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Editorial correspondence: Dr Annette Potgieter, atjcs.editor@netactmail.org.za

Technical correspondence: Mr Fraser Jackson, admin@netactmail.org.za

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Transhumanism (h+) *vis-à-vis* African Holism: A Theological Response for a Teleological Ethic

Dr Robert Falconer
South African Theological Seminary
robertf@sats.edu.za

Abstract

Transhumanism (h+) is a social and philosophical movement that looks to enhance human cognitive and physiological conditions by developing technology to improve human health and extend human life, leading to a digital version of eternal life on a virtual platform. Considerable research from neuroscience, technology, the sciences, philosophy, and ethics has been ploughed into Transhumanism and related fields. Although there are some Christian voices from the West, such as Fazale Rana and John Lennox, there are few Christian voices from Africa addressing the Transhumanist concern. The traditional African philosophy of holism together with a biblical-theological response may help us identify the dangers of this movement. The research findings provide a framework for constructing a teleological ethic for an emerging Transhumanist context in Africa. This paper employs as its research methodology a modified Architectonic Theology which includes the following: (1) exploring the Transhumanist project, both historical and present; (2) exploring the traditional African philosophy of holism in relationship to Transhumanism; (3) exploring Christian theology in response to Transhumanism; and (4) constructing a teleological ethic for Transhumanism given African holism and the biblical-theological response. This paper will empower African Christianity with a biblical-theological response to the emerging Transhumanist project that is not only contextual to African thought but also relevant for all. Furthermore, it will give Africa a critical voice in a global movement.

Introduction

Transhumanism (h+)[1] is not science fiction, nor is it a future reality. Although it is early days, it is already here. Transhumanism is considered "an intellectual and socio-political movement", and seeks to enhance the human being by encouraging the use of enhancement and bio-transformative technologies that in time will radically alter the human being, creating a post-human species (Porter 2017: 237–238). It argues that human nature is not a fixed concept, thus the prefix, "trans", and the abbreviation (h+). According to Transhumanism, humanity must take charge of its evolutionary process by employing reason and technology not only to help those who suffer from physical injury, deformity, or any kind of handicap but also so that they can transcend and break free from their bodies (Oesch 2020:24). The concept of Transhumanism is ancient. A 3000-year-old piece of Transhumanist technology was discovered in ancient Egypt: a sophisticated prosthetic wooden toe, together with a strap that allowed for movement. The artificial limb is said to have belonged to a daughter of a priest. (Strickland 2017).

The concerns of Transhumanism are numerous, and conservatives, especially conservative Christians like myself, ought not to respond in thoughtless knee-jerk reactions. Instead, they ought to highlight the common ground between Christianity and technology and medical science, and offer a mitigated response that is compassionate towards those who are suffering and may benefit from human enhancement technology to alleviate suffering or handicaps (Rana 2019: 21). These are complicated realities that deserve an urgent response from the Christian church together with biblical-ethical considerations (Oesch 2020:13). This paper offers a theological response to Transhumanism (h+) *vis-à-vis* African holism that will help develop a teleological ethic.

Employing a modified Architectonic Theology (Falconer 2019), I first provide an overview of the Transhumanist project, its ancient origins and contemporary figures, along with a working definition of Transhumanism. From there I explore an unlikely dialogue partner, African holism. This will help us understand the complexities of humanity in light of Transhumanism. Of

[1] From here on (h+) will not be included at every mention of Transhumanism.

most importance for the church is the theological response. The theological response includes a discussion of those Transhumanist ideologies that share common ground with the Christian faith, which in turn leads to a discussion on Christian Transhumanism. After this, I discuss the embodied resurrection which, in my view, provides the ultimate answer to Transhumanist goals. Using a biblical-theological response as my foundation and African holism as a guide, I offer a teleological ethic for the future of the Transhumanist project.

The Transhumanist (h+) Project

The seed of the Transhumanist project is found in ancient Greek mythology when the Titan god, Prometheus, took clay and fashioned humanity. Afterwards, he took fire from the gods and handed it to humankind in the form of knowledge, technology, and civilization (Porter 2017:242; Herold 2016:19). More recently, contributions from English philosopher and statesman Francis Bacon (1561–1626), German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844–1900), and English evolutionary biologist and eugenicist Julian Huxley (1887–1975) have been seminal for the Transhumanist movement. Today, influential Transhumanists include, among others, computer scientist and futurist Ray Kurzweil, who is famous for his book *The Singularity Is Near*, philosophers and futurists Max More and Nick Bostrom, and Swedish researcher and Transhumanist Anders Sandberg.

The Israeli historian and public intellectual Yuval Noah Harari, although not himself a Transhumanist, has written at length about Transhumanism in his book, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (Harari 2017). Harari explores the future of humanity, its dreams and projects, as well as the nightmares that may haunt our horizon. Although he is not entirely convinced by all Transhumanism has to offer and expresses numerous concerns in his book, Harari is not entirely opposed to the idea either (Curran 2017:24).

Transhumanist sub-projects include artificial intelligence and artificial life which we are in the first stages of developing and creating. Overcoming death is another transhumanist goal into which funding and research have also gone.

Harari believes that we can influence the direction of our future by employing new technologies, yet old values such as equality and freedom will still guide

our moral compass. In my view this is optimistic because it says that humans and machines can unite in a kind of marriage where those humans who wholeheartedly embrace the Transhumanist project and upgrade themselves will, at best, treat traditional humans with inferiority. Harari says that the gap will be larger than the gap between neanderthals and homo sapiens. Already we are seeing the initial stages of the collapse of democracy and the free market, and a shift from the individual to computed algorithms. The future, Harari argues, is not *homo sapien* (wise man) but *homo deus* (man-god). In other words, humans will be upgraded into demigods (Curran 2017:23). Harari highlights concerns, especially the notion of humanity losing their human identity. The Transhumanist (h+) project, according to Harari's vision, is not a Christian one, nor is it one that is grounded in any of the Abrahamic faith traditions. Rather, it is inspired by paganism, a claim with which Christian Transhumanists would disagree. Once we become transhuman, we will become gods, albeit, fallible gods, like those of the ancient Greek pantheon. For Harari, God is dead, there is no transcendent god, and neither are there souls. These are said to be outdated concepts. So, if asked whether God exists, Harari might answer, "Not yet." Instead, "organisms are algorithms," therefore, there is no intrinsic meaning or purpose in our universe, according to Harari (2017; Curran 2017:23–24).

Herold (2016:19) explains that the word, "transhuman" was coined by Julian Huxley, the brother of the English writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley. Huxley believed the human beings would transition from human to the next stage of their evolution. That being he called" posthuman."

Transhumanism seeks to overcome human limitations, like the body and its physical restrictions, disease and physical illness, aging, cognitive capacities, life span, and so on (Oesch 2020:24; Sweet 2015:360; Waters 2011:165; Campbell 2006:64). Think of it as three superpowers, says Oesch (2020:28): "super-longevity, super-intelligence, and super-well-being." These will be achieved by employing "enhancement technologies" to launch humanity into its next evolutionary phase (Shatzer 2021:134; Oesch 2020:26; Rana 2019:15). Such enhancement technologies include genetic engineering, pharmaceutical drugs, nanobots, neuro implants, bionic replacements for poorly functioning

body parts,[2] and cybernetic augmentations for our physical, emotional, and psychological composition (Curran 2017:23; Herold 2016:15). And so, as Herold (2016:15) proclaims, the "line between 'human' and 'machine' will become progressively more blurry." Transhumanists want to control our evolutionary process and enhance human potential by transforming and redesigning human nature[3] (Sweet 2015:360).

O'Connell (2017:17) explains that Transhumanism is considered a liberation movement, freeing itself from biology itself. But on the other hand, it is a "total enslavement to technology." Here we need to keep in mind that there are two terms, Transhumanism and Posthumanism. Transhumanism is the present transition towards the goal of posthumanism where our psychosomatic persons are replaced by a non-organic body (Kraftchick 2015:48), either as a robotic machine (think cyborg) or in virtual space. Either way, our minds, and even our consciousnesses will be uploaded into a non-biological brain-computer interface (BCI). Here we begin to see the overlap of artificial intelligence (AI) with Transhumanism (Rana 2019:102, 105; O'Connell 2017:32; Porter 2017:239; Kraftchick 2015:52; Tirosh-Samuelson 2012:717). They are separate projects, but they are related and may merge in the future. This is called the "singularity", the moment technology fuses with "human consciousness and artificial intelligence" (Curran 2017:25; Kurzweil 2006). Tirosh-Samuelson (2012:717) says that for Ray Kurzweil, the "uploading of ourselves into a human-made machine is the spiritual goal of Transhumanism since it promises transcendence and even immortality. While the body, the hardware of the human-computer, will die, the software of our lives, our personal 'mind file,' will continue to live on the Web in the posthuman future where holographic avatars will interact with other bodiless posthuman entities."

For now, Transhumanism is the "merging of humanity with technology as the next stage of our human evolution," according to Campbell (2006:62). He explains that technology is the tool that will help us overcome our biological

[2] Herold (2016: 18) tells us, "Already in use or in development is an array of artificial organs, including hearts, kidneys, pancreases, lungs, retinas, and parts of the brain."
[3] This paper is not advocating evolution, theistic evolution, or any other evolution-creation view. It merely presents the views of Transhumanism, which adhere to some variation of Darwinism.

limits, improve our physical condition, and lengthen our lives (Campbell 2006:61).

Technocrats, specialist medical doctors (like neuroscientists), computer and robotic engineers, scientists, and philosophers are already working toward the future of humanity's existence (Kraftchick 2015:50). Such an existence may be considered posthuman. The irony is that while "Posthumanism is a new vision of humanity" (Campbell 2006:63), it not only redefines humanity but also transcends it, replacing it with something quite different (Sweet 2015:361). As Tirosh-Samuelson (2012:715) laments, this may lead to the "delinking (of) sex and reproduction and seek the self-destruction of the embodied human."

Curran (2017:23) explains that Transhumanists are "children of the Enlightenment, with its optimistic view of human progress. They believe that developments in science and technology will soon make possible the radical transcendence of human biological, cognitive, and emotional limitations, and the evolution of a posthuman race, even the attainment of immortality." Transhumanism makes use of "humanist values such as rationality, personal autonomy, and so on," says Porter (2017:238). Further, Transhumanists have the conviction that they can and indeed must control human evolution using technology (O'Connell 2017: 10) and that humans have the moral right to extend life and upgrade human cognitive and physiological capabilities (Campbell 2006:64). The principle of Transhumanism is to improve our works, to make humanity better, to eliminate suffering. Consequently, along with O'Connell (2017:10), who is not a Transhumanist, we should at the very least be sympathetic towards this cause, despite so many ethical, social, and religious concerns.

African Holism

Few African scholars have engaged with Transhumanism, and yet it is a global movement. African philosophy offers a unique response to Transhumanist ideals that need to be taken into careful consideration. Before supplying a theological response to Transhumanism, I will explore the contributions that African holism can make to the Transhumanist dialogue.

Turaki (2006:32) explains that holism is an African philosophical concept that "life is more than the sum of its parts," yet each part has a function and exists in "a state of complex interdependency." Further, he says that the boundaries between the material world and the spiritual world are blurred, that is, nature and human beings exist in a fluid, but coherent unity with the spiritual world (Turaki 2006:32). As Mburu says, the spiritual world is more real to the traditional African than our physical world. This is why life's questions usually "have a spiritual answer." (Mburu 2019:33). She argues that this is like the biblical worldview where the physical and spiritual realities exist together in God's creation, and spiritual beings are very active around us (Mburu 2019:34). Accordingly, Turaki (2006:34) explains that the traditional African sees life as full of supernatural possibilities.

As mysterious as life is, it is not a collection of fragmented parts. Everything exists as an integrated whole, according to Turaki, speaking of African holism. African holism does not recognize a separation between the secular and the sacred, which is why living in harmony and balance in everyday life promotes peace with one's community and the spirit world (Turaki 2006:33). Lajul (2017:26) explains holism best when he says that "African metaphysics takes the knowledge of reality as a totality, regardless of whether this reality is material or immaterial, seen or unseen, mundane or celestial, human or non-human, living or non-living."

In addition to belonging to a community, the traditional African also belongs to their creator, God, sometimes called the Supreme Being.[4] Human dignity is rooted in the notion that one is not created by oneself but by God, which gives meaning to the sacredness of human life (Ajedokun 2015:143).

The African community also facilitates another kind of holism. African scholars agree that one achieves personhood through social relationships and interaction. But it is more than simply participating in a community, it is about making a positive contribution by promoting well-being and the common good—benefiting others in their community (Molefe 2019:315–316, 320; Lajul 2017:31). Ikuenobe (2015:1008) explains that the social responsibility of all the

[4] This discussion is not going to explore the African concept of God, and whether it is the same as the Judeo-Christian God or not. For now, I mean a generic deity that shares some characteristics with the Judeo-Christian God.

members of the community is mutual and equal. Of course, that is not to say that there are no social hierarchies like chiefs, patriarchs, and intermediaries. This notion of social responsiblity is consistent with the familiar *Ubuntu* meaning, "I am because we are." *(Umntu ngumntu ngabantu* [Xhosa]). In other words, a person is a person through other persons. According to Ajedokkun (2015:137), the cultural values of Africans help guide "the role and function of the individual living within the African community."

However, as Ikuenobe (2015:1005) argues, even though the African understanding of personhood is that it is integrated into the community, this does not necessarily negate human autonomy. On the one hand, the individual is embedded in their "social environment, culture, or tradition that indicates value commitments, social obligations, interpersonal relationships, and mutual dependencies." (cf. Igbafen 2017:252; Ikuenobe 2015:1005). On the other hand, the individual is autonomous only as far as their social identity and cultural standards defined by their specific community direct their values and actions. In other words, while they have free will, their personality, and choices are shaped by the community from which they come (Ikuenobe 2015:1006, 1011). One might call this form of autonomy, "relational autonomy" (Ikuenobe 2015:1007). So, while an African is a person, they are beyond their individuality, says Ikuenobe (2015:1007). He sums it up succinctly as follows, "The community involves a set of values, traditions, interests, and complex relationships that transcend individuals or their collectivity the individual self is defined by, integrated into, and constituted in the community by the organic processes of acculturation, socialization, moral education, and ritual integration." (Ikuenobe 2015:1010).

Although Sweet (2015) is not writing on African community or holism, his reflections on Transhumanism and the metaphysics of the human person are salient to this discussion. He argues that Transhumanism dissolves human and personal identity, firstly by blurring the distinguishing marks of personal characteristics that distinguish one person from another, and secondly by diminishing shared communal characteristics (Sweet 2015:362). There is no recognition in the Transhumanist movement of the relationship between human beings as a fundamental part of what it means to be human (Sweet 2015:363).

Transhumanism also views the human as a duality; the body is a commodity that is distinct from the human person, implying that the person may be separated from their body (Sweet 2015:363). Human beings are also embodied beings who "exist and relate to one another so far as they are material beings." In other words, we are embodied persons who relate to others through our bodies (Sweet 2015:365, 370). The Transhumanist view is contrary to African holism, and in my view, a biblical anthropology, namely dualist holism (or psychosomatic holism). Sweet states that the body "is not merely an instrument through which relations occur or activities are engaged in. The body is 'integrated 'with what it is to be a human person. And it is because of this integration that the human person is said to be a 'whole.'" (Sweet 2015:365). Transhumanism fails to consider that humans are social creatures who participate as members of communities where we grow and develop in morals, language, self-awareness, social behavior, customs, codes, and so on. All these are part of what makes us human persons (Sweet 2015:367). The Transhumanist project seeks to employ technology to improve the human condition. Yet, one needs to ask whether this is an improvement if the human virtues of accomplishment and the process of achieving moral, intellectual, and spiritual development that contribute to human personality are diminished.

However, the traditional African view of the community has been romanticized, especially in contemporary Africa, because globalization has fostered a "culturally pluralistic and interconnected global society." (Ajedokun 2015:138). This means that the modern African city dweller has lost some of their sensibilities towards their traditional African community whereby their personhood has adopted different moral and cultural guides, namely those produced by colonialist values, urbanization, and modern thought and lifestyles (Ikuenobe 2015:1014). It is not difficult to see that Sweet's reflections on community, though Western, address African concerns, which suggests that African holism may be quite relevant to Western sympathies as well as to contemporary urban Africa where globalization is prevalent—even more reason for Africans to engage with Transhumanism.

A fascinating dialogue has taken place between two Nigerian philosophers, Ademola Kazeem Fayemi, a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Johannesburg, and Amara Esther Chimakonam, a doctoral student at the same

university. Both are researchers in Bioethics in Africa and African philosophy.[5] Fayemi's article was titled, "Personhood in a Transhumanist Context: An African Perspective." Chimakonam's "Transhumanism in Africa: A Conversation with Ademola Fayemi on his Afrofuturistic Account of Personhood" offers her confutation to Fayemi.[6]

Consistent with the African community, Fayemi acknowledges that "personhood in Yoruba culture (Nigerian) is defined primarily through other persons and other secondary but complementary qualitative capabilities such as will and social functionality." Fayemi agrees that Transhumanism may conflict with traditional values and beliefs and with the African perception of personhood. Yet, he "defends an Afrofuturistic account of personhood that is compatible with some censored essentials of Transhumanism in African thoughts." After all, Transhumanism also confers personhood via technology, says Fayemi (2018:55). Science and technology are employed by Transhumanism to improve humanity's condition. The objective of this "intellectual, cultural, and technological commitment" is to make human beings *more* human by "transcending our biological limitations." (Fayemi 2018:62).

Fayemi (2018:71) holds that Africa may well embrace Transhumanism, especially if it is able solve some of painful realities that so many Africans experience every day. Yet, he is aware of the public health and economic challenges in Africa. Although Fayemi wishes to see the protection of African personhood, as well as the enhancement of humanity's condition, he suggests that Transhumanist technology needs to be appropriated slowly, and in piecemeal fashion. Transhumanism will realize true personhood, according to Fayemi (2018:72), "by providing platforms for increased capacity of appreciating life in all its dimensions." This suggests that personhood would not be negatively affected, especially if the Transhumanist project can learn from "African moral and metaphysical conceptions of personhood." (Fayemi 2018:72). Feyemi (2018:73) concludes,

[5] Their academic credentials were current at the time they published their articles.
[6] The two scholars have also co-authored papers together.

> Africa, in the face of its mountainous challenges, needs to key into the Transhumanist scheme. In appropriating Transhumanist ideas and products in Africa, Africans can rarely afford to be mere end-users of therapeutic and enhancement technologies of the world; efforts should be stepped-up in being active participants in the production of ideas and knowledge in the Transhumanist age. African states can, and do have a duty to, transform the human condition for the better by embracing technologies that not only promote personhood but also have potential of making humans more humane.

I appreciate Fayemi's awareness of some of Africa's challenges, his concerns about personhood, and his eagerness for Africa to make a significant contribution to a global movement. Yet I find his argument that Transhumanism's is able to enhance personhood and make humans even more human is naïve, particularly when the integration of technology with biology could diminish human personhood and humanity itself. One need only look at social media and the global crises of loneliness and lack of authentic and embodied community to see this danger. I am not alone in my criticism. In her response to Fayemi, Chimakonam (2021:43), agrees that "the technological enhancement of personhood would increase the relational capacity of individuals and better situate them to contribute to the common good." Yet, she rightly, in my view, opposes the idea that "Transhumanism is compatible with the Afro-communitarian normative concept of personhood." This" casts doubt on the permissibility of Transhumanism from an Afro-communitarian stance." (Chimakonam 2021:43).

Chimakonam (2021:50) argues that it is the level of an individual's adherence to the norms of their community and their responsibilities that develops and enriches one's personhood. Transhumanism, on the other hand, radicalizes the acquisition of personhood by taking it out of the hands of the community and putting it in the cold clinical hands of technology. By so doing, she argues, the value Africans place on personhood will be eliminated, because the process by which one attains "personhood is ultimately eliminated by the genetic compulsion to always do good." (Chimakonam 2021:52). In other words, moral responsibility would terminate in "such a technologized

personhood." (Chimakonam 2021:53). This, of course, also raises the question of human free will, another important topic in African philosophy (or any philosophy for that matter). In her conclusion, Chimakonam (2021:53) writes,

> Fayemi's Afrofuturistic Transhumanist future provides grounds to doubt the permissibility of Transhumanism in Africa. The technological enhancement of human behaviour would then be morally objectionable in so far as it waters radicalizes [sic] the normative conception of personhood. This radicalization would be in the form of a radical change from normative personhood, where individuals strive to achieve personhood and succeed or fail at it, to technologized personhood, where personhood would be technologically engineered.

Transhumanism: A Theological Response

In the previous discussion, I looked at African holism and demonstrated how it offers a critique of Transhumanism. In this discussion, I will offer a biblical-theological response to Transhumanism. This response is not a supplement to the contribution of African holism. Instead, it takes the discussion further, beyond the limits of human philosophy. After all, Scripture and theology have the last word when it comes to a Christian response.

Many Christian theologians take issue with Transhumanism's view of anthropology, personhood, and their poor understanding of transcendence (Tirosh-Samuelson 2012:718). Nevertheless, that does not mean that there is no common ground between Transhumanism and Christianity; there certainly is. Subsequently, this has become the seedbed for the Christian Transhumanist Association, which encourages "using science & technology to participate in the work of God—to cultivate life and renew creation." (Christian Transhumanist Association 2023).

There is much that Christians can commend in Transhumanism. Transhumanists and Christians agree that the world is not as it should be and needs to be redeemed. However, Christian theologians argue that our present condition is the result of humanity's corruption; for the Transhumanist, the

world is broken because of our limited mortal condition, our unablility to reach our full potential (Oesch 2020:211; Waters 2011:164). While Christians seek transformation "by their life with Christ," Transhumanists seek it "through technological transformation." (Waters 2011:164). Both wish to see the removal of evil, sickness, suffering, and death. Both hope for a renewed creation, even if each one's final vision looks different from the other. Traditionally, Christians have been pioneers in starting hospitals and caring for the sick and so support medical research to "promote human flourishing and alleviate human suffering" (Rana 2019:204). Christians and non-believers have worked together in medicine and technology and should continue to do so (Oesch 2020:211).

Both Christians and Transhumanists perceive death as an enemy of humanity (Oesch 2020:214; Waters 2011:164). Transhumanists look to overcome death by using technology "to extend life indefinitely, provide unlimited knowledge, and give its adherents total bliss." Christianity, on the other hand," teaches about eternal life (super-longevity) in which all of God's designs will be made known (super-intelligence) in a state where fear or sadness no longer exist (super-well-being)." Transhumanists rely on their creative power and technology, while Christians look to the truly transcendent God and his promises of a glorious, embodied resurrection (Oesch 2020:44–45). According to Rana (2019:23), Transhumanists also look for transcendence and immortality, but this transcendence is not found in an external deity, but in us. They argue that this is to be unlocked and cultivated by science and enhancement technology.

There is common ground between Christians and Transhumanists, despite significant differences. Both believe that we need to continue with caution and careful reflection as we develop an ethical framework that is caring and just, explains Campbell (2006:71), but as he reminds us, continuation must not be at humanity's expense. This too is my greatest concern.

Cole-Turner (2015:20) reckons that those who oppose Transhumanism are hopeful that Christians will put an end to the Transhumanist project. The problem he says is that Transhumanism is a Christian idea. In my view, such Christians see more in common with Transhumanism, than they ought. Enter the world of Christian Transhumanism. According to the Christian

Transhumanist Association website, a Christian Transhumanist is "Someone who advocates using science & technology to transform the human condition—in a way consistent with, and as exemplified by, the discipleship of Christ." (Christian Transhumanist Association 2023; Shatzer 2021:134–135).

