Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

JAAS publishes studies with Adventist and world perspectives exploring the Bible, theology, history, mission and ministry to raise the level of spirituality, scholarship, and service in the world church.

JAAS is a semiannual peer-refereed academic journal. It accepts articles and book reviews exploring a wide range of topics like studies in the Bible and spirituality, historical and systematic theology, the history of ideas and philosophy, religions and their interactions, cultures and religious psychology, mission, ministry, and development work.

JAAS accepts cutting-edge articles, research notes, book reviews, thesis and dissertation abstracts written by faculty, students, and alumni of the Theological Seminary of Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies and scholars of various faith persuasions from around the world. The ideas expressed are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the thinking of the Theological Seminary of the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies.

JAAS is indexed in *Index Theologicus* (Universität Tübingen, GERMANY), *International Review of Biblical Studies* (Brill, NETHERLANDS; Universität Paderborn, GERMANY), *Religious and Theological Abstracts, Old Testament Abstracts, New Testament Abstracts, BiBIL* (Bibliographie biblique informatisée de Lausanne, SWITZERLAND), *Bulletin de Bibliographie Biblique, THEOLDI* (Theological Literature Documented in Innsbruck, AUSTRIA) *and RAMBI* (Index of Articles on Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, ISRAEL).

EDITORIAL

KENNETH BERGLAND

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES

We are happy to announce a new issue of *JAAS*! With this issue, we are making two major changes for the journal. First of all, we have formulated new vision and mission statements. The vision statement reads as follows:

> The *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* (*JAAS*) is a leading venue for publishing studies with Adventist and world perspectives on the Bible, spirituality, theology, history, mission, and ministry.

The new mission statement is formulated accordingly:

> *JAAS* publishes studies with Adventist and world perspectives exploring the Bible, theology, history, mission, and ministry to raise the level of spirituality, scholarship, and service in the world church.

While theology has often taken a more Western perspective, with these changes we want to welcome studies that explore the Bible, spirituality, theology, history, mission, and ministry from various cultural perspectives. While still including more traditional approaches, we also encourage studies of issues relevant to the wide multicultural reality of our world today. AIIAS is an institution with students and faculty from all continents, and we find it appropriate that our seminary journal engage in topics reflecting the diversity of backgrounds represented at our institution.

The second change we are making is making the journal available for free online. You will already find back-issues available at https://journals.aiias.edu/jaas. We will upload new issues there as soon as they are ready. It means that we will no longer require subscriptions to be able to access the journal and its latest issues. We hope this will make it more readily accessible for you as a reader.

The first article in this issue is written by Roy Gane. He explores the failure of the ritual procession as described in 2 Sam 6 and 1 Chr 13. By comparing this incident with other ancient Near Eastern ritual processions Gane clarifies the distinctive understanding of the character of God and His cultus

according to the Bible. The biblical God is not like the other gods prone to be manipulated by humans but shows Himself as an awesome being demanding the utmost respect and obedience.

The other four articles in this issue deal with various cultural perspectives. Andy Tsoi Kashing's article discusses how the words נֶפֶשׁ (*nepeš*) and רוּחַ (*rûaḥ*) in the Hebrew Bible have been translated into the Chinese Union Version. He shows how the translation has been influenced by cultural and religious presuppositions and suggests more appropriate translations given the biblical text and the Chinese language.

In their article, Marcelo Soares and Marcelo Dias, argue that mission in Japan has often not been sensitive enough to the cultural setting of this country. By comparing Shintoism and Christianity, they argue for combining elements from two missionary methodologies, contextualization and inculturation.

Victoria Aja explores various issues related to chaplaincy ministry in the African setting. She argues for the need to understand the importance of specialized training of chaplains, investing in the workforce, and creating awareness of the contributions of chaplains to the Great Commission. In her study, she shows how these areas have been neglected and deserve much more attention in the future, especially by leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist Divisions in Africa.

David Odhiambo gives us another article exploring issues from the African perspective. In his article, he discusses the increasing importance of the family context in the post-Covid setting. He analyses the importance of the home and family in African cultures and the small group model as seen in the New Testament. He further elaborates on how leaders should be trained and their role in the family context, and the significance of small groups for evangelism.

