) disciple from hypocrites, who only claim to be right. The true disciple's motive in performing religious duty is to glorify God only. They do not seek earthly reward, whereas the hypocrites practice righteousness to be seen by people, to be rewarded and praised by them. They want worldly honour and applause. In order words, the kind of righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees is without pretense, and the motive is purely to glorify God.

[80] Karla Pollmann, "Hypocrisy and the History of Salvation: Medieval Interpretations of Matthew 23," *WS* 114 (2001): 469–82, at 470.
[81] Mark A. Powell, "Do and Keep What Moses Says (Matthew 23:2–7)," *JBL* 114 (1995): 419–35, at 421.

The Treatment of the Prophets

Matthew 23 also talks about the righteous receiving the treatment of the prophets (cf. Matt 5:10–12). The last woe is a rebuke to the scribes and Pharisees for persecuting the prophets and those who came in the name of the Lord (Matt 23:29–36). Again, the insider-outsider theme is present here. Those who come as a prophet comes will be persecuted for their righteous obedience and proclamation of God's message (23:34). Abel and Zechariah are given as examples of those who were killed for righteousness' sake (23:35). The Matthean Jesus predicts that the same thing will happen to those whom God sends to preach repentance and righteousness in Israel. The religious leaders will persecute them, just as their fathers did (Matt 23:34 and 36), because of their blindness and hard hearts.

The message is that those who were rebuked for apostasy and hypocrisy were not willing to humble themselves and repent. Instead, they killed the prophets and God's messengers. Like them, the scribes and Pharisees pretend to honour the prophets and the righteous by building and adorning monuments for them, but their hearts are far from God and righteousness (23:29–30).[82] They also will persecute the righteous (disciples) for their righteousness and message.

Anthony Saldarini, on the other hand, observes that:

> the author of Matthew seeks specifically to delegitimate rival Jewish leaders and legitimate himself and his group as the true leaders of Israel, accurate interpreters of the Bible and the authentic messengers of God's will. The warrant for their claim is, of course, through the life and teaching of Jesus whom Matthew acknowledges as the Son of God.[83]

It is not necessary to go this far. Matthew's Jesus speaks about his own time from the perspective of the biblical-historical past being repeated in the present and the future. In Matthew 21 and 22 Jesus denounces the religious scribes and Pharisees through parables and "then hammers them with seven woe oracles (chap. 23)"[84] which seem to be the opposite of the seven beatitudes.[85]

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[82] Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians*, 84.
[83] Anthony J. Saldarini, "Delegitimation of the Leaders in Matthew 23," *CBQ* 54 (1992): 659–80, at 660.
[84] Saldarini, "Delegitimation of the Leaders", 661.
[85] Saldarini, "Delegitimation of the Leaders," 660.

Jesus points out that the scribes and Pharisees are blind guides (Matt 23:16) sitting in the seat of Moses. Jesus, as the Messiah, takes the seat of Moses (Matt 23:1) to teach the law with new light and the eschaton in view (see Matt 23:36). The Matthean Jesus says that all good deeds ought to be done to glorify God so as to be rewarded by him. He teaches that his followers should not follow the Pharisees' example. In other words, they are to become Jesus' disciples and not disciples of the scribes and the Pharisees. Moreover, if they do follow Jesus, they will be persecuted by the scribes and Pharisees.

Seeking First God's Righteousness (Matt 6:33)

> ζητεῖτε δὲ πρῶτον τὴν βασιλείαν [τοῦ θεοῦ] καὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ, καὶ ταῦτα πάντα προστεθήσεται ὑμῖν.
>
> "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."

Moving on from the discussion of right motivation for performing religious practices or the law (5:17–48; and 6:1–18), Matthew's Jesus now focuses on desire or worldview. He teaches that life's greatest pursuit is God's kingdom and its righteousness, not temporary needs and material wealth. God's kingdom, according to Matthew, is both present and future (Matt 3:2; 4:17; and 10:7). It has already come, but Jesus' disciples are to seek it diligently looking forward to the final culmination upon the return of Jesus.

ζητεῖτε, here, makes a contrast with the Gentiles seeking (ἐπιζητοῦσιν) in v. 32. The word ἐπιζητοῦσιν is a "strong compound word for seek," which means to eagerly seek or desire something. The Gentiles anxiously seek after the necessities of life, while the disciples "have a different orientation, a higher purpose in life."[86] This verse seems to be more than just an admonition to seek God and not to worry. In line with the Matthean presentation of righteousness, Jesus is comparing the basic worldview of a Gentile (who does not know God) and his righteous disciples (who know God).

There may be allusions here to Isa 55 where Israel is invited to an abundant life (55:1–11). The passage talks about seeking God and buying food and water without money (55:1–2). The reason being that the literal

[86] France, *Matthew*, 270.

food and water are perishable; they do not truly satisfy.[87] The treasures of this world are perishable and thieves can steal and destroy them, but the treasures of heaven are eternal (Matt 6:19–21). They are told to seek first the treasures of heaven, God's kingdom and his righteousness. This seeking means more than just desiring; it is an active seeking.[88]

Thus, the "greater righteousness" theme of the Sermon on the Mount is explained by the reinterpretation of the Mosaic law. Jesus focuses on the internal aspects of action, purity of motive, and condemns hypocrisy, selfishness, and self-righteousness. Jesus' righteous followers are expected to seek God and his righteousness not worldly possessions and prosperity. All of these things are to be done for God's glory alone, and not for earthly honour or fame. Only then can his disciples practise and have the righteousness of God and, thereby, inherit the kingdom of God.

Hungering and Thirsting for Righteousness (Matt 5:6)

> μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται
>
> "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

The adjective μακάριος means blessed or fortunate.[89] If Matthew 5:17 – 7:29 is a reinterpretation of the Mosaic law in light of eschatology, the Beatitudes seem to be a reinterpretation of the Abrahamic covenant (see Gen 12:1–3; 13:14–17; 15:1–7; 17:1–8; and 22:15–18).[90] The Beatitudes are "not statements about human virtues … [r]ather [they are about] authentic discipleship in the Christian community."[91] The Beatitudes are the

[87] There is also a call to repentance, where the unrighteous and the wicked are called to forsake their ways and thoughts (55:7).
[88] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 451.
[89] Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (trans. James D. Ernest; Eng. ed.; 3 vols.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 2.432, s.v. μακάριος; and *BDAG,* s. v. μακάριος
[90] Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," 177; Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (trans. Irene and Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson; Eng. ed.; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1960), 69. See George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 122–48 and 285–86; George Eldon Ladd, *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 77–98; and George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*: *Popular Exposition of the Kingdom of* God (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 13–23.
[91] Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," 178.

characteristics of true disciples, who are identified with the persecuted prophets as opposed to Jewish religious leaders.

The blessings of the Beatitudes recall the seven blessings promised to Abram (Gen 12:1–3). Abram was told that he would be a blessing to all nations, and that those who cursed him would be cursed and those who blessed him would be blessed.[92] From the first two promises, Abraham would enjoy both "progeny and material wealth" within the covenant.[93] From the third promise, "to make his name great," Abraham would be highly esteemed throughout the nations and generations. Nahum Sarna explains:

> [i]n the ancient Near East, the name was not merely a convenient designation but an expression of the very essence of being. Hence, this promise means not only that Abraham will acquire fame but also that he will be highly esteemed as a man of superior character.[94]

God reaffirms the Abrahamic covenant with Isaac (Gen 26:24) and Jacob (Gen 27:28–29; and 28:3–4) across three generations, because blessing and multiplying the descendants of Abraham was part of the promised blessings. The covenant was then reaffirmed again in the Sinai covenant (Exod 20–23; 24–34; cf. Deut 6:1–3) and the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7:4–17). In the Jewish tradition every Israelite knew and cherished the Abrahamic covenant and its blessings. As the descendants of Abraham, they claimed to be God's chosen ones having membership of his kingdom, its blessings and favour. Matthews states that:

> [i]t is commonplace in the Old Testament for divine "blessing" to favor the recipient with many descendants and material prosperity. A "blessing" presupposes a relationship between God and the persons blessed. Especially in the patriarchal narratives, God's blessing means proliferation and success (e.g., 12:2–3; 17:16; 22:17; 26:24; 39:5; 48:3–4). Blessing by Israel's patriarchs calls for a fruitful progeny and understands that it is God who determines the outcome of the blessing (e.g., 28:1–3; 48:15–20)."[95]

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[92] Cf. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC 1; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 274–75.
[93] Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1–11:26* (NAC 1A; Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 113.
[94] Nahum M. Sarna (ed.), *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 89.
[95] Matthews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 158.

But in Matthew, John rebukes the Pharisees and the Sadducees for calling themselves children of Abraham while not bearing "fruit that befits repentance" (Matt 3:8). He describes them as "children of vipers" because of their self-righteousness and pride.[96] It is implied that the religious leaders saw no need of repentance because they were descendants of Abraham and were, therefore, chosen and blessed through him, unlike the Gentiles.[97] But John says, "God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Matt 3:9), which also means that God's grace is inclusive and is extended to the people outside of the Abrahamic lineage.[98] Righteousness and salvation do not depend on being children of Abraham or an Israelite but on personal humility and repentance.[99] Only then can one bear the fruit of repentance.

Although John is not clear on what the "fruit that befits repentance" (καρπὸν ἄξιον τῆς μετανοίας) means; it probably means discipleship within the theme of greater righteousness and the doing of God's will in line with the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. Boring also argues that the fruit of repentance is a "representation of the life of discipleship to Jesus, which he will have Jesus elaborate at the key junctures in the narrative (7:16–20; 12:33; cf. 13:8, 26; and 21:18–19)."[100] However, discipleship is not filled merely with good works, but the transformation from within, which results in good works.[101]

Thus, John preaches repentance because the kingdom of heaven is for those who repent, and not for those who think they will inherit the kingdom through their traditions and descent from Abraham. The Matthean Jesus also says that many who will enter the kingdom of heaven to sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not Abraham's descendants and that the children of Abraham will be cast out (Matt 8:11–12).

Jesus reinterprets the Abrahamic covenant and enlightens the minds of the multitude and the disciples about the true character and virtue of the righteous disciple who will inherit the future kingdom of God. The righteous

[96] Archibald T. Robertson, "The Gospel according to Matthew," in *The Word Pictures in the New Testament* (ed. James A. Swanson; 6 vols.; Grand Rapids, MI: Bakers Book House, 1930), 1.27.
[97] Carson, "Matthew," 103.
[98] Carson, "Matthew," 103.
[99] Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew" 157.
[100] Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," 157.
[101] Morris, *Matthew*, 58.

and the blessed are not defined by material prosperity or worldly honour, but by doing God's will, being treated like the prophets, and rejoicing in persecution. These are the true heavenly treasures (Matt 5:3–12; and 6:19–34).

The Meaning of Hungering and Thirsting for Righteousness

The participles πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες (hungering and thirsting) are used metaphorically. They portray the disciples' priority and their basic orientation in comparison to the stereotypical Jew who claimed to be righteous. The participles picture an intense longing for righteousness.[102] The context of the use of δικαιοσύνη here is also related to that of 6:33, where the priority and basic worldview of the followers of Christ are described. Those who are πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες after righteousness are the same as those who seek after God's kingdom and his righteousness.[103]

Righteousness here refers both to right conduct and God's intervention in bestowing righteousness. France claims that righteousness refers to "right conduct only," which cannot be correct because there are two parts to it: πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες ("hungering and thirsting"), and χορτασθήσονται ("they will be filled"). As Morris says, "They *will be filled* … surely means God will fill them (cf. 6:33, 'his righteousness')."[104] He goes on to say, "We need not doubt that the term here includes the doing of right, an indication that we are expected to live in full accordance with the will of God. How can anyone have a strong desire for a right standing before God without at the same time strongly wanting to do that right?"[105]

In the Jewish society, especially during the patriarchal period, the righteous were not supposed to go hungry, or thirty, they were not supposed to be poor or be mournful because God's covenant with Abraham was filled with promises of blessings, prosperity, and greatness (Gen 12:1–3). Those having the characteristics mentioned in the Beatitudes would have been considered to be sinners before God. Thus, Jesus reinterprets the Abrahamic covenant in saying that those who are truly blessed and righteous are those

[102] John F. MacArthur, *Matthew 1–7* (MacArthur New Testament Commentary 1; Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 181.
[103] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 451.
[104] Morris, *Matthew*, 99.
[105] Morris, *Matthew*, 99.

who are humble and hunger and thirst for God's forgiveness and righteousness.

Righteousness and Persecution (Matt 5:10–12)

> [10] μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. [11] μακάριοί ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν καὶ εἴπωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθ' ὑμῶν [ψευδόμενοι] ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ· [12] χαίρετε καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὅτι ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· οὕτως γὰρ ἐδίωξαν τοὺς προφήτας τοὺς πρὸ ὑμῶν.
>
> "[10] Blessed are those who are persecuted for righeousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so people persecuted the prophets who were before you."

The seven beatitudes end with both a warning and an encouragement. Matthew's Jesus warns his followers that they are to expect persecution for the sake of righteousness and on account of Jesus.[106] Just as Israel's righteous prophets were persecuted, so they are to expect the same. Since they are part of the realised and future kingdom of God, they will experience persecution from those not of the kingdom. Their persecuters will not be outsiders like themselves, or Gentiles, but insiders, the religious leaders and their followers, and even their own family members (Matt 10:16–26).