Curran (2017:25) believes that human enhancement technology may serve *some* of God's purposes and that Christians can employ technology to extend life, improve family and community life, and contribute to overall human flourishing. Yet, he also acknowledges that the Transhumanist concept of "absolute physical immortality contradicts Christian teaching about our ultimate destiny." (Curran 2017:25). Mercer (2015:30) pushes this further, arguing that Christians may embrace Transhumanist ideals like uploading persons. He has in mind uploading our consciousness on brain-computer interfaces (BCI) that are in some way embodied— presumably cyborg or otherwise. He thinks that our future hope in the resurrection will include a radically transformed body anyway (Mercer 2015:29–30). Mercer (2015:30) argues that our Christian faith should not necessarily "insist on the continuation of homo sapiens." This brings him to ask whether "Christian theological anthropology is flexible enough to view posthuman persons or for that matter posthumans who do not meet the full criteria for personhood, as in the image of God?" (Mercer 2015:30). Cole-Turner believes that "Christians and Transhumanists are visionary partners" and that Christians should claim the Transhumanist project as their own. He argues that the foundation of Transhumanism is in line with the central teachings of Christian revelation; that is, "the hope of going beyond the human, beyond this present condition of our humanity and entering something indescribably rich and inexhaustibly glorious." Cole-Turner (2015:21) believes that this "is the central promise of the gospel. It is rooted in the incarnation itself, in God becoming human to raise humanity to a new and glorified state". One wonders whether Cole-Turner understands what it means to be truly human. He reckons that Transhumanism was birthed from Christianity and believes that God can work through our technology bringing about his ends (Cole-Turner 2015:21, 23).

One of the major obstacles to Transhumanism from a Christian perspective is the embodied resurrection. Related to the resurrection is Jesus's incarnation. He became human so that we may "participate in the divine reality and transcend at least some of the limits of ordinary human experience." (Curran

2017:23). In other words, Jesus becomes human—not cyborg—so that we may take part in his divine reality, not some kind of technological virtual reality. According to the Apostle Paul, this participation is by way of sharing in Jesus's life and suffering, his death and resurrection, and his mystical body (Rom 6:5; Gal 2:20; Phil 3:10; Col 1:24; cf. Curran 2017:22).

The Transhumanist looks for a way to overcome death, either by prolonging life using technology, uploading consciousness onto a brain–computer interface (BCI), or Cryonics. To be sure, Transhumanism offers a type of resurrection, but as Campbell (2006:69) explains, this resurrected transcendence is itself limited and beholden to physical technology.

The irony, of course, is that for the Christian believer, Jesus has already conquered death in his resurrection (Acts 2:24; 1 Cor 15:20; 2 Tim 1:10; Rev 1:18b). This means that we too will be recipients of eternal life, embodied resurrection (Luke 14:14; John 5:29; 1 Cor 15:50–55; 1 Thess 4:13–18; Rev 2:10–11; 20:6), and a redeemed creation (Is 11:1–9; 41:18–20; 66:22–23; Hos 2:18–19; Acts 3:20–21; Rom 8:18–23; 2 Cor 5:17; Rev 21:1–5; cf. Oesch 2020:220). Such a resurrection, which we assume would be the same as Jesus's resurrection (1 Cor 15:20; Phil 3:20-21), though probably of lesser glory but glorious nonetheless, will be transphysical as his (Luke 24:36–43; John 20:19–20; 1 Cor 15:51–53). In other words, there will be "continuity and discontinuity between our present and future bodies." (1 Cor 15:36–38; Phil 3:20–21; Rana 2019:256; Wright 2008:77). It is this resurrection that will finally restore our true humanity and free us from suffering and death (1 Cor 15:54; Is 65:17-19; Rev 21:4; Oesch 2020:222), making Transhumanist technology, as helpful as some of it might be, a poor and insipid substitute for the glorious resurrection we await. One wonders how for the Transhumanist Christian the resurrection might pan out for those individuals whose transition into Transhumanism has moved beyond being recognizably human (Dumsday 2017:618). Of course, this begs the question, at which point in the transhuman trajectory does being human begin to diminish? There is no clear threshold, but a teleological ethic may offer some guidance.

Furthermore, Waters (2011:172) reminds us that Christian theology upholds the sacredness of the body, and thus of embodiment. It is through our bodies that life is conceived, love is shared, and we fellowship with one another and

with God in worship. It is not that our soul—or the consciousness that makes up our personality—is rescued from our physical bodies. Our entire person is redeemed in resurrection life. Jesus's bodily resurrection shows this. The body ought not be despised; it is God's "gift endowed with sacredness", even though we long for its future resurrection (Campbell 2006:67). The resurrection, according to Scripture and Christian theology, is an embodied one, enjoying a transphysical and eternal existence—it is not a ghostly existence. Rana (2019:257) explains that our resurrected bodies will be: (1) imperishable, meaning that they will not succumb to disease, injuries, aging, or even death (1 John 3:2; 1 Cor 15:53–54); (2) powerful, that is, they will enjoy strength and power (Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:43); (3) glorious, exhibiting "radiance, honor, and beauty." (2 Cor 3:18; Phil 3:20); and (4) spiritual, meaning that they would be free from the corrupting power of sin and will be infused with the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:10; 1 Cor 2:14–15). Considering this, Christians are the true Transhumanists, quips Rana (2019:258). With a resurrected body like this in a renewed creation, who needs the Transhumanist (h+) project? The irony, as Rana (2019:253) points out, is that if enhancement technology is employed to re-create humanity, it will not be humans who are saved.

From a Christian worldview, the problem with Transhumanism is that it attempts to take charge of God's creative act and his creative process by disordering the created order into something that was never intended. Such Transhumanist creations are presumptuous at best. Even for a secular naturalist, do we have the right to redirect and manipulate our evolutionary process? Similarly, Parks (2019:213) says "our use of technology cannot decide what does and does not count as human—those beings who are so beloved of God that the Second Person became a man." He continues to argue that our use of technology ought not to be employed for violent ends that promote chaos and power (Parks 2019:213).

Transhumanism is a transgression of and violation against the sanctity and value of embodied human life as created by God (Hasselbrook 2022:27; Campbell 2006:67). This sacrilegious project is the result of hopelessness born out of dire despair and a rejection of natural embodiment and the limitations of human nature (Hasselbrook 2022:31). Hasselbrook (2022:31) argues that "Transhumanism is fundamentally a reaction against, not an answer to, the limitations and corruptibility of the human being. To confront this doubt,

Transhumanism seeks control over and correction to the imperfections of death, cognition, and morality." The more Transhumanists seek to overcome the effects of Adam's fall and humanity's sin, the more they put themselves in God's place as Creator and Designer (Gen 3; Hasselbrook 2022:31; cf. Oesch 2020:213).

The Oxford mathematician and philosopher of science John Lennox, himself a Christian, provides us with a helpful theological response to Transhumanism. While he believes that Christian theology and science are beautifully compatible (Lennox 2020:113–115), he looks at the creation account in the Garden of Eden where God provides a moral dimension for humanity. Lennox (2020:135-136) argues that, "Far from diminishing human status, by forbidding one thing, God conferred a unique dignity on humans." The moral boundary is constituted by the command not to eat a fruit from a certain tree. Transhumanism, however, by seeking to improve and even to "upgrade" human nature (Lennox 2020:146), may in time diminish freedom and free choice, and remove moral responsibility and human relationships (Cf. Oesch 2020:210). Furthermore, the creation of "a super-intelligent 'Homo Deus 'will neither lead back to God nor lead to God, but rather to the greatest rejection of God." There is no way to bypass the consequences of humanity's sin, except in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and the hope he brings to our world (Lennox 2020:227–228).

The concept championed by Transhumanism, to create godhood through super-longevity, super-intelligence, and super-well-being, is an ancient affair (Lennox 2020:157), reminiscent of the New Testament's warning of the "devil-inspired, anti-god, immensely powerful world leader who will in a future time claim divine honors and deceive the world by false wonders and who will be cataclysmically destroyed by the return of Christ in power and great glory" (Lennox 2020:206; cf. 2 Thess 2:1–12; Rev 13:1–18; 19:20; 20;10).

Naydler (2020:14) fears that the price of Transhumanism is the diminishing of spiritual life and our understanding of its meaning and purpose. Our understanding of the language used in our wisdom or religious traditions will also be lost, along with our humanity. It would not take long before we become inhuman. More frightening would be the inability to recognize that we have

lost our humanity or, at best, a feeling of indifference to that which we have lost.

According to Christianity, humanity is made in God's image (Gen 1:27). This forms the basis of a biblical ethical system (Rana 2019:183). While theologians might not always agree on what is meant by being made in the image of God, we can at least agree that we are in one way or another created in the likeness of God (Col 3:10; Eph 4:24; Rana 2019:183).

Rana (2019:184) explains that being in the image of God may include the following: (1) having an innate understanding of right and wrong (morals and justice), (2) having an awareness of spirituality and a desire for the transcendent and to connect with it, (3) having a tendency to worship a deity, (4) having the cognitive capacity for reason and logic, (5) having an awareness of time - past, present and future, (6) and having an ability for creativity, whether it be in art, architecture, music, literature, science, and ironically, developing technology for Transhumanism. Rana (2019:178) proclaims that ethical considerations for Transhumanism need to take into account these human qualities which reflect the image of God. If not, transhuman ethics will be inadequate and will prove to be disastrous.

In his work, Hasselbrook (2022:32) picks up the issue of being created in God's image. Yet, after humanity's fall (Gen 3:6-7) they distorted this image in their sin. Now through Jesus 'sacrificial death, he redeems us and restores this image in us, by renewing and transforming us to be like himself (2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:10; 2 Pet 1:4; 1 John 3:2). And so, as Rana (2019:144) says, the problem is not so much about Transhumanists playing God; it is that they use their "capacities as image bearers[7] to usurp God's authority." He suggests that this is analogous to the sin that the ancients committed when building the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1–8. Building the tower to reach heaven was not the problem; the problem, Rana says, was their design to become like God and replace him (as if God could be replaced!). The Transhumanist project suffers from the same kind of attitude (Rana 2019:144).

[7] I take it that those who have rejected God still bear God's image even if it's disfigured.

It is noticeable in this discussion that many of the distinctives of African holism are addressed in a biblical-theological response to Transhumanism. Theology does not merely serve its religious ends, at its very heart it also addresses very human concerns. It seeks to protect human progress and flourishing but not at the expense of diminishing human nature and the image of God *(imago Dei).*

Transhumanism is here; it has been here since ancient times, but its technology is developing at a rapid rate, quicker than we might imagine, and there is little we can do to prevent it. Therefore, we need to develop appropriate ethical systems. The only way we can develop a suitable ethic for Transhumanism is if these systems protect the rights and dignity of humanity (Rana 2019:177).

A Teleological Ethic

As I showed earlier, Christians share common ground with some elements of the Transhumanist vision, despite nuanced differences which are quite significant. Rather than condemning all things Transhumanist, we ought to engage with it thoughtfully yet critically, because we have something important to offer the world. A biblical-theological critique is always best when it is served with a better alternative. And so, when we engage with the ethical concerns of Transhumanism and its technologies, our posture ought to be a positive and hopeful one, even though we might perceive it as a false gospel and a dangerous endeavor, keeping in mind that many of the human enhancement technologies might be of great service to many people (Oesch 2020:206; Rana 2019:246, 250–252).

Both Christianity and the Transhumanist project have a strong eschatological emphasis - except that Christian theology understands the end, the resurrection, and the coming of the new creation as a divine act, while Transhumanists see it as a series of human initiatives and technology bringing about a utopia (cf. Rana 2019:251; Tirosh-Samuelson 2012:721). With this kind of teleological focus, it seems suitable to select teleological ethics as an ethic for the concerns of Transhumanism.

Teleological ethics (sometimes called consequentialist ethics) is a moral theory that explores the morality of actions that would lead to the most desirable

outcome that could be achieved for everyone. In other words, the focus of teleological ethics is on the result or the consequence, not on the actions themselves that got us there. A frequent problem, however, is that the end does not necessarily justify the means. This is different from deontological ethics which places the emphasis on the ethics of the actions and how they adhere to common moral duties and standards, rather than their consequences which may be either good or evil (Baumane-Vitolina, Cals & Sumilo 2016:110; Britannica 2008). In my view, Transhumanism is more teleological than it is deontological, and while its end goal is desirable for a select few, it does not necessarily mean that the result will be best for the greater good of humanity. For this reason, I argue that we need to develop a teleological ethic for Transhumanism considering what African holism teaches us. As we learn from Lajul (2017:25), "Teleological and holistic natures of African metaphysics are not contradictory to each other." More importantly, we need to develop ethics that are informed by Scripture and Christian theology.

A primary goal of Transhumanism is not only to improve humanity using enhancement technologies, but also to change the nature of the human being. This has serious ethical and theological ramifications (Lennox 2020: 146). After all,

> Deification[8] does not transform us into independent deities but rather frees us from our pretensions to autonomy so that we may participate in the blessed, communal life of the triune God. We do not participate in that life merely by living longer, becoming smarter, looking sexier, acquiring more power, or improving our gene pool, but rather through the graced effort to live as holy people. We are upgraded from sinners to saints as we struggle to overcome our vices, to embody virtues like faith, hope, and love, and to practice the worship and contemplation of God. (Curram 2017:25)

[8] We could take also use the more Protestant concept of "union with Christ."

According to Rana (2019:153), bioethicists are concerned about neuro-engineering technologies and gene editing that may "strip away personal and species-wide human identity." Many of the Transhumanist advances in science and technology will improve the lives of many who have suffered deformity, injury, or are handicapped in some way. However, the Transhumanist agenda is naïve because not only will it not solve all the problems of human pain and suffering in our world, but it will also ultimately create a new hybrid species. So, if we are going to make use of some human enhancement technology, we ought to develop a solid ethical framework that is both wise and appropriate for the preservation and flourishing of humankind (Rana 2019:73, 143).

If the ultimate goals of Transhumanism are realized, we will eventually reduce ourselves to sets of data, but as Shatzer (2021:138) explains, human beings are more than just chemical reactions in our material bodies. What Transhumanism would eventually save is anything but human (Rana 2019: 242). As Oesch (2020:224) correctly suggests, an authentic human being must be embodied in flesh and blood. Because of God's design this embodied arrangement of body and soul existing together affords human life and flourishing. It is not morally acceptable to diminish personhood by manipulating or swopping out embodiment (think cyborg), gender, or personality for enhancing one's physical and mental capacities (Campbell 2006:68–69). This would be a reordering of God's created order.

Oesch (2020:258) suggests that the following qualities are indicative of having a true sense of being human: (1) *Vocation.* Having a purpose in one's life, in the family, and in the community. For Christians, this includes a purpose to serve God in their community. (2) *Embodiment.* That is to have a real "sense of physical embodiment" which finds expression in sexuality, communication, compassion, and so on. Humans were not designed to be disembodied beings, but to be a psychosomatic whole. Our personhood is rich and complex, it is more than the mind, intellectual capability, spirituality, and bodily physicality. As we have seen, even Jesus 'resurrection and our coming resurrection is an embodied one. (3) *Community.* Every human being is meant to be connected to a community or communities. For Christians, this includes their church community. Communities offer networking, friendship, spiritual, moral, and often practical support, and accountability. In other words, communities offer relationships. Community and relationships provide great benefits for the

overall well-being of any individual connected to a community. As Oesch (2020:247) says, "To be human is to be in community with other people sharing the joys and pains of life together." Remember *Ubuntu?* There is a significant overlap between Oesch's list of human qualities and African holism.

However, drawing from theology and African Holism, I add two more qualities: (4) *Moral Freedom.* This is the God-given ability to exercise freedom of will by choosing between right and wrong, not to mention any number of other kinds of choices we might choose. Our moral freedom originates from being made in God's image *(imago Dei),* and God's "unconditional respect for the freedom of his creature" (Ratzinger 1988:216). This leads us to the fifth quality: (5) *Worship.* Humanity has the desire to worship a transcendent deity external to himself. In Christianity, especially, this pushes further in desiring to be in a relationship with the triune God in addition to worshiping him.

Despite the theological critique on the Transhumanism (h+) project, certain technologies would certainly help humanity, and so a teleological ethic for Transhumanism need not be a complicated one despite all the academic nuances. While many of us might not agree on what it means to be human, we all ought to agree on the five distinctions mentioned above, (1) vocation, (2) embodiment, (3) community (and relationship), (4) moral freedom, and (5) worship. The Transhumanist project may go on if we prioritize protecting these five distinctions at all costs. Secondly, we ought to treat human enhancement technologies as remedial only; that is, they should be employed only to fill the gaps due to impediments, handicaps, or injury.

One might imagine the Transhumanists rolling their eyes at such a teleological ethic, saying, "that makes the goal of Transhumanism redundant!" To which I reply, "If you have enough ingenuity, creativity, and determination to make Transhumanism a reality, then surely you can work within the parameters that protect the human identity and flourishing, all it takes is a little more imagination and humility.

Conclusion

Transhumanism is a broad philosophical, scientific, and technological movement that promotes the ideals of transforming human beings with

enhancement technology to transition into their next evolutionary step, becoming posthuman. This movement includes the noble desire to remove pain, and suffering, and prolonging human life, and more generally work towards a utopic future (Rana 2019:216). While researching I was astonished at how much common ground there is between Christian ideals and those of the Transhumanist (h+) project. This gives Transhumanism a quasi-religious sense (Tirosh-Samuelson 2012:719).

Regardless, Transhumanism is naïve because, as Waters (2011:173) says, "as one attempts to transform oneself into a superior being, the resulting posthuman becomes enslaved to itself as a self-constructed artifact, a semblance of a semblance." Not to mention that it diminishes and destroys the very thing (humanity) that it (supposedly) desires to save. It is not surprising that many of the concerns related to Transhumanism are the loss of human identity and dehumanization (Rana 2019:153).

Transhumanism is here to stay. There is no point in decrying the project. A more sustainable and helpful approach is to offer a framework for a teleological ethic that looks not only to protect humanity but to enable scientific advancement and human flourishing. A study of African holism and theological responses to Transhumanism offers us such an ethic, one that supplies parameters for safeguarding human identity. I argued that five distinctives make up a teleological ethic for Transhumanism: (1) *Vocation.* Protect and promote purpose in one's life, family, and community. This includes serving God in their communities for those who are Christian and are part of a church fellowship. (2) *Embodiment.* Although there should be provision for human enhancement technology for those in need, for example, prosthetic limbs, and implantable brain-computer interfaces for the paralyzed and handicapped, human beings ought to remain embodied in their biological body and this needs to be protected. Our sexuality, communication, and compassion must be authentic; enjoyed, and expressed in embodiment. This means that disembodiment is out of bounds. (3) *Community (and relationship).* Protect and promote personal relationships in communities like networking and friendships. Communities supply accountability, and spiritual, moral, and practical support. Community and relationships are significant contributions to human flourishing and development. (4) *Moral Freedom.* God has made us in his image, and thus has also given us the gift of free choice, and so our moral

freedom needs to be upheld and protected. (Ironically, this means that Transhumanists may either ignore or embrace this teleological ethic.) (5) *Worship.* Irrespective of one's faith tradition, humans were created to worship and look for the transcendent. Regardless of one's religious convictions, the innate desire for worship must be protected. For the Christian, the desire to worship and be in a relationship with God needs to be protected at all costs.

With ingenuity and humility, we may promote Transhumanist technology while also celebrating our human identity. Perhaps then it is no longer "Transhumanism" because there is no "trans." Instead it is "pro-humanism", and let's keep the (h+) for enhancement technology that might assist and promote human flourishing. Amen to Prohumanism (h+).

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Magical Thinking: Familiar/Cursed Objects

Annari du Plessis
NG Kerk
annarid@ngkerk.org.za

Abstract

Magical thinking can take on many forms within Christianity. One of the aspects of the spiritual warfare and deliverance ministry worldview is that of cursed or familiar objects. Demons are attracted to these objects and may inhabit them. Cursed/familiar objects include items explicitly related to other religions, items that are implicitly connected, and even seemingly innocent items. A number of Scriptures have been employed to argue for the existence of cursed objects, the grave results of contact with such objects, and how to react to such objects. Key texts are: Deuteronomy 7: 25-26, Isaiah 2: 6, and Acts 19: 19. The aforementioned texts are taken out of context and haphazardly assembled to strengthen the argument. This is not a responsible interpretation of Scripture. The original language and historical context need to be taken into consideration. The magical thinking about objects hearkens to what used to be called fetishism. It is unfounded in Scripture and boils down to superstition that can have negative effects on the individual and society.

Introduction

When it comes to magical thinking, most people in the Western world would probably consider it doubtful to exist. In ancient times, the belief in magic was common, but through the advancement of science the belief in magic has dwindled. However, the belief in magic still persists even in modern society (Subbotsky 2011: 127, 137). Eugene Subbotsky defines magic as following fashion: it relates to the direct effect of consciousness over matter, such as affecting or creating physical objects through the effort of thought, will, wish, or word (mind-over-matter magic). It may concern the sudden acquisition of

spontaneity by a nonanimate physical object (animation magic), or a violation of the fundamental laws of object permanence, physical space, and time, such as one physical object inexplicably turning into another physical object in an instant (nonpermanence magic). It may also indicate when certain objects or events affect other objects or events in a nonphysical way, through similarity or contagion (sympathetic magic) (2011:127). Haydn J. McLean has a wider definition that defines magical thinking as consisting of the following four aspects: (1) "A conviction that thinking is equivalent to doing…"; (2) "…the ability to influence events at a distance with no known physical explanation"; (3) "…the interpreting of two closely occurring events as though one caused the other, without any concern for the causal link"; and (4) "…that one's thoughts, words, or actions can achieve specific physical effects in a manner not governed by the principles of ordinary transmission of energy or information" (2009: 5). Magical thinking can take on many forms within Christianity. This article focuses on an aspect of spiritual warfare, namely, the belief in familiar or cursed objects.

Spiritual warfare is mostly found within the Pentecostal and charismatic traditions (Smith 2011: 4) but can be found among people of any tradition. The notion of spiritual warfare has been in circulation since at least the 1970's (Howard 2009: 159). A well-known and popular book about spiritual warfare is *Pigs in the Parlor: A Practical Guide to Deliverance* by Frank and Ida Mae Hammond, first published in 1973. In the 80's and 90's there was a surge in media attention to Satanic influence (Frankfurter 2001: 352; Howard 2009: 163). The term "Satanic Panic" refers to that period in which conspiracy theories regarding an outbreak of Satanism sparked the formation of parent groups and action from police and counsellors (Wallace 2015: 37; cf. Ellis 1990: 29, 39-40; Ivey 1992: 41; Victor 1990: 53). It should be noted that the kind of Satanism envisioned in the conspiracy theories is not the kind of Satanism proposed by Anton LaVey. Even though Satanic Panic has been debunked, it enjoys revivals from time to time and remnants of the beliefs still remain to this day. There are links between the beliefs of Satanic Panic and the beliefs of the QAnon movement: "A belief in ritualistic human sacrifice and Satanic worship is a fundamental tenet of QAnon - over time, that paranoia managed to trickle into the mainstream, accelerated by a general distrust of authority and institutions" (Di Placido 2022). Rebecca Brown's fantastical books about spiritual warfare between herself and servants of Satan were published during

the Satanic Panic of the 80's and 90's. In South Africa, the Occult Related Crimes Unit was formed in 1992 and Kobus Jonker published his book *Satanism in South Africa: Knowledge, insight, hope*, *help* (Wallace 2015: 37).

In 2022, the popular Netflix science fiction horror drama *Stranger Things*, set in the 80's, refers back to Satanic Panic in their fourth season, when a group of teenagers gang up against schoolmates who play Dungeons & Dragons. The game is an adventure storytelling game where players form parties that explore fantasy worlds with the dungeon master acting as storyteller and referee (Wizards of the Coast 2022). The game includes "a mix of Tolkien fantasy tropes, with some folkloric and religious influences" (Di Placido 2022). Denis describes the Satanic Panic as the "a paranoid belief that orgies and ritualistic murder played out to metal music and in worship of fantastic creatures" (2022). The main target in Stranger Things' Satanic Panic is the leader of the Dungeons and Dragons players, a character who is a metalhead (Di Placido 2022, cf. Denis 2022). This character is loosely based upon the story of Damien Echols who was wrongfully imprisoned for a triple homicide (Denis 2022). Bob Larson, a staunch anti-rock music preacher, is one of the frontrunners to claim that any non-Christian belief system is demonic (Howard 2009: 163). This is one of the prominent beliefs that influence the perceived need to be cautious about certain objects.