Failure of a Ritual Procession (2 Samuel 6; 1 Chronicles 13) and Its Implications Regarding the Nature of God

ROY E. GANE

Andrews University, MICHIGAN

Abstract

The present article investigates the cause(s) and implications of a biblical instance of ritual failure: the failure of the first ritual procession by which King David attempted to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. Analysis of the descriptions of this procession includes comparison and contrast with accounts or instructions regarding other ancient Near Eastern ritual processions and with the biblical descriptions of David's second successful procession. The failure of David's first procession highlighted the awesomeness of Israel's deity and the importance of strictly following his instructions.

Keywords: ritual procession, infelicitous performance, ritual failure, ark of the covenant

1. Introduction

This article contributes to the understanding of dynamics and concepts that can be involved in an infelicitous ritual performance by analyzing biblical records of a particular ritual event. [1] This case study is the failure of King

---

[1] An earlier version of this research titled "Failure in a Ritual Procession and Its Implications (2 Sam 6)" was presented in a Ritual in the Biblical World session at the national meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in San Antonio, Texas, USA, on November 21, 2016.

David's first attempt to convey the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem through a ritual procession (2 Sam 6:1–10; paralleled in 1 Chr 13:1–13).[2] The procession was aborted when Yʜwʜ struck Uzza (alternative spelling "Uzzah") dead because he took hold of the ark in order to steady it on the cart that was carrying it to the city of David (2 Sam 6:6–7; cf. 1 Chr 13:9–10). Why did Yʜwʜ do this? Was only Uzza at fault, or did other aspects of the procession contribute to the tragedy? In any case, how does this ritual failure illuminate the nature of God in relation to His people?

A ritual procession is a complex religious event. Therefore, in order to clearly recognize the factors involved in David's failed procession, we will begin by reviewing some descriptions of other ritual processions in ancient Near Eastern (ANE) texts outside the Bible. Then, we will assess the descriptions of David's interrupted first procession in the narratives of 2 Sam 6:1–10 and 1 Chr 13:1–13 in relation to the other ANE processions. After that, we will examine the accounts of David's second ritual procession, which continued the journey to Jerusalem and succeeded in bringing the ark there (2 Sam 6:12–17; 1 Chr 15:2–16:1), for additional light on the reason(s) for the failure of the first procession. Finally, we will draw a conclusion regarding what the reason(s) teach(es) regarding the divine nature.

2. Ritual Processions in the Ancient Near East

2. 1 Mode of Carrying Sacred Objects

Ancient Egyptian priests carried sacred objects on poles over their shoulders in processions.[3] However, other ANE peoples transported such objects on carts or wagons. For example, during the Babylonian New Year Festival of

---

[2] Cf. Ronald L. Grimes, "Ritual Criticism and Infelicitous Performances," in *Readings in Ritual Studies*, ed. Ronald L. Grimes (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 279–93 for an introductory exploration of ritual failure, including types of infelicitous performance, with some other illustrations from the Hebrew Bible.

[3] Egyptian "festivals always included processions during which the processional statue of the god, enclosed in a small wooden shrine and placed on a portable bark, was carried out of the sanctuary on the priests' shoulders" (Herman te Velde, "Theology, Priests, and Worship in Ancient Egypt," in *CANE*, ed. Jack M. Sasson [New York: Scribner's Sons, 1995], 3:1744). For ancient Egyptian pictures of this practice, see http://ss69100.livejournal.com/2478092.html; Bruce Well, "Exodus," in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Old Testament*, ed. John H. Walton (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 1:248; and Erik Hornung, "Ancient Egyptian Religious Iconography," in *CANE*, ed. Jack M. Sasson (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1995), 3:1716, 1726.