However, they are encouraged to rejoice in persecution because they will be persecuted for the sake of righteousness (Matt 5:11). They are to rejoice because they are living the life of the righteous prophets before them who were persecuted for God and his prophetic message, i.e., for the sake of righteousness. Just like John, Jesus was going to be persecuted, and his righteous disciples should also expect persecution. As Lange says, persecution affirms the disciples' righteousness and their relationship with Jesus.[107]

They are not to be saddened or ashamed because of this treatment. They are not to retaliate and defend themselves. They are to be meek peacemakers, even to those who persecute them. Loving one's enemy is also one of Matthew's important teachings, and it is on this that all the law and the

[106] Lange, "The Gospel according to Matthew," 107.
[107] Lange, "The Gospel according to Matthew," 107.

prophets hang (Matt 5:43–44; cf. 22:34–40). Matthew's Jesus tells his righteous followers, "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (5:44). This has to be done genuinely with a pure and clean heart (5:5, 9, 43). This will make them salt and light in the world for the kingdom of God (5:13, and 16–18). As Lange says, even those people who persecute "contribute" to the "blessedness", which identifies the righteous with God's prophets.[108] This is the righteous reaction to persecution that the Matthean Jesus expects of his disciples. This is what it means to be a righteous disciple. It is to live the life of the prophets and of John and Jesus himself.

The sin-bearing servant of Isa 52 and 53 was oppressed and afflicted. He was bruised and brought to slaughter as a lamb, and he opened not his mouth (53:7). When Pilate asked Jesus whether the accusations brought against him by the chief priest and the elders were true, he did not reply (Matt 27:11–14). They mocked him, but he did not defend himself (27:29–32). Also, in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus bids Peter not to take the sword because those who do will perish with it. He goes on to say that it would not be difficult to call down twelve legions of angels to deliver him, then adds that he must finish his mission (Matt 26:51–53). The Matthean Jesus exemplifies the righteous life for the righteous, even as the Pilate's wife described Jesus as "that righteous man" (27:19). True disciples are to be meek, make peace, and rejoice in persecution, for their reward is an eternal inheritance.

From a Jewish covenantal perspective, this looks like a seven-fold blessing for the unrighteous and the cursed (Matt 5:3–12). The self-sufficient and the comfortable, who desire temporary security, happiness, and honour, will have no part in the kingdom of God. As the children of Abraham, the religious leaders should be the light of the world, but they lay heavy burdens on people's shoulders, "but they themselves will not move them with their finger" (Matt 23:4).

Conclusion

Matthean righteousness is not an abstract concept or certain behaviours that are in accordance with the law of God, nor does it mean God's act of salvation exclusively, although Matthew stands on the fact that the Messianic prophecies are fulfiled, which means salvation for the righteous has come. One cannot conclude that the Matthean Jesus is works-oriented because he

[108] Lange, "The Gospel according to Matthew," 107.

does not emphasise the righteousness of God. That may be right from a Pauline perspective because Matthew talks explicitly about the righteousness of the righteous more than he does the righteousness of God. But the righteous will also be filled with the righteousness of God (Matt 5:6).

Mattthean righteousness is a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. The Matthean Jesus interprets the *Torah* by internalising its precepts. *Torah* observance involves the entirety of the righteous' life, where righteousness is not equated with mere outward conformity to the will of God but involves obedience from an inward conviction and with pure motives. Righteous acts or obedience are not rendered with pretence or selfish motives. The righteous do not seek worldly approval, applause, or reward. Their rewards are eternal and not temporary.

Matthean righteousness involves a life of radical obedience as exemplified by the lives of the prophets, John, and Jesus himself, and by the treatment that they all received from insiders. Although they came in accordance with God's will and preached his message, they were persecuted and their message was rejected. But, like the prophets and Jesus, the obedience and faithfulness of the righteous will be uncompromised.

The Matthean righteous are persecuted for righteousness' sake and on account of Jesus Christ, but they are to regard this treatment as a great blessing. They will not cease to hunger and thirst for righteousness. The righteous do not react by retaliating. They are meek, peacemakers, they love and pray for their enemies, and they turn the other cheek. They are to be like a light in the darkness, and the salt of the earth. This is the greater righteousness. But in the eyes of religious insiders, like the scribes and Pharisees, the righteous outsiders appear to be cursed sinners, the least in the Jewish community.

For Matthew, anyone who desires to become Jesus' disciple is not exempted from the treatment that the prophets received at the hands of religious insiders, because this is the essence of the life of greater righteousness. Thus, Matthean righteousness is exemplified in the lives of the righteous, in the lives of disciples who hunger and thirst for righteousness, who mourn but are comforted, who are persecuted and falsely accused but, like John and Jesus, honour God's law by not doing away with one iota or dot. This portrait of righteous discipleship should be taken to heart by every person who desires to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthean Theology of Righteousness in Melanesia

Blessing and Curse

In Melanesia, it is commonly believed that a follower of Christ is always blessed and happy as opposed to the unbelieving ones. This blessing and happiness mostly concern material increase and progressive life, especially education-wise. So, when a Christian is faced with any tragedy or some unflavoured changes or circumstances she is conceived to have sinned. This is how the Pharisees and scribes perceived life as children of the God of Abraham.

Thus, Matthew's Jesus reinterpreted the Abrahamic promise of Genesis 12:1–3 in the Beatitudes in Matthew. The Matthean Jesus promises his followers peace, rest, and joy not in the absence of turmoil or persecution but amidst all of these. True peace and rest can be found in the presence of unrest and war, just as light is distinguished and appreciated in the presence of darkness.

Honour and Shame

Honour and shame is another aspect of Melanesian culture. Its effects can be seen in the lives of Christians and their children or grandchildren. There is a likelihood of compromising with unbiblical social expectations just to avoid shaming in their society or their reputation.

In Melanesia, especially in Papua New Guinea, Christian church leaders and administrator are highly esteemed and respected. We receive the best treatment and sit on the best seats. Thus, there is a danger of using our church leadership authority or power to manipulate, deceive, or obscures the gospel for one's own benefit. For instance, especially in Enga (PNG) many ministries have mushroomed over the years. The founder of these churches have turned their churches into money-making institutions, thus, becoming wealthy in no time. There is the danger also of persecuting those who preach the truth just to avoid shame and retain honour

This hypocritical attitude of the leader is the manifestation of mere outward conformity to religious practices and the law, which is what the Matthean Jesus is speaking against. He internalises the law of Moses by promoting an inner conviction that manifests itself in obedience and acts of righteousness. The Matthean righteousness also rebukes any confidence in

tradition, family line, any status or church leadership role. Thus, those desiring to inherit God's kingdom auth to repent.

Thus, Melanesians can see all of these issues—blessing-curse mentality of the Pharisees and scribes, practising religious practice for temporal honour and praise, persecuting the righteous and giving them the treatment of outsiders—being counteracted in Matthean theology of righteousness.

DEDICATION TO IDOLATROUS WORSHIP IN ACTS 17:22–23 AND IMPLICATIONS FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE GOSPEL AND MELANESIAN RELIGIONS

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Abstract
Acts 17:22–23 is part of the introduction of Paul's teaching, a new teaching which sound strange upon the hearing of the Athenians' city council, which makes them want to hear and know more about it. Paul began his discussion with an altar he came across in the city on which is written "to the unknown god." The issue that this article seeks to address is whether the inscription "to the unknown god" is a dedication to an idol or to God because whatever hermeneutical position one takes would have a critical implication on his or her contextual theology approach, faith, and missionary endeavour. The paper challenges the assumption that it was a dedication to God based on the exegesis of text, a survey of the immediate context, Paul's view on God's revelation, and the biblical view on non-Christian religion. It is suggested that the inscription was a dedication to idolatrous worship that although, Paul knew, he decided to take it as his text, or point of contact to facilitate his dialogue to suggest the true God.

Key Words
Paul, altar, unknown god, idolatry, revelation

INTRODUCTION

This research aims to exegete Acts 17:22–23; the passage commonly used in the dialogue between the gospel and non-Christian religions. The key interpretative issue in this passage is whether the inscription "to the unknown god" is a dedication to an idol or to God. Few people have suggested that it was a dedication to God, such as Lenski, Richardson, Prior, and Clarke.[1]

[1] R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles 15–28* (LCNT; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1934), 723; Don Richardson, *Eternity in their Hearts* (3rd ed.; Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2005), 20; Randall Prior, *Gospel and Culture in Vanuatu* 1: *The Founding Missionary and a Missionary for Today* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 1998), 20; and

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However, this article aims to defend the inscription "to the unknown god" as a dedication to idolatrous worship so that it will redirect and correct us on how we use that passage in the dialogue between the gospel and non-Christian religions because whatever hermeneutical position one takes from this passage would have a critical implication on his or her contextual theology approach, faith, and missionary endeavour.

The research will cover these four areas. The first is an exegetical observation on Acts 17:22–31. The second is a survey of the immediate context. The third, is a brief synthesis, which includes an interaction with the opposite views, Paul's view on God's revelation, and the biblical view on non-Christian religion. It ends with a highlight of the assumed implication of the opposite view and a conclusion.

An Exegetical Observation on Acts 17:22–23

Acts 17:22–23

> 22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

In this section, we will set a brief background of the book of Acts and move on to the detail analysis of the passage.

Introductory Background

Luke is the author of Acts of the Apostles.[2] The book has what we may term individual, ecclesiastical, and theological purposes. In terms of its individual purpose, Luke wrote an accurate account building upon his previous work

Matthew Henry, David Brown, and Adam Clarke, *The Bethany Parallel Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1983), 58.

[2] There is no dispute against the authorship of Acts since there is strong evidence for that. First, as with the third gospel (Luke 1:3–4), Luke introduces himself as the author of Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:1). Second, the "we" passages are indisputable, since he was Paul's companion (Col 4:14; Phlm 24; and 2 Tim 4:11). Third, Marcion (*c*. A.D. 135) accepted him as the author. See Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts* (The Expositor's Bible Commentary; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 239; and Judith M. Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 183–233. Fourth, the uses of medical vocabularies confirm him to be the author because he was a physician (Col 4:14).

on the ministry of Jesus to encourage Theophilus and others to be certain of their faith (Acts 1:1). In terms of its ecclesiastical purpose, Luke was writing "to provide the church with a record of its beginnings".[3] What he records is how the church started from its Jewish root, its evangelistic and missionary endeavours in different parts of the empire, and its apologetic value where we see repeated offensive and defensive cases run through the book.[4] In terms of its theological purpose, Luke wrote about the work of the Holy Spirit and clarified "the identity of the people of God".[5] He addressed questions about Judaism and the mission to the Gentiles and the relationship between Jewish and Gentile believers.

Looking at our passage (Acts 17:22–23) in the larger literary context, it is part of the unit that runs from 15:36 – 18:22, which is all about Paul's second missionary journey. After settling the boiling controversy between the Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians over the issue of keeping circumcision and the law in addition to believing in Christ, Paul set out for his second visit to his new churches with the council decision that faith alone in Christ was necessary for salvation and Gentile believers were not to be bound with Jewish laws (Acts 15).[6] When Paul had finished strengthening the churches planted from his first visit, he received a vision in Troas to go over to Macedonia. For the first time his tiny group reached Europe with the gospel (Acts 16). They visited different cities, such as Philippi (Acts 16:11), Thessalonica (Acts 17: 1–9), Berea (Acts 17:10–15), Athens (Acts 17:16–34), and Corinth (Acts 18:22) before returning to Jerusalem and Antioch.

In the more specific context, Acts 17:22–23 is part of Paul's witness in Athens. He witnessed in the synagogue and marketplace where he encountered the Athenians philosopher (v.16–21) who then brought him to the Areopagus to make a presentation on his new teaching (v. 22–31). Verses 32–34 give different responses to the presentation. Paul left Athens and went to Corinth (Acts 18). He stayed here probably eighteen months establishing the church and people in their faith.

[3] Walter L. Liefeld, *Interpreting the Book of Acts* (Guides to New Testament Exegesis 4; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 30.
[4] Liefeld, *Interpreting the Book of Acts*, 31.
[5] Liefeld, *Interpreting the Book of Acts*, 31.
[6] Chris Wright, *User's Guide to the Bible* (Lion Manual; rev. ed.; Oxford: Lion, 1993), 108.

Detailed Analysis

In this pericope, Luke provides Paul's presentation of his gospel in the speech to the Areopagus, within a context dominated by idol worship.

For the sake of our discussion, this pericope can be divided into three separate parts. The first part looks at Paul's poisonous praise of the Athenians' wrong-headed religiosity. The second part discusses Paul's objective to contrast the true God with the object of idolatrous worship. The last part is about Paul's disclosure of the Athenians' ignorant worship.

Paul's Poisonous Praise of the Athenians' Wrong-headed Religiosity

The Epicurean and Stoic philosophers brought Paul to the Areopagus to explain more on the teaching that he was propagating (v. 19). Areopagus means "hill of Ares, the god of war, lying between the Acropolis and the Pnyx, the place where assemblies of the people were held".[7] It was named after the judicial body that tried homicide and sacrilege cases, which met on that hill. Their responsibilities were to supervise "religious worship, the sanctuaries, education and other matters".[8] It was appropriate for them to inquire about Paul's new teaching because it was part of their responsibility.