According to the doctrine of spiritual warfare, Christ did have victory over Satan, but the war is not over yet. The main weapon of Satan is sin and spiritual warfare is primarily aggressive prayer (Gross 1990: 112, 116). According to spiritual warfare teachings, spiritual bondage can happen in a variety of ways, including: generational curses, involvement or experimentation with the occult, occult objects, wilful sins, unforgiveness, demonic vows, spoken self-curses, points of weakness, etc (cf. Els & Jonker 2000: 290-291). Familiar or cursed objects are also called occult objects. In South Africa there exists a following of this kind of spiritual warfare belief system. One of the current national bestsellers on the Exclusive Books website is *A Divine Revelation of Satan's Deceptions & Spiritual Warfare* by Mary K. Baxter (2022). The description of the book reads as follows:

> In 1976, Jesus took Mary K. Baxter on a spiritual journey for thirty nights to witness the torments of hell, charging her to reveal the terrible reality of God's judgment and to relate the

urgent message of salvation through Jesus Christ. Mary wrote about her journey to hell in her best-selling book A Divine Revelation of Hell, which has sold nearly 1.4 million copies. After those thirty nights, Jesus told Mary, "I will close up your mind, and you will not remember some of the things I have shown and told you. But I will reopen your mind and bring back your understanding in the latter days." Recently, God brought back to Mary's remembrance many of those experiences because these revelations are particularly for our day. A Divine Revelation of Satan's Deceptions contains new images of hell that Mary has not related in her other books, as well as crucial insights into the deceptions Satan uses to destroy people and the tactics he employs to defeat believers. Our choice is between allowing Satan to deceive and rob us—or claiming our spiritual inheritance and conquering the enemy in the power of God.

In A Divine Revelation of Spiritual Warfare, you will learn more about how to receive divine protection and use the spiritual weapons that are rightfully yours so you can take back what Satan has stolen, break free from generational curses, know what spiritual warfare is and is not, conquer entrenched sins and habits, see healings, and release others from spiritual bondage. The enemy seeks to conquer and destroy your spirit, soul, and body, but the devil has far less power than God has made available to us. Learn the enemy's strategies and be equipped to engage in spiritual battles—and win! (Whitaker House 2022).

A local proponent of spiritual warfare and "spiritual house cleaning" in specific is Tiaan Gildenhuys from Authority in Christ Ministries (Outoriteit in Christus Bedieninge) who has 10.5 thousand subscribers on YouTube. Other South African churches that teach spiritual house cleaning are Kanaan Ministries with 13,406 followers on Facebook, and Choose Life Church with 46, 012 followers on Facebook. On 14 Augustus 2022, Choose Life Church burned "various occult and items of bondage [sic]" during their "Revival in Acts"services (Choose Life Church 2022).

Familiar or cursed objects are broadly defined as any objects used in the service of Satan. “These must be removed from the house as they provide legal ground for the demons to use to bring a continuing evil power into the house” (Brown 1992: 159). Rebecca Brown states that demons cling to these objects (1992: 142). Tiaan Gildenhuys argues that idols and demon spirits are linked (2022 46:18) but that demons cannot live inside objects and can only dwell around these objects (2013:17). Demons do not indwell the object but remain in close proximity to it. An example of this is that spirits of “murder, death, and aggression” hanging around objects such as war memoribila and weapons (Gildenhuys 2013: 46). These familiar or cursed objects are also called “contact points” or “crystallisation points'' which allow demonic spirits to enter your home (Kanaan Ministries 2019: 4; Koch 1986: 288). These objects are said to open up a door in the spiritual dimension (Gildenhuys 2013:24). Occultic objects are believed to actively attract demons (Baxter 2006: 43; Hammond & Hammond 1992: 175; Mostert 1992:84). Rebecca Brown and Daniel Yoder state that even just touching “unclean and unholy things” can cause a person to become cursed (1995: 47). Occultic objects and idols are any objects that are worshipped by other religions and belief systems (Gildenhuys 2013:23). They also included items related to or used in the practices of other religions. These are items such as Buddhas, statues of Hindu gods, dream catchers, items depicting Satan or demons, or items with pagan or occult symbols on them. Items used in occultic or New Age practices such as Ouija boards, Tarot cards, and crystals, are also included (cf. Mostert 1992:84). Even seemingly innocent items are said to be occultic and give demons legal rights in your home, e.g., wind chimes, suns and moons with faces, African artefacts, playing cards, dreamcatchers, incense, hearts, images of certain animals, dolls, and even certain geometric designs like spirals (Van Rensburg 2005, cf. Els & Jonker 2000: 290).

It is also said that “if you bring an artefact into your home, it is not just an idol, it is an altar where demons can feed in your home” (Van Rensburg, 2005). It is believed that such items must be destroyed by fire, following the instruction in Deuteronomy 2: 5 “But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire” (Kanaan Ministries 2019: 10, Gildenhuys 2013: 15). If an object cannot be burned, it should be destroyed in another way. Kanaan Ministries advises that it should still be passed through

the fire first "as an act of obedience" (2021:11). The object should then be smashed (Kanaan Ministries 2019: 11, Gildenhuys 2013: 15).

Fetishism and contagious magic

In this section, two relevant magical concepts are examined. The first concept is what used to be referred to as fetishism. The term originated in 1481 with Portuguese seafarers' description of the cultic images and beliefs of the indigenous people of West Africa (Von Stuckrad 2006: 731). The English term fetish comes from the Portuguese *feitiço*, derived from *feito*, the past participle of *fazer* "to do, to make" (Radermacher 2019: 169). The term later became so broad that it included almost all aspects of the religion of West Africa (Pool 1990: 116). Charles de Brosses introduces the term in his 1760 book *Du Culte des Dieus Fétiches*. It was meant to designate the "primitive" first stage of religion (Radermacher 2019: 170). Likewise, Auguste Comte's Enlightenment view of the evolution of religion, fetishism was also the first stage (Von Stuckrad 2006: 371) The first criticism of this term and the concepts behind it came from Marcel Mauss as far back as 1907 (Iacono 2016: 75). Vernon argues that the term should be abandoned but could still be used to describe small objects such as charms and talismans (2009: 209). This is relevant for the current discussion. These items can also be referred to as cultic images. Cultic images refer to objects which are "inhabited by spiritual power," or images or statues that are believed to be "material representations of transcendent beings" (Radermacher 2019: 169, 170). As argued by Ann Taves, these objects do not act by their own accord, but "have the capacity to produce an effect" (Rademacher 2019: 173). This slots into the notion that cursed or familiar objects attract demons which give them the capacity or potential to have real consequences for those who interact with these objects. Another definition, by Marianne Vedeler, is that these cultic images "have the ability to arouse awe within a given cosmological frame … within a cosmology where objects are considered to have properties animated by a holy or magical power" (Radermacher 2019: 176). It logically follows that in a worldview where objects are seen as completely inanimate, these objects would have no power. Objects with no power could not attract demons. The notion that handling or viewing a cursed object could impart one with a demon reveals a worldview associated with cultic images and fetishes.

Another kind of magic is “contagious magic”, which is a belief in “things once joined together to affect or have a contagious, contaminating influence on each other, even after their separation” (Thorpe 1992: 110). In the area of cursed objects, there seems to be a notion similar to the idea behind contagious magic at work. AKLAS (Kommissie van Leer en Aktuele Sake of the Dutch Reformed Church) poses a thought-provoking question (2011): If it is dangerous to own a Buddha statue because the demon spirits would gain entrance into the owner’s home and life, would a New Testament Bible in the possession of a Buddhist not cause Jesus to gain entrance into that person’s house and life? Jan de Jongh van Arkel states that: “It seems to me that the people who become involved in demon exorcism have very often settled for mythical concepts and prefer mythical thinking... A mythical religion is very easily degraded to the level of magic with a whole set of rituals. Magic is, in essence, a refined form of domination. It is used to avert disaster, to influence the forces of nature, and to influence or even manipulate other people” (1987: 144).

Isaiah speaks about the worthlessness of the heathen gods and especially their idol statues in 44: 6-22. Jeremiah 10: 5 agrees with how useless idols are: “They *are* upright, like a palm tree, And they cannot speak; They must be carried, Because they cannot go *by themselves.* Do not be afraid of them, For they cannot do evil, Nor can they do any good.[1]" Living in the victory of Christ, should this not be every believer’s attitude toward idols? The objects have no power within them (Kruger 2007). James Kirkpatrick states that we should reject this magic-oriented superstition (Oosthuizen 2011: 3) which is in dire need of the message of freedom in Christ (Kirkpatrick et al 2011: 12). He also says that “we lose our theological integrity” when such practices are allowed (Oosthuizen 2011: 3).

Scriptures

Many Scripture verses are cited as proof texts and guidelines on cursed objects, what they are, and what to do with them. These include Exodus 20:2-4, Numbers 23:8, Deuteronomy 7: 25-26, 14:7-19; 21:23, 23: 14, 32:5, 17, Joshua 6:18, 24: 21-24, II Samuel 7:29, Psalm 81: 9; Proverbs 3:33 Isaiah 2: 6,

[1] All Scriptures are quoted from the NKJV

Jeremiah 10:2, 48:10, Acts 19: 19, I Corinthians 10: 19-29, and Revelations 9: 20-21 (Brown 1992: 143; Gildenhuys 2013: 12, 15, 16, 40; tiaan gildenhuys 2022; Schmoyer 2010: 31, 72). In this article, I focus on three texts for the sake of brevity: Deuteronomy 7: 25-26, Isaiah 2: 6, and Acts 19: 19. These texts display three different arguments and come from both the Old and New Testaments.

Deuteronomy 7: 25-26 (NKJV)

25 "You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. 26 Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing."

In these verses, Israel is told not to take the idols of Canaan, lest they be spoiled by them. It is only in Deuteronomical law where the idols should be burned with fire. The phrase "for it is an abomination to the LORD your God" serves as the final ground for a prohibition (Driver 1996: 105). Abomination is the opposite of holy and Israel is supposed to be a holy nation. It has to do with the identity of Israel (Versluis 2017:80, 137); it creates a distinction between Israel and the other nations (Macdonald 2003:121). A concept similar to abomination is that of *hērem*. In the Old Testament the term has a twofold meaning: firstly, that of destruction and devastation and secondly, that of the sacred (Benovitz 2020:74, Stern 2020: 104, Versluis 2017:46-47).

In Deuteronomy the *hifil* form of the verb *haram* always means "to kill, destroy, exterminate" (Versluis 2017: 69). The chapter of Deuteronomy 7 emphasises the ban on the Canaanites, which is expressed in its sharpest terms in the book of Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomic law, the Canaanites are not to be expelled, but exterminated, whereas other texts prefer expulsion from the land (compare Exodus 23: 27 with Deuteronomy 7: 23 and Exodus 23: 28 and Joshua 24: 12 with Deuteronomy 7: 20). The reasons found in the Deuteronomical law for the Canaanites to be expelled or exterminated are religious (Weinfeld 1991: 384). In Deuteronomy *hērem* is to serve as a safeguard against Israel turning to Canaanite gods and Canaanite religious rituals (Benovitz 2020:81, 107; cf. Stern 2020: 104). It is about contamination (Macdonald 2003:117). *Hērem* is contagious and those who come into contact with such objects themselves become *hērem* (Benovitz 2020:75, 80, Versluis

2017:50, 122). In the Ancient Near East it was customary for the victors to take over the cultic sites of the vanquished. Israel is prohibited from doing this (Versluis 2017:79). Idols from other nations were also "recycled" and repurposed, as is evidenced in a text from Alalakh, which states that silver objects were made from an idol (Versluis 2017:121). In Deuteronomy 12 the religious rituals of the Canaanites are mentioned and "an explicit connection is made between divination and child sacrifice of the nations of Canaan and their extermination" (Versluis 2017:255). The specific motive found in Deuteronomy 7 is not found elsewhere in the Old Testament (Versluis 2017:285). Deuteronomy 7 is seen as the expression of the radical nature of obedience and loyalty to YHWH (Macdonald 2003:116, 123).

Isaiah 2: 6 (NKJV)

6. "For You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, Because they are filled with eastern ways; They are soothsayers like the Philistines, And they are pleased with the children of foreigners."

The relevant part here is that they are filled with eastern ways. Isaiah 2:6 is interpreted as pointing to objects from what we today known as "the East," e.g. China, Japan, India, etc (Gildenhuys 2013:40). The phrase "they are filled with eastern ways" is not clear. The Hebrew מָלְאוּ מִקֶּדֶם is problematic to translate. The verb מל, "to be full" seems to lack an object. The Septuagint and the Targum insert "their land" or "your land" and JJM Roberts uses that as a clue that the original text might read "full of Arameans from the east" (1985: 300). The reason for this is that in Isaiah 9:12 the same expression occurs and points to the Arameans from the east.

Reading the next few verses gives more context:

6 For You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob,
Because they are filled with eastern ways;
They are soothsayers like the Philistines,
And they are pleased with the children of foreigners.
7 Their land is also full of silver and gold,
And there is no end to their treasures;
Their land is also full of horses,
And there is no end to their chariots.
8 Their land is also full of idols;

They worship the work of their own hands,
That which their own fingers have made.
9 People bow down,
And each man humbles himself;
Therefore do not forgive them.
10 Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust,
From the terror of the Lord
And the glory of His majesty.
11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled,
The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down,
And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

Shawn Aster reads it as "full of practices from the East" (2007: 259) and states that this would lead to "hubris and arrogant pride" (2007: 260). Idolatry, accumulation of wealth, and soothsaying would cause the people to be lofty and haughty, as stated in verse 11 of the same chapter (Aster 2007: 260). Aster (2007: 260) goes on to say that when compared to texts regarding idolatry in Deuteronomy, the focus in Deuteronomy is on disloyalty, but the focus in this text from Isaiah is on interfering with the sovereignty of God.

To be filled with the East could refer to the trade which Israel did with other nations (Gray 1975: 51). Verse 7 does speak of silver, gold, treasures, horses and chariots. It could be that Isaiah condemns the hoarding up of material possessions and implements of war. This would agree with other prophets who condemn these things because of their blinding effect on the minds of people to the things of YHWH (Gray 1975: 54). Roberts holds a different view and argues that the text refers to the build-up to war and not to trade (1985: 304) and that the pericope of Isaiah 2: 2-22 was written to reassure Judah (1985:308).

Acts 19: 19 (NKJV)

19. "Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned *them* in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and *it* totalled fifty thousand *pieces* of silver."

Ephesus was a large and prosperous cosmopolitan city in Asia Minor and the goddess Artemis has been worshipped there since the 11th century BCE (Brinks 2009: 783). The Temple of Artemis just outside of the city was one of

the seven wonders of the world and played an important part of the economy in Ephesus, even functioning as a bank (Brinks 2009: 781-782).

Ephesus was well-known for its magicians and magical practices (Munck 1981: 191). It was also known for magical books and the term *Efésia grámmata* was commonplace (Barrett 1998: 913; Talbert 2005: 169; cf. Klauck 1994: 100). The word translated with "magic" is περίεργα and it originates with "things better left alone", as used by Plato and is a semi-technical term for magic (Barrett 1998: 912). Matthew Bates states that "it's semantic domain includes abstract notions such as curiosity and more concrete activities such as astrology and poisoning" (2011: 412). Frederick William Danker uses the term "misdirected curiosity" (2000: 800), while Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott use the term "curious arts" (1891: 548). It could also be translated as "dark arts" (Bates 2011: 412).

Carl R. Holladay states that there are contexts in which magic is regarded in a negative light in Roman society (2016:181). An example of this is Pliny the Elder opposing magic in his *law against pharmakeia* (Otto 2013: 324). *Pharmakeia* includes the use of medicines, poisons, potions, or spells (Danker 2000: 1050; Liddell & Scott 1891: 751). Plato and Pliny the Elder also devalue and oppose *mageia,* Plato because of religious convictions and Pliny because of the inefficacy of the practices (Otto 2013: 328). *Magos* is originally a word referring to Persian priests, but the terms *magos* and *mageia* soon came to be used to refer to any abnormal religious practice (Edmonds 2008: 24; cf. Hornblower & Spawforth 1996: 908, Klauck 1994: 95; Strelan 2004: 66). Within ancient Greek culture, *magoi* are foreign to the Greek traditions (Strelan 2004: 66). Dirk Rohman refers to the Twelve Tables, which were the first codification of Roman law (2013: 116). Within this law, harmful magic was punishable by death. Non-harmful magic was often absorbed into Roman religious ritual, but harmful magic was illegal, yet it was practiced privately (Adkins & Adkins 1996: 138; cf. Hornblower & Spawforth 1996: 910). Bernd-Christian Otto points out that people have been persecuted for *crimen magiae* since early times in the Roman Empire (2013: 311). There are also cases of people being persecuted for *magica mallificia* (Masoga 2002: 166). Harmful magic included curse tablets (Otto 2013: 312), as well as poisons (Hornblower & Spawforth 1996: 909). Astrologers, magicians, and philosophers were expelled by various emperors, but Rohman argues that the reasons were mostly political in nature (Rohman

2013: 145). Yet there are also positive uses of the terms *magos* and *mageia* (Edmonds 2008: 25; Ahmadi 2014: 488) and thus it is a nuanced concept. Harold Remus describes the variety of practices mentioned under the umbrella term of *mageia* as: "everything from humble supplication to sublime praise of deity to threats and strict injunctions to deities and daemons, from ways to make people well to make them ill, from divination through spirits of the dead to ways to ascend to the heavens" (1999: 268).

The burning of books in this Scripture verse is not a unique event. Other book burnings in Roman times are known to be mandated by rulers and not voluntary like the one in Acts 19 (Holladay 2016:374). However, book burnings were a rare occurrence (Rohman 2013: 145). In 181 BCE, books that were deemed to be subversive to religion were burned (Rohman 2013:120-121). It was of great concern that Roman tradition could be contaminated by foreign influences (Rohman 2013: 121), e.g. Greek and Babylonian influences (2013: 118). Books were also burned for political reasons, for example slander (Rohman 2013: 125, 129; Talbert 2005: 169). Luke's portrayal of magic is negative (Bates 2011: 412). Holladay postulates that Luke, the author of Acts, seeks to portray the church as not only harmless, but as also beneficial to Roman society (2016:57).

Hans-Josef Klauck explains the message as follows:

> But there is a certain danger of confusing magic with Christian miracles, therapies and exorcisms, and, still worse, of taking Christian belief for a more powerful manifestation of magic. That may lead to a blasphemous usurpation of Christian holy names for magical purposes. It may provoke conversions to Christianity mixed up with dubious motives, and it may, worst of all, cause sincere believers to relapse into their old life and take up magic once again, but now hidden under the veil of the newly acquired faith. In short, what Luke fears most is a syncretism, a religious mix that swallows up everything: paganism, Judaism and Christianity, which is an obstacle to the Christian mission and a continuing threat to the established local churches (1994: 100-101).

Johannes Munck summarizes this episode as follows: “Where Christ was, there was no room for magic, and now they not only confessed their sinful use of demonic names and powers, but they burned their magic books as an act of faith” (1981: 191). Charles H. Talbert states that the book burning in Acts 19 is “an expression of repentance, symbolizing one’s leaving the old life behind” (2005: 170).

Scriptures: Conclusion

Deuteronomy 7: 25-26 was intended to keep Israel from falling into idolatry. It is not said that the idols are objects to which demons cling or even that they attract demons. Demons are not mentioned at all. It is simply a case of purity and impurity, of obedience to YHWH, and resisting idolatry.

To use Isaiah 2: 6 as a condemnation of objects originating from the Eastern cultures like Japan and China (Gildenhuys 2013:40) is a gross misinterpretation of the text. It is doubtful that Israel was even aware of the existence of the far eastern lands and their culture. When Isaiah refers to the “east”, he is more likely to be referring to the nations of Amon and Moab, since these lie directly east of Israel (May 1975: 69), or like Roberts argues, Arameans (1985: 300). If the phrase “they are filled with eastern ways” refers to magical practices, the specific practices are unclear.

In Acts 19: 19, the new converts in Ephesus burned their magic books to show the seriousness of their commitment and the break with their previous life (Kee 1997: 231; Malina & Pilch 2008: 138). Dirk van der Merwe points out that Luke juxtaposed miracles and magic to prove “the victory of the proclamation of the Gospel over the practice and involvement in evil practices (e.g. magic)” (2010: 83). Regarding Acts 19: 19, it is not possible to infer that the burning of the books by the Ephesians had anything to do with Deuteronomy 7: 25. To see a connection would be to take the texts out of their contexts.

Texts have to be read in their contexts (Versluis 2017:139). One cannot simply take a text out of its context and string it with other texts taken in a similar fashion. As Arie Versluis states: “A theological evaluation of the Deuteronomic command should read it both against its own historical-cultural background, and in its canonical context” (2017:346). This is true for all three texts in our

discussion. William P. Brown sees eye to eye with the statement by Versluis by saying that "[n]o text stands on its own, isolated and hermetically self-contained. Rather, a text stands in line with other texts, before and after it, all interconnected, explicitly and implicitly" (2017: 145).

Within hermeneutics, there are three worlds that interact when one reads a text. These are:

> (1) the world behind the text, (2) the world in or of the text, and (3) the world in front of the text. The world "behind" the text refers to the historical context of the text's origin, retrieved through the work of historical investigation. The world "of" or "in" the text designated the text itself, disclosed through close readings. The world "in front of" the text includes the contexts in which the text is interpreted and appropriated, its history of interpretation or reception, including the world of the reader (Brown 2017: 7).

Brown refers to the hermeneutic circle originally defined by Friedrich Schleiermacher and developed by Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer, which acknowledges the role that the reader plays in interpreting the text. He goes on to call it a "hermeneutical convolution," because it isn't a "tidy circle" (2017: 8).

When watching the videos of Tiaan Gildenhuys or reading a number of books on spiritual warfare, there is one thing that immediately stands out: a large amount of Scripture verses are quoted in short succession, without adequate explanation or exegesis. As an example, in the introduction of his first spiritual house cleaning video, Gildenhuys quotes nine texts within the first ten minutes and sixteen by the twenty-minute mark (2022).[2] The verses are just stacked one upon the other, as if the sheer number of verses will be what makes the argument strong. In his article "Biblical Interpretation Is More than Stacking

[2] These texts are: John 10: 10 II Tim 3: 16, Is 28: 9-10, II Cor 1: 13, Ex 20: 2-3, Ps 102: 27, Mal 3: 6, Heb 13: 8, Jos 24: 21-24, Ps 96: 4, Ps 60: 4, Deut 18: 9, Jer 10: 2, Deut 7: 25-26, Is 30: 21-23, and John 16:8

Verses," Brandon D. Smith compares stacking verses to how Satan used Scripture to tempt Jesus in the desert:

> We cannot merely stack up Bible verses, making biblical claims based on a handful of verses that are isolated from their immediate and broader biblical contexts…. Satan shows us that quoting out-of-context phrases and sentences that seem handy in the moment can be a dangerous game. Obviously, he was nefarious, but even if he were innocently quoting the verse, the type of application he suggested would have been inappropriate. … Indeed, one can quote the Bible extensively and still teach the Bible wrongly (2022).

Stacking verses in this manner is like building a tower with Jenga blocks. It might look like it makes sense. It might look impressive to an onlooker, but when the texts (bricks) are taken out and examined, the tower will eventually collapse.

Consequences of belief in cursed objects

The consequences of a belief in cursed objects also needs to be looked at. The first aspect examined is paranoia. In his doctoral thesis titled *The Church Militant: A Study of "Spiritual Warfare"in the Anglican Charismatic Renewal*, Graham Russell Smith refers to a "paranoid universe" that could lead "to an insecurity that often demonises others" (2011: 164). In addition to paranoia, anxiety could be another result as people keep returning to identify "demonic strongholds" which do not exist (Smith 2011: 167). There is also the risk that one has not "discerned the spirits" correctly (Marshall 2016: 106). With regards to the history and development of spiritual warfare, Ruth Marshall points to an "almost obsessive focus on demonic spiritual entities" (2016: 100). She also references that it can absolve people from their personal responsibility for their own sin (2016: 100): the infamous "the devil made me do it" angle. In his case studies, Smith finds that paranoia and fear are mitigated through a "strong undergirding of taking personal responsibility for personal failure and confidence in the victory of the cross" (2011: 169). However, he does emphasise that training and close monitoring are needed to avoid exposing people to fear (2011: 169-170).