Spring (Akītu Festival), probably on the date of Nisannu 9, idols of the gods were carried on magnificent wagons from Marduk's Esagila temple northward along the processional way through the Ishtar Gate to the dock, where they were transferred to barges and continued upstream on the Euphrates River to the Akītu chapel (*bīt akīti*) on the outskirts of the city of Babylon. There, they spent a couple of days before re-entering the city on Nisannu 11 in a second grand parade.[4]

Another example comes from Anatolia. On the fourth day of the Ninth Year Festival of the god Telipinu, Hittites conveyed sacred objects from the temple of Telipinu to a river in order to wash them there.[5] The objects included idols of Telipinu, his consort, the sun god, and the weather god, as well as a cult pedestal. After the sancta were purified, they were brought back to the temple. They were transported both ways on Telipinu's carriage. Telipinu's idol, perhaps having been placed in a box, was accompanied on the carriage by a couple of his priests,[6] one of whom held the idol in place during the journey. This box protected the idol in case the wagon would jerk.

---

[4]   Julye Bidmead, *The* Akītu *Festival: Religious Continuity and Royal Legitimation in Mesopotamia*, Gorgias Dissertations 2, Near Eastern Studies 2 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2004), 93–101. Partially preserved Akkadian tablets prescribe the rituals of this festival, which was to be celebrated in Babylon during the first 11 or 12 days of the spring month of Nisannu. The tablets recording days 2–5 date to the Seleucid period, and evidence for the other days of the festival also dates from the first millennium BC (especially Neo-Babylonian). However, the procedures are rooted in much earlier Mesopotamian practice: the oldest references to *á-ki-ti* festivals in other cities date to the third millennium BC (Mark Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* [Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1993], 401, cf. 406–18). In *The Cultic Calendars,* Cohen includes translation and discussion of texts concerning at least part of each festival day (pp. 437–51). Bidmead also provides translation of some portions, as well as reconstruction of ritual activities and their social function (Bidmead, *The* Akītu *Festival*).

[5]   The festival activities are prescribed on partially preserved Hittite tablets that mostly date to the Late Hittite period. The Ninth Year Festival was published by Volkert Haas and Liane J.-Rost, "Das Festritual des Gottes Telipinu in Ḫanḫana und in Kašḫa. Ein Beitrag zum hethitischen Festkalender," *AoF* 11 (1984): 10–91, 204–36. An English translation appears in Roy E. Gane, *Ritual Dynamic Structure*, Gorgias Dissertations 14, Religion 2 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2004), 347–66, with ritual analysis of the rituals of the fourth day on pp. 245–86. There (p. 268) I briefly refer to similarity with 2 Sam 6, citing Moshe Weinfeld's "Traces of Hittite Cult in Shiloh and in Jerusalem," *Shnaton* 10 (1990): 110–14 (Hebrew), but do not develop this topic.

[6]   A second priest was with the priest mentioned in the journey to the river because later for the return journey the priest boarded the carriage along with his fellow.

2.2 Participants and Activities

Many people, including royal individuals, could participate in a ritual procession, which was a festive occasion. In the Hittite procession to the river, the carriage of the god Telipinu was accompanied by the crown prince, musicians played a harp and tambourine in front of the god, i.e., in front of the carriage, and girls sang behind the carriage.[7] The presence of the crown prince indicates that the event was religious-political. On the way back from the river, wrestlers performed before Telipinu's image, apparently to entertain him and the gods with him.[8] However, there is no indication that the Hittite crown prince participated in the singing, dancing, or entertainment. After the Hittite priests set the image of Telipinu back in its usual place in his temple, a large offering of meat (animal sacrifices of bovines and sheep), bread, and drinks was presented to the god.[9]

The Babylonian procession during the New Year Festival (see above) included cultic musicians, singers, and dancers.[10] More importantly, however, the king of Babylon was to lead the procession of gods, represented by their idols, from the city to the Akītu chapel. Following the king and the gods, priests and other cultic functionaries marched according to their ranks, and the parade also included a special group of citizens: the people of the *kidinnu*.[11] Julye Bidmead points out:

> The procession did more than just identify the primary participants in the ritual—rather it acted to reinforce social stratification. The king, temple staff, and privileged citizens (i.e., the elite) marched side by side with the chief god, Marduk. This visible and conspicuous representation of the social structure was emphasized annually as the procession marched through Babylon.[12]

---

[7]   The preserved Hittite texts do not refer to dancing.