Paul addressed them as "men of Athens" and said: "I see that in every way you are very religious" (v. 22). "Very religious" comes from the Greek *deisidaimonesterous* (δεισιδαιμονεστέρους), which also means "God-fearing," "religious," or "superstitious".[9] Thus, the word has both a positive and negative sense. When used in a positive sense, it would be translated as "religious" and as "superstitious" in the negative sense. Those who give it a positive interpretation here recommend Paul's approach as a good missionary tactic. However, from the context and his Jewish background, I would argue that Paul used this word here in negative sense. He never endorsed the Athenian idolatrous worship but attacked it. So, he used "very religious" as a means to capture the attention of his hearers and establish a way for him to communicate. Moreover, from Luke's perspective as the author and driven by the context of v. 16 (cf. 25:19), he used this word in a derogatory sense. It is like Luke winking at his readers about the unnoticed

[7] Hans-Josef Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity: The World of the Acts of the Apostles* (trans. Brian McNeil; Eng. ed.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 79.
[8] Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 79.
[9] Cleon L. Rogers Jr and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 275.

poisonous praise by Paul of the intelligent Athenians about this problematic aspect of their religiosity.[10] The later sense (negative) would be the suitable interpretation since it fits well the Jewish context because Luke and Paul are using this statement to talk about Greek spirituality; calling "the Athenians the most pious of Greeks, using this term".[11] Furthermore, it also fits well with the context dominated by idols and Paul's revealed hidden opinion during the discussion. He showed them later that their religiosity was wrong-headed.

Paul's Point of Contact: The Athenians' Object of Idolatrous Worship

In v. 23, Paul continues to give the reason for the previous statement that he had made in v. 22 marked by the conjunction *gar* (γὰρ). He admired the religiosity of the Athenians as he was passing through *dierchomenos* (διερχόμενος) the city.

He "looked carefully"—*anatheoron* (ἀναθεωρῶν)—is a strong word meaning "to look at" or "to observe".[12] Paul looked at and observed carefully the *sebasmata* (σεβάσματα), the objects of worship or religious reverence,[13] such as associated with temples, altars, statues, etc.[14] The idols must have struck the eyes of Paul such that he looked at and observed them carefully. Barrett explains that *sebasmata* is "used of object of idolatrous worship, and so it is here, through one such object will be found to point to, or rather to suggest the true God".[15] Paul declared that among the objects he saw, he found one that was an altar—*bomon* (βωμὸν), a *hapax legomenon*. On that altar there was an inscription, which read *Agnosto theo* (ΓΝΣΤΩ ΘΕΩ), meaning "to the unknown god".

There is no archaeological proof of such an inscription. Jerome, Pausanias, and Philostratus attest to the plural forms of dedication ("unknown gods"). Jerome wrote that there were inscriptions to gods of Asia,

[10] Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 79.
[11] Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament Series; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007) 564.
[12] Rogers and Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key*, 275.
[13] Rogers and Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key*, 275.
[14] Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), 572.
[15] C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 2: *Acts 15–28* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 837.

Europe, and Africa.[16] Pausanias, the second-century geographer, and Philostratus, the third-century philosopher, also spoke of altars to unknown gods at Athens.[17] Tertullian knew of altars dedicated to unknown gods[18] and rendered the Lukan passage in the plural.[19] However, this does not rule out that such an inscription in the singular ever existed. There are questions into which we may need to inquire. Why did Luke write that Paul said he saw the singular form of dedication? Does this inscription refer to the true God? There are number of responses to these questions. Barrett suggests the following responses. First, Tertullian knew Acts yet used the plural. Second, the singular form of dedication could possibly refer to a hero cult since it was also very common in Athens.[20] Third, Barrett argues that "[t]his, even in the singular, implies polytheism; the speaker makes it monotheist."[21] This argument fits well with Jerome's assumption. He assumed that since there is no such inscription but only inscriptions to gods of different places as Asia, Europe, and Africa, Paul decided to choose one he needed for his purpose.[22] Likewise, Macgregor and Ferris agree that "probably Luke simply given the polytheistic inscription a monotheistic turn to serve the purpose of his argument". Next, Macgregor and Ferris, and Larkin refer back to Diogenes Laertius' story of Epimenides the Cretan who instructed the Athenians to sacrifice the black and white sheep wherever they lay down as a remedy for the plague.[23] Macgregor and Ferris commented "to sacrifice to 'the appropriate god' i.e., the unknown god who was concerned in the matter". And they add "It is just possible that it was such altar Paul observed, and that 'to an unknown god' is Luke's not quite accurate paraphrase".[24] Larkin however say that according to Diogenes Laertius the sacrifice was offered to "the god of that place" and memorial altars were built with no god's name

[16] Jerome, *Comm. Tit.* 1.12 (PL 26.572): "Paulus asseruit, *ignoto Deo*, sed ita: *Diis Asiae et Europae, et Africae: diis ignotis et peregrinis*."
[17] Pausanias, *Hell. per.* 1.1.4; and Philostratus, *V. Apoll.*6.3.
[18] Tertullian, *Adu. Marc.* 1.9.2 (CCL 1.449).
[19] Tertullian, *Ad nat.* 2.9.4 (CCL 1.55).
[20] Barrett, *Acts*, 2.837.
[21] Barrett, *Acts*, 2.839.
[22] Joseph Addison Alexander, *A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Geneva Series Commentary; London: Banner of Truth, 1963), 153.
[23] Diogenes Laertius, *V. Philos.* 10.110.
[24] G. H. C. Macgregor and T. P. Ferris, *The Acts of the Apostles, The Epistle to the Romans* (George Arthur Buttrick, ed., Interpreter's Bible 9; Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1954), 234–35.

inscribed on them. He continues that "Wycherley proposes, with some archaeological justification, that such altars may also have been raised to appease the dead wherever ancient burial sites were disturbed by building projects of later generation (1968:621)".[25]

Having said that, the important thing that needs to be noted from Paul's approach to the Athenians' religion was that he identified a point of contact to proclaim his gospel. Although Paul recognised that the object was dedicated to idolatrous worship, he used it as an open door for discussing the one true God of creation. Furthermore, Paul was not equating the Athenians' god with the God whom he intended to proclaim. Paul took this inscription he came across as his text, or point of contact and contrast, the starting point for his dialogue.

Paul's Disclosure of the Athenians' Ignorant Worship

This sentence "So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship, this is what I am going to proclaim to you"— *ho oun agnoountes eusebeite, touto ego kataggello humin* (ὃ οὖν ἀγνοοῦντες εὐσεβεῖτε, τοῦτο ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖ)— is made up of two statements. There are two different subjects, the Athenians and Paul and there are two different verbs, the Athenians who "worship" *eusebeite* (εὐσεβεῖτε), while Paul "proclaims" *kataggello* (καταγγέλλω). However, the object of the verbs is the same. The Athenians revere it as well as Paul is going to proclaim it. It is obvious to see that translations differ in their description of the object of the Athenians' worship and Paul's proclamation. Some versions of the text used the neuter "what … that" *ho ... touto* (ὃ … τοῦτο); others used the masculine "whom … him" *hon ... touton* (ὃν … τοῦτον). The neuter was the correct text because it refers to the idol object of worship and not the true God. With that understanding, Williams adds that Paul "was not suggesting for one moment that they were unconscious worshipers of the true God but was simply looking for a way of raising with them the basic question of all theology: Who is God?"[26] Similarly, Bruce says that "Paul starts with his hearers' belief in an

[25] William J. Larkin Jr, *Acts* (IVPNTC 5; Downers Grove, IL: InverVarsity Press, 1995), 255.
[26] David J. Williams, *Acts* (New International Biblical Commentary 5; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 305.

impersonal divine essence, pantheistically conceived, and leads them to the Living God revealed as Creator and Judge".[27]

Paul statement denotes the appropriate attitude such as reverence or respect towards divine beings, the practice of religion.[28] Their respect or practice of religion was wrong-headed. There is a play on the word "ignorance". When Paul says to the Athenians "you are ignorant", he picks up also the concept of "unknown" mentioned on the inscription. That means the Athenians were ignorant because they were worshiping something unknown to them to which they themselves testified through the inscription on the altar. As Polhill describes it, "To worship an unknown god is to admit one's ignorance. If he is unknown to you, you are then in total ignorance of his true nature" (1992, p. 372).[29]

Truth is the greatest virtue to the Greeks and the Stoics and it is discovered through "divine reason within oneself".[30] So, if people live without that reason, they will be regarded as ignorant. From a Stoic perspective such ignorance was considered a cardinal sin and Paul's accusation was that the Athenians were sinful because of their ignorance. Therefore, in v. 30 he returns to the same topic of ignorance, which God once had overlooked and concluded with an urgent call to repentance because people are now without excuse. Their ignorance is manifested in their worship. Their worship was wrong-headed, because of "what" not "whom" they were worshiping. They were worshiping an object or impersonal thing and not the personal God.[31] Such ignorance of worship is also manifested by the altar erected to the unknown object of worship that they themselves acknowledged.[32] Instead of Paul affirming their worship, he discloses their ignorance of worship. Stott states that Paul "using the ego of apostolic authority, and insisting thereby that special revelation must control and correct whatever general revelation

[27] F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (2nd ed.; London: The Tyndale Press, 1970), 336.
[28] Barrett, *Acts*, 2.838.
[29] John B. Polhill, *Acts* (The New American Commentary 26; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 372.
[30] Polhill, *Acts*, 372.
[31] Polhill, *Acts*, 372.
[32] C. S. C. Williams, *A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Black's New Testament Commentary; London: A & C Black, 1975), 203.

seems to disclose. He went on to proclaim the living and true God in five ways, and so to expose the errors, even horrors, of idolatry"[33]

Although Paul was not equating the Athenians god with God and knowing full well that they were worshiping an impersonal thing, he still went on to proclaim to them. Even though, from our perspective, "what … that" in this clause refer to the impersonal thing or idol that the Athenians were worshiping, Paul however, saw it as his point of contact, common but different, to initiate the dialogue between the two religions, Christianity and the Athenian religion. He used the inscription "to the unknown god" from the Athenian religion as his point of contact to initiate the dialogue and explain the theology of God.

Paul's approach to the Athenians' religion was a good missionary strategy when entering into dialogue with other religions. Our Melanesian religion, as well as other religions, holds religiosity and reverence in common with Christianity but they differ in term of the deities revered. For example, instead of worshipping God, the Melanesian people are worshipping the ancestors and other benevolent spirits. So, in order to facilitate a good dialogue between the gospel and Melanesian religion, I suggest Paul's strategy. Firstly, we need to appreciate that fact that they were religious although wrong-headed. This is in order to establish a relationship and open the door for communication. Secondly, find a point of contact from the Melanesian religion as text and starting point for the dialogue. For example, the ancestor, whom they trust for providence and protection or other benevolent spirits for healing and others, can be used as the starting point for the dialogue. Lastly, from what they are familiar with, their object of worship, we can lead them to the living God revealed as creator, provider, protector, healer, and judge.

SURVEY OF THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

The above exegesis of Acts 17:22–23 proves that the inscription "to the unknown god" was a dedication to idolatrous worship and not to God. In order to strengthen this position, we shall survey briefly the immediate context of that passage. These following points will be discussed in this

[33] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 285.

section, Paul's provocation by idols, contrast between God and idol, and Paul's call to repentance.

Paul's Provocation by Idols (vv. 16–21)

If we argue that the Athenians were worshiping God, we are denying the fact that Paul was provoked by idols. The Athenians' idolatry had caused him to take action, which was to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

While Paul was waiting in Athens for his friends Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols (v. 16). Athens was known as intellectual centre of the ancient world.[34] Bruce affirms, "the sculpture, literature and oratory of Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. have never been surpassed; in philosophy, too, she took the leading place, being the native city of Socrates and Plato, and the adopted home of Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno."[35] Paul remarked that the city was full of idols. "Idols" comes from *eidolon* (εἴδωλον), which means lifeless souls, shadowy and deceptive images.[36] The city was "full of idols", which conveys the ideas as the city was under the idols, smothered with idols, swamped by idols and veritable forest of idols.[37] This context is shown clearly in Paul's opening discourse to the Areopagus: "For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship …" (v. 23). Klauck assumed that Paul could have seen "the temples of Aphrodite, of Hephaistos, of Apollo and of Ares [, which] are grouped around the Agora as well as a shrine of Zeus, an altar consecrated to twelve gods and a shrine of herms".[38] Stott adds that all the beautiful gods of Olympus were also there: "They were made not only of stone and brass, but of gold, silver, ivory and marble, and they had been elegantly fashioned by the finest Greek sculptors".[39] All these attested that the Athenians were pious (v. 22). Paul was greatly distressed—*paroxuneto* (παρωξύνετο) is a strong word meaning "irritate," "provoke," and "rouse to anger." This word is widely used in the Old Testament to describe God's reaction to idolatry; many times the Israelites had "provoked"

[34] I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC 5; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 283.
[35] Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 331.
[36] Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 76.
[37] Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 277.
[38] Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 75.
[39] Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 277.

the Lord God to anger by their idolatry. A similar understanding applies to Paul here. He was provoked by idolatry to anger, grief, and indignation for the name of God. Stott comments on Paul's feeling saying:

> Paul felt in Athens was due neither to bad temper, not to pity for the Athenians' ignorance, nor even to fear for their eternal salvation. It was due rather to his abhorrence of idolatry, which aroused within him deep stirrings of jealousy for the Name of God, as he saw human beings so depraved as to be giving to idols the honour and glory which were due to the one, living and true God alone. His whole soul was revolted at the sight of a city given over to idolatry.[40]

Because of the significant influence of idolatry, which had caused him great distress, Paul was moved to share the good news of Jesus with the Athenians (v. 17). His aim in proclaiming the gospel was to help the Athenians to turn from their idol worship to the living God. Luke records that Paul had made an attempt to reach three groups in city with his gospel. First were the Jews and God-fearers (v. 17a). As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue probably on the Sabbath and reasoned with them. Second, in the marketplace, a public centre, Paul argued day by day with those who happened to be there (v. 17b). Since he was in the native city of Socrates, Paul adopted Socratic dialogue involving questions and answers to discuss his gospel or moral questions.[41] Third were the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who began to dispute with Paul (v. 18). For them, gods were far removed from the world and had no contact or influence on human affairs.[42] They taught rudimentary atomic theory about the existence of the world and their ethics were based on pleasure and tranquillity.[43] The Stoics, on the other hand, had a conception of God but in a pantheistic way as a world soul.[44] Stott said the Stoics believed that "The world was determined by fate, and human beings must pursue their duty, resigning themselves to live in harmony with nature and reason, however painful this might be, and develop their own self-sufficiency."[45] We can hear the echo of these theories that Paul challenged in his speech at the Areopagus when he presented God

[40] Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 279.
[41] Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 332.
[42] Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 280.
[43] Marshall, *Acts*, 284.
[44] Marshall, *Acts*, 284.
[45] Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 280.

as creator, the source of human life, and the reality of judgement that led to a call for repentance.