In the case of the spiritual house cleaning videos of Tiaan Gildenhuys, it is noticeable how more and more things are added to the list of familiar objects. Gildenhuys states that as soon as Christians realise that something is an idol, Satan ensures that new idols come up (2013: 17). What begins with items such as Buddha statues and items depicting creatures from folklore, proceeds to people inspecting everyday items like clothing and curtains for spiral patterns. It can develop into an unhealthy preoccupation with finding and avoiding familiar or cursed objects. Another aspect of possible paranoia is how it can take only one object to attract demons, even after a person completed (often lengthy) processes of destroying the cursed/familiar objects.

In our modern age, the internet and internet communication plays a big part in most people's lives. Robert Howard writes specifically about the phenomenon of spiritual warfare on the internet and states that

> [t]heir use of the Internet, which enables them to locate geographically dispersed individuals who share this understanding, creates an insular enclave where repeated exposure to their shared ideas reinforces their beliefs. Because they view many ideas that diverge, challenge, or conflict with their own beliefs as deceptions created by Satan and his demons, the Internet functions not only to support their convictions but also to give them greater access to individuals whom they believe deserve to be the targets of their spiritual attacks. By allowing them to find these potential targets, the Internet seems to enable a particularly active kind of intolerance (2009: 160).

The media publications mentioned at the beginning enabled those with extreme views to find literature that support their views, but the internet greatly increased the ability to support these views and allows people to interact with others who hold the same beliefs. Howard states that "they create a vernacular web of expression that supports, extends, and encourages their intolerant beliefs and practices without publishers, editorial boards, or institutional religious figures to temper their intolerance" (2009: 165-166). It results in an echo chamber. This intolerance sees other belief systems and views as demonic in nature (Howard 2009: 163), and can also lead to the

demonisation of other people (Howard 2009: 174). We come full circle, back to Satanic Panic, albeit in a less mainstream incarnation.

Concluding Remarks

The belief in familiar / cursed objects is a form of magical thinking. It has links to fetishes and contagious magic, which are not Biblical concepts. The lack of exegesis from most proponents of this belief is concerning. Scripture verses are taken out of context and haphazardly assembled to strengthen the argument. This is not a responsible interpretation of Scripture. The original language and historical context need to be taken into consideration. From the exegesis of three main texts, we can deduce that the practice and beliefs are not grounded in Scripture. Belief in familiar / cursed objects can lead to paranoia and an unhealthy preoccupation with the perceived dangers of such objects. It can also lead to intolerance and the demonization of other people.

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A text-centred rhetorical interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15 and the resilience of African women

Tsholofelo J. Kukuni
North-West University
tsholok@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study analyses "but she will be delivered by childbearing" (σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας) in 1 Timothy 2:15 using a text centred rhetorical approach called *a text-generated persuasion interpretation* (Genade 2015:23). In addition, it integrates Virkler and Ayayo's (2007:53) application step principle with special reference to the resilience of African women in the context of staggering gender-based violence (GBV)[1] statistics in South Africa. Male perpetrators of violence against women and children in South Africa were given birth to by women. As a result, their mothers carry the stigma of bringing GBV contributors into this world. How can women who carry this stigma be saved from it? This study examines how a resilient African woman, a survivor of GBV, who bore a male child was saved by raising him to become a moral voice against GBV in the context where he ministers. It is proposed herein that her faith and faithfulness in passing down the message of redemption to her son has resulted in her salvation from the stigma she would have carried had it not been for her resilience. As biblical researchers we should contribute to the combating of GBV in South Africa because one of the charges advanced for why GBV is prevalent is that biblical texts have been used to perpetuate GBV in various forms. As a result, the bible, the New Testament in particular, is partly blamed for the discrimination based on gender because of how genders are portrayed in the New

[1] Hereinafter referred to as GBV.

Testament. We may contribute, therefore, through the interpretation of texts such as 1 Timothy 2:15.

Introduction

Reports about violence against women in South Africa are staggeringly frightening. One reads of such reports, and they cannot help but feel disturbed at the levels of violence against women in all South African societies (Cornelius 2013:173). It is unsettling to read about the statistics that point to violence against women bordering on a pandemic-like state. Seeing that it is endemic, various academics from different academic disciplines have sought to contribute to the eradication of violence against women from their respective perspectives.

Mofokeng (2022) contributes to the tackling of GBV[2] from a branch of practical theology called pastoral care. She (2022:4) describes pastoral care as relating to the shepherding care offered to those in need of comfort, healing, guidance and reconciliation. Those in need are predominantly women who have been subjected to some form of violence directly or indirectly. She (2022:26) points out that GBV is prevalent in South Africa to an extent that a third of all women have been exposed to some form of GBV in their lifetime. As a result, South Africa is classified as a country where GBV is a common narrative, one of the leading countries with GBV and a rape capital of the world (Mofokeng 2022:26).

Von Meullen (2021) studied GBV from public management and governance perspective. The focus of her study is on GBV at institutions of higher learning and the role that student representative councils (SRC)[3] can play in combating the GBV epidemic. She (2021:34) reports that since there is a significant

[2] For the purposes of this study, GBV is conceptualised as physical, psychological, and emotional hurt or harmful act inflicted on a person on the basis of their gender. 'Woman' (γυνὴ) is understood in this study, according to Louw and Nida's (1988:107, 108) definitions as an adult female person of marriageable age, and 'man' (ἀνδρός) as an adult male person of marriageable age. 'Stigma' is a form of discrimination due to ill formed disapproval about people. 'African' is understood geospatially, with specific focus on South Africa.

[3] Hereinafter referred to as SRC.

number of young women at university campuses, the university itself is an unsafe space for younger women. The reason is that it is at university spaces, private and public, that the young women encounter young men around whom they are vulnerable. After conducting her study on GBV at university campuses, Von Meullen (2021:136) concludes by designing a "GBV awareness model". One of the key components of this awareness model is the empowerment of SRCs to play a significant role in supporting victims of GBV as it has a debilitating impact on their academic lives (Von Meullen 2021:136).

Leburu-Masigo (2020) conducted research on the empowerment programme for victims of GBV from a social work perspective. Her research highlights that GBV affects the quality of the lives of women. Its effects are social, psychological, emotional, physical and overall affect the wellbeing of a woman victim (Leburu-Masigo 2020:IV). Her (2020:284) findings from the qualitative research she conducted concluded that social workers practice various ways of intervening to assist and empower GBV victims. In addition, the social workers helped the victims to be able to recognise abuse for what it is, since some of the victims were not empowered to recognise the impact of GBV on their wellbeing. This was especially detected from women who stayed with their abusive partners due to failing to recognise that they were being abused. Moreover, social workers have ways to help victims of GBV to regain a sense of control, restored confidence, restored self-esteem and ultimately the ability to make honourable decisions to not stay in traumatic situations (Leburu-Masigo 2020:285).

Cornelius (2013) researched the use of scripture in violent situations against women and ancient texts as loci of power abuse. She researched the use of the NT in violent situations of abuse against women. She points out how violence against women is disturbing because its occurrence is not unusual. To highlight its heinousness, she looked at how it occurred in domestic situations, that is in intimate situations where women should be safe. In these intimate spaces, their intimate partners abuse them physically, sexually, destroy their property, harass and intimidate them in various ways (Cornelius 2013:174). Disturbing findings also include abused women becoming depressed, powerless, socially and economically deprived, abusers of substances, suicidal, losing confidence and suffering spiritually (Cornelius 2013:174, 176, 179, 183). She (2013:178) further finds that traditional norms and values trap women in abusive intimate

relationships because their commitment is anchored in traditional norms and values. These traditional norms and values, however, cause battered women to remain in painful situations for fear of being shamed if they speak about their abuse or leave the abusive relationship. Fearing that they will be blamed for marrying the wrong person, these women opt to blame themselves rather than blaming tradition and the perpetrator of violence against them (Cornelius 2013:178).

Common thread permeating the above findings

A two-fold powerful tapestry emerges by weaving together the above perspectives. Firstly, there is a positive aspect from these research findings in that there is awareness of how prevalent GBV is in South African societies. It permeates every aspect of society just as it affects every aspect of victims of GBV. Different scholars from various fields recognise how their respective field of study can contribute to fighting the scourge of GBV. In her study, Cornelius (2013:173) points out that since society at large is affected by GBV, it is up to "the pastors, police officers, shelter workers, lawyers, therapists and counsellors to work together to prevent abuse". She further points out that in her research she found steps that should be taken by churches to offer spiritual help and healing to battered women; however, the respective study she referred to singles out women's bible study as one of the steps which is problematic because it implies that the rest of the church, particularly men, need no equal education on preventing the abuse of women (Cornelius 2013:177).

Mofokeng's (2022) research brings to the forefront the awareness that the prevalence of GBV in South African communities means that a third of women in South Africa will either become directly affected by it by being a victim of violence or indirectly by knowing of someone who has been a victim of GBV. Von Meullen (2021) takes us to institutions of higher learning to show that even though women may be raised in safe homes or safe spaces pre-university life, being on university campuses in South Africa means that the young women will inevitably find themselves in an unsafe space. Leburu-Masigo's (2020) research findings indicate that social workers who worked with victims of GBV had to find ways to help victims recognise abuse for what it is. The

inability to recognise it means that the victims are not empowered to make the justifiable decisions that will enable them to leave traumatic situations.

The second thread that permeates through the above research is a disturbing one. The above scholars, and other scholars in general will agree that broadly defined, GBV is violence targeted at specific individuals on the basis of their gender (Kangas *et al* 2014:40). However, disturbingly, women bear the biggest brunt of GBV in the South African context. Unwittingly, the spotlight is shone on GBV victims in that they have to be used to gather statistics of the proportional prevalence of GBV against women in comparison to men who suffer the same. This is bearing in mind the tremendous trauma women have to go through to talk about their ordeal; they are nonetheless our source of statistics in tackling the GBV pandemic.

With good intention, awareness is made of the fact that GBV is prevalent in South African societies; but that immediately alerts the woman of the staggeringly frightening statistics of this scourge. Women hear that it is endemic, in the home, in churches, in public spaces, in institutions of higher learning, in the workplace, and basically in a number of spaces that should be deemed safe for anyone. Strikingly obvious is that men share these spaces too but they do not become victims of GBV to the same degree as women in the same spaces. It feels rather sad and heavy that we have resigned to the fact that as a society we should conceive of the possibility that this problem will affect women more than it does men.

The efforts of those who want to know what to do to eradicate this debilitating culture must be strengthened, so that South Africa may become a society where we do not speak of GBV's women victims as the face of its traumatic effects. Is there a glimmer of hope that this rainbow nation that recently celebrated 29 years of freedom will find itself freed from the grips of this terrible nightmare South Africans wake up to almost on a daily basis?

In her research into GBV in the form of sexual assault, women's oppression and safety, Gqola (2015:7) contributes to the realisation of this hope by suggesting that if rape is taken seriously in our country and ensuring that there are consequences for perpetrators of this violent crime, then we will make inroads into getting to the heart of tackling it. She poignantly points out that

there are various places we have to start or various approaches we have to take. The first that she points out is that we need to find ways to not put pressure on women to talk about rape nor put the onus on them to find the perpetrator of rape. There is very little talk about the rapist. Inadvertently, rape then becomes a crime with just the victim but not the perpetrator. Vividly, Gqola captures the problem by stating that "sometimes it feels as if aliens come down to Earth to rape those constructed as feminine and vulnerable, only to then jump back up into their spaceships and return to their planet, leaving us shocked, brutalised and with inadequate technology to fight back, to make them stop, to hold them accountable or to act in collective self-defence".

Slogans we chant, such as 'real men don't rape', perpetuate the myth that rapists don't live among us, or they are easily noticeable either by the class, race, or background the come from (Gqola 2015:4). At the same time the tension is there that we cannot profile everybody, suspect, and expect every man to be a potential rapist. It seems like an elusive balance to strike.

Endorsing Gqola (2015), Molope suggests that "an honest discussion about sexual assault, women's oppression and women's safety needs to begin with how we raise men. I'd like to move beyond the developed world's approach to teaching women to empower themselves because – as I once announced to a room full of appalled first-world feminists – telling women to end rape is like telling black people to end racism". This sentiment is what will be echoed in this article, that it is true that GBV is disturbing and reading about it is unsettling; but moreover, for this author, what is unsettling is firstly the pressure put on women about how to be safe, how likely they are to be the statistic, how difficult it is to prove violence against them beyond reasonable doubt in a court of law,[4] and how they must work hard to prevent the heinous crime that they might suffer that they have not called for.

[4] Ordinarily in a court of law, Section 35 (3)(h) of the South African Constitution states that "every accused person has a right to a fair trial, which includes the right to be presumed innocent, to remain silent, and not to testify during the proceedings". This injunction in our law is rightly meant to protect innocent people against malicious prosecution, but it also places victims of GBV in a difficult position to

It is incumbent on those responsible in society to raise male children to be men, therefore, to raise them in a way that will ensure they do not contribute to the staggering GBV statistics in South Africa. As far as possible, this should not be done by putting pressure on women who despite their efforts to raise their male children well, still in the end have men who become perpetrators of GBV. There should be no stigma carried by women for the actions they did not commit. Furthermore, women alone should not carry the burden of raising men who are going to turn into moral voices against GBV. All of society should become moral voices against GBV and the stigma on women who bore perpetrators of GBV should be condemned and eradicated.

Recently in our country, a convicted rapist and serial murderer escaped from a maximum-security prison in Mangaung. He was sentenced to serve life in prison in 2012. In 2022 he escaped from custody, which later made headline news in early 2023 because contrary to earlier reports by the correctional facility where he was incarcerated that he had committed suicide in his cell by setting his body alight, he was spotted alive, and the police began a manhunt to bring him back in custody. While his mother was reported as saying she had not seen him in years, it seems as though some sectors of society unduly implicated her in this elaborate prison escape, and implied she must know about his whereabouts.

This was worryingly unfair on the escapee's mother, who told Bhengu (2023) that she "has been living in fear since the news of her son's escape from prison". As if no one felt her anxious fear, she added "I don't feel safe because I get phone calls from different people every day. I don't know who to trust. At the end of the day, these people have my address. When I see cars stopping at the gate, I get scared that it is someone who is coming to kill me"[5]. Exactly why

prove their case beyond reasonable doubt. In a court of law, the onus rests on the accuser to produce evidence to convict a perpetrator. However, in most cases, and due to the traumatic nature of GBV, the victim and the offender(s) are the only witnesses. In addition, when courage is gathered to report these incidents, evidence that could be used as admissible in court is often nowhere to be found. The burden and blame again lie with the woman.

[5] This is akin to a common occurrence in South Africa. Time after time the society retorts: "woman, where is your criminal-child that you brought into this world"? Why are the fathers not involved is the pertinent question we do not ask.

his father or other male figures in the escapee's life were not sought, one may perhaps deduce the reason from the statistics provided later in this article. Even if they were, they should not be put in a situation where they have to fear for their lives like his mother feared. Overall, the common thread is that women have to do something for men to change their behaviour, or for the focus to shift from them to the perpetrators of GBV rather than the victims.

Fatherlessness epidemic in South Africa

According to the findings of Statistics SA in the report on the wellbeing of children and child education in 2018, therein we detect a dire situation concerning fatherlessness in South Africa. The estimate population of South Africa in 2018 was 57.7 million, out of which Stats SA (2018) reported that "more than one-third (34,5%) were children under the age of 18 years". These are minors who are still in the developmental stages of their lives. One cannot overstate the importance of the presence of family in the well-being and development of children. Moreover, Stats SA (2018) reported that "Children in South Africa live in non-standard family structures with mostly one of their biological parents. In 2018, there were twice as many children who had a co-resident mother compared to those who had a co-resident father (76% and 36,4%, respectively). Furthermore, black African children aged 0–17 were less likely to stay with their biological father compared to their peers in the other population groups".

This means that only 31% of black African children were more likely to be raised with their biological father. In comparison to other population groups, 51.3% of coloured African children, 86.1% of Indian/Asian African children and 80.2% of white African children lived in standard family structures with their biological parents, especially fathers, present (Stats SA 2018:x). The likelihood of children growing without their biological fathers or fathers at all, means that their mothers as the next of kin are people who will be closest to them. This probably explains why when people who were looking for the above referred to escapee sought after his mother with the hope of being able to find him. However, such incidents perpetuate the stigma that the woman who gave birth to the offender who was wanted by law enforcement officers was somehow inextricably connected to her son's whereabouts.

The said perpetrator had committed unspeakable acts of violence against women, for which he was justly serving a prison life-term. Yet, by virtue of being birthed by his mother, she carried the stigma of bringing a perpetrator of GBV into the world. Even though there was no lead that suggested she knew where he was when he escaped, society and the media naturally gravitated towards his mother for answers. Is this not a form of unwittingly extending the effects of GBV to someone who did not contribute to it? Is this not a form of stigmatising the woman who gave birth to the perpetrator? Although she should have never had to deal with the trauma unduly placed on her, she remained resilient even though the South African context induces trauma on the majority of women.

Trauma and resilience of a stigmatised survivor of GBV

Monday, the 17th of November 1986 was the day that a twenty-five-year-old mother gave birth to a male child in the small village called Thaba 'Nchu in the Free State province. His mother named him "Hope" for two reasons. The first reason she named him "Hope" was because South Africa was at the cusp of transitioning from one state regime to a new state that was eventually ushered in during the 1994's first democratic elections held in South Africa. This was the change that the suffering millions of South Africans, and those who sympathised with them, wanted to see realised. The ruling state before 1994 was an apartheid state which committed unspeakable acts of violence against innocent, undeserving people. The trauma that it induced left people with resilience that one day they will experience freedom in South Africa, and that hope was held on to by millions including this 25-year mother.

The second reason why she named her son "Hope" was due to the fact that in her marriage and in her home, the place she should have felt most safe in she experienced unimaginable trauma at the hands of her husband. She had no refuge because even her family that she turned to for help neglected to protect her. More traumatic still is the fact that whenever she ran to her parental home for help she was always sent back to her abusive husband and was told to be resilient. She perceived the apathy by her family as akin to overtly conveying to her that she made the choice to get married to a GBV perpetrator, thus the struggle was hers alone to bear. It seemed to her around that time

that resilience is all she had, but she had hope that one day her trauma will dissipate.

While this twenty-five-year-old woman lived in a space where traumatic violence was normalised, and was given no refuge by her family, she knew that she could not endure the suffering nor numb up its pain. She understood her trauma for what it was. Her understanding of her trauma was not anecdotal. She understood trauma, as postulated by Punt (2022:111), as "deeply distressing or disturbing experience, at a social or personal level, not restricted to political contexts only, even if it often manifests in particularly acute ways in those contexts". Its effects are distinguishable because the person experiencing trauma bears the physical and psychologically enormous effects (Punt 2022:111).

The traumatic effects were not only experienced by her. Her only son too suffered violence at the hands of his father. The two of them lived and experienced violence regularly in their home. The aforementioned violence survivors describe the perpetrator as a chef at work because he was a chef at the hotel where he worked, but a butcher at home because he attempted many times to end their lives but failed. Many times the perpetrator's attacks were averted due to the bravery of Hope's mother who stood between the perpetrator and her son and told the perpetrator that he would only kill her son if he killed her first.

During the year 1999 on a very odd day, this GBV survivor bravely decided to move out of her house with her son to start a new life somewhere where she felt safe. She found a place of safety and started building her life together with her son and two daughters who also survived violence by their father but did not endure as much as their sibling and mother did. Her survival is one of a resilient woman who had to face dealing with new challenges that presented themselves at her new home.

A stigmatised GBV survivor, her faith and her son

A new challenge faced the survivor of GBV. As her son grew older, she started noticing character signs in him that although he was not influenced by his abusive father, he started developing tendencies of being a violent teenager

himself. Unbeknownst to herself, her hunch was valid. Her son practiced violence and exerted it on innocent people. According to him, this was a long-hatched plan from childhood that as soon as he was able, he was going to avenge against his father.

Although there was little of this plan that she was aware of, his mother thought that if her son turned violent she was going to be stigmatised for bringing a perpetrator of violence into the world. Worse still, she feared that if he was going to have a woman partner, she was going to suffer the same violence that she suffered at the hands of her husband. Driven by this fear she turned to faith for aid to avert the realisation of her fears.

Shortly after she gained her independence, she started associating with a community of the Christian faith that she hoped would guide her on how to pass on to her son the message of redemption that would result in his salvation and bear the fruit of causing him not only to not be a perpetrator of GBV but a moral voice against GBV. She faithfully devoted herself to the teachings of the Christian community that she had found and faithfully shared those teachings with her son.

Amongst the many teachings that she received from the Christian community was that she bears the stigma of bringing a sinner into the world. However, she was encouraged that if she applied 1 Timothy 2:15 she will be delivered from that stigma. This rabbinic interpretation, according to Hutson (2014:402-403), posits that Eve is to blame as the first sinner. In light of this view, it is from the woman that sin comes and death as a consequence of her sin. Her rescue from this stigma is by the propagation of godliness through raising godly children, adhering to her God-given role (Schreiner 2016:222, 225). This interpretation, which finds favour among many scholars, is what led the woman referred herein to take it upon herself to ensure that her son became godly so as to be preserved from the potential stigma he might have brought her had he not been redeemed. Her son, who authored this study, dissents as he will show later in the study why this interpretation cannot be sustained. Nevertheless, her motives and intentions were virtuous even though 1 Timothy 2:15 was used inaccurately.

Her efforts yielded the results she prayed for. Her son was redeemed in 2006. He started devoting himself to the teachings of the bible which led him to see the heinousness of violence against the *Imago Dei.* This means that he reneged from his plans to take revenge against his father. Not only that, but he committed himself to being educated about being violent-free. His education led him to being educated about the equality of men and women and of the proper understanding of relationships in society and in marriage. The bible, Christian values and norms taught him appropriate societal behaviour and to learn from Jesus how not to treat human beings as less valued, especially women. He thus gained a redeeming understanding of the value of human life through the life of Jesus in order to promote change in society that will ensure the protection of would-be victims of GBV and to train others not to be perpetrators of GBV (Cornelius 2013:188-190).

A text-generated persuasion interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15

This section and the remainder of the study is devoted to interpreting 1 Timothy 2:15, to demonstrate how this text of scripture can hardly be used to perpetuate violence against women under the guise of an authoritative injunction found in the bible. The method that will be employed to analysis this text is called *a text-generated persuasion-interpretation.*[6] It is an analysis of the rhetoric of the text without preselecting a rhetorical model and fitting it into it. It most importantly does not rely on ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical model to analyse the text. It analyses the rhetoric of the text by firstly identifying the dominant rhetorical objective of a particular pericope, then analysing that strategy, and showing various rhetorical techniques that the author uses to enhance his or her persuasion (Snyman 2009:1). It answers two primary questions: (1) how can one describe the author's primary rhetorical objective in the particular section; (2) how does the author set about achieving this objective?

Tolmie (2004:37) first suggested a text-centred descriptive analysis of how the author attempts to persuade his audience by formulating an analytical guide called a "minimal theoretical framework". Genade (2015:21-22) formalised

[6] Hereinafter referred to as TGPI.

this guideline into orderly steps that are involved in this methodology. The five steps followed in this methodology are:

Step 1: identify the dominant rhetorical strategy;

Step 2: create a detailed analysis of the author's rhetorical strategy;

Step 3: identify the supportive rhetorical strategies;

Step 4: identify the rhetorical techniques; and

Step 5: describe the organisation of the argument of the letter as a whole.

Dominant rhetorical strategy of 1 Timothy 2:15

Persuading the recipients to apply scripture correctly by interpreting it correctly.