[8]   Cf. Alfonso Archi, "Fêtes de printemps et d'automne et réintégration rituelle d'images de culte dans l'Anatolie Hittite," *UF* 5 (1973): 25–27; Gary Beckman, "The Religion of the Hittites," *BA* 52 (1989): 103.

[9]   Gane, Ritual Dynamic Structure, 254–60, 360.

[10]   Bidmead, *The* Akītu *Festival*, 94.

[11]   Bidmead, *The* Akītu *Festival*, 94–96. In Babylon on holidays such as the New Year Festival, "at the sides of the procession road there were musicians, acrobats and wrestling contests" (Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life*, SHANE [Leiden: Brill, 1996], 21).

[12]   Bidmead, *The* Akītu *Festival*, 96.

The historical return of the captured idol of Marduk, the city-god of Babylon, to his restored temple in Babylon at the beginning of the reign of the Neo-Assyrian king Assurbanipal (see further below) was accompanied by music and rejoicing. Furthermore, Assurbanipal's army participated in this great event, during which the Assyrians offered sacrifices every double mile from the quay of Assur to the quay of Babylon.[13]

2.3 Failure

A ritual, including a ritual procession, could fail to achieve its goal. Claus Ambos has identified several causes of ritual failure documented in cuneiform sources, including refusal by the gods to communicate what they wanted, interruption of a ritual process by the gods, and mistakes by human participants, such as omitting necessary rituals or utilizing "new" or "foreign" ritual techniques.[14]

An example of failure of a ritual procession occurred during the reign of the Neo-Assyrian king Esarhaddon. The Assyrians under Sennacherib, Esarhaddon's father, had destroyed the city of Babylon in 689 BC. At that time, they had deported the idols of Marduk and his consort, Zarpanītu, to Assur, the capital of Assyria. Subsequently, Esarhaddon began to restore Babylon, and he decided to return the idols to Babylon as a major gesture of reconciliation with the people of that city. So in 669 BC, the journey from Assur to Babylon began. Esarhaddon was looking forward to joyfully leading the great god in a procession at Babylon into the heart of the city.

However, ten days into the trip, a servant made a strange utterance that was interpreted to be an oracle from Marduk and Zarpanītu. The purported

---

[13]   Patrick D. Miller, Jr. and J. J. M. Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord: A Reassessment of the "Ark Narrative" of 1 Samuel*, JHNES (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 15–17. Here Miller and Roberts have pointed out similarities between this event and that described in 2 Sam 6. Cf. parallels between 2 Sam 6 and 1 Chr 15 regarding the Israelite ark's journey into David's new royal city of Jerusalem, where he had established his residence and a place for the ark (see esp. 1 Chr 15:1), and Assyrian royal inscriptions describing celebrations attending the installation of deities at new cult centers instituted by kings when they built or restored palaces, which could be in new or reconstructed royal cities (Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,* AB 12A [New York: Doubleday, 2004], 630–31).

[14]   Claus Ambos, "Types of Ritual Failure and Mistakes in Ritual in Cuneiform Sources," in *When Rituals Go Wrong: Mistakes, Failure, and the Dynamics of Ritual*, ed. Ute Hüsken, Numen Book Series: Studies in the History of Religions 115 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 28–38.

message was a warning that robbers were lying in ambush at or in the vicinity of the city of Dūr-Kurigalzu, and the Assyrians believed that the gods did not wish to continue their procession. Thus, their journey to Babylon was unexpectedly interrupted, and the disappointed Esarhaddon could do nothing about it. He died soon afterward, and the gods were returned to Babylon only later in the first regnal year of Assurbanipal, his son and successor (see above).[15]

3. David's First (Failed) Ritual Procession

There are close parallels between David's first attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem and other ANE processions.

3.1 Mode of Carrying Sacred Object

In David's first procession, the ark was carried on a new cart, which had never been put to common use, and it was driven by two men: Uzza and Ahio (2 Sam 6:3; 1 Chr 13:7). This was how the Philistines had safely returned the ark to Israel years before: by a new cart (1 Sam 6:7–14).[16] Using a cart to carry the ark was an innovation in Israelite ritual practice (see below). It introduced a method by which ANE peoples, other than the Egyptians, impressively transported sacred objects, including for long distances (see above).