Contrast between God and Idols (vv. 24–29)

If the Athenians were worshiping God, why did Paul have to explain who God is? Paul's explanation about God was to give a clear contrast with the idols they were worshiping and to challenge related religious theories.

Paul developed different doctrines related to God like "God's creation of the world, God's transcendence, God as the source of human life, God's sovereignty over human history and geography, God's immanence and God's noncorporeality" (vv. 24–29).[46] These doctrines echo the religious theories of the philosophers of the day that Paul wanted to refute.

First, let us consider God's creation of the world. Paul begins "the God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth" (v. 24a). This proposition comes from Gen 1:1. Here, Paul was objecting to the idea that the world existed by chance, asserting instead that it was God who created it. Furthermore, he was revealing to the Epicurean that God was not removed from the world as they believed. In fact, God was greater than creation. Paul also wanted to show the contrast between God as the creator and the lifeless idols, which were made out of God's creations.

Second, we may turn attention to God's transcendence. Having given a little challenge in v. 24a, Paul comes back to the common ground to maintain the attention of his hearers. He stated that God needs nothing from people and cannot be served by them. This fits well with the Epicurean belief that God was far removed from the world. Paul gave the reason why God needs nothing: God is the source of all life. This truth is also in agreement with the Stoics belief later alluded to in v. 28.[47]

Third, there is the idea of God as the source of human life and sovereign over human history and geography. Paul indicates, "From one man, he made every human nation" (v. 26a). Paul wanted to show the Athenians the unity of the human race. The human race was descended from one man, Adam, although his name was not mentioned. The reason why Paul mentioned that was because the Athenians prided themselves that "they had sprung from the soil, i.e., that they were indigenous and therefore different- superior- to

[46] Liefeld, *Interpreting the Book of Acts*, 69.
[47] Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 336.

others."[48] Paul continued that God "determined the time set for them and the exact places where they should live" (v. 26b).

Fourth, we may note God's immanence. Paul mentioned that God is the source of human aspiration. God made them in a way that "they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him" (v. 27a). Paul asserted that God "is not far from each one of us" (v .27b). The Stoics believe in a world soul, which is imminent to all things and not far from us. It is almost similar to the concept of God's imminence. However, it is different in the sense that although God is close, God is not identical with creation, nor impersonal. In contrast to the Stoic philosophy, God is a living and personal God.[49]

Lasty, God's non-corporeality features in v. 28 where Paul used the pagan Greek poems and applied them to God saying: "For in him we live and move and have our being." Since people are God's offspring, meaning that they are like God, possessed by the Holy Spirit, they must recognise that God is Spirit and no image or material representation can portrait God. "We should not think that the divine being is like gold and silver or stone- an image made by human design and skill" (v. 29). Here, Paul is concluding that idolatry is forbidden.

Call to Repentance (v.30-31)

If the Athenians were worshiping God, why did Paul give such an urgent call to repentance instead of commending them from their religious practices? The Athenians were wrong-headed and that is why Paul has to call them to repent, to turn around and comeback to God through his appointed mediator and judge, Jesus Christ.

Before the inauguration of the new age by Christ, people lived in ignorance of him. But now that they had heard the proclamation of that gospel there was no longer any excuse for their ignorance. Paul affirmed that "God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent" (v. 30). Williams comments:

> Through him (Christ) God had dealt definitively with problem of sin. But for that very reason, he had now laid humanity under a new accountability. The offer of salvation in Christ carried with it the threat of judgment if that offer

[48] Williams, *Acts*, 306.
[49] Williams, *Acts*, 306.

> was refused. Judgment and salvation go hand in hand; both are vested in Christ; both give expression to the righteousness of God.[50]

The urgency of Paul's appeal to the Athenians to repent is because God "has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed" (v. 31a). God has already appointed the judge and his resurrection is a further proof of his judgeship. This judge is known as Jesus.

The inscription to the unknown god was a dedication to idolatrous worship but not to God. The survey of the immediate context proves that. The city was flooded with idols, which provoked Paul and caused him to proclaim the good news to different groups of people in the city. The inscription serves as his point of contact to proclaim the different doctrines about God to challenge idolatry and religious theories of the day, which led him to make an urgent call to repentance.

SYNTHESIS

Opposite Views

The findings from our exegesis and the immediate context prove that the inscription to the unknown god was a dedication to idolatrous worship and not to God. However, to avoid bias it is fair to synthesis with those who held the opposite views. There are some people who take the opposite view and argue that the inscription to the unknown god was a dedication to God. Lenski, Clarke, Richardson, and Prior are examples. In this section, we are going to explore and interact with their views in brief.

Interpretation without Historical Context

Lenski supports the argument that the inscription to the unknown god refers to God. He argued that although Paul knew the Athenians were worshiping something immaterial and might have polytheistic conceptions about this god, "He (Paul) intended to regard this altar and its inscription only as a confession on the part of the Athenians that, despite their multitude of divinities, one God existed of whom they themselves said that, while they knew of him, they did not in any way know him."[51] This claim is partly true when we think of general revelation. However, to neglect the context of the

[50] Willliams, *Acts*, 309.

[51] Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 723.

passage and the historical facts is a problem. That is what Lenski did. He put aside the context that he developed about the Athenians cultus of the divinities instead of understanding the altar and the inscription in line with that context. In relation to the historical facts, Lenski argued "we pass all this late material by as being of little interpretative value."[52] It means he ignored the historical sources and the immediate context on his interpretation.

Interpretation Based on Paul's Fear

Clarke in his commentary claims to avoid capital offence of introducing a new god into the state and charge as in v.18; Paul "showed that he was bringing neither new god or new worship among them, but only explaining the worship of one already acknowledge by the state, though not as yet known."[53] Clarke's argument is like that of Lenski. In contrast, his interpretation is based on Paul's fear. As a result, it deviated from Paul's actual concern for the city according to the context. Since, idolatry was Paul's main concern, Williams opposes this, stating that Paul "was not suggesting for one moment that they were unconscious worshipers of the true God but was simply looking for a way raising with them the basic question of all theology: Who is God?"[54] He expanded that in the following verses. Still on that concern, Bruce adds that "Paul starts with his hearers' belief in an impersonal divine essence, pantheistically conceived, and leads them to the Living God revealed as Creator and Judge."[55] Both Williams and Bruce agree that, according to the context, the Athenians were not worshipers of the true God.

Taking the Historical Context too Far

Don Richardson in *Eternity in their Hearts* acknowledged that Paul was not proclaiming a foreign God to the Athenians: "Not at all! By Paul's reasoning, Yahweh, the Judeo-Christian God, was anticipated by Epimenides's altar. He was therefore a God who had already intervened in the history of Athens."[56] This statement is partly true in the sense that God is sovereign and omnipresent. We should not question and limit God's intervention in

[52] Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 723.
[53] Clarke, *The Bethany Parallel Commentary*, 812.
[54] Williams, *Acts*, 305.
[55] Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 336.
[56] Richardson, *Eternity in their Hearts*, 20.

history. Nevertheless, this statement is not true for there is no clear evidence from the context of this passage itself. Richardson made this statement based on his assumption that Epimenides was God's prophet and concluded that the inscription to the unknown god refers to God. Larkin comments: "Don Richardson, missionary author misreads the Diogenes Laertes account of Epimenides' animistic polytheism as evidence that Epimenides was a prophet of the one true God and taught vicarious atonement."[57] Furthermore, Larkin adds that according to Diogenes Laertes the sacrifice was offered to "the god of that place" as a remedy for the plague and memorial altars were built with no god's name inscribed on them.[58] Macgregor and Ferris also support that the sacrifice was offered to "'the appropriate god' i.e., the unknown god who was concerned in the matter." And they added: "It is just possible that it was such altar Paul observed." [59] According to Larkin, and Macgregor and Ferris, Epimenides was not a prophet of the one true God because he came from an animistic polytheism background. Therefore, the inscription to the unknown god was a dedication to idolatrous worship and not to God.

Ignorance of Immediate Context

Prior in his book *The Founding Missionary and a Missionary for Today*, part of a series of volumes on the relationship between religion and culture in Vanuatu, highlighted some of the theological limitations under which John Geddie (d. 1872), the Presbyterian missionary among the Aneityumese in Vanuatu, operated. He stated that, instead of making links between the traditional culture of the Aneityumese and the gospel, Geddie was too negative about the hosting culture. He emphasised that Geddie should have learned from Paul's approach. So, based on Paul's experience in Athens, he argued that "Paul identifies the presence and activity of the 'unknown God' whom he has come to make known. There is no hint here that these peoples are in complete bondage to Satan." He continued that "to speak of God as creator and sustainer of creation, as Paul does here, is to acknowledge that God has revealed himself to the people before the arrival of the missionary."[60]

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[57] Larkin, *Acts*, 255.
[58] Larkin, *Acts*, 255.
[59] Macgregor and Ferris, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 234–35.
[60] Prior, *The Founding Missionary*, 58.

One of Prior's point that needs consideration is the question of how to be ready to link the traditional culture and the gospel. In order to achieve that, a point of contact needs to be identified in the culture to facilitate the dialogue. However, there are two points in his argument that are doubtful. First, he argued that "there is no hint here that these peoples are in complete bondage to Satan" based on his assumption of the presence and activity of God before the arrival of Paul. If this was the situation of these people, why did Paul have to present the theology of God and gave them an urgent call for repentance instead of commending them of their worship? It means they are going in the wrong direction; their worship was wrong-headed so they had to turn around and come back to Christ. Lastly, it seems that Prior is trying to base his argument on general revelation. In doing so, he neglected the context of the passage. For the passage itself reveals that the context was dominated by idolatrous worship. The reason why Paul explained God as creator and sustainer of the universe was to show the difference between God and the idols, which are only human-made objects. They need to worship the creator instead of worshiping the creatures or created things.

Having commented on the different starting points of interpretation of those who have taken the opposite view on the inscription to the unknown god in Acts 17:22–23, it is fair to say that most of them seem to take that inscription as a general revelation. They assume that it was a confession on the part of the Athenians that one God existed and had already revealed the divine self and intervened in their lives. They knew of God but they did not in any way know him. That leads us to briefly explore Paul's view on God's revelation.

Paul's View on God's Revelation

From this passage (Acts 17:22–23), we see Paul did not compromise the gospel with the Athenian religion. This fits well with his theology on the gospel and God's revelation explained in Romans 1.

Paul's gospel was all about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. "Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith" (Rom 1:5). Faith in Jesus Christ is the only requirement to become righteous and have the assurance of the eternal salvation according to Paul's gospel. In order for that to happen in a person's life, Rom 10:14–15 explains the process; someone has to be sent and preach so that others could hear, believe,

and call on the name of the Lord to be saved. Apart from that (God's specific revelation), hope is not guaranteed.

People may raise questions as to why salvation is guaranteed through special revelation and not general revelation? Some may argue against that and give different responses. The simple answer from Paul in Rom 1:18–25 is that Scripture affirms that people who never heard about God did know God, "his eternal power and divine nature" through creation (Rom 1:20). Furthermore, God had given them spiritual light and planted the seed of spiritual truth in their hearts that is God-awareness or God-consciousness. But because of sin people rejected what God had offered them and followed their sinful desires. "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearths were darkened" (Rom1:21). As a result, this light is turned off and they were in total darkness. They were trying to resolve the situation but through unrighteous ways. As Paul says, "Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles" (Rom 1:22–23). This is the beginning of a wrong-headed religion.

Those who have taken the opposite view discussed above, such as Lenski, Clarke, Richardson, and Prior might have seen the inscription to the unknown god in Acts 17:22–23 along those verses in Rom 1:22–23. They assumed the inscription to the unknown god was a confession on the part of the Athenians that one God existed who had revealed the divine self already and intervened in their lives.