Ordinarily in TGPI one would take a pericope of a number of verses to describe the dominant rhetorical strategy of that section and show how the author uses supporting rhetorical strategies and rhetorical techniques to persuade the audience to see their point of view. In this study, however, 1 Timothy 2:15 is regarded as a concluding statement of the 1 Timothy 2:8-15 pericope (Porter 1993:93; Schreiner 2016:216. Thus, the rhetorical objective may be constructed from the 1 Timothy 2:8-15 pericope or from 1 Timothy 2:15 as a stand-alone text. This study will describe the rhetorical strategy of 1 Timothy 2:15 while using the 1 Timothy 2:8-15 text for context in the analysis.

As such, the dominant rhetorical strategy in 1 Timothy 2:15 may be described as *persuading the recipients to apply scripture correctly by interpreting it correctly.* In 1 Timothy 2:15 Paul[7] uses the conclusion of the argument to say "but she will be saved through the bearing of children, if they continue in faith and love and sanctification with self-restraint" (σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας, ἐὰν μείνωσιν ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ καὶ ἁγιασμῷ μετὰ σωφροσύνης 1 Timothy 2:15). At first glance this passage appears to be

[7] This study will refer to the author of 1 Timothy as Paul who is identified as the author in 1 Timothy 1:1. Regarding the historic Paul of the undisputed Pauline letters as the author of 1 Timothy, see Carson and Moo (2008, 554-587).

problematic. Scientifically, scholars such as Porter (1993:95) and Upton (2007:175) have labelled it embarrassing, sexually discriminatory with regards to how the *hapax legomenon* τεκνογονίας appears to be confining childbearing to women only and oppressive towards women in ecclesiastical structures. Still more harsh categorisation, Jacobs (2005:85) calls it an irredeemable text. One can sympathise with such challenges to a biblical text, and others like it, that have been used to justify the subjugation of women without conducting due exegetical diligence of this text that will be able to withstand scholarly scrutiny.

Cornelius (2022) penned an article wherein she pertinently asks whether the New Testament can be blamed for unfair discrimination and domineering of women in societies. In defence of the New Testament, Cornelius (2002:1) argues that the New Testament is not to blame for such discrimination. She, however, recognises that it is without question that the New Testament has been used to foster such acts. It has been interpreted wrongly yet formed fertile ground for the formation of disparities between men and women and fostered by religion. She attributes this to New Testament texts that she claims promote patriarchy when referring to women described as child bearers and workers at home, required to be silent and obedient, dress and behave modestly (Cornelius 2022:3). Notwithstanding this, Cornelius (2022:3) recognises that there are hints gleaned from Jesus and Paul's writings that suggest their view towards women was revolutionary.

It was revolutionary in a sense that the equality of men and women is found in pertinent passages of the New Testament.[8] The equally yet different principle is how Strauch (1999:3) prefers to frame the portrayal of men and women in the bible because he believes the complementarian viewpoint is what has to be seen in passages some scholars categorise as patriarchal. The debate on the same passages of scripture have been traversed from a host of approaches of Biblical interpretation. As some scholars may have earlier discussed a text such as 1 Timothy 2:15 through the lens of either egalitarianism or complementarianism, it is unwise to assume that the debate is solely between proponents of these two opposing views.

[8] Gl 3:28; Eph 5:23; Jn 4:1-42; Lk 13:18-21; Mk 1:30-31; Lk 10; 38-42; Mk 15:40-41).

What Cornelius (2022:4) aptly observes, a view aligned to a position adopted in this study, is that one's method of Biblical interpretation is what will ultimately determine one's conclusion on what 1 Timothy 2:15 teaches and how it is to be applied today. This study has already stated that TGPI will be used to analyse 1 Timothy 2:15, which will yield insights obscured by theological treatises with which this text has been analysed. Suffice to mention, however, is that much can be relied on from existing scholarship to enhance the interpretation and discussion of this text. While Jacobs (2005) asks why we should still interpret irredeemable biblical texts, Porter (1993) already stated over a decade prior to Jacobs that 1 Timothy 2:15 is a text that will refuse to go away as an item of debate. The debates have been beneficial in that they have narrowed down the crucial issues to zoom in on this for purposes of enhancing New Testament research.

Paul's objective, as stated above, is to persuade the recipients of 1 Timothy to interpret 1 Timothy 2:15 correctly; this is what scholars have been embarking on as well. Some of what scholars have invited our attention to is the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15 in context. The need for taking context into account is because of the lexical and grammatical points that stand out in this text. The commonly observed is firstly the subjects of the verbs σωθήσεται (Porter 1993; Schreiner 2016) and μείνωσιν (Schreiner 2016). The second is what type of salvation does σωθήσεται refer to. Thirdly, what and who does the *hapax* τεκνογονίας refer to? Lastly, how does the preposition διὰ function?

Louw and Nida (1988:241) define the indicative, future, passive verb σωθήσεται as "to rescue from danger and to restore to a former state of safety and wellbeing". The subject of this verb is not explicitly stated in 1 Timothy 2:15. The near reference this could refer to is ἡ γυνὴ ("the woman") mentioned in verse 14. But as Porter (1993:90) poignantly argues this does not solve the difficulty of explaining which woman this refers to, because the woman in 1 Timothy 2:14 should have an antecedent to aid us in exegeting the text.[9] There is no specific woman this refers to, therefore it should at best be concluded that ἡ γυνὴ ("the woman") is generic, which makes sense since the verb is in the future tense and will always reference every woman who has ever come

[9] SE Porter (1993, 90-91) for at least five exegetical solutions that have been provided by scholars.

after Eve (Porter 1993:92; Schreiner 2016:219). This study argues that it could also refer to whoever will be saved or that the work of salvation itself is what will continue in the future as a result of children being born.

The moving away from the explicit mention of Eve in the illustration in 1 Timothy 2:13, to the omission of Eve in 1 Timothy 2:15, to the generic reference to the nominative singular "the woman" (ἡ γυνὴ) shows that neither Eve nor any woman is to blame for anything. It is purposeful by Paul to move away from stigmatising Eve or any woman. It is an illustration which should not be theologised. Jacobs (2005:91) fails to notice this but is quick to infer that Paul refers to Eve thereby accusing him of probably misunderstanding the account of Genesis 2-3. Similarly, Hutson (2014:402) points out that in the second century BCE, Eve was seen as the woman who plunged the entire human race into sin based on the Genesis 3 account. The sense of the entire text of 1 Timothy 2:15 will be provided below as the analysis continues.

The text continues to be more puzzling by alluding to "the woman" being saved through the bearing of children. Schreiner (2016:219) explains how some scholars have attempted to refer to the *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3:15 to refer to the child as Christ so that the text would align the salvation of the woman through Christ. This will surely be scholarly palatable as it will be aligned with the other New Testament texts that make it plain that salvation does not come by childbearing. This reading saves this verse from many problems, such as women not having children but being saved, the women who are not married as 1 Corinthians 7 teaches, stepmothers being saved as Upton (2007) asks as well as adoptive mothers. Platt (2013:49) staying away from committing himself to the exegesis of the text, theologises it by stating that women are saved through Christ and not through the birth of children. Porter (1993:94) puts to rest the debate by examining from the letter-context that the passive verb σωθήσεται is salvific in the sense that the recipient of the salvation receives it from God who is the agent of salvation. This interpretation accounts for the use of the preposition διὰ as a marker through which an event is realised (Louw & Nida 1988:787).

The event that is anticipated to be realised by Paul is the salvation that will come through childbearing (τεκνογονίας). This is a notoriously bold conclusion to reach as it makes the conclusion prone to challenges that exegetes will find

difficult to answer. However, despite the interpretive challenges, this text cannot ignore the function of the preposition διὰ that it unequivocally states that the instrument through which salvation will be realised is by the bearing of children (Porter 1993:98). It is the bearing of children that accomplishes salvation, or that that childbearing makes it possible for salvation to be realised because without children continually being born there will be no perpetual availability of the recipients of salvation. This interpretation accounts for the use of the plural μείνωσιν which makes the children the product of childbirth and beneficiaries of salvation. This accounts for why Paul is generic and does not attach the subject σωθήσεται. It is worth noting that this makes the text grammatically awkward as Porter (1993:98, 99) provocatively remarks that it leads to the implication that the children will accomplish the salvation of their mothers through faith and love.

Continuing on that trajectory, Paul concludes by stating that the subjects who will be saved through childbearing will be σωθήσεται ἐὰν μείνωσιν ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ καὶ ἁγιασμῷ μετὰ σωφροσύνης, 1 Timothy 2:15. The spanner in the exegetical works of this last clause of the verse is the third-class conditional clause, the *protasis* ἐὰν followed by the subjunctive verb μείνωσιν. Little attention is paid to the *apodosis* and the *protasis* of this verse, which have massive implications for the interpretation of this verse. Porter (2010:307-320) discusses at length the impact the third-class conditional clause has on one's exegesis. Similarly, Mounce (2009:329) and Wallace (1996:679-712) discuss the meaning and impact of conditional clauses on one's exegesis with reference to whether they refer to a likely or unlikely future occurrences.

Figuring out the responsible interpretation and application of this text proves to be quite challenging, with scholarly consensus remaining elusive. A panacea cannot be reached, and this study does not propose to solve the debates. The contribution this study makes is to observe from the scholarly debates something not stated, namely Paul's strategy in 1 Timothy 2:15. It is argued herein that his dominant rhetorical strategy was to *persuade the recipients to apply scripture correctly by interpreting it correctly*. He intentionally phrased it as provocative, vague, ambiguous, not exactly appearing to be interpreting the Genesis account correctly, appearing to be teaching a salvation by works, using a *hapax legomenon*, and ending with a third-class conditional clause which is hard to solve.

This appears to be his point, to puzzle the audience so that they may embark on an exegetical journey leading to the discovery of the meaning and application of 1 Timothy 2:15. He also uses the supportive rhetorical strategy and rhetorical techniques to enhance the effectiveness of his main persuasive strategy. Some of them will be discussed briefly below to show how they contribute to the dominant rhetorical strategy and the probable interpretation and application of 1 Timothy 2:15.

Argument based on authority of scripture

At the back of Paul's argument on 1 Timothy 2:15 lies the prohibition against women teaching and exercising authority over men in 1 Timothy 2:12. What follows this injunction is Paul's substantiation in 1 Timothy 2:13-14. What we find him employing is the supportive strategy called *argument based on the authority of scripture*. *Argument based on the authority of scripture* is a rhetorical strategy that Paul employs numerous times in his letters. The main purpose for alluding to scripture is to motivate the readers to engage with the scriptures they hold in high regard. If they find that his teachings are consistent with the authority they hold, they are likely to be persuaded to accept Paul's point (Tolmie 2004:108).

Scholars are generally in concert that Paul alludes to the Genesis account regarding the creation order of Adam and Eve in 1 Timothy 2:13, but then strangely he attributes what is commonly known as the "original sin"[10] to someone other than Adam. To be specific, an unspecified woman. Jodamus (2005:28) specifies the woman as Eve and draws the reader's attention to the intensified word for deception "ἐξαπατηθεῖσα" in relation to her in 1 Timothy 2:14. Jacobs (2005:91) is even more scathing of Paul. She accuses Paul of distorting Genesis 3:13 by scapegoating Eve as the only transgressor in Genesis.

Jacobs (2005:91) further points out that deception was fairly used in the then world to silence people. However, is that what Paul is doing here? The answer may emerge from the rhetorical techniques that Paul employed which will be

[10] Grenz et al (1999:87) define original sin as "the state of alienation from God into which all humans are born". Original sin is also connected to Adam as the first human to sin, thus plunging the entire human race into sin. Some scholars refer to it as "federal theology" (Horton 2011:994).

discussed below. Suffice to mention at this point is that Paul's allusion to scripture, or using it for illustrative purposes, is a very effective strategy which serves to enhance his persuasion.

(a) Irony

The rhetorical technique that Jacobs (2005) fails to notice that Paul employs by referring to the Genesis account, is the technique of irony. Irony, argues Lanham (1991:128), employs fallacious speech to imply the opposite of what is stated. On a more sophisticated level, the author may infuse irony with hyperbole and lead the readers to do *reductio ad absurdum*. In *reductio* Paul wants the readers to engage the scriptures to see that if they accept a fallacious reading of the Genesis account, they will reap disorder as all of 1 Timothy 2 is about accepting the orderly way God wants the church to conduct its business. If Paul were to argue that Eve was deceived, then he would be committing *ad absurdum*. Traces of his understanding of Genesis in his other teachings, imply Adam is the one who was deceived.[11] If Eve were deceived, who was she deceived by? It seems the culpability lies squarely with Adam as it would be *ad ridiculum* to conclude otherwise.

This is the point Paul aims to achieve in the text of 1 Timothy 2. The text may appear unpalatable to someone like Keener (1998) who relies on extrabiblical sources to interpret the meaning of Paul's words. Jacobs (2005) similarly misrepresents Paul's argument by claiming that Paul did not understand the genre of Genesis and that he interpreted and applied it through the lens of the patriarchal traditions that shaped his theological understanding of scripture. It seems that relying on Graeco-Roman literature leads one to depart from critically engaging with the text comprehensively and let the text speak for itself.

If one looks closely at the 1 Timothy 2:15, rather than attempting to explain away that Paul says "but she will be delivered by childbearing" (σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας), we can find a plausible explanation by looking at his rhetorical intent. He intends for his recipients to plainly discover that to conclude women will be preserved, rescued from danger and restored to a

[11] A detailed argument is made in Romans 5:12-21. The other passage that alludes to Paul's understanding of the Genesis account is 1 Corinthians 15:22.

state before the deception is interpretively implausible. It is implausible because this supposed salvation through childbearing happens "if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint" (ἐὰν μείνωσιν ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ καὶ ἁγιασμῷ μετὰ σωφροσύνης). The use of the third- class conditional clause "if" (ἐὰν) casts doubt into whether Paul promises this to be a future reality the recipients of 1 Timothy 2:15 should anticipate.

(b) Paralipsis

One of the rhetorical techniques that Paul employs to enhance his persuasion of the recipients to interpret and apply scripture correctly is by deliberately omitting the antecedent of ἡ γυνὴ in 1 Timothy 2:14. While some scholars have concluded that it is Eve and her progeny, Paul has not committed himself to that conclusion. It is deliberate on his part because to say this is Eve would legitimise some of the criticism this text has received, namely that Paul blames Eve for being deceived by misreading the Genesis account.

In 1 Timothy 2:14 it was not Eve who was deceived, so she cannot be stigmatised for plunging the entire human race into sin. Women are not saved by childbearing and depending on their children's faithfulness of works nor the mother's perseverance in godly living. The use of a third-class conditional clause "if" (ἐὰν) makes it almost unequivocal that there is no promise of future salvation as a reality to be anticipated by anyone. TGPI promises to converse with scholars seeking to solve a number of problems associated with this passage with the hope of eradicating the stigma women face because of how it has often been interpreted. It however remains a challenging text and we are invited to embark on this challenge, looking at other Paul and women texts using TGPI to interpret them.

Conclusion

This study started on the premise that up to this day scholars who have embarked on analysing 1 Timothy 2:15 have done so to determine which theological viewpoint this text supports. The lacuna that emerged from literature reviewed pointed to the need for a new way of interpreting this passage using Greek rhetorical analysis called TGPI since it has never been applied to this text. This methodology takes full advantage of exploring the

beauty of Paul's rhetorical wit without proving or disproving theological viewpoints that have emerged from interpreting this verse in Christendom.

The application of this methodology yields new insights that may have an impact on one's interpretation and application of this text. Taking a closer look at Paul's dominant rhetorical objective, the supporting objective, and rhetorical techniques used to enhance his persuasion, alternative meanings of this contentious text emerged. The first alternative interpretation is that Paul persuades the readers by showing them that it is not Eve who is to blame in Genesis 3. Subsequently it is not women in general. The second alternative interpretation is that since it confines the role of rearing children and passing the message of redemption to women, that role cannot be their sole responsibility. Interpreters of this text should properly teach about the collective effort it requires to pass the message of redemption to children.

After all, Paul will proceed in 1 Timothy 3 to say overseers have the responsibility to teach the message of redemption. This surely includes overseers teaching the children. The third alternative interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15 is that Paul knows that the bearing of children cannot apply to everybody for various circumstances. Some people may not have children. If that is the case, does that mean they will not be "delivered" (σωθήσεται)?

First Timothy 2:15 is about persuading the readers to discover the meaning of scripture for themselves. Once they do, they will take pleasure in having the ability to interpret the scripture for themselves (Kukuni 2022:51). Once they have discovered the meaning for themselves, they will see that 1 Timothy 2:15 does not apportion blame to women. Therefore, those who have used it to stigmatise women or those who read it to be perpetuating GBV should be persuaded to look at it afresh through a text-generated persuasion analysis.

Notwithstanding this challenge, women in Africa who have had to endure the stigma attributed to the fact that they birthed and reared male perpetrators of GBV should be liberated from this burden by reading texts correctly. The fact that some embarked on a journey of faith to faithfully pass the message of redemption to their children through struggles and wrong readings of texts must be applauded. The woman referred to in this study must be applauded because a wrong reading of a text was used by God who knows the true

meaning to pass the message of redemption to her son. He now not only has been rescued from being a perpetrator of GBV, but he also now has a wife and female daughter who he knows should never suffer any violence because there is no justification for it in scripture. Moreover, his teachings and activity in the church offer a safe space to women, do not stigmatise any woman for the acts of her child(ren), and offer support to survivors of GBV.

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Building Church Beyond the Ewe People: Paul's Areopagus Speech as Model of Context Reading for the Global Evangelical Church, Ghana

Francis Lawer Sackitey
Global Evangelical Church, Ghana
lawersackitey@hotmail.com

Cornelia van Deventer
South Africa Theological Seminary
cornelia@sats.edu.za

Abstract

Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations in Matthew 28:16–20 calls for a missional and ecclesiological strategy that takes into consideration the socio-cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds of those to whom the church reaches out. Luke narrates the fulfilment of this mandate by recounting the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to what was considered the farthest parts of the first-century Mediterranean world (see Acts 1:8). While the core of the gospel message was consistent throughout, Luke recounts various context-informed deliveries (e.g., Acts 2:14–36; 7:2–53; 10:34–43; 13:16–41; 17:22–31; 20:18–35; 22:1–21; 23:1–6; 24:2–21; 26:1–23). Paramount among these is Paul's speech in Acts 17:16–34. Following a socio-rhetorical analysis of the aforementioned pericope, this article affirms the importance of "context reading" in the missions and ecclesiological strategy of the church, whereby churches take cognisance of the socio-cultural, religious, and linguistic settings of the communities they wish to impact. Using the Ghanaian context as a test case, we argue for a commitment to contextually-informed language planning in the Global Evangelical Church for it to move beyond its exclusively Ewe culture.

Introduction

Paul's Areopagus speech in Acts 17:16–34 is regularly used to argue for the contextualisation of the gospel message (see e.g., Flemming 2002:199; Preece 2013: ii; Johnstone 2017: ii–iii). It stands apart as an extended discourse that, unlike the other speeches in Acts, does not lean upon Old Testament imagery for its central message (cf. Acts 13:16–41; 22:1–21; 24:10–21; 26:2–23; 28:17–22). Rather, Paul borrows from Greco-Roman philosophy, literature, and religion to convince his audience. The rhetorical prowess displayed in the speech enables him to translate the central message of Christ into the cultural language of an audience who were initially uninterested in listening to him (Acts 17:18–21).

Africa is confronted with ethnic diversity and tribalism which often make it difficult to plant heterogeneous churches. In light of these difficulties, many churches lean into their shared cultural language and plant and propagate churches that are marked almost exclusively by one people group. The Global Evangelical Church in Ghana is a good example. As a predominately Ewe Church, with an almost-exclusively Ewe leadership, and Ewe as a preferred language, there is very little room for non-Ewes to participate in the church movement.

In this article, we build on the findings of a socio-rhetorical analysis of the selected pericope to argue for the adoption of better social reading skills among the leaders of the Global Evangelical Church in Ghana, to broaden the ethnic scope of the church and reach and disciple non-Ewes. The synopsis of the textual analysis shares insights from Paul's use of rhetorical devices and language in order to convey meaning and his reading of the social and rhetorical contexts of the receivers. We argue that Paul's speech in Acts 17:16–34 illustrates the mandate to better read the context of others in order to build churches that set examples of diversity amid tribalised contexts.

Insights from a socio-rhetorical reading of Acts 17:16–34

While it is beyond the scope of this article to do a full socio-rhetorical analysis of the chosen pericope, we will share a synopsis of such an analysis to ground the argument for better context reading in the biblical text. This section will briefly discuss the social setting(s) of Paul's hearers and Paul's adaptation of

the gospel message both in content and style to illustrate how Acts 17:16–34 functions as a fitting example of context reading.

The social setting

A socio-rhetorical analysis brings into conversation the socio-historical realities of ancient hearers and the rhetorical strategies used by speakers to evaluate the rhetorical impact of a portion of literature or speech on its intended audience.[1] In short, it is "the synthesis of two separate methodologies … sociological analysis and rhetorical analysis" (Elliott 1981:7–8). Before Paul's rhetorical prowess can be evaluated, a word on the target audience of the Areopagus speech is in order. Luke identifies Athens (ταῖς Ἀθήναις) as the historical setting of the speech (Act 17:17). Athens was known as the centre of art and philosophy in the Greco-Roman world. It was also known for the abundance of unusual statues that were strewn about the city in every available space (Parsons 2008:269; Acts 17:26). Athens was well known in antiquity for promoting new cults and elevating them to prominence throughout the Greek world (Garland 1992:8).

The Epicureans and Stoics saw Paul's preaching of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 17:18) as an introduction to foreign deities (ξένων δαιμονίων), which is why they summoned him to the Areopagus to defend or justify his reasoning for adding other gods to what they already had (Acts 17:19). The Areopagus (Mars Hill) is the ancient and revered seat of Athens's Supreme Court. The Council was made up entirely of ex-archons (ancient Athens's chief magistrates) of serious and blameless character, whose wise and just decisions made it famous far beyond the borders of Greece (O'Sullivan 2003:130–134). They prosecuted murders, impieties, and immoralities, and punished all vices, including idleness. They also rewarded or helped the good and were especially sensitive to blasphemies directed at the gods (Rowe 2009:31–50).

Paul's summoning to the Areopagus was on the grounds of the philosophers ' accusations that he was ὁ σπερμολόγος (a babbler, chatterer), advocating ξένων δαιμονίων (foreign gods) (Acts 17:18). The former evokes the image of someone who made a living by picking up scraps, consequently a peddler of second-hand opinions (Dunn 2016:258). This places Paul in the same category as the infamous street preachers of the time, who were known as cynics

[1] For more on socio-rhetorical criticism, see Lawson and McCauley (1990:22–31); Witherington (2009:1–12); Jonker and Lawrie (2005: 58); Robbins (1996:87).

(Talbert 2005:151). Paul's address in this setting was thus important for a few reasons: first, it served as a defence against the accusations against him and the God that he proclaimed; second, if executed successfully, it would aid in the spread of the gospel among the Greeks and Romans as the Areopagus' stamp of approval and acceptance of the message in Athens could foster wider acceptance of the message of Christ, giving Paul the opportunity to minister beyond the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles. In a sense, Paul's preaching in the marketplace was already a precursor for the Areopagus speech as it necessitated the broadening of his audience beyond those found in the synagogues. While Luke points out that the direct audience of Paul's preaching in the marketplace was the Jews and God-fearing Greeks (Acts 17:17), this location caused the gospel to be heard by others,[2] who became the primary audience in the speech that would follow on Mars Hill.

The groups who brought Paul before the Areopagus included the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. The Epicureans held to a materialistic worldview. Their central concern was happiness (Kee 1997:212), pleasure, and peace (Johnson 2016:195). While it cannot be said that they were hedonists, their concern was a life without pain (Biblical Studies Press 2005: sn *Epicurean*). They also believed that, while the gods most likely existed, they were unconcerned about human affairs. Salvation, according to this group, was to be liberated from the fear of the gods and the fear of death (Kisau 2006:1357). According to them, the body and soul disintegrated after death. They found the idea of the gods punishing humans in the afterlife appalling (Biblical Studies Press 2005: sn *Epicurean*). Moreover, they also despised organised religion. One of their popular slogans was, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" (Long 2017:21–22). This group would, therefore, not have been open to a message underpinned by the Torah, nor would they have resonated with Paul's message about the resurrection or his calls to repent.