These claims are true from a theological standpoint when we think of God's sovereignty and omnipresence. However, from a biblical standpoint, they were not faithful to the scriptural context of Acts 17:22–23. Idolatry was the main concern in the context of that passage. We conclude that the inscription to the unknown god was perceived by the Lukan author as a dedication to an idol. With those who insist on seeing the inscription as general revelation, another question may arise: could the object dedicated for idolatrous worship be seen as something of general revelation. This is an important and difficult question to handle. Some people, like those discussed above, probably may be comfortable to see the object dedicated for idol worship as something of general revelation. From an animistic point of view, it would be compromising to call the things of Satan the things of God. There are two reasons for that. First, when we speak of idol worship the first thing

that usually comes into the mind are spirits. We are referring to the worship of a spirit that is represented by idol, whether spirit of death, ancestor, territorial spirits, or other spirits. Second, we cannot equate the altar dedicated to idolatrous worship with nature through which God revealed invisible qualities like the eternal power and divine nature, the subject matter of general revelation. Even so, people are not worshiping nature as it is, which God is using to reveal divine qualities, but the spirit in place of God, which can manipulate nature. So, to avoid the risk of compromising, it is good not to take the object dedicated to idol worship as something of general revelation.

Therefore, I agree with Spencer's conclusion on general revelation:

> Nevertheless, special revelation is still indispensable. Because of the testimony of creation, humans are left with the bad news that they are accountable for their impiety to God. They have no defence. Therefore, Gentile (and Jews alike) needs to hear the good news that they may become righteous through faith in Jesus the messiah, proclaimed by the prophets of old, and by believers in face-to-face proclamations.[61]

So, people need that light, the knowledge of God and the gospel revealed from the Scripture; that is, righteousness comes through faith alone in Christ Jesus.

Paul ends his explanation on general revelation with wrong-headed religiosity due to sin (Rom 1:22–23). Those kinds of religion cannot be seen as true religion or as something of God because "they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the creator (Rom 1:25). This leads us to explore the biblical view on religion.

Biblical View of non-Christian Religions: The Example of Canaanite Religion

To equate the gospel or Christianity with non-Christian religion and supported with Acts 17: 22–23 would be an abuse of this text. For the context of this passage does not allow it. This section will briefly discuss the question, how does the Bible view non-Christian religion?

[61] A. B. Spencer, "Roman 1: Finding God in Creation," in *Through No Fault of Their Own: The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard*, ed. William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 125–35, at 135.

It is very important to consult the Bible rather to be too simplistic about our non-Christian religions. The Scriptures warn us that "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness" (2 Cor 11:14–15).

Let us look at the Canaanite religion in the Old Testament as an example. The religion includes many practices such as "idolatry, child sacrifice, fertility cults, sacred prostitution, blood-soaked rhetoric, snake worship, demons, necromancy, gods without moral character, magic, divination and the like."[62] According to some biblical historians, this religion is considered as false and destructive to faith and relationship between Yahweh and the people. God warned the people not to have any relationship with it. It deserved to be wiped out for it did not lead people to God rather blinded them and corrupted their relationship with God. It is better for them to live without it. Furthermore, there were other nations like the Moabite, Hittite, Philistine, and so on who also had their own gods. The familiar ones are Baal, Anat, Moloch, Dagan, Chemosh, and Astarte. These gods had their own ways and practices to relate to them. They were threats to the faith of God's people. God in the Old Testament repeatedly warned the people not to associate or to have any relationship with them.

We need to be careful not to claim that our Melanesian traditional religion is like the Christian religion brought by the missionaries. For, there are big differences as to their deities of reverence as well as their practices. Many of the practices of our traditional religion are like those of the Canaanites. Therefore, Pinnock's comment on world religion needs consideration:

> The idea that world religion ordinarily function as paths to salvation is dangerous nonsense and wishful thinking…There are so many evil sides to religion that a fulfilment paradigm (the idea that religion point people to Christ) is out of the question. Religions are not ordinarily stepping stones to Christ. More often, they are paths to hell.[63]

The overall biblical context of Acts 17:22–23 challenges those who hold the opposite view that the inscription was a dedication to the true God whom the Athenians were already worshipping. In doing so, they are running the risk of equating Christian religion and the Athenian religion. Likewise, we

[62] Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 87.
[63] Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, 90–91.

must not equate Christian religion with our Melanesian traditional religion. We must not to domestic God in our traditional religion.

If we take the opposite view, there would be implication of that on our contextualisation approach and faith and mission. We now move on to explore few assumed implications of the opposite view.

Assumed Implication of the Opposite View

If we take the opposite view that the inscription to the unknown god was a dedication to God, certain implications of such a claim would follow. Some of them we have already experiencing in the churches today. This section will briefly highlight few examples in the area of contextualisation, and faith and mission.

Contextual Theology

With the assumption that the inscription to the unknown god refers to God whom the Athenians were already worshiping before Paul the missionary arrived and evangelised them, some people went on to apply it directly into their traditional religion. One such example is Sione 'Amanaki Havea. In the first evangelical consultation on Pacific theology in Papua New Guinea Havea claimed that "the Good news was already present before the missionaries came to the Pacific."[64] In other words, God was already in the Pacific and worshiped by our ancestors before the arrival of the missionaries. Instead of identifying points of contact in traditional religion to link or initiate dialogue with the gospel as Paul did with the Athenian religion, he went on to apply it directly into his context. This claim is beginning to take root in the Melanesian context in the field of contextualisation.

The truth of the matter is that before the arrival of the missionaries, the Melanesian people were heathen in the sense that they did not know the good news. It means they did not know that two thousand years ago God sent Jesus Christ into the world and that he died on the cross to pay the penalty of human sin and satisfy God's holy demands. Without that knowledge and faith in Jesus Christ, salvation is not guaranteed.

Furthermore, when we say, the good news and God were already in the Pacific and worshipped by our ancestors before the arrival of the

[64] Sione 'Amanaki Havea, "Christianity in the Pacific Context," in *South Pacific Theology*, papers from the Consultation on Pacific Theology, Papua New Guinea 1986 (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1987), 11–15, at 12.

missionaries, it like we are supposing that the gospel and God brought by the missionaries and the god worshiped by ancestors in non-Christian religion are equal or similar. So, the implicit result of that claim is that sinners could be saved through our non-Christian religion. However, the truth is that we cannot deny the fact that there are big differences between the good news/God brought by the missionaries and the so-called good news/god of our ancestors. I agree with the statement made by the Lausanne Covenant when discussing the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions, "therefore, it is false to suppose that sinners can be saved through other systems or that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies."[65]

So, what can we say? Are we going to acknowledge that the good news and God was already in the Melanesia and rituals are acts of worship to Him or is it idolatry? From what we have covered, we can confidently say that it is idolatry and rituals are not acts of worship to God rather they are religious ceremonies. Mantovani describes "non-Christian religions mainly as a human enterprise, as a human initiative, while Christianity is regarded as the answer to God's initiative and revelation which are perceived only through faith."[66] The Melanesian people know nothing about how to relate to God and did not even know the gospel. So, people need that light, the knowledge of God and the gospel revealed from the Scripture, the specific revelation. From there, the Holy Spirit will help them apply the word into their lives, turning from idolatry or non-Christian religion to a gospel-centred Christianity. That is what the missionaries in the nineteenth century were convinced about and committed their lives totally to introduce it to our shores in Melanesia.

Faith and Mission

If we claim that the good news and God were already in Melanesia and worshipped by our ancestors before the arrival of the missionaries based on the assumption that the inscription to the unknown god was a dedication to God; we are running the risk of watering down our faith and missionary zeal. For, we are not acknowledging any differences between the two religions. We are equating the God brought by the missionaries and the god of our

[65] Ennio Mantovani (ed.), *An Introduction to Melanesian Religion* (The Point 6; Goroka: Melanesian Institute for Pastoral and Socio-Economic Service, 1984), 12.
[66] Mantovani, *An Introduction to Melanesian Religion*, 13.

ancestors. As a result, our traditional religion may be seen as another way to God. That is the trend of pluralism which "denies the finality of Jesus Christ and maintains that other religions are equally salvific paths to God."[67] In other words, pluralism holds that all religions lead to God and Jesus is not the only way. If people could be saved through their non-Christian religion then other claims are expected such as, it does not matter whether you are a Christian or not since we shall all be saved. That is the position of the Universalists. These are issues that can water down our faith in Christ. Moreover, if we are not cautious, they will undermine churches' mission activities and evangelistic zeal. In relation to these concerns, Michael Griffiths states that universalism:

> Gained entrance into Christendom and threatens to destroy missionary motive and hinder the effectiveness of Christ's soldiers and their readiness to continue the battle…perhaps there is no battle! ... If all men are to be saved in the end why bother to urge men to repent now? They will later in any case.[68]

We must be careful when we approach other religions, in this case our traditional religion; we must allow the Scripture to guide us from the beginning to the end. We must not be driven away from the Scriptures because of respect of other religions or our traditional religion, which does not recognise and base on the Scriptures.[69] As Christians we are grounded on the truth of God's revelation found in the Scriptures and our experience of Jesus Christ. That is what we should continue to proclaim because without faith in Christ salvation is not guaranteed.

CONCLUSION

The inscription to the unknown god was seen by the author of Acts as a dedication to idolatrous worship and not to God. The reasons which support that argument are as follow:

First, the exegesis of Acts 17:22–23 gave enough evidence that the inscription to the unknown god was a dedication to idolatrous worship and not to God as some have interpreted it. Most commentators like Barrett

[67] Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, 15.
[68] M. Griffith, *The Confession of the Church and the World* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1980), 116 and 129.
[69] Charles Van Engen, "The Effect of Universalism on Mission Effort," in Crockett and Sigountos, *Through No Fault of Their Own*, 183–94, at 187.

argued that the object used for idolatrous worship was used by Paul as his point of contact to suggest the true God. He further affirmed that "this (inscription to the unknown god), even in the singular, implies polytheism; the speaker makes it monotheist."[70] Second, the survey of the immediate context supports that the inscription to the unknown god was presented as a dedication to idol worship and not to God. Athens was flooded with idols, which provoked Paul and caused him to proclaim the good news of the risen Lord to different group of people in the city. The inscription serves as his point of contact to proclaim the different doctrines about God to challenge idolatry and the religious theories of the day, which led him to make an urgent call to repentance. He never commended them for their religious practices. Third, this argument fits well with Paul's view on the gospel and God's revelation. And lastly, it also goes along with the biblical view on non-Christian religion.

To take the opposite view like that of Lenski, Clarke, Richardson, and Prior, and claim that the inscription to the unknown god was a dedication to God, is running the risk of accommodating our traditional religion in our contextual theology approach and watering down our faith, mission, and evangelistic zeal.

[70] Barrett, *Acts*, 839.

ANSELM FOR MELANESIA: A TRANSLATION OF GISBERT GRESHAKE, "REDEMPTION AND FREEDOM: TOWARDS A NEW INTERPRETATION OF THE SOTERIOLOGY OF ANSELM OF CANTERBURY"

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Abstract
Many modern theologians find Anselm's soteriology presents God as cruel and vain, concerned with his own honour at the expense of human suffering. In 1973 Gisbert Greshake published an alternative view: the old Germanic concept of honour is taken by Anselm and transformed to be the human perception of God which enables them to live in justice. Sin distorts that perception of God and leaves no road open for a simple return. God, respecting human freedom, sends Jesus, the God-man, to enable humanity to make that offering of satisfaction (compensation) which restores God honour. However, as society moved from being based on personal relations to being based on law, theologians lost the ability to see what Anselm was doing, A translation of Grehake's article is present in the hope that Melanesian theologians will find that Anselm uses and transforms concepts that belong to their world, as a first step to understanding better God's gift to us of salvation, and also the implications that Christ's payment of compensation to God for human attempts to bring peace through compensation.

Key Words
Anselm, Gisbert Greshake, soteriology, *Cur Deus homo*, satisfaction, punishment, compensation, atonement

INTRODUCTION

Our background and education make us confidently certain of some things. As a white Australian missionary to PNG who did his undergraduate theology in the 1980s, two of those things were: (a) the bride price turned women into commodities and was therefore a Bad Thing; and (b) that

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Anselm's theory of atonement turned salvation into a commodity, and was therefore a Bad Thing.

Despite the first certainty, when I came to PNG in 2005 and suddenly found myself teaching the unit on marriage, I thought it prudent to ask my class what they thought of bride price, and was surprised to find that they were all in favour of it. Thus began a time of listening, trying to understand what the exchange that we modern westerners call "bride price" meant in a very different context. Five years later, doing my PhD, I was reading a theologian who was looking at the soteriology of Anselm and Thomas Aquinas, and trying to explain away all the language of "price" and "buying" to say that it was simply all about love.[1] Instead of convincing me of what I wanted to believe, he made me realise the terms could not be explained away. But there was one other thing I had learned in theology: that which most resists our attempts to fit it into our system of thought is actually the key to a better understanding. If "pre-modern" Melanesian society had a way of looking at "price" that did not reduce women to commodities, then perhaps Anselm and Thomas, who were also pre-modern, had a way of looking at "price" that did not reduce salvation to a commodity.

My mind went back to passing remark in Walter Kasper's *Jesus the Christ*, which noted that Gisbert Greshake had shown what Anselm's theory meant in the terms of his age, but that this would not be useful to modern westerners, and then moved on.[2] But as a missionary to Melanesia, I thought, it might be useful to me.

I eventually found the article in the Bodleian Library in Oxford and slowly translated it from the original German. I am publishing the translation in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* because what Greshake says about feudal German society has strong parallels with contemporary Melanesian society: *satisfactio* ("satisfaction") is the counterpart of compensation, and *poena* ("penalty or punishment") is the counterpart of payback.

Greshake notes that in using the concepts of feudal German society for theology, Anselm transforms them. Compensation has a powerful negative side; it is often associated with merely material gain rather than the restoration of relationship. Bishop Bernard Unabali sometimes speaks about

[1] Romanus Cessario, OP, *The Godly Image: Christ and Salvation in Catholic Thought from Anselm to Aquinas*, Studies in Historical Theology (Petersham, MA: St Bede's, 1990).
[2] Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (trans. V. Green; Eng. ed.; Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1976), 219–21.

the "compensation industry" stage of the peace process in Bougainville, where it was simply a matter of trying to get as much as possible from the offenders.[3] Not surprisingly, some of my students fail to see how Anselm is transforming the concept of *satisfactio*/compensation, and claim that what he is talking about is called in PNG "reconciliation". But I want to stick to the word "compensation" to show the continuity between the two. The desire for compensation is not be denied, but transformed, or if it is denied, it is only so that a new desire can arise that can be recognised as the true fulfilment of the old one. If we follow this logic we can arrive at a conclusion that Greshake does not reach because it is not an issue for him: compensation can only truly establish peace and the order of justice if it is compensation as transformed by Christ, compensation that draws its power from the price Jesus paid for us on the cross. He alone is the prince of peace.

This, I think, is the most immediate practical conclusion for Melanesians from Greshake's article. However, as I started by mentioning bride price, there is scope for further theological reflection in that direction. If Christ can transform the economy in which compensation payments are made so that they bring true reconciliation, can Christ also transform the economy in which bride price payments are made? Can the man see his bride price as somehow imitating the price that Jesus paid for his bride, the church (Eph 5:22–30)? Can the material goods that the husband gives be a symbol of an inner self-giving that, like Christ's death on the cross, has as its goal not to possess woman but to give her freedom? Greshake merely enables us to ask these questions; it would take a completely new and different article even to begin to explore them.

I do not agree with everything in Greshake's article. I think that he is not entirely fair in his criticism of Thomas. More importantly, I think that he has overlooked the significance of Anselm's definition of the contrasting pair satisfaction and punishment, and therefore has not completely exorcised Anselm's text. God's honour cannot be lessened or destroyed, holds Anselm, and so if God is offended through sin, then God's honour will be restored one way or another: either in accord with the offender's will (satisfaction),

[3] Bernard Unabali, "Reconciliation in Bougainville after the Crisis," Singkai Lecture, 30th June 2017, Catholic Theological Institute, Bomana.

or against the offender's will (punishment).[4] Anselm meaningfully defines punishment without any reference to pain or suffering, and so his insistence that God must be given either *satisfactio* or *poena* (in Latin, *poena* or punishment was given by the offender to the offended one) does not of itself imply any desire in God to inflict suffering. The idea that God might punish is not original with Anselm, of course, as it is thoroughly scriptural: reading Anselm closely may be helpful in interpreting many of those biblical texts.

I should not delay any longer. I am not a great German scholar, so I erred on the side of caution and have tended to be literal rather than to write normal English. Where Greshake used a Latin term, I have kept it, but I have provided an English translation too. Greshake could presume that his German readers of the 1970s knew Latin: I cannot presume the same of today's readers of *MJT*. The numbers in square brackets in the text in the indicate the page numbers in the original article, and use of a smaller font in the translation reflects a change of font size in the original. Greshake will often use an author's ideas, and even quote directly, without giving a full reference, and with the limited resources available here in Port Moresby, I have not had time to chase these up.

I would like to thank Marianne Zabukosek of Camberwell, Victoria, who looked over my translation. In a few places I preferred my original wording as it seemed to match better what I understood of Anselm's thought or simply standard theological usage. So, any mistakes in the translation should be attributed to me alone.

Gisbert Greshake, "Redemption and Freedom: Towards a New Interpretation of the Soteriology of Anselm of Canterbury," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 153 (1973): 323–45

[323] There is probably no theological theory which is so passionately disputed and yet which—although it has never been the object of official church teaching—has imprinted itself on the sense of the faith of so many Christians as the teaching on the redemption of Anselm of Canterbury.

[4] Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* 1.15. The critical edition for this is found in F. S. Schmitt (ed.), *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis archepiscopi opera omnia*, vol. 2: *Continens opera quae archipiscopus composuit* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1946), 37–133.

To put its distinctive nature (as it is usually understood) in *one* sentence, according to Anselm the essence of redemption is that the God-man Jesus died on the cross to achieve expiation to God for our guilt and through his suffering and death to pay infinite satisfaction for our sin, which we could not pay, so that through him the righteousness of God would be satisfied, his anger calmed, and reconciliation would be established between God and humanity. It will soon be shown that this summary, in fact, has *nothing* in common with the core of Anselm's view. Nonetheless this caricature that I have just outlined still is the dominant cause of the widespread rejection of Anselm's soteriology in the current day. The critique of it still stands under the influence of the Liberal Theology of the previous century, supported above all by Ritschl and Harnack. According to Harnack the weaknesses of this theory lie "so much on the surface, and they offend to an equal extent both our sense of reason and our sense of morality (not to mention the attempt to murder the gospel) to such a degree that, if modern theology were operating under normal conditions, it would not bother wasting words over it." Despite Anselm's good intention and despite some valid observations "never before has such a bad theory been put forward as something *belonging to the church*." But there are also opposing opinions. For example, there is Emil Brunner, who describes Anselm's idea as "priceless" and declares it to be "a first rate achievement" in the history of theology.

[324] Precisely as a result of this heatedly-debated evaluation of Anselm the need has arisen to seek a new interpretation of Anselm with the insights and methods of modern hermeneutics. We don't mean by this merely a retrospective of re-appraisal of the past: since at this time a pronounced embarrassment dominates in theology, there urgently emerges the task of making clear under today's conditions how the message of redemption through Jesus Christ is believable and understandable. What do salvation and reconciliation mean in a world where lack of salvation and reconciliation force themselves on us in a new way each day? Perhaps a look at history, perhaps listening to the testimony to the faith of the past can help us to gain perspectives for the understanding of salvation today. Finally, if we can bear the embarrassment that theology should need to listen to a sociologist, in the words of P.L. Berger "the presumption that one can drive theology under the ignorance of history is not only intolerably self-righteous, it is also uneconomical."

The following explanations are divided into three parts of unequal length. In the first and most detailed section a new interpretation of Anselm's soteriology will be sought; in the second the position and significance of Anselm in the history of theology will be briefly outlined, and finally questions will be asked about the relevance of Anselm's ideas for today.

I. An Interpretation of Anselm's Soteriology

Two Preliminary Remarks:

1. Anselm's soteriology is found above all in his work *Cur Deus homo?*. Anselm wrote this work about the year 1100 when he was fleeing and in exile in Italy, when he, caught up in the investiture controversy, refused to give his oath of feudal loyalty to Henry I of England. He also wrote this work in a [325] situation that was for him extremely troubled and lacking in peace; furthermore, he completed it in an overhasty rush, as people from the surrounding neighbourhood had already, without his knowledge or consent, published the first part of his draft before it had been properly checked over. These external circumstances also might be responsible, as Anselm himself admits, for the fact that the work *Cur Deus homo?* has not achieved its final unity and maturity. Often arguments are placed side by side without any connection; the flow of thought is broken off and then taken up again later in another form. Thus, it is not easy to find the heart of the argumentation. For this reason alone this work has given rise to a very varied and inconsistent interpretation.

2. Anselm quite expressly states that salvation through Jesus Christ has many dimensions. Like his theological opponent Abelard, he can say in this regard that salvation consists in the revelation of the infinite love of God for us; he also points to the saving function of the example and teaching of Jesus. Anselm does not deny these and other dimensions of salvation. Furthermore, he expressly admits: "Whatever a person can say about salvation—there still remain hidden deeper grounds for such a significant thing." Therefore, Anselm does not want to produce a complete soteriology. His motivation, rather, is to find the inner core of the various moments of the process of salvation, the very one which is the ground and unifying factor of all the others. "The crucial point of the question," concludes Boso, Anselm's dialogue partner, "is: Why did God become human, so that humans could be saved through his death, when apparently he could have done this in other ways?"—"He could have done this in other ways!"—this formulation does

not in any way indicate some unreal hypothetical theology, but rather it gives expression to the astonishment of the believer, the believer who so far has accepted his faith in a merely postivistic way, but now has been startled from his comfortable rest by the incarnation of God and the kenosis of the Son, the believer who has discovered the incomprehensible and totally new fact of the death of God. But the formulation, "He could have done this in other ways," also takes into account the objections of the Jews and Muslims, with whom the generation of Anselm found itself in [326] living dialogue, and who specifically held the redemptive death on the cross to be unworthy of a God. So, the discovery of "He could have done it in other ways" leads both to probing the depths of the inner dimensions of the faith in the death of Christ as death-for-us, and to defending it against the objections from outside.

So much for the preliminary remarks. The explanation and interpretation of Anselm's theory of salvation should start at the point which is normally considered to be the key element of Anselm's soteriology, that is, with the examination of the *honour of God* which is injured through human sin.

The Meaning of the Expression: Expiation for the Injured Honour of God

The human being—as Anselm emphasises again and again—has through his or her sin deprived God of the honour due to him. He was created for obedience, for devotion, for service of God. He has deprived himself of this goal through his sin. He has through the cancellation of his obedience deprived God of his honour and refused his love. He has thrown away the ground of his being, lost his purpose. In order to be able to exist again as a meaningful creature, he must give back to God his honour; he must achieve satisfaction for the honour of God which has been taken away. If not, he falls victim to his own meaninglessness. This is the force behind the axiom: *aut satisfactio aut poena* ["either satisfaction or penalty/either compensation or payback"]—either humanity makes satisfaction for the injured honour of God, or he falls victim to eternal punishment. God in his own righteousness must demand one of the two: *aut satisfactio aut poena*. But because the human being cannot make an infinite satisfaction, God sends his own Son, who through his vicarious death on the cross pays the satisfaction for us and so the honour of God and the broken relationship between God and humanity is restored.

A strange thing, this "honour of God", which is injured through human sin and for that reason is demanded back by him in the form of punishment or satisfaction (= expiation)! Does it not seem that the liberal critique has got it [327] right here: the worst thing about Anselm is—as Harnack says—"his mythological understanding of God as a powerful private individual, who rages on account of his damaged honour, and will not give up his anger until he has obtained some equivalent of at least the same greatness"? Is it not—Harnack continues—a terrifying thought, "that God has a horrible privilege with respect to humanity, to be unable to forgive out of love, but rather always needing a payment."? Since that time this critique has remained a general *topos* of criticism of Anselm. On the Catholic side even, for example, J. Ratzinger joins in. He remarks that the infinite expiation, the repayment of which God demands, shows God in a "sinister [*unheimlich*] light." "The impression forces itself on one's consciousness that Christian faith in the cross represents a God whose unmerciful righteousness has demanded a human sacrifice, the sacrifice of his own Son. And one turns oneself away from a righteousness whose dark anger makes the message of love unworthy of belief."

Now is the time to ask why, according to Anselm, is God reckoned to demand *satisfactio—Genugtuung* ["satisfaction"] for sin? Why does not his unconditional forgiveness and goodness satisfy? Is not the axiom *aut satisfactio aut poena* totally unsuitable to express the process of salvation, in that there is no room in this alternative for God's love and pity? But Anselm does not deny God's infinite compassion. Just the opposite! Towards the end of the work *Cur Deus homo?* he triumphantly claims, "We have now found the compassion of God to be so great and in agreement with justice, that it cannot be thought to be any greater." But for Anselm this compassion of God is not something totally free-floating, arbitrary; rather, it is tied to justice, or better, to the *ordo iustitiae* ["order of justice"], which God himself has set. Therefore, Anselm can address God with the words "What does not happen justly is not allowed to happen, and what is not allowed to happen happens unjustly. Therefore, if you do not take pity on sin justly, you are not allowed to take pity; and if you are not allowed to take pity, you would take pity unjustly." Therefore, because the pity of God must be *just*, the *justice* axiom *aut satisfactio aut poena* holds true—either satisfaction or punishment for sin. To grant compassion without observing this *ordo iustitiae* means to

forgive sin "*inordinate*"—against this *ordo*. "But it would be a thing of derision," declares Anselm, "to want to attribute such a compassion to God."

[328] What outrageous expressions! Can they be understood at all? Don't we find here even more clearly the mythical picture of a God who is constrained by a magical order of justice, which watches over the absolute maintenance of the divine honour, and would even set this honour against any possible compassion of God?