A second group present was the Stoics—a group that emphasised the importance of coexisting with nature (Stead 1994:63–76). They emphasised rationality over emotions, holding that one ought to accept life's pain courageously (Kee 1997:213) and display "great moral earnestness" (Bruce 1990:377). According to the Stoics, a divine principle (*logos*) pervaded all and

[2] Kisau (2006:1357) thus notes that Paul is reaching three audiences in the marketplace (Jews, God-fearing Greeks, and Gentiles).

held the entire cosmic order together. They contended that in order to pursue one's highest good, one must live by reason. This group also emphasised virtue and taking responsibility for one's actions (Biblical Studies Press 2005: sn *Stoic*).

Paul's rhetoric

As Paul is brought to the Areopagus, he moves from a setting in which the standard packaging of the gospel message (showing Christ to be the fulfilment of Scripture) would resonate with his hearers to a setting where it would no longer be convincing. According to Luke, the Epicureans' and Stoics' protest of Paul's discourse was mainly due to his proclamation of Jesus and his resurrection (Acts 17:18). Paul's central concern in this speech was thus convincing this new group of hearers of both. In this speech, we notice a remarkable departure from the standard packaging of the gospel message. Instead of beginning with Israel's scriptures and God's historical dealings with his people, Paul begins with a greeting in which he seeks to build rapport with his hearers. He opens with an *exordium*[3] (introduction; Acts 17:22–23a),[4] combining *insinuatio* - a form of an introduction in which the speaker insinuates himself into the minds of the audience (Murphy and Richard 2003:215) - with *captatio benevolentiae* - commendation of the audience (Schnabel 2012) - to evoke the goodwill of his audience. Paul begins with the vocative, ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι (men of Athens; Acts 17:22) and the emphatic description of them as δεισιδαιμονεστέρους (very religious/devout).[5] This affirmation is based on the variety of their objects of worship, one of which was called Ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ ([To] an unknown god; Acts 17:23). While the reader knows that Paul was irked by the many idols strewn about in Athens (Acts 17:16), he uses this point to gain a hearing with his audience (Kisau 2006:1357).

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[3] The *exordium* is the introduction, *propositio* is the summary of the subject matter while *probation* is the proof offered by the rhetor (Witherington 1998:519 and Zweck 1989:103).

[4] See Parsons (2008:246) and Witherington (1998:519) for a structuring of Paul's speech according to typical Greek rhetoric. They argue for the following structure: *exordium* (Acts 17:22–23a); *propositio* (Acts 17:23b); *probatio* (Acts 17:24–29); *peroratio* (Acts 17:30–31).

[5] The main verb, θεωρῶ ("I see"), appears last in Paul's affirmation, emphasising that which precedes it ("in all things, you are very religious").

After Paul's commendation, he highlights a point of convergence between himself and his listeners, singling out the inscription to the unknown god that he had noticed (Acts 17:23). While he begins with what his listeners would find familiar, he delves into the unknown in the *propositio* (a summary of the subject matter; see Parsons 2008:246; Acts 17:23b), stating that it is this deity that he is coming to proclaim to them. What follows in verses 24-29 is the *probatio*, (proof; see Schnabel 2012:966), in which Paul defines and describes this deity. Noting that they have been worshipping this god in ignorance, Paul identifies him as ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας τὸν κόσμον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ (the God who created the world and everything in it; Acts 17:24a), …οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὑπάρχων κύριος ([being] the Lord of heaven and earth; Acts 17:24b), and one οὐκ ἐν χειροποιήτοις ναοῖς κατοικεῖ (not residing in handmade temples; Acts 17:24c). Paul thus employs the category of ἄγνωστος (unknown) to proclaim a god to whom his audience would not have otherwise been open. Paul also leverages his audience's admittance of ignorance about this god to soften the accusatory tone of his preaching, ascribing their idolatry to ignorance (Acts 17:23). This marks his proclamation as a well-deserved opportunity for clarification by asserting τοῦτο ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν (this I proclaim to you; Acts 17:23).

Paul's affirmation of God as the one who made everything and, hence, as one who does not need to live in handmade temples is rhetorically loaded. As a religious and cultic epicentre, Athens had many temples and other religious monuments of which to boast. Paul situates God above these attempts at deific accommodation. Using a deductive approach as a rhetorical device, he offers proof that the unknown God worshiped by the Athenians is the creator of the κόσμος and everything in it. Wilson (2005:198) claims that Paul's theology of God is a "convergence of both Jewish and Greek thought and language, particularly in Hellenistic Judaism." According to Wilson, the affirmation that God made the world and that he is Lord over the heavens is a mixture of Jewish and Greek thought. He indicates that ποιέω was used by both Greek and Jewish writers to refer to the act of creation. Wilson (2005:198) concludes:

> [T]he fundamental ideas behind Acts 17:24 are Jewish, possibly based on Isaiah 42:5, with echoes of Genesis 1:1ff. However, Paul's language appears to have been purposefully chosen to be understandable to Greeks.

Paul continues with the notion that God is self-sufficient, not in need of service by human hands as if he needed anything (Acts 17:25), again emphasising that the statues, altars, and other expressions in Athens are unnecessary and insufficient. Moreover, Paul adds that "having an idol does not make God exist, for he has existed even before creation" (Kisau 2006:1357). Paul notes that God has made πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων (every nation of humanity; Acts 17:26) and has placed them across the earth, including Athens, as part of God's creation. While being profoundly Jewish, this idea is also borrowed from the Greek audience's context (Wilson 2005:198). God's plan in all this was that all humanity would seek (ζητεῖν) him, perhaps grope for (ψηλαφήσειαν) him, and find (εὕροιεν) him, since he is near (Acts 17:27). Paul's affirmation that God is not far from "each one of us" (ἑνὸς ἑκάστου ἡμῶν; Acts 17:27), strengthens the association with his hearers as he creates a category that includes both him and his listeners as those who can find God. Paul's emphasis on God's nearness would also have struck a chord with the Stoics in the audience (Johnson 2016:203–204), who held that the divine governing principle of the world was within reach to those who would pursue it with rationality. Paul further strengthens this notion that the God he proclaims is in grasp by quoting Athenian poets, again using the inclusive "we" (ἐσμέν; Acts 17:28) to create a communal category. Toussaint (1984:403) claims that Paul's affirmation of God's provision of life (Acts 17:28) suited the Stoic philosophy of aligning people's lives with the purpose of the cosmos. Again, Paul emphasises the order of things: humanity comes from God and, therefore, humanity cannot create or craft God from gold, silver, or stone (Acts 17:29).

It is at this point that Paul's gospel message begins to sound familiar. After skilfully affirming his audience in their seeking of God and building around an understandable category (the unknown god), he moves to the *peroratio* (conclusion; see Witherington 1998:519): his message of repentance and the resurrection (Acts 17:30–31). Just like Paul had universalised God's creation and placement of all people, as well as God's ability to be sought and found by them, he now universalises the judgment of God by arguing that God wants τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντας πανταχοῦ (all people, everywhere) to repent (Acts 17:30).

The Athenians did not hold to a common theology of repentance. The closest equivalent in Athens may have been conversion to philosophic thinking (Keener 2020:668). Paul frames this repentance in light of what is to come: a

designated man (ἀνήρ) who will judge the inhabited world (τὴν οἰκουμένην); one about whom proof was provided to all (πίστιν παρασχὼν πᾶσιν) that he arose from the dead (ἀναστήσας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν; Acts 17:31). Despite philosophic detractors, many Greeks believed in divine wrath and judgment (see, e.g., Epictetus *Diatr*., 2.19.26). However, most people did not anticipate a day of universal judgment in the future (Verbrugge 2000:211–215). The Stoics, in particular, would have had a hard time accepting the notion that history was reaching a climax (Johnson 2016:203–224). Paul saved Jesus's resurrection message for the end of his speech, knowing that nothing in his message would be as repugnant to his critics as the resurrection. The Greeks believed that dead people remained dead and that there was no hope of resurrection (Wright & Bird 2019:32–38; Homer *Od*., 11.160–225; Il. 24.551). The Greek tragedian Aeschylus (525–456 BC) represented the gods of Apollo by saying, "When the dust has soaked up a man's blood, once he has died, there is no resurrection" (Eumenides 647–648; Conzelmann 1987:146; Fitzmyer 1988:612). According to Croy (1997:21–39), the Greeks believed in either a total extinction of body and soul, an afterlife in Hades, or limited immortality of the soul as opposed to eternal immortality. Regarding the resurrection of the dead, Pliny the Elder (AD 23/24–79), for example, opined, "These are fictions of childish absurdity and belong to a mortality greedy for life unceasing" (*Nat*. 7.189). He continued, "It is a plague on this mad idea that life is renewed by death. It is a sweet but naive perspective" (7.190). All of these Greek perspectives agreed on one point: the body is never restored in any way (Bock 2007:696).[6] In light of the challenge of the central message of Christ's resurrection and divine judgment, Paul has been careful to borrow from and lean into the language of his audience up to this point. Paul's whole speech, therefore, set the stage for his main point: "Athenians may be religious (17:22), but the 'unknown God '(17:23) is revealed not in idols, but in Christ

[6] According to Schnabel (2012:995), the Greeks who believed in the immortality of the soul were unfamiliar with the concept of bodily resurrection from the dead. Hope was usually expressed in terms of the immortality of the soul, which lives in the heavens or is associated with the stars. Although Plato and Aristotle saw the cosmos as eternal, Epicureans and Stoics saw the cosmos as finite (though for Stoics it would be repeated cyclically). It is, therefore, unsurprising that some philosophers mocked Paul when he spoke about the resurrection (Acts 17:32).

(17:29–31)" (Keener 2020:441). Though the speech appears to have ended abruptly, Witherington (1998:531) contends that the fact that Paul's speech brought his audience to "a point of decision and judgment" indicates that he used the rhetorical device known as *peroratio* (conclusion) to compel his audience to make a decision.

Parsons (2008:249) refers to the Areopagus speech's "preference for general revelation over Christological formulation." Such a sensitivity grants Paul the privilege of translating his central message—the death and resurrection of Christ—into the language of the hearers, a skill which demonstrates profound "context reading" from Paul's side. While Paul demonstrates an exceptional sensitivity to the language and worldview of his hearers, his employment of points of conversion is not for the sake of compromise but for points of contact. First, while Paul affirms his audience in their seeking for God by erecting a statue of the unknown god, he confronts their practise of polytheism by arguing that the God he proclaims created all humankind from one person. This same God now invites all inhabitants of the earth under himself. Paul's speech thus demonstrates God's universal revelation to humanity. Yet Paul emphasises that this God is wholly other than what they have perceived him to be. Paul's speech provides a model that extends beyond its immediate literary context. The message's application to "all people everywhere" (Acts 17:30) fits Luke's ethnic universalism (Luke 24:27; Acts 1:8), as well as Paul's (e.g., Rom 1:14, 16; 10:11–13; Talbert 2005:672). It is clear that Paul confronts his Athenian audience with the gospel of Jesus Christ in a tactful yet forceful manner. As Daryl (1995:47–62) aptly notes, "Paul's speech begins with the epistemological assumptions of its hearers, it builds on a common understanding of the cosmos, yet it climaxes in the fullest self-disclosure of the creator—the resurrection of the God-man."

Paul thus deviates from the standard form of speech associated with his Jewish brothers. "The striking significance of Acts 17:16–34 is Paul's ability to clothe biblical revelation in a cultured and relevant argument to his pagan contemporaries" (Daryl 1995:60). By communicating the gospel through Greco-Roman rhetoric, the apostle Paul is able to find common ground and thereby demonstrates a profound mastery of the language and context of his hearers. Paul's awareness of his audience's language, philosophical, cultural, and religious backgrounds is a direct result of his time spent in Tarsus, one of the three Greek university cities. With this background, Paul was able to

reinterpret pagan writings from a biblical standpoint. Finally, the Apostle Paul demonstrates contextual balance, allowing him to adapt the gospel to the cultural flavour of his audience without compromising the central message.

While the above is only a condensed version of a socio-rhetoric analysis of the pericope at hand, it serves as an apt example of context reading, demonstrating that perception and empathic awareness of the worldviews of one's hearers was a crucial skill in the initial spread of the gospel as recounted by Luke. Analogously, the implications of Paul's missions strategy of reaching out to multilingual or heterogeneous people as outlined in his Areopagus speech in Acts 17:16–34 cannot be lost on church planting in Africa. Of particular interest in this article is the Global Evangelical Church in Ghana, which is currently marked by an Ewe majority. The ensuing discussion, therefore, elucidates how the Global Evangelical Church is constituted ethnologically and by what means it can adopt "context reading" strategies to improve its language planning and language policy in order to reach out to diverse cultural groups in Ghana.

Implications for missions strategies that include non-Ewe speaking people in the Global Evangelical Church in Ghana

The Global Evangelical Church as an ethnic church

The Bremen mission in Germany brought the Church to Ghana. The missionary association founded in northern Germany in 1819 dispatched missionaries to Ghana and Togo (Asante 2018). They laboured among the ethnic Ewe people who live in what is now known as Ghana's Volta Region. After several years of missionary work with vital African assistance, the church spread into numerous towns and villages throughout the then Gold Coast and the Republic of Togo (Brydon 2008:375–377).

Following the First World War, the Germans, along with all of its missionaries, fled the nation. A small group of African Christians, who convened the first synod of the church in Kpalime on May 18–22, 1922, assumed the church's leadership. At this synod, the church was properly established under the name Ewe Christian Church (*Ewe Kristo Hame*). The Eweland where the church was founded was separated politically into two zones: the English zone and the French zone in a joint synod at Ho, with the English zone having their headquarters in Amedzofe until 1945 (Ustorf 2002).

After the Bremen missionaries left the shores of the Gold Coast, the church struggled to survive. The Gold Coast government at the time urged the Church of Scotland to come to the church's aid by providing leadership, which they did. The church was renamed Ewe Presbyterian Church (EP Church, Ghana), adopting the governance system of the Church of Scotland (the Presbyterian tradition). The people embraced the name, transforming their church into an ethnic one that only Ewes attended. All services were conducted in Ewe. The Bible, as well as other church literature, were translated into the Ewe language. Later, during its synod in Kpedze in 1954, the church's leadership changed the name Ewe Presbyterian Church to Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Tosu, 2007:48–66). This was done to rid the church of its tribal identity. The leadership also ensured that branches were established in other regions of the country. However, the church continued to evangelise only their kind and to conduct church services largely in the Ewe language. As a result, non-Ewe speakers found it difficult to participate and join. The Ewe and Ashanti tribal war histories also hampered the Ewes's effort to bring the Ashantis and other tribes into the church (Johnson 1965:33–59).

As the church grew, the question of how long a moderator should be in office became a cause of controversy. The church eventually split, and on June 8, 1991 the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana (EP Church of Ghana) was formed—only the word" of" and a comma differentiated the names of the two churches. To govern the splintered church, new leadership was installed. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana went to court to reclaim properties from the EP Church of Ghana. On December 20, 2002, the High Court of Ghana ruled that the EP Church of Ghana should change her name because the two names were confusing. The EP Church of Ghana changed its name to Global Evangelical Church at an extraordinary synod on May 3, 2003. The Global Evangelical Church has hence survived under six moderators.[7]

Though the Global Evangelical Church has grown in leaps and bounds ever since, she is yet to break from the tribal label that is associated with her. Across the country, the church continues to conduct services mainly in the Ewe language. Ewes continue to make up about 99 percent of the church's membership and, since the split, the highest leadership positions have been

[7] The 2013 edition of the constitution of the Global Evangelical Church, p.3.

filled by only Ewes. Even though the church has a global label, little has been done to change its tribal identity. As demonstrated in the Areopagus speech, context reading is an essential skill for multi-cultural or multi-ethnic mission and ministry. While the GEC sought to drop its ethnic labels, the movement has not yet demonstrated an effective understanding of and engagement with the worldviews of the non-Ewe members it seeks to serve. A key factor in such an endeavour would be mastering the languages and conventions of other Ghanaian tribes, which brings us to the need for an adapted language policy in the GEC.

The importance of language in context reading

Language is critical in propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations. The German Bremen missionaries who started the EP Church among the Ewe-speaking people in Togo and Ghana performed an excellent job of translating the Bible into Ewe. They realised that they could not make any progress until they communicated the gospel in the language of the people they came to evangelise. Not only was the Ewe language employed, but Ewe ways of speaking were engaged to ensure that the church truly embraced the gospel in ways that made sense to them. This is one of the reasons for the strong Ewe flavour of the church.

Ghana is home to around seventy ethnic groups. Its population of about 30 million people speaks more than eighty languages (Lewis, Gary, and Fennig 2016). All of the languages spoken within Ghana are of the Niger-Congo linguistic family. According to the 2021 national population census, Akan is the native language of approximately 45.7 percent of the Ghanaian population, and it is also spoken as a second language or as the *lingua franca* by at least 40 percent of the remaining Ghanaian population. The most populous ethnic groups in Ghana are the Akans, Dagbanis, and Ewes. Most of the Orthodox Churches in Ghana are heterogeneous. According to ARHEN (2020),[8] the Presbyterian Church of Ghana uses over five major ethnic languages to conduct church services. These are Akan, Fanti, Ga, Ewe, and Dagbani. Akoto

[8] Australian Rural Health Education Network

and Ansah (2021:1-11) reveal how church names portray their heterogeneity in Ghana.[9]

While the missions directorate of the GEC is making some efforts to reach out to people of other languages in Ghana and beyond, a lot more needs to be done to rid the church of the assumption that it exists only for Ewe-speaking people. Whereas other churches, such as the Church of Pentecost, the Assemblies of God, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana use different ethnic languages in their services and have developed programs to draw new converts from all ethnic groups, the GEC seems to be focusing mainly on the Ewe people alone. The number of non-Ewe-speaking pastors in the GEC is negligible such that it cannot make any significant impact in opening the church up to other tribes. As a result, the growth rate of the GEC is declining.[10] It is however gratifying to note that at the August 5, 2022 mini synod held by the GEC at Adonai Chapel in Accra the Moderator of the church, Rt. Rev. Prosper Samuel Dzomeku, announced that the church has decided to open English assemblies in various places within the country. According to him, this is meant to "retain our teeming youth who have been flocking to other churches due to language issues and also to open up the church for non-Ewe speaking people to join and to feel free to worship with the Global Evangelical Church."[11] While adopting the English language could be a helpful step in the right direction, the invitation remains for the church to better read its context in order to soften its tribalised identity. This includes understanding and appreciating the ways of talking of various non-Ewe groups

[9] This is ongoing research that seeks to explore various aspects, ranging from theology to linguistics (pragmatics, semantics, grammar, sociolinguistics), of church names in the Ghanaian religious landscape. Some church names were found to be linguistically homogeneous and others were heterogeneous. Church names ideologically and theologically define the members in a particularly Christian denomination. The local languages in church names allow Ghanaians to christen their "church" based on their own worldviews which are inextricably part of their linguistic heritage

[10] Global Evangelical Church 2018 Church Survey Report under the heading, "Membership Growth Rate from 2015-2018," states that, "while membership increased consistently over the years, overall growth rate … declined from 7.4% in 2015 to 2.5% in 2018" (5).

[11] 2022 Mini Synod Programme/Agenda/Keynote Address/Reports of the Global Evangelical Church, p.23

and adopting known and shared metaphors, cultural emblems, literary devices, and ways of speaking into the culture of the church.

Worship and liturgy serve as prime examples here. Currently, the church's hymnal is predominately in Ewe. Purists see it as the work of the church to preserve the Ewe language. The majority of preaching is done in the Ewe language.[12] This happens even in congregations that are located outside the Volta Region. Though the GEC uses English and Ewe in their regional and national programs, much needs to be done to entrench the practice. Often, such programs start with the English language but then change into Ewe along the line, leaving the few non-Ewe pastors completely lost. The church ought to look into a language policy that will enable it to use English and other ethnic languages on regional and national platforms. Pastors and other church leaders posted to these places must either speak the local language or make sure they employ the services of translators. The church can also set up a language desk to foster a missions strategy that reaches out to all the major language groups in the country. This will help the spread of the gospel in Ghana and beyond.

Although some non-Ewe-speaking congregations exist in the GEC, there is also a need to open more congregations in other ethnic languages. This will call for the recruiting of more non-Ewe-speaking pastors and evangelists. So far, only a limited number of pastors and evangelists serving in the GEC are non-Ewes. The current system of appointing leaders is further strengthening this imbalance as it is the current leadership of the congregations that recommends eligible persons to be recruited as pastors. In selecting people for leadership positions in the church, equal opportunity must be given to all who qualify irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds, and the church needs to ensure that the few non-Ewe leaders are heard and seen in the process. The issue of the transfer of pastors must also be transparent and unbiased. Non-Ewes are rarely transferred to major congregations, while newly commissioned Ewe pastors are sent to bigger congregations. This has caused disaffection among the non-Ewe pastors in the Church.

[12] This is due to the fact that Ewe pastors, evangelists and presbyters are in the majority.

Apart from the desire to preserve the Ewe language, which is one of the reasons the GEC seems to be concentrating mainly on the Ewe people, there is also a lack of the necessary rhetorical skills needed to reach non-Ewes. Since the GEC originated among the Ewe people and since over the years she concentrated on her own people, the church has not acquired the rhetorical skills necessary to reach out to people of other tribes. The socio-rhetorical analysis of Acts 17:16–34 has demonstrated that Paul's rhetorical versatility enabled him to reach out to people of diverse cultures, languages, and religions of his time. Born a Jew, Paul educated himself with the rhetorical skill of the Jews (Acts 22:3). In an analogous manner, the invitation remains for the GEC to learn basic principles of language planning and adopt a language policy that will aid leadership in developing strategies necessary to not only win non-Ewes but to also accommodate them in the church.

Conclusion

A socio-rhetorical analysis of Paul's Areopagus speech demonstrates that the central message of the gospel and the expression of the church matched the receiving context in the spread of the early church. Without altering the core of the gospel, Paul employs the language and shared cultural systems of his hearers to make his point. Such an analysis makes a compelling point that, rather than expecting the hearer to make impossible rhetorical, cultural, and literary jumps in order to understand the central message, the onus to read a selected context and to translate the gospel accordingly is on the speaker. In an analogous manner, the GEC finds itself before a non-Ewe audience that requires reading and understanding. While a survey of its historical roots explains its Ewe identity, we argue that, in order for the church to live up to its appellation of "global," and for it to remain effective in an ever-expanding and diverse Ghana, the church ought to be intentional in employing context reading to delve into the cultural and rhetorical worlds of non-Ewes. As a nation of various tribes and tongues, Ghana begs for churches that reflect its diversity and beauty.

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De-Silencing the Voice of the Christian Teacher via the Societal Curriculum: Applying Lessons towards Solidifying Education and Development in Africa

Dr Gentleman Gayus Dogara
ECWA Theological Seminary Kagoro (ETSK), Kaduna State, Nigeria
gentlemandogara@gmail.com

Abstract

This study pursued three purposes: Firstly, to discuss what it means for Christian teachers to have a comprehensive working grasp of their calling to Christ's ambassadorial services; secondly, to consider how the silence of Christian teachers in the education system and Public Square of Nigeria is reflecting lack of a comprehensive working grasp of their calling to Christ's ambassadorial services with responsibilities in the education sector; thirdly, to reason-out ways in which the societal curriculum can be deliberately engaged to develop a voice for Christian teachers. The study was done through the documentary research approach component of the historical methodology. The study concludes by noting that Christian teachers have a dual mandate as educationists in Christian-based schools, and also non-Christian schools. It is through this mandate that the voice of Christian teachers in Nigeria can be de-silenced via the societal curriculum, towards solidifying education and transformational development in Nigeria.