This very widespread interpretation overlooks, however, some crucial expressions of Anselm, which put it all in a completely different light. For Anselm declares briefly and succinctly, "It is impossible that God could lose his honour!" "God's honour, *so far as it concerns him*, can in no way be added to or taken away from. For in itself the honour is indestructible and totally unchangeable. But if the creature … maintains his order, it, so to speak, obeys God and honours him … If it should want what it should, it honours God, *not because it gives him something*, but because it voluntarily submits itself to his will and his ordering and it maintains its place in the universe of things and the beauty of this universe, *so far as it concerns* [*the creature*] *itself*. But if the creature should not want what it should, in that way it dishonours God, *so far as it concerns the creature itself*, precisely because it does not voluntarily submit itself to his ordering and makes a mess of the order and beauty of the universe, so far as the creature has a share in it (*quantum in se est*), though admittedly the creature does not in the least (!) injure or disfigure the power and the dignity of God." With these and similar expressions it is made clear beyond doubt: God's being-Lord, his honour, suffers no damage through human sin and thereby needs no restoration or satisfaction. Therefore the "injuring of the honour of God" through sin (as Anselm puts it) does not involve God at all, but rather it involves humans, it involves the order and beauty of the world, which is handed over to humanity and is destroyed through its guilt. Therefore, God and his personal honour do [329] not demand restoration, rather the world, disfigured and turned completely upside down, demands restoration. Therefore, at a crucial place God's honour is re-interpreted by Anselm anthropologically (or, if you want, sociologically) and understood as the order and beauty, as *the honour of creation itself*, which, as it were, should reflect the honour of God. But what does this mean, and why does Anselm often speak expressly of the honour *of God*?

We must go back a lot further in order to answer this problem. Only in that way can we open up the core of the thought world of Anselm.

[330] The Sociological Context: "Honour" in the German World

Anselm's soteriology cannot be understood without taking note of the sociological context in which he stood. Since the arrival of the sociological formulation of the question, we see more clearly than before that each theory is based on a sociological plausibility structure, a sociological *eidos*, whose immediate comprehensibility and obviousness is grounded and guaranteed by the experiential horizon of the epoch concerned, and above all by the social situation. It is certainly an important and vast task of future dogmatic and theological history to take into account sufficiently the problematic posed by sociology.

The imagery and social basis from which Anselm saw the honour of God, the position of humanity, sin, and salvation, is the German constitutional law of his time. This needs to be dealt with more closely.

From the early Germanic legal ideas of an oath of allegiance and loyalty there developed in the kingdom of the Franks the feudal system with feudal law, which thence develops into the decisive form of the medieval constitution. For although other constitutional forms still continue to exist alongside feudalism, nonetheless we find even these gradually "infiltrated with feudal concepts and not able to be completely understood without having regard to them." The heart of feudalism lies [331] in the original interpersonal commitment of a feudal lord and vassal, who promised each other loyalty for loyalty and thus entered into mutual dependence. The vassal receives from the lord a fief and protection and with it a share in the public power and official mission; the lord obtains from the vassal the undertaking of allegiance and service. The kingship becomes more and more involved in this feudal connection, so that the king emerges as the apex of a feudal pyramid spreading itself downward into many ranks and little by little including almost the whole social unit. This inclusive feudal order not only gives the individual his established role, his rights and his freedom,—in this order there also lies the peace, unity and cohesion of the social fabric.

The meaning of this historical indication for the understanding of Anselm's theology becomes immediately clear if one considers that the feudal order is essentially totally grounded in the mutual recognition of the social placement and function, or, to put it in other terms, the recognition of the "honour" of the contractual partners. In this Germanic world honour is not some sort of virtue, not some moral value, not personal self-esteem, nor even the esteem achieved through another—*honor* is not *gloria*!—; rather, honour is the recognised "position, which anybody

occupies in the connection with the life of the people." So, honour is the quintessence of social existence, "the ordering factor in the relations of people with each other." Feudalism particularly rested on the honour of lord and vassal, recognised and strengthened through the oath of allegiance. The honouring and enforcement of this honour thereby becomes the root of the social ordering of freedom, law and peace. Law, peace and freedom are a virtual synonym for "honour", so, looking from the other side, dishonour and the injury of honour are equivalent in meaning to lawlessness and the absence of peace, unfreedom and ruin. Therefore, according to the Germanic understanding, the state with its law is not a pre-existing abstract "[your] highness"—a sort of made-up juridical person; rather, the state is identified with its personal bearers and their mutual relations. This holds above all for the [332] king. His position, his *honor* quite simply constitutes the state and the law. Therefore, he is not an individual, a private person; rather in his recognised position he guarantees the overall public ordering of peace. Should his *honor* be injured, the state of peace is broken, the cohesion of the social fabric is endangered. The restoration of the royal honour is therefore not demanded for the personal satisfaction of the office holder, but *for the sake of the restoration of the order of the whole*. What holds for the king holds to a lesser degree for the lower orders of the feudal pyramid: the recognised *honores* (relations of honour) are the decisive constituents of law and order.

For this reason, the restoration of injured honour is no purely private concern; it has social and public consequences. Now, according to Germanic law the restoration of injured honour took place either through the punishment of the guilty party (*poena*) or through satisfaction (*satisfactio*). Now the legal axiom *aut satisfactio aut poena* is not specifically Germanic; the Roman law already knew for legal infringements either the infliction of a direct revenge punishment or a penance/penalty (expiation, satisfaction)—a sort of substitute punishment, therefore, which one carried out on oneself as a voluntary, pre-emptive self-punishment. This *satisfactio* did indeed have the character of a punishment, insofar as it was based in the loss of valuables or in an adoption of burdens, but in Roman law it already had a note of the voluntary, the spontaneous, and the personal. The legal axiom *aut satisfactio aut poena* entered the church's theology and practice of penance through Tertullian,[5] and there—and mediated through the mediaeval practice of penance—[333] it met with the equivalent Germanic legal principle. In the process *satisfactio* achieved concrete form generally as monetary penalty to the person whose honour had been offended. What served as the measure of the amount to be paid was the fixed numerical value of a person in the customary institution of what was called Wergeld, which again was equivalent to the social position, the *honor* of the one

[5] Tertullian, *De pudicitia* 2.13 (CCL 2.1285): "aut uenia … aut poena, uenia ex castigatione, poena ex damnatione."

offended. In other words, the quality of the wrong and of the compensation was measured by the status or "honour position" of the one harmed, as quantified in the Wergeld. Since the punishment for injured honour was usually carried out as a cruel act of revenge and had general lawlessness as its consequence, the payment of the Bußgeld or monetary penalty *(satisfactio),* as a friendly and peaceful settlement (*compositio*), took priority over the vindictive punishment. "Associated with the admission of guilt, the Bußgeld counted as a perfectly adequate performance of satisfaction, since it involved the humiliation of the offender," and also recognised the injured honour of the other party, and thereby preserved the general order of law and peace.

With this excursus we have now investigated the life context and the sociological horizon in which Anselm's soteriology stood, from which it has its plausibility and coherence, and the whole point of it can be truly seen: God's government of the world is conceived by Anselm on analogy with that of a Germanic king or supreme feudal lord, whose honour provided the foundation for and guaranteed the general maintenance of law, order, and peace. Human sin is an assault on this *honor dignitatis* ["honour of dignity"]; it is a breach of loyalty, the removal of the submission that God deserves, and thereby it is at the same time the destruction of the order of the world, the breaking of the peace of the universe.

The Anthropological-Sociological Function of the "Honour of God"

However, if one looks more closely, Anselm corrects this model of Germanic constitutional law that had been given to him in advance for the purposes of his theological message. Whereas there the breaking of allegiance was directed both to the personal honour of the offended party and to the public legal system, which was constituted through it, here sin against God only offends the order of the world; it offends only the creature itself, not the [334] personal honour of God. "God's honour cannot be increased or decreased," Anselm expressly remarks. Precisely this point of view has either been completely overlooked or not fully appreciated in the interpretation of Anselm up until now, since they do not take note of the sociological context by means of which the anthropological-sociological function of the "honour of God" as constituting the order of creation becomes understandable. If according to Anselm God demands satisfaction for his injured honour, this has nothing to do with God in himself; he does not bring forward the demand on analogy with an injured private individual, as Harnack would have it, but rather as the very one who could restore the world and its order, in that

humanity acknowledges him again as Lord. The point of demanding satisfaction is not, therefore, the reconciliation of an angered lord, but the reconciliation of the world. "God had no need," says Anselm expressly, "that he should save the human being, but human nature needed that God gave satisfaction in this way." And in this way a second modification can be seen which Anselm carries out on the sociological model which is given to him in advance: the character of expiation and punishment, which *satisfactio* had in both Germanic and Roman law, fades further and further away in Anselm's theological argumentation. The satisfaction that God demands is not punishment, but rather something *purely positive*: humanity has to completely restore honour to God, which means that it must once again acknowledge him as Lord and submit its freedom to him, for it is precisely there that there is freedom and peace, law and meaningfulness for the world.

And so we can see the sociological model according to which Anselm thinks the God-human relationship: if God demands the restoration of his honour through *satisfactio*, this does not involve God at all; rather, it is only about people.

[335] The connection between the sociological model and the theological message that has been demonstrated in the case of the interpretation of Anselm is clearly confirmed again if one considers the subsequent historical development. Since the middle of the twelfth century (more precisely, from 1158, the Diet of Roncaglia, at which jurists of Roman law from the school of Bologna were consulted), Roman constitutional law made advances in Germanic lands. The most important innovation that introduced was "the connecting element of the unified authority of the state, from whose abundance all authority was derived." Not only this, but also under the influence of Roman constitutional law the feudal state and feudal law decayed and were gradually re-organised "into a system of objective order."

What becomes of the Anselmic concept of the "honour of God", now that its sociological basis and its social context are being transformed? The theological consequences can be read in Thomas Aquinas. For Thomas, God is no longer primarily conceived of as the One constituting the world order through the acknowledgement of his honour, but rather as absolute sovereign, who in the event of human guilt can act as a sort of private person. God can remit human sins out of pure compassion (without *satisfactio*!), "just as every man can forgive an insult committed against him without satisfaction out of compassion and does not act unjustly in doing so." God is a sovereign free lord as well; he can remit unconditionally the sins directed against him; *satisfactio* is no longer an absolutely necessary legal demand. In this way theology has also changed its representational

model according to the change in the legal order. Out of the God conceived on analogy with a supreme feudal lord, who insists on the recognition of his honour for the sake of the ordering of creation, has emerged the "sovereign" who no longer stands in a relational-interpersonal legal order, but who is the very definition of sovereign of law and order.

This observation concerning the subsequent development similarly confirms *e contrario* the specific Anselmic understanding of satisfaction: satisfaction is demanded so that in the acknowledgement of God's honour the world may recover its order. But no human being can achieve this "satisfaction". To the objection raised by his dialogue partner Boso—but the human being could devote himself to God after his sin through repentance, new obedience and new love—Anselm answers pregnantly: "You have just not grasped what weight sin has." Sin is not a mere episode, after which a human being can turn himself back to God and let the past rest by itself; [336] rather, through sin that which holds together and guarantees the order of the world, the recognition of God, is totally deformed. Only the attitude of unconditional obedience and radical devotion on the side of the creature could provide new ground for the honour of God in creation, and thus for the very order of creation. But no human being is capable of such an unconditional attitude. Anselm explains this incapacity again, all in the context of his sociological model of Germanic law, as he asks for an infinite payment almost really balancing the infinitely injured honour of God—which in many interpretations is emphasised as the specific centre of the Anselmian conception of soteriology. But one should not overlook that this measuring of equivalents is for Anselm just *one* dialectical step amongst others, so that it can be seen that an infinite personal devotion and unlimited love is demanded for the restoration of creation, which quite simply exceeds the capacity of corrupted humanity.

"Satisfactio" as a Moment of Freedom

But what now? Is humanity therefore to be abandoned to the punishment of its own meaninglessness and purposelessness? No, for "then it would seem as if he (God) either has changed his mind about the good (of creation) that he had begun, or that he could not execute his plan." Humanity would have been created "in vain". But that is unthinkable. For when God freely created the human being for fellowship with himself, his will and his decision for the creature was absolute and not open to revision. For this reason, God owes it to himself, to his goodness and loyalty, to bring to fulfilment the work of

creation that he has begun. [337] But how can this come about? Does the unconditional Yes of God to the human being posit a radically new beginning? Does an act of all-powerful compassion undo sin? For Anselm, neither of these things is possible. God does not correct his work through a second creation. And, even more so, he does not replace the free will of creation through an act of his omnipotence. For then humanity would be injured in its most precious capacity, precisely where its worth and distinction lies, namely, human freedom and independence. Were the unconditional all-powerful compassion of God to take humanity to beatitude, salvation would sweep over the human being; it would simply confirm humanity in its powerlessness and in this way make it for all eternity "needy", "defiled", and thus "unblessed," make it unable to achieve what it was created for. So, humanity would not regain its original dignity and freedom. For humanity was created free, wherein lies its "dignity, power, and beauty." By virtue of their freedom, they should themselves overcome evil and devote themselves to God. They should freely, through the recognition of God and love of him, maintain the order and beauty of the world and so find their way to beatitude. If, therefore, salvation should be the restoration of the freedom of human beings, if it should place them back again in the original position of free partner as willed by God at creation, then salvation cannot and may not be achieved as a sovereign act of the divine compassion over humanity, but rather it must be "just" [*gerecht*], it must put human beings back in the right [*Recht*], make them capable of being responsible in freedom for their own salvation.

[338] With this it is clear what Anselm means by *iustitia* or *ordo iustitiae*—not an abstract, mythical ordering that envelops even God himself, but that righteousness which God himself is and in which he remains "righteous to his own self". It is the righteousness by virtue of which the God of creation said Yes to human beings and their freedom and autonomy and carries this Yes through. The *ordo iustitiae* is therefore nothing other than the unconditional loyalty of God to the free, independent creature—a loyalty which goes so far that—and now come what are probably the sharpest but also clearest and most unambiguous words of Anselm— "if the human race lifts itself up again after the Fall, it must lift and erect itself right out by means of itself." For this reason, *satisfactio*, that means the action of the human being, is demanded, not because in this way God receives something from human beings, but because in this way the freedom and autonomy of the

human being remains preserved in the process of salvation, in this way—yes! —salvation is achieved by the free human being himself.