Background of the Study

Introduction

This study emerged from a context of hearing the echo of all kinds of voices, many of which claim to be speaking for the good of the African society in the area of education and development. In the middle of such voices, questions

arise as to whether or not Christian teachers, in particular, are voicing out actions towards advancing education and transformational development in various African countries. For example, at the time of writing this paper, the umbrella body of teachers in Nigerian universities, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has been on industrial action for close to eight months, starting from 14th February 2022; are research papers being written from a Christian-based perspective to recommend fresher strategies to address lingering challenges in the Nigerian education system, such as this? In other words, there is a question as to whether or not Christian teachers are speaking at all. Linked to this, there is also a question as to whether or not Christian teachers in Africa are speaking loudly, that is if they are speaking at all; whether or not Christian teachers are speaking loudly enough to be heard; whether or not Christian teachers are being heard by those who need to listen.

A recent curricular matter in Nigeria can be engaged as a miniature example pointing to the questions as to whether or not Christian teachers, in particular, are voicing out actions towards advancing education and transformational development in Africa. It is an example on how all kinds of voices are being raised in the contemporary Nigerian society with a view to consolidating education and transformational development in the country—a country in which Christians in general, but Christian teachers in particular, are also key stakeholders. This is the example: while there are few voices against the re-introduction of "History" as a stand-alone course of study at the basic education level in Nigeria, (which the government terminated over two decades ago), stronger and louder voices are in support of re-introducing it. Some of the official reasons for scrapping "History" as a subject were attributed to lack of teachers of the subject, shrinking job opportunities for graduates of history, and lack of students' interest on the subject. However, some of the consequences of stopping this subject include the fact that: "To date, Nigeria has no official account of the 1967 to 1970 civil war. The removal has serious bearing on the process of nation building and has continued to widen the gap between the young and the old. Many students are also largely ignorant about Nigeria's past…" (Adebumiti 2022:2). As at the time of developing this paper, four Southern Nigeria states (Oyo, Ekiti, Lagos and Anambra) have brought back the subject to their primary and secondary schools while no Northern Nigeria state is reported to have done so. Now a question to Christian teachers, as joint-owners of (and key stakeholders in)

Nigeria, is: to which side of history do they belong? In alternative terms, how did Christian teachers in particular spoke or kept silent when the initial decision was processed towards scrapping the subject or how are Christian teachers speaking now as to whether or not it should be reintroduced? This question is significant in view of the fact that scrapping "History" as a subject in Nigerian schools denied learners and citizens the opportunity to know how Christian missions/missionaries, Christian expatriates, and Christian nationalists contributed towards the making of Nigeria in both its pre-amalgamated and post-amalgamated existence. But the question is more noteworthy in view of Christianity being a way of faith with ever-present dimensions of history.

Sequel to the example above, it is notable that questionable involvement of teachers, generally, in unethical conduct in the public square of democracy and governance in Africa is also strengthening the question as to whether or not Christian teachers, in particular, have any impact in such locations. For illustration, it has long been in the Nigerian public domain that a sizeable number of teachers, even those who have attained professorial cadre, (many of whom are also known to be affiliated to Christianity) have facilitated the rigging of elections at all stages of the leadership recruitment process. In a juxtaposed consideration, it would have been a great opportunity for Christian teachers in such situations to be on the side of social-justice, thereby voicing out Christ-like values in the midst of unethical practices in the democratic cosmology.

In a general sense, unethical conduct in the education system (and especially in schools—public, private, Christian, and non-Christian) in Nigeria (although other Africa countries are nto spared) is increasing on an exponential basis, despite the presence of Christian teachers in the system. For instance, it is no longer secret or news that even in many schools where Christian teachers are on the executive seats, there are widespread examination malpractices initiated and/or abetted by the Christian teachers. What is more worrisome is that even some hypothetically Christian schools (whether privately-owned or church-possessed) have become notable centers for all kinds of academic racketeering and examination malpractices, especially with regard to those assessments being administered by the West African Examination Council

(WAEC), and National Examination Council of Nigeria (NECO), just to give an abridged picture.

While the presence of Christian teachers in the Nigerian society is undeniable, it is debatable as to whether such presence constitutes a voice capable of checking or addressing unethical conduct related to education and transformational development in the country. Using a public primary school in Kabene-Surubu zone (a Christian-dominated community in Southern Kaduna State of Nigeria) as a miniature of the larger Nigerian society, in what ways are the Christian teachers in such a school serving as a reference model of professional ethics to other civil servants in the community? In this Kabene-Surubu community, it has been observed to be a regular occurrence for teachers to go to school on an irregular basis, late, close before officially-scheduled times, and even assign unqualified members within their family-and-friends circle to represent them in conducting the teaching process. A few years ago, some teachers like these in Kabene were retrenched from government service under the watch of Mallam Nasir El'rufai, governor of Kaduna State, and being a Muslim, the governor was accused of religious persecution against Christians!

In the face of lack of overwhelming evidence to support that, by virtue of their presence and actions in the education system and Public Square in Nigeria, Christian teachers constitute a voice of reason, authority, order, and leadership, it can be premised that they are generally silent. Christian teachers are silent in the sense that they have conformed to the pattern of the world, thereby questioning their qualification to speak while the world listens. Christian teachers are silent because they are also not proactively confronting the rot in the Nigerian society from a Christian-based educational perspective. In view of this silence, there is a need to initiate actions aimed at encouraging Christian teachers in Nigeria to start speaking with purpose until their voice is heard and becomes effective in integrating education and development in the country. One of such actions is represented by the paper: "De-Silencing the Voice of the Christian Teacher via the Societal Curriculum: Applying Lessons towards Solidifying Education and Development in Nigeria."

De-Silencing the Voice of the Christian Teacher in the Real World

Christian teachers in Africa need to dis-conform to the pattern of the world, and also challenge the accepted norms of contemporary times (Janvier 2005:77), so that their voice can be heard, it can be stated that it is in speaking that they can be real-world problem solvers. The expression "real-world" can be understood in at least four interconnections below.

Firstly, the real world of people is made up of the truly educated people; the phrase "truly educated people" refers to those who are not just educated but have also experienced the saving grace of God, as manifested in Christ Jesus. Christian teachers in this category are people who have experienced the real liberating influence of education and enjoy the freedom of educational exploration which Christ gives. These are teachers whom God uses in bringing change to the world, via the educational process, towards making it free from the bondage of sin and corruption in which it is now.

For the Christian teachers, the meaning of becoming educated definitely supersedes just speaking (in words and actions) towards bringing about sustainable human development to the communities where they reside or wherever developmental challenges exist in the real-world. It involves living a "purpose driven life," (Warren 2002:Cover Page) as world-class Christians fully committed to the Lordship of Christ, to His call for them to be His agents of positive change in the world, and to the "Master Plan of Evangelism" (Coleman 1993:Cover Page). The desire of every purpose-driven teacher should be to assist the students to learn by applying theories to real-life, as an evidence of having learned. This desire should be stronger in Christian teachers, by virtue of the fact that each individual Christian teacher is called by God to be an "effective minister of education" (Stubblefield 1993:Cover Page) to the students and to the world, with a view to impacting people with the life of Christ.

Secondly, the real-world is also made up of the seemingly educated people; these are people whose educational experiences are limited, so far, only to the realm of God's common grace; these people are educated but have salvation in Christ (Grudem 1999:274-275). Christian teachers are also

called to serve among (and to) this category of people, whose education is only within the natural realm.

The seemingly educated have no spiritual discernment whatsoever. Their situation is actually pathetic, as noted by Apostle Paul: "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14, NIV). For Christian teachers to serve effectively in the context of this category of people, the Christian teachers concerned need to be aware of the danger of basing educational affairs on theories and principles which have been developed by non-Christian educationists, without any form of filtering. The danger is both clear and present, in the sense that development of biblical values would not form the basis of education.

Thirdly, an immediate aim of education, from a Christian perspective, is to lead people of the world to a true knowledge of God which is a consequence of their having eternal life. Under God's common grace, "the grace of God by which he gives people innumerable blessings that are not part of salvation" (Grudem, Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine 2000:657), a key focus of the Christian teacher in the educational process is to help people to connect to Christ's salvation, so that they can have enablement of the Holy Spirit to address real-world challenges and to also make positive contribution to the development of the human society. Accordingly, teachers who have experienced God's saving grace, have a more crucial reason for participating in the educating process—to prepare God's children for life in the next world, on the other side of eternity. For the Christian teacher, an ultimate significant aim of education is to present every person as a whole in Christ.

Fourthly, the attention of the Christian teacher in the curriculum delivery process, as well as in all matters of education, is really focused on the eternal earth which God will bring into place upon the termination of this present earth. While Christians shall be permanent residents of the real-world that is coming *next*, non-Christians shall experience the other side of eternity in hell, which is the worst place to be. However, it is only in speaking out (in words and actions) that Christian teachers can help make *this* world a better place for all to live profitably, and not be in the semblance of hell on earth. Accordingly,

"men of honour in the public square" (Tushima 2013:1-288) must be produced and empowered to work towards making the world a better place.

Thesis Statement

This study is built on the premise that the silence of Christian teachers in the education system and Public Square of Nigeria reflects lack of a comprehensive working grasp of their calling to Christ's ambassadorial educational services. As a rejoinder, the societal curriculum can be deliberately engaged to develop a voice for Christian teachers, as well as lessons applicable towards solidifying education and transformational development in Nigeria.

Purpose of Study

This study is being guided by a three point purpose of study. Firstly, the study aims at discussing what it means for Christian teachers to have a comprehensive working grasp of their calling to Christ's ambassadorial services. Secondly, the study shall also consider how the silence of Christian teachers in the education system and Public Square of Nigeria is reflecting lack of a comprehensive working grasp of their calling to Christ's ambassadorial services with responsibilities in the education sector. Thirdly, the study shall reason-out ways in which the societal curriculum can be deliberately engaged to develop a voice for Christian teachers, as well as lessons applicable towards solidifying education and transformational development in Nigeria.

Research Questions

In view of the purpose of the study, three research questions are developed. Specifically:

What does it mean for Christian teachers to have a comprehensive working grasp of their calling to Christ's ambassadorial services?

How does the silence of Christian teachers in the education system and Public Square of Nigeria reflect lack of a comprehensive working grasp of their calling to Christ's ambassadorial educational services?

In what ways can the societal curriculum be deliberately engaged to develop a voice for Christian teachers, as well as lessons applicable towards solidifying education and transformational development in Nigeria?

Significance of the Study

This study is designed to benefit teachers in two ways. Firstly, the study is designed to serve as a basis for Christian teachers to have a refreshed look of themselves as people whom God has called to serve as His voice of reason, order, authority, and leadership in a chaotic Nigerian society. By this look, Christian teachers cannot afford to withdraw themselves from providing direction in the education system in particular, or the public square in general. Secondly, the study will provide Christian teachers with practical strategies that can be corporately applied towards enhancing their participation as proactive agents of education and general human development in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework for De-Silencing the Voice of Christian Teachers

This study is being principled on the framework that the speaking action of Christian teachers is intricately connected to their call and sanctification by Christ for the purpose of engaging them individually and corporately, in His ambassadorial services in the world, particularly as educationists, and generally as His agents of transformational change in the Public Square. As John Stott would put it, as members of the Church, Christian teachers (like all Christians in a general sense) have been called to "Holy-Worldliness", which is an expression of the double identity of the Church (Stott 1992:242-245). Based on this identity, Christian teachers are called to be holy, yet "worldly" in the sense that Christian teachers have a responsibility of being immersed in the life of the world in all ramifications of the interconnection between education and development, for the purpose of influencing the world, yet without being soiled or swayed by the world. The Christian, Christian teacher specifically, has been ***saved*** from the world and also ***sent*** into the world: Mark 16:15, John 17:6–20). Consequently, it is possible for the Christian teacher to facilitate effective change both in the education system and in the larger society, as a result of having personally experienced a radical change in Christ.

Limitation and Delimitations of Study

Limitations

The need to develop this paper was generated by an invitation by a body of students in the education discipline, at a seminary in Nigeria, who requested the researcher to write a paper that addressed the silence of Christian teachers in the Nigerian educational system. Apart from the fact that the invitation did not come at a time long enough for the researcher to explore more areas of concern to the paper, the researcher also went through some health-related challenges that limited him to only a few areas of exploration. Although these limitations did not affect the overall quality of the paper, they constraint the researcher to focus more on documentary research; otherwise, the researcher would have loved to engage in more extensive qualitative studies on the issues surrounding the silence or not of Christian teachers in the Nigerian education system and the Public Square.

Delimitations

Firstly, the study relates only to people called by Christ to service as Christian educationists and/or trained Christian teachers who regularly function in the formal curriculum delivery system, and who engage the societal curriculum either regularly or irregularly in order to support formal curricular goals. By this understanding, this paper is also concerned with Christians who, for various reasons, have found themselves in teaching services although they may not be trained teachers, professional teachers, or Christian educationists, bur who (nevertheless) have become active and direct participants in delivering the formal curriculum in Africa. Secondly, Nigeria and the Nigerian education system are used to constitute an example applicable to Africa. The choice of Nigeria is based on the fact that it is the most populous country in Africa, which also has a very large educational system that can be used to reflect the situation in many African countries, most immediately countries in West Africa.

Operational Definition of Terms

This study defines six operational terms towards providing a better working guide to comprehending it. A conceptual approach is used to define these

terms: Education, Curriculum, Societal Curriculums, Christian Teacher, Development, and Transformational Development.

Education. This term is defined from the perspective of the concern and goals of education, and in formal and non-formal sense. It is definition taken from a fairly recent training document developed by a leader in the field of education in Nigeria. Accordingly:

> The primary concern of the process of education is more about the cultivation of learning and character than about the acquisition of specific facts, figures, and theories. The ultimate goal of education consists in the imbibing of the orientation toward and the ongoing development of understanding (of the social, physical, and spiritual worlds) and the making of sound judgment (based on knowledge gained) for living in ways that are beneficial to oneself and one's world. Education, understood in this way takes place both in formal and non-formal settings. A major objective of education, therefore, should be that of providing the right environment and relationships for learning to be cultivated (Tushima 2021:1-8).

Curriculum. This is a term with both prescriptive and descriptive dimensions (Ellis 2004:1-148). Firstly, the term "Curriculum" can be defined *prescriptively*, which is a statement of what "ought" to occur as evidencing the kind of deliberately planned learning experiences that are envisioned and mandated for the student to go through. This statement generally applies to formal teaching-learning processes in which experts in curriculum or a curricular authority decides for the learner what knowledge is worth knowing; it is a pre-existent master-map or a blueprint determined to delimit the formal process of learning, which teachers are assigned to implement. Secondly, the term "curriculum" can be defined *descriptively*. This is a statement of the reality of how things are, not how they ought to be or how they are mandated or influenced (or even "manipulated") to be. In other words, any occurrence that results in immediate or subsequent learning, whatever kind that learning may be, is qualified as curriculum.

For the purpose of this paper, the curriculum shall be defined as made up of both prescriptive and descriptive qualities. Accordingly, "The curriculum can be said to be all the experiences for which the school or education system accepts or assigns to itself direct responsibility; learning still goes on in the daily realities of the student outside the predefined package of learning the formal curriculum is responsible for" (ECWAPECC 2021:5-6). This view allows curriculum to be further considered as a prescription for learning by which learners are guided to reactively, actively, proactively, and interactively respond to the constant experience and imprinting of God's truth in their lives (Deuteronomy 6:1-9) as well as in the reality which God has created for humans and which exists irrespective of the formal curriculum (ECWAPECC 2021:5-6), "For in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:18, NIV).

Societal Curriculum. This curriculum acknowledges the existence of other facilitators of learning within the larger society, which can be within the education system or outside the formal schooling or formal curriculum system. For example: the Nigeria Bar Association, Nigeria Union of Journalists, or other civil society organizations can be creators of the societal curriculum. In other words, the societal curriculum is being defined operationally as this: "The massive, on-going, informal curriculum of family, peer groups, neighbourhoods, church organizations, occupations, mass-media, and other forces of socialization. These agencies of socialization play a significant role in educating all of us throughout our lives (Dogara 2018:64).

Christian Teacher. For the purposes of this paper, the definition of the term "Christian teacher" is being anchored on the Christian theological foundations of education, based on which what constitutes qualification items of a Christian teacher. It should be noted that Christian teachers have a dual mandate: to serve as a teachers in Christian-based schools as well as in non-Christian schools; the qualification of a Christian teacher also covers this duality of service. In consequence, three areas of qualification are mentioned below.

Firstly, the Christian teacher needs to be truly Christian. To be a Christian is for one to have experienced God's saving grace in Christ. All other qualities necessary for one to be considered as a Christian teacher are dependent on this particular experience of salvation in Christ, who is the only way, the truth,

and the life. While people follow as many ways as they choose for the purpose of achieving salvation, the Christian teacher staunchly pledges allegiance only to Christ: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

It is true that many people profess to be Christians while, in fact, they are not. The world, based on various non-biblical criteria, also considers many people as Christians, while, in fact, they are not. Only Christian teachers, who are qualified as such from a biblical standpoint, are Christians in the true sense of the word. The only way teachers can have a basis upon which to impact the life of Christ to others around them, at school, or to the society at large, is by being Christians in the true sense of the word.

The Christian church today is, (unfortunately) in many instances engaging in practices which encourage a false sense of salvation. By being involved in such practices, the Christian church is making it possible to have people who bear Christian identity, in the outward sense, but who are not Christians in fact. For example, people are being baptized for having made a “profession” of Christ acceptable to a church concerned; but in reality, some churches are only interested in adding what it considers as “committed” members to their membership roll. In other instances, such baptisms are done in order to allow intending couples to get married in the church, or to make it possible for members to be elected or appointed to church leadership positions, or simply for the minister to have something to satisfy himself or show as progress report to his superiors, or for handing over purposes from one minister to the other. The church, as made of those who subscribe to the basic tenets of evangelical Christianity, needs to call itself to order, so as to address nominalism in Christianity. Moreover, this call to order should help in ensuring that those who represent Christ in non-Christian schools, and indeed all educational establishments, are truly known by Christ. Otherwise, it would be necessary for Christ to deny them at a future day of judgment, just as He said He would do: “Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'” (Matt 7:22-23, NIV). This pronouncement will not apply to those who are Christians indeed.

Secondly, the Christian teacher needs to have the spiritual gift of teaching. This simply refers to possessing a special ability, not just to teach the Bible but other areas of knowledge, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Teaching is one of the key gifts of the Holy Spirit, clearly stated in many Biblical passages such as 1 Corinthians 12:28. It is not enough for those who would teach in schools to possess just academic and professional qualifications–it is also necessary for them to possess the gift of teaching as provided by the Holy Spirit; otherwise, their services as teachers would amount to functioning in services and locations contrary to the directions of the Holy Spirit and the purposes of God for the advancement of his kingdom. The spiritual gift of teaching is given for a specific purpose:

> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:11-13).

Even in non-Christian schools the Christian teacher is still representing Christ and his church. Hence, it is needful for the teacher to be spiritually gifted in teaching.

Thirdly, the Christian needs to be someone who has answered the call to the teaching profession. It is one thing for someone to possess, and to be conscious of possessing, the spiritual gift of teaching, and it is quite another entirely to *agree* to be a teacher and be really committed to teaching. To agree to be a teacher is to answer the call to teaching.

There are many Christian people who have the spiritual gift of teaching but who, for various reasons, have *refused* to be teachers. A key reason for refusing to be teachers, especially in developing societies such as Nigeria, has to do with unsatisfactory conditions of service and welfare in the Nigerian education system. On the other hand, there are Christians in Nigeria who are not spiritually gifted to teach, but who—as a result of desperation for employment or lack of understanding of the meaning of spiritual gift—are *joining* the teaching service. It is also unfortunate, that a large number of

Christians in teaching services in both Christian-based educational establishments and non-Christian-based educational establishments are failing to teach with this divine consciousness: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Col 3:23-24). Christian teachers who teach without recognizing Christ as the most important authority over them are actually rendering a disservice to the cause of Christ (Dogara 2016:50-53).

Development. The term development has different connotations to different categories of people. Politicians, economists, sociologists, environmentalists, ecologists, psychologists, communists, capitalists, scientists, and a host of others describe it from their own professional or ideological perspectives. However, a great number of literatures prefer to describe the term as “a process of changing and becoming larger, stronger or more impressive, successful or advanced, or of causing somebody or something to change in this way” (NOUN 2017:2). This process is viewed in terms of per-capita income, structural transformation, socio-economic and environmental capacity building, and whatever resources can be engaged by the society towards fulfilling its aspirations.

From the perspective of a political state, development refers to: “changes that result to positive benefits to the generality of the citizens and other residents of a country/community/town. It is the ability of a country/town to improve the standard of living, security and welfare of its people” (NOUN 2017:2) . In countries such as Nigeria, the ability to improve to the desired standard is dependent on whether or not the government is fulfilling its primary purpose of existence, which is ensuring the security and welfare of the people (Nigeria 1999:Section 14). It is expected that, if the government (Nigerian government in this case) is able to fulfill its primary purpose, the people, from whom government is supposed to derive its authority and power, shall be effective participants in making development possible at personal, community, and national levels.

For the purposes of this paper, several caveats to the term “development” need to be noted as a step in delimiting its engagement. Bryant Myers notes some of these limitations (Myers 2011:3). Apart from the term being heavily

loaded with past meanings, many people look at the term in material sense; the term is wrongly considered as material change, owning more material possessions, or social change in the material world. There are many others who consider the term as being synonymous to Westernization or modernization. There are people, too, who view development, simply as an antonymous term to poverty. Brian E. Woolnough also notes that some Western perspectives on development are misconceptions (Woolnough 2014:2-4). Some Westerners see development as a way of helping underdeveloped or developing regions of the world, such as Africa, to "catch-up" with the West; this has, in many instances, brought about the transfer of vast amounts of money from the more developed countries to the less developed ones. Some people in the world (and even in Africa) consider development as helping individuals to become either richer or less materially poor.

Sequel to limitations concerning engaging the term "development" there are also hindrances associated with the use of the term. If development is about improving the quality of human life, it is evident that some people or humans in some societies enjoy high quality of life while the life of those in some other societies can simply be described as deplorable. Consequently, the question arises: what is hindering development? Woolnough has provided an appropriate Christian perspective in response to this question: "The reasons for the perseverance of such inequalities are many and complex. They include bad governance, corruption and mismanagement in receptor countries, unjust financial systems imposed by donor countries, lack of political will by governments and people, civil wars within countries, money given with inappropriate conditions attached to vested interests, inhospitable physical and climatic conditions, especially with climate changes, and indifference, selfishness and sin throughout the world" (Woolnough 2014:2-4). Woolnough also notes commentaries which indicate situations where aid from the "developed" world has, consequent upon inefficient usage [and corruption], has become "positively detrimental" or done more harm than good to the developing nations; many evidences attest to such aid causing dependency, bad governance, and actively replacing and/or preventing indigenous development. Even Christians, acting based on the best possible motives, have at many times only succeeded in producing a situation when helping hurts (Woolnough 2014:2-4). These hindrances can be addressed through transformational development.

Transformational Development. The term "Transformational Development" is a fusion of two terms: transformation (changing the condition, nature, function, and form of an existing situation) and development. The term "Transformational Development" came into currency consequent upon the need to address the deficiency in the term "development." Myers' definition, which is the most commonly referenced source for the concept of transformational development, describes from a Christian perspective as: "the process that helps people to discover their true identity as children of God and to recover their true vocation as faithful and productive stewards of gifts from God for the well-being of all. Transformational development is seeking positive change in the whole of human life materially, socially, and spiritually" (Rahschulte 2010:199-208). Myers sees transformational development as a deliberately-planned never-ending process involving everyone towards enhancing human life and community progress, enabling people-one and all-to find and enjoy quality life as it should be, and as God intended it to be, and as people on the way to recovering their true identity as human beings created in the image of God.

Christian Philosophy of Education versus Philosophy of Christian Education. The phrase "Christian-based education" is used in this document as a term encapsulated in the definition of Christian Philosophy of Education. But the expression "Philosophy of Christian Education" is considered as the term within which Sunday-school, Bible studies, and other Christian nurturing activities within the church and/or para-church bodies (although this study is not primarily concerned with these activities and bodies) are encapsulated. In other words: While Christian philosophy of education concerns itself with education in a wide-ranging sense notwithstanding the terminology ("sacred" or "secular"), philosophy of Christian education contracts education strictly and traditionally to Christian organizations, church educational ministries, Christian family ministries, Christian specialized ministries, para-church agencies, and other Christian nurturing ministries (ECWAPECC 2022:6-7).

Methodology and Procedure of Study

Methodology of Study.

This study engages primary documents, on the basis of the documentary research approach component of the historical methodology. The primary documents in this case are the various passages of the Bible where original words of Jesus Christ and Apostle Paul were recorded verbatim. These passages are considered as constituting primary data for the research.

A hermeneutical strategy is employed in studying and interpreting the data; it is a strategy that moves back and forth within and between the parts and the whole of the Biblical passages in a manner that connects their context, structure, and interpretation to the research questions. This strategy allows investigating, identifying, categorizing, analyzing, and interpreting data from the written texts concerned (Bible passages) and, where necessary, other primary documents and documentary sources that contain information about the event being examined. For efficiency, surgical (not necessarily comprehensive) extractions are made from each passage or set of passages which constitute the data.

For this study, the Biblical texts from Matthew 5:13-16, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, Acts 1:8, Romans 12:2, 2 Timothy 1:7, Ephesians 5:15-16, John 3:16 were specifically engaged to generate data for the study. The original words of Jesus Christ are found in Matthew and John, while those of Apostle Paul are found in other passages. Accordingly, inferences are made from the passages in a manner relevant to advancing the purpose of the study. Note that the logic behind the choice of these passages is that direct words of Jesus Christ and apostle Paul are relevant for generating data in so much as they are within (and supportive of) the conceptual framework for the study and can be used, if necessary, to address other passages that might appear opposed to this logic should an oral presentation of this study be needed in due course.

Procedure of Study

The study is being undertaken as a four-step process. Firstly, a general idea of the direction of the study has been provided in the background above.

Secondly, this step (methodology and procedure of study) is designed to connect the background of the study with the main body of the study. Thirdly, presentation and analysis of data constituted the discussion of the study; of course, the discussion proceeds as guided by the three research questions developed for the study. Fourthly, the study is summarized through a conclusion within which recommendations are encapsulated via lessons extracted from the discussion, applicable towards solidifying education and transformational development in Nigeria.

Presentation of Results and Discussion of Research Questions

Understanding the Call to Christ's Ambassadorial Services

Research Question 1: What does it mean for Christian teachers to have a comprehensive working grasp of their calling to Christ's ambassadorial services?

Presentation of Data: Matthew 5:13-16

Verse 13: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. Verse 14: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Verse 15: Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. Verse 16: In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (NIV).

Analysis of Data

Jesus Christ here uses two metaphors "salt" and "light" to describe His disciples.

Verse 13:

Being salt is a present reality, you "are".

The basic quality of salt is in “saltiness”, it is in having “saltiness” that salt is useful in a positive way “good”. In New Testament times, salt was “a seasoning and key preserving element and highly valued” (Zondervan 2014:4323).

It is when the salt is “good” that it can have “saltiness” or be useful.

It is possible for salt to have the texture of salt, but without the “saltiness” of salt, which means it has expired. When it has expired, it has gone through an irreversible process “how can it be made salty again?” At this point, it can only be “thrown out and trampled underfoot”; by application, “Jesus’ point here is that if his disciples are to fail they should then be as worthless as refuse” (Herbert W. Basser and Marsha B. Cohen 2015:130)

Verse 14:

Being light is a present reality, you “are”.

Light does not light “light!” It is to light “others” (verse 16) as a way of consolidating all lights to light the “world”. For the world to be lighted, it is darkness.

Just like a “town built on a hill cannot be hidden”, it is not possible to hide light.

Verse 15:

For light to shine, it cannot be blocked with obstacles “bowl” that would stop or limit it from doing so.

For the light to shine, it must be put in the appropriate place, “stand”.

One lamp can only light “everyone in the house” but not everywhere in the “world” (verse 14). As many lamps as possible are needed in order to be “the light of the world” (verse 14).

Verse 16:

What you are “you are the light” (verse 14) is different from what you do, “your good deeds.”

The aim of shining the light is not so that "everyone in the house" (verse 15) would see you, but so that they can see "your good deeds" as those good deeds direct their focus to "glorify your Father in heaven."

In Response to Research Question

The call to Christian teachers as Christ ambassadors is be "good" wherever they are in the education system; they should not outlive their usefulness in any situation. The education system should taste better wherever Christian teachers are found, their "saltiness" should be evident in their communication and action.

The call to Christian teachers as Christ ambassadors requires them to be found in dark places of schools and the education system (for example: in the midst of financial corruption, admission racketeering, bureaucratic injustice, and inefficient service delivery) where their good deeds would be illuminated by the light for the world to see and glorify God.

Element of Silence in Misunderstanding the Call to Christ's Ambassadorial Services

*Research Question 2***:** How does the silence of Christian teachers in the education system and Public Square of Nigeria reflect lack of a comprehensive working grasp of their calling to Christ's ambassadorial educational services?

Presentation of Data: 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

Verse 18: All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: Verse 19: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. Verse 20: We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. (NIV).

Analysis of Data

Christians are mandated by God with the "ministry of reconciliation" (verse 18).

The specific instruction for those involved in the ministry of reconciliation is to deliver “the message of reconciliation” (verse 19).

The contents of the message of reconciliation are these: “that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them” (verse 19).

Having been sent by God with a message of reconciliation, “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors” (verse 20).

In Response to Research Question

When Christians in general, but Christian teachers in particular, are silent, in situations whereby their voices need to be heard in the education system and Public Square, (for example: when Christians are denied promotions and appointments to senior positions) it would amount to failure in their duty as Christ ambassadors called to serve in Nigeria.

The primary allegiance of Christian teachers in schools, education system and Public Square of Nigeria should be to Christ, whose ambassadors they are. For example: primarily Christian teachers are on Christ’s ambassadorial services, while they may be on government civil service secondarily.

Developing a Voice for Christian Teachers via the Societal Curriculum

*Research Question 3***:** In what ways can the societal curriculum be deliberately engaged to develop a voice for Christian teachers, as well as lessons applicable towards solidifying education and transformational development in Nigeria?

Presentation of Data: Acts 1:8, Romans 12:2, 2 Timothy 1:7, Ephesians 5:15-16, John 3:16

Acts 1:8: But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (NIV).

Romans 12:2: Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (NIV).

2 Timothy 1:7: For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

Ephesians 5:15-16:

Verse 15: Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, Verse 16: making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. (NIV).

John 3:16: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (NIV).

Analysis of Data

The power to be witnesses is accessible to all on whom the Holy Spirit has come (Acts 1:8).

Christians have a command to be different from the world (Romans 12:2), but to also seek to transform it by being transformed people, this is possible through a continuous renewal of the mind (Romans 12:2).

The Spirit God gives bestows "power" on those who, otherwise, would be "timid" or fearful or shy (2 Timothy 1:7)

The wisdom in the life of circumspection is revealed in efficient utilization of prospects, which "making the most of every opportunity". Such carefulness is necessary because "the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15-16). In response, what is required is "discerning and acting upon all too scarce opportunities for good and the gospel in the midst of lives which are all too pressurized and constricted" (Dunn 2007:1176).

God's love is an expression of His perfect unselfishness, on the basis of which "He gave his one and only Son" to the world (John 3:16).

In Response to Research Question

Christian teachers, like other Christians, must be different from the world, although seeking to transform it by being transformed people. In furtherance of this, Christian teachers must be proactively involved in the affairs of the world (for example: starting from active campus unionism and/or governance matters of education students, in teachers' unionism, in party politics, in the electoral processes and officiating, in public affairs, in civil society organizations, and in organizing community actions for social change), yet without being tainted by the world. Christian teachers must be "Holy-worldly" teachers (Stott 1992:242-245), having been called by Christ from the world, and also sent back into the world to disciple all nations.

Christian teachers must also be involved in all educational areas empowered by the Holy Spirit, using the Bible as their primary constitutional authority. That means, unless otherwise instructed by the Bible, there should be no "no-go" (forbidden) areas for Christian teachers to explore with the aim of expanding their influence and consolidating their voices. For example, Christians called to Christ's service as educationists in Nigeria should proactively insert themselves in areas which, ordinarily, they are usually not interested: Arabic language education, Hausa language education, political science education, security studies and education, international relations and education, history and education, and other academic disciplines that are capable of solidifying the voice of the Christian teachers in Nigeria. This kind of proactivity is called for as a way of efficiently utilizing every opportunity to advance the cause of Christ, and to challenge the days that are becoming more evil against the Christian faith.

Since Christian teachers are engaged in the service of a global God, they have no option but to be "world-class Christians." World-class Christians are the only fully alive people in the world, who function with full awareness that they are saved by a global God in order to serve a global cause (Warren 189-193:PDF). While the world is constantly changing, although under the sovereignty of a changeless God, those on Christ's ambassadorial services as teachers and/or educationists must be contemporary Christians.

Conclusion

As noted previously in line with the procedures for this study, the paper would be concluded by pooling together items already presented consequent upon extracting lessons drawn from the presentation, to form the recommendations from the study. These lessons are basically drawn from an earlier notation that Christian teachers have a dual mandate as educationists in Christ's ambassadorial services: to serve as a teachers in Christian-based schools as well as in non-Christian schools. Consequent upon this dual mandate, the voice of Christian teachers in Africa can be de-silenced via the societal curriculum, towards solidifying education and transformational development in Nigeria as summarized below.

First: Recommendations for Christian Teachers: Teaching in Christian-Based Schools.

This five-point recommendation condenses lessons in expression of the first mandate of the Christian teacher. The lessons concern teaching in Christian-based schools.

Christian teachers in Christian-based schools are mandated to train people who will become the salt of the world and be effective as agents of change wherever they find themselves in the society. These teachers are involved in training Christian people who will become ministers of God's common grace to the world in need of experiencing God's saving grace.

Christian teachers in Christian-based schools are to work at presenting every person complete in Christ. This mandate basically concerns learners who are already recognized as Christians. The focus is to help learners to have effective experience of progressive sanctification as they move towards conforming to the image of Christ. Hence, the need for Christian teachers to be people who are also growing towards ultimate sanctification.

Christian teachers in Christian-based schools are to equip the saints–that is Christian learners–for various works of service of Christ in the church or in representation of Christ and his church. Consequently, when Christian teachers engage in various aspects of curriculum delivery at all levels, they

should do so for the purpose of equipping Christian people for various works of Christ's service in both the Church and the society.

Christian teachers in Christian-based schools are to train people who will be involved in Christ's ambassadorial services, especially in missions and evangelism. All Christians, having already being reconciled to God, are Christ's ambassadors to the world: "He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us" (2 Cor. 5:19-20). In line with this ambassadorial mandate, Christian teachers have a duty to present the message of Christ's redemption to those learners who do not have a personal saving relationship with Christ, with a view to leading them to a point whereby they will come to a saving knowledge of Christ.

Christian teachers in Christian-based schools are to teach guided by Christian philosophy of education. This means the centrality of the Scripture–the compendium of sixty-six books recognized by the evangelicals–must be affirmed in Christian schools; all Scripture must be taken as preeminent and sufficient for Christian life and practice, as well as authoritative over all educative purposes. Accordingly, Christian worldview must be deliberately emphasized in Christian-based education.

Second: Recommendations for Christian Teachers: Teaching in Non-Christian-Based Schools.

This five-point recommendation condenses lessons in expression of the second mandate of the Christian teacher. The lessons concern teaching in non-Christian-based schools.

Christian teachers are under a biblical mandate to see themselves as "salt" in the non-Christian-based schools they find themselves. As beneficiaries of God's saving grace, they are also ministers of God's common grace in the educational situation they find themselves in. Accordingly, Christian teachers need to be models of truth, effectiveness, efficiency, productivity, creativity, and excellence, in the non-Christian-based educational contexts they are called by God to serve.

Christian teachers in non-Christian-based schools are mandated to be evangelistic in focus. Christian teachers in such contexts need to go about their teaching services with a view to attracting non-Christians in the school to a point whereby they can experience the saving grace of God. In doing so, they would be acting in compliance to this injunction given by Christ: "let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:16). Obedience to this injunction will also serve in attracting non-Christians to the message of God's redemption in Christ Jesus.

Christian teachers in non-Christian-based schools are also under mandate to act in ways necessary for people to have a greater consciousness of God's common grace in their lives and the larger global society. Consequently, as they facilitate the learning process among non-Christian students, they should do so praying and trusting that God, by virtue of his common grace, will be pleased to use them in facilitating positive change wherever they find themselves in the society. Christian teachers in this situation need to base their teaching on an understanding that God will, ultimately, use the education acquired by non-Christians for the good of his children, and for the advancement of his purposes.

Christian teachers in non-Christian-based educational contexts need to also be models of how people who have experienced God's saving grace are supposed to act in non-Christian-based affairs of the human society. Christian teachers concerned, need to be models to learners who are Christians, but who–for one reason or the other–are studying in non-Christian-based educational contexts. In essence, the Christian teachers concerned provide leadership for the Christian community of learners in the non-Christian-schools or establishments concerned. To facilitate the achievement of this mandate, Christian teachers need to be actively involved in such programs as the Fellowship of Christian Students (for example: in Nigerian secondary schools), and International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (for example in tertiary schools across Africa).

Christian teachers in non-Christian educational contexts need to demonstrate a deep ability to evaluate non-Christian educational affairs from the perspective of biblically based hermeneutical foundations. They need to be people who understand the world as well as the Word. As such, while teaching

guided by a national policy and curriculum of education, the understanding of the Christian teacher on any such policy or curriculum should be guided by a clear Christian philosophy of education.

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Review

The Changing Face of Christianity: Africa, the West, and the World
Lamin Sanneh and Joel A. Carpenter (eds.), Oxford University Press, Oxford: 2005, ISBN 9780195177275, 238 pp.
Review by Kefas Lamak[1]

Worldwide today there are uncountable forms of Christianity, especially outside Europe and America. For a very long time, there has been a denial and suppression within Europe and America of other forms of Christianity in an effort to claim that there is only one Christianity all around the world, and that its model is the West, even though Christianity in the West has, in modern times, taken many directions since the Reformation. This book analyses the emergence of Christianities, methodologies, and theologies in third-world countries that de-centre Western missionary Christianity in the age of globalization and post-colonialism (Sanneh and Carpenter, 2005:4-5). Lamin Sanneh and Joel A. Carpenter (2005:4-5) show the encounters of Christianity in modern times with socio-political events such as World War II, colonialism and post-colonialism, slavery, and missionary and post-missionary activities that situate world Christianity differently. Through these encounters, Christianity took a new face to fit into the context and practices of the people.

Sanneh and Carpenter (2005:21) argue that with the progression of Enlightenment thinking and secularism from the late 1700s to the 1800s, the West has witnessed a significant shift from emphasizing faith and tradition to engaging socio-political issues with rationality and science. Religion was challenged in the West such that many people projected the decline of religion worldwide in modern times. This projection turned out to be false. From the mid-1800s, Christianity started growing fast beyond the West during colonialism and missionary activities. Cultures and people who never had Christianity in the precolonial period embraced Christianity in record numbers

[1] Kefas Lamak is a PhD student in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Iowa, Iowa City, USA.

to replace their indigenous religions or to add Christianity to their former religious practices.

The growth of Christianity in Africa, Asia, and Latin America has brought about new projections by scholars of Christian history, such as Andrews Walls, that the centre of Christianity has shifted from Europe and America to the global South; that is, Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Sanneh and Carpenter, 2005:21). Sanneh and Carpenter (2005:3-4) note that this global shift poses a significant challenge to Euro-American Christianity. Although Euro-American Christianity continues to partner with most of these other world Christianities, it no longer serves as their model. Christianity now has no centre and no model in terms of geographical location. Christianity has found a new application in cultures other than western cultures. Depending on the socio-political events of every continent, country, and region, the people who accepted Christianity thought about it differently and practiced it in a unique way that fits their culture and context.

In this book, Sanneh and Carpenter (2005:135-136) discuss multiple examples of how Christianity evolved in Africa, the Caribbean, and Asia. In the Caribbean, the people saw Jesus as a man of colour and constructed hymns, songs, and plays or drama to undo white western Christianity (Sanneh and Carpenter, 2005:34-35). Through the Karen Baptist mission in China, thousands converted to Christianity with little western missionary efforts. Missionary efforts were indigenous (Sanneh and Carpenter, 2005:135-136). In Africa, Christianity metamorphosed from African Independent Churches to Pentecostalism and the prosperity gospel. While church and state are separated in the West, the church was instrumental in nation-building, peace-making, reconciliation, and the freedom movement of post-colonial Africa.

Sanneh and Carpenter give a background to the emerging variant of Christianity in Africa through the post-colonial movement. At the turn of the 1960s, reflecting Africa's fight against the colonial powers, many African scholars and Christians had started calling for a post-missionary Christianity. This was due in part to people's perception of collaboration between western missionaries and colonialism from the beginning. Therefore with the fall of the colonial powers in India and many African countries, indigenous people started calling for an indigenous application of Christianity - a Christianity that

addresses the people's immediate needs through acculturation, adaption, assimilation, racialization, and indigenization (Sanneh and Carpenter, 2005:45-46). According to Sanneh and Carpenter, this calling for an indigenous application of Christianity not only encompassed the African Independent Churches and Pentecostal churches. Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and SIM churches were all involved in this outcry for independence. And this call did not happen in only one African country; it was a trans-continental call for theology and Christianity that fit the African experience.

The proliferation of Christianity in other parts of the world forced the West to come to terms with emerging changes within the Christian religion. Sanneh and Carpenter show that by 1948, western missionaries and Christians could not continue to live in denial of these emerging Christianities and their calls to de-centre western Christianity. As a result, the West constructed a new missionary model that sought to answer the non-Western people's call through the mission methodology of "contextualization." Western missionaries started making deliberate efforts to learn the language and cultures of the people. They also started by incorporating non-Western people's practices and ideas in their ministering areas (Sanneh and Carpenter, 2005:162-163).

Sanneh and Carpenter's book engages the socio-political changes Christianity has faced from the 1800s to the present. Christianity today is not a western religion but a world religion. With the proliferation of churches worldwide through Pentecostalism and indigenous religious movements, scholars have continued to raise significant questions about the similarities of these new emerging churches and religious movements to the older ones and their difference from them. Can a new religion become part of the older ones with time when newer ones appear? Sanneh and Carpenter's work calls for a critical reflection on the evolution of Christianity in modern times.

Faber R 2023, Review of *Stand Up for the Gospel: Getting the Church Back on Track*, EK Amoafo, *African Theological Journal for Church and Society*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 131-133

Review

Emmanuel Kwasi Amoafo, *Stand Up for the Gospel: Getting the Church Back on Track*. Oasis International Publishing, 2022. ISBN 1594528519, 207pp.

Review by Dr Ryan Faber[1]

Many lament the current captivity of the African church to prosperity teaching, but few provide as clear and compelling a prescription for getting the church back on track as does Emmanuel Kwasi Amoafo in *Stand Up for the Gospel*. Amoafo, a lecturer at Global University (USA) and St. Paul's University (Kenya), believes that the biblical book of Jude holds "the key to solving the serious departures from the gospel that we find in the church in Africa today" (Amoafo 2022:1). Jude can "help us move from our serious theological crisis to a place of hope, truth, and power" (Amoafo 2022:8).

Stand Up for the Gospel brings together two stories: the story of the church to which Jude wrote, with which Amoafo is familiar from his doctoral studies; and the story of the African church today, with which Amoafo is equally familiar from two decades of ministry in the Anglican Church of Kenya. Both stories "demonstrate serious deviation, negations, and departures from the gospel of Jesus Christ" (Amoafo 2022:5). The present departures include especially the prosperity doctrine. Amoafo refused to call it a gospel, because it is not; it is a teaching (doctrine), not a gospel (good news).

Amoafo notes that in Africa "many people's real beliefs and worldview are strongly influenced by African Traditional Religions (ATR)" (Amoafo 2022:33). The early Western missionaries' version of the gospel that focused on sin was not "relevant to someone with this worldview". Africans are "concerned about deliverance from the influence of evil powers in the unseen spiritual realm"

[1] Ryan Faber is a lecturer at Justo Mwale University, Lusaka, Zambia and a research fellow in the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa.

(Amoafo 2022:33). “Lingering aspects of an ATR worldview” makes many Africans “easy prey for prosperity teaching” (Amoafo 2022:77). The solution is not outright rejection of the ATR worldview - “the Bible affirms that the unseen spirit world of darkness is real” (Amoafo 2022:83) - but “presenting the gospel as deliverance from Satan and his demons”. Such a gospel presentation, which Amoafo ably models, “feels very relevant to the fear that pervades an ATR worldview” (Amoafo 2022:36).

Amoafo exposes the lie of prosperity preachers who only offer “false hope and disappointment to churchgoers in Africa” (Amoafo 2022:79). When the prosperity they promise is not realised, these preachers “blame churchgoers for their lack of faith as a way of excusing their inability to make real their false promises” (Amoafo 2022:79). Prosperity teaching “seems to only enrich the church leaders” (Amoafo 2022:111), who are “only interested in luxury cars and sound equipment” (Amoafo 2022:115). They hold up their lives as evidence of the truth of their teaching, but “what would happen if members stopped paying tithes?” (Amoafo 2022:110).

Amoafo also exposes the poor biblical interpretation of prosperity preachers. He argues that “Scripture must be correct interpreted, as God intended it in the original context, to be rightly considered the Word of God” (Amoafo 2022:62), and offers sound explanations of numerous verses that are often misused by prosperity preachers, including 3 John 2, Mark 10:29-30, Psalm 90:10, Deuteronomy 28:1-14, and 2 Corinthians 9:6 and 8:9.

In the end, getting the church back on track requires one thing: that we preach the gospel - the gospel rightly understood. The gospel reminds people that “they are in Christ” (Amoafo 2022:133). In Christ, they are “called, loved, and kept by God” (Amoafo 2022:16). This is a key theme for Amoafo: Christians must know their true identity in Christ, because “doubting God’s love is often the root issue when people fall way” (Amoafo 2022:158). “The lack of these reassurances” - that we are loved and kept by God - “[makes] people susceptible to those people who claim special status as ‘the man of God’” (Amoafo 2022:9). Such preachers “use fear to influence people: the fear of witchcraft, the fear of demons, and the fear of the future” (Amoafo 2022:19). But “the Bible clearly teaches that, although Satan may exercise power through witchcraft, demons, spells, and curses, we have power over all these

evil forces through Christ" (Amoafo 2022:83). The book includes personal accounts of how "God is able to deliver and protect believers from demonic influence and attacks and from witchcraft" (Amoafo 2022:85).

Amoafo argues that the gospel "is not a religion of dos and don'ts, but rather, it is a relationship with God the Father that is made possible by the work of God the Son on the cross and experienced in our lives by the empowerment and in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit" (Amoafo 2022:134). The most effective way to preach the gospel is through expository sermons (Amoafo 2022:137). Such sermons will necessarily focus on Christ, because "focusing on Christ is essential to understand and effectively preach any biblical text" (Amoafo 2022:137).

My only criticism of the volume is that Amoafo's assertion that "the solution to every problem Christians face in work, in relationships, or in interactions with non-Christians" (Amoafo 2022:129-30) is left undeveloped. It requires further elaboration or clarification: How is the gospel the solution to every problem? Without clarification, the assertion risk sounds no different from the (false) promises of prosperity preachers.

Despite this criticism, *Stand Up for the Gospel: Getting the Church Back on Track* is highly recommended. Amoafo offers an insightful diagnosis of the current theological crisis in the African church, especially prosperity teaching's influence and inroads. His prescriptions for the church's correction are contextual, clear, and clearly rooted in Scripture. The centre of Christianity has shifted to the global south, particularly Africa. "Now it is up to us: will the faith once for all delivered to the saints stay here and thrive or will it move on?" (Amoafo 2022:54). *Stand Up for the Gospel* is essential reading for all who want to see true Christian faith thrive in Africa.

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