But since the sinful human being is incapable of such *satisfactio*, God made it possible through the sending of his Son, who *as human* in absolute freedom and spontaneity—in his death as the final consequence of a life of radical obedience and unconditional love—standing in the place of the whole human race, gives honour to God (with this phrase meant according to the explanations we have just had): who in his own person also re-establishes creation for us as well. Therefore for Anselm Jesus is in no way at all God's whipping-boy;[*] [339] in him God does not punish the innocent for the guilty; nor is his death on the cross the consequence of a conflict between divine attributes of compassion and justice; for Anselm God does not stand against God; rather, the voluntary death of Jesus is the culmination of a life which radically gave itself away to God and to the others and precisely in this way fulfilled creation in freedom and re-constituted everything for us. In his death a space for reconciliation as true peace and true freedom is opened, in which humanity—as *imitatores* [imitators], as Anselm says—may and can enter through discipleship.

But why, according to Anselm, must it be the "Son" who is the God-man? Could not some other sinless creature act as substitute in fulfilling the same free deed of radical obedience? For Anselm this possibility is excluded, because human freedom would not be fully restored in this way either. Right from its creation, humanity should be responsible for itself, should be independent and subordinate its freedom to God alone, should find its true freedom in this single act of submission. Now if another creature, even if it were sinless, were to bring salvation, the human being would be indebted to it. And so a new limitation of human freedom would arise. Only the one who is God and human being simultaneously can bestow freedom without making one "unfree" in a new way.

This is as far as research has been able to present anew the basic lines of Anselm's soteriology at this stage. Certainly, today a great deal of this sort of thought is foreign and strange. Especially on account of its close interconnectedness with Germanic legal concepts, the theology of Anselm seems to represent merely a historical curiosity from a time long past,

[*] In earlier centuries if a young prince deserved to be punished (e.g., for misbehaving in lessons), to avoid the disgrace of physically attacking royalty, the punishment would be carried out on a servant, the "whipping boy".

without relevance and normativity for us today. However, in the course of the explanations it should have been continually more apparent that, essentially, Anselm's thoughts come straight from a biblical covenant theology. Insofar as Anselm understands the *iustitia Dei* or the *ordo iustitiae* [340] as the unconditional loyalty of God to his free, autonomous creation, he comes very close to the biblical understanding of justice. For according to Scripture *iustitia Dei* [the justice of God] means the same as God's covenant loyalty. God in his justice—*sedakah*—never ceases to offer humanity the living-space of the covenant, in which humanity is allowed to be not merely the recipient of the divine goodness, but also the free partner of God, whom it is allowed to receive in freedom as both gift and task. The free recognition of the "honour of God" is the response of humanity appropriate to the covenant, which offers it "Life" and leaves creation intact. If humanity refuses this response, then it becomes enslaved to "death," insofar as it does not in freedom carry out *satisfactio*, the behaviour appropriate to the new covenant. So, the covenant obliges humanity and at the same time sets it free for a freedom which God always respects. Anselm translates this fundamental structure of biblical covenant theology (which we have already described in terms of Anselmic concepts) into Germanic constitutional law, not without considerable corrections, and thereby renders meaningful for his time the idea that redemption arises from the absolute loyalty of God to the dignity and freedom of humanity, and that it is carried out respecting and taking into account the freedom and autonomy of humanity. It was not the sociological idea-system described above, nor the ways of speaking and thinking that are strange to us in so many respects, but rather the fundamental understanding of redemption as the freeing of human freedom through the deputisation of a freeman brought to expression and translated within Anselm's thought itself, which allowed it to be a unique and enduring achievement in theological history.

This can be seen observed more precisely in a short historical outline.

II. The Place and Significance of Anselm in the History of Theology

If one looks over the history of Christian soteriology, one can see there a remarkable development. In the Greek Fathers, human redemption is regarded as pointedly theocentric, i.e., the active subject of the redemption is God, or, to be precise, the *Logos*, the divine nature of Christ. God and God

alone brings salvation and rescue to fallen humanity. Human freedom can only passively receive the work of redemption wrought by God alone.

Contrary to this broadly outlined theocentric concept of the Greek Fathers, western or Latin theology brings to light [341] to a greater degree the *human* side of the redemption. In western soteriology the cross stands in centre stage as the reconciliatory sacrifice of humanity, which the *human being* Jesus, deputising for all, offers to the Father, so as to heal the broken relationship between God and humanity. Admittedly, God is also seen here in so far as he is the decisive subject of the act of redemption, as he appoints Jesus as the mediator with humanity and has assumed humanity in the hypostatic union. And yet it is important to see the change of perspective: in Western theology God is no longer the only acting subject, but in and through Jesus humanity is included in its own liberation.

Anselm stands on this western-Latin line, but—in my opinion—at a singular moment. He combines the concept of *satisfactio* in the minutest detail with human freedom and dignity. The human race must lift and erect itself right out by means of itself. Humanity itself is responsible in freedom for the restoration of creation. God's redeeming compassion is thereby the empowerment of humanity for its own redemption, and, more specifically through the sending of the representative, the God-man Jesus, who precisely *as a free human being* is our representative. In Anselm's theory his divine nature has—as A. Ritschl has already correctly remarked—merely the function of being "that which establishes the value of human nature in action/transaction." Or in Anselm's words, "In all this, the divine nature is not lowered but the human nature is exalted." Thus, in the work of Anselm, redemption is thought through on the basis of human freedom in a totally unique way, in that it revolves around the focus of *iustitia*, God's covenant loyalty with a free partner.

With this passion for freedom, which always permeates the theological work of Anselm and which is combined in its minutest detail with the praxis of freedom, which Anselm proved through his conduct in the Investiture Crisis, [342] Anselm's soteriology is an extremely important step in the history of freedom in the West. If one does not rashly let oneself become deterred by scholastic formulations, but knows how to listen to the language of a time long gone, the basic lines of Anselm's soteriology are the very first outlines of that modern theory of redemption, which is determined by the question of emancipation, i.e., of human self-liberation.

Yet, Anselm's initiatives were not carried through. Although with him, on the basis of his understanding of God's covenant loyalty, God's compassion and justice were inseparably combined, in Scotism and Nominalism there was introduced the disastrous division of the divine compassion and justice—the latter understood as punitive justice—,which formed the pre-condition and background of the Reformation re-interpretation of Anselm's soteriology. In Luther and Calvin the representative *satisfactio* of Christ was rethought as a *satispassio* ["sufficient suffering"]. Christ suffered God's wrath for us, so that God's compassion for us occurs therein *sub contrario* ["under its opposite"]. Here one can no longer feel any trace of freedom and the empowerment of creation, but now just the gloomy mediation of the divine attributes of compassion and justice on the back of Jesus Christ. God against God! Just in the way that Anselm did not understand it. Therefore, the modern critic of his doctrine of satisfaction does not meet him at all, but that remodelling of his teaching, at most only his concepts; the spirit of Anselm, however, no longer survives.

But what does the genuine "spirit" of Anselm have to say to us today? With this we come to the third and final part, in which on the basis of Anselm some very fragmentary perspectives for the conveying of the message of redemption today will be sketched. Therefore, it is not at all the case of an unmediated re-issuing of Anselm's soteriology, attached to a bygone age, which would scarcely be possible without substantially violating it, but rather it is a case of setting some critical and perhaps also enhancing directions for contemporary formulations of soteriology.

[343] III. The Message of Redemption Today

It is probably not a simplification if one says that today the Christian message of redemption appears in two different forms, or more precisely, *between two opposing poles*.

The first, more traditional formulation lies on the line which has marked western teaching on grace since Augustine. According to this formulation, redemption consists in the *interior* salvation of the human being, in the justification and sanctification of human subjectivity through God's grace. This grace is understood as an internal power that establishes the foundational operations of faith, hope, and love and gives a share in the divine life. Through it, Christ was able to live in a still unredeemed and unreconciled world in the inner freedom of the child of God; he is driven by

the Spirit to love in a reality that is still full of hate; he receives the strength and the hope to see it through in a world full of confusion and darkness. So, the human being finds his identity in the isolated space of subjective or interpersonal-ecclesial inwardness. This inner freedom, this inner finding of identity through grace to a great extent, of course, leaves the unredeemed world out there; the world is perhaps the addressee and the workspace of redeemed life and action. But the gift of freedom itself, the grace of redemption, is fundamentally interior, invisible, mysterious, without any constitutive link to the world. Here it would certainly be the right time to ask whether in this way a fundamental element of the biblical message of redemption is overlooked. For Scripture, redemption is quite essentially an event, "which takes place in public, on the stage of history and in the medium of community, in short, which takes place decisively in the world and it cannot be thought without such a manifestation," as the Jewish theologian Gershom Scholem writes, who thereby also presents the objections of Judaism against this form of Christian teaching on redemption.

In the face of this question, Anselm's concept of *ordo* can, under other conditions and within a transformed thought-horizon, be a critical corrective. Anselm does not locate his soteriology in the inner salvation of the individual. For him it concerns the restoration of creation disfigured through sin, the healing of the broken order of the world. Redemption as a new ordering of justice, peace, and freedom can, according to him, provide just that place where creation gives honour to God, i.e., where all worldly reality is through humanity included in an attitude of obedience; where humanity does not make itself the ultimate concern in its dealings with the world, [344] divinise itself and thereby violate just about everything, oversubscribes, destroys, but where it leaves the last place free, or, more precisely, where it hands over its freedom to God as to the Lord, who is love and who gives the freedom to love. In the life and death of Jesus such radical obedience has taken place in a way that is representative and normative for all of us. But his act of representation does not mean a quintessential substitute for one's own deed, a relieving of one's own responsibility. By closely combining the concept of representation with the idea of discipleship, Anselm made it clear: the representation of Jesus designates the place where our freedom also has its foundation, where the redemption of the world for all time can be found.

In saying this, we now touch on the other opposing pole of the Christian representation of redemption today. We are thinking of those theories which

in different ways combine with modern ideas of emancipation. According to these theories, redemption is purely a future goal, to be achieved first of all through human activity. On the journey there, the messages of Christianity, especially the "Jesus thing," have the function of an ethical impulse and a real-utopian ideal, which is able to initiate the critical emancipation process and to maintain it as it goes along.

Such tendencies can be found especially in the field of *political* and *social-theoretical* theology. Anselm would critically question them at the point where they understand radical and exclusive redemption as a future for freedom to be made by human being: do they not burden and demand something from humanity which simply overtaxes it and makes it "unfree" all over again? "You have not yet understood what weight sin has," remarks Anselm. Have such theories really gauged the utter abandonment and entanglement of humanity in its own "unfreedom"? How is freedom possible under the conditions of unfreedom? And how are brotherhood and love possible under the conditions of hatred and oppression? To elevate love, brotherhood and peace to be merely the postulate of duty is—as T. W. Adorno writes—a "self-perpetuating item of ideology, which perpetuates the freeze. It possesses the compulsion and oppression that works against the capacity for love." So, it is no wonder that blind-activist engagement for freedom on the one side and weary resignation on the other—as we can often observe today—are merely complementary forms of the one unfreedom, which obviously seizes humanity just where all the realisation of redemption as the future goal of his own activity is loaded on him. And in this way is not that astonishing up-to-date sounding insight of Anselm's confirmed, that precisely where redemption comes solely from humanity, there always also arise at the same time new conditions on freedom, new unfreedoms?

[345] For Anselm, redemption is only guaranteed in the actual representative redemptive act of the God-man. It is thereby established beyond doubt that redemption is not an outstanding [in the sense both of "yet to be achieved" and "standing outside"] *goal* that unceasingly overtaxes humanity, but that it *is* [already] achieved, and precisely *in humanity, out of human freedom*—albeit enabled by God. The human being Jesus in his freedom allowed and enabled to take place that stance of *satisfactio*, that unconditional obedience and uncompromising love, which alone redeemed the world. Of course, this representative action of one individual is not exclusive. On the contrary, it enables and provides the pattern for

discipleship, as the representative shares the way which he has travelled, the way whose destination is called the fulness of life. So, Jesus in his representation is no mere substitute, who does what we were unwilling or unable to do. He is the one-who-stands-in-our-place, i.e., he has opened for us and keeps open for us the only place in which the world can finds identity. "The human race has its own place with God," as is sung at the conclusion of J. S. Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*. According to Anselm, this "place" is the posture of Jesus, the posture of radical obedience and unbounded love, which, so long as reconciliation is still lacking in the world, will always bear the signature of the cross, the signature of dedication, of self-surrender, of powerlessness, of pain, but also of hope and confidence. Until God shall be "all in all," we are on the way to this place and we find there our identity and freedom only partially and never fully, or as we could better put it: we find them in that identification in which Jesus identified himself with each one of us, in that identification which unburdens us, sets us free and precisely in this way encourages us to discipleship, which in a still unreconciled world necessarily leads us to the place where Jesus stands in for us. So, the cross under the conditions of history is the place of our identity and freedom. It is clear that this "place" cannot be found at a lesser cost.