3.2 Participants and Activities

As in other important ANE ritual processions, especially those led by royal persons, many participated in David's first procession. These included "all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand" (2 Sam 6:1 ESV), i.e., elite soldiers (cf. 1 Chr 13:1 and also Judg 20:15–16, 34; 1 Sam 13:2; 24:3 [Eng. v. 2]; 26:2). The presence of all these military men would have protected the ark and displayed David's royal power. This was a religious–political event, as when Assurbanipal's army participated in the return of Marduk to his new sanctuary (see above).

---

[15]   Ambos, "Types of Ritual Failure," 31–34.

[16]   In this instance, the cart was pulled by two milk cows that had never borne a yoke. Cf. the ritual for an unsolved murder, which utilizes "a heifer which has never been worked, which has never pulled in a yoke" (Deut 21:3 NJPS).

Not only did David include soldiers, he invited "all the house of Israel" (2 Sam 6:5), i.e., all Israelites, including priests and Levites (1 Chr 13:2–6, 8). This was a national celebration that dwarfed other ANE ritual processions. All could join the procession, not only members of the upper ranks of society, by contrast to the socially stratified procession during the Babylonian New Year Festival of Spring (see above).

While David invited priests and Levites, there is no indication that they played a special role in the first procession with the ark (by contrast with his second procession; see below). Rather, the ark was attended by Uzza and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, at whose house the ark had been residing (2 Sam 6:3; 1 Chr 13:7; cf. 1 Sam 7:1). The people who brought the ark to Abinadab's house had consecrated Eleazar, another of his sons, to guard the sacred chest (1 Sam 7:1). However, there is no indication that Abinadab or his sons were Aaronic priests or Levites. So it appears that priests and Levites were even less prominent in David's first procession than priests and other cultic functionaries were in the Babylonian procession at the New Year Festival of Spring; these cultic officials followed the king and the gods (see above).

As in some analogous ANE processions (see above), David's celebration involved music, in this case by singing accompanied by a variety of musical instruments (2 Sam 6:5; 1 Chr 13:8). This playing or celebrating (*piel* of שׂחק)[17] was performed by David, in the role of a musician (e.g., 1 Sam 16:23; Ps 7:1), together with his people, for the pleasure of YHWH (2 Sam 6:5; 1 Chr 13:8—adding "with all their might"). It resembles how musicians and entertainers performed before the idol of Telipinu during his processions to and from the river (see above on this event and also the return of Marduk's idol to Babylon).[18]

3.3 Failure

The problem with carrying a sacred object on a cart is that it could jerk and thereby upset the object, whether due to the roughness of the road or the movement of the animals pulling it. The Hittites apparently recognized this

---

[17]   See *DCH* 8:121.

[18]   Weinfeld has pointed out a number of parallels between the Hittite KI.LAM and Telipinu festivals and 2 Sam 6, including participation of a royal person (king or crown prince), music and dancing, and transportation of sacred objects on carts. On this basis, he suggested that the Israelite processions may reflect some Hittite influence (Weinfeld, "Traces of Hittite Cult," 110–14).

possibility, but they solved the problem by having a priest hold the image of the god (see above). The Israelites did not have this option because the real presence of the awesome deity called יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת יֹשֵׁב הַכְּרֻבִים "Yhwh of Hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim" (2 Sam 6:2, my translation), i.e., the cherubim that were on the ark (Exod 25:18–20, 22; Num 7:89), was with the sacred chest. He was not merely represented by a material symbol, such as an idol. The ark neither symbolized Him, nor was it a pedestal for such a symbol. Therefore, the holiness of the ark was too powerful for anyone to be able to sit on the cart in order to hold it.

The cexact cwords cidentifying Israel's deity as יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת יֹשֵׁב הַכְּרֻבִים only appear once elsewhere in the Bible: 1 Sam 4:4.[19] Here the Israelites presumptuously brought the ark of the covenant of "YHWH of Hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim" from Shiloh with the priests Hophni and Phinehas to their war camp, supposing that it would guarantee victory against the Philistines (vv. 3, 5). We are not told how the ark was carried, but it did not belong in the war camp at this time with the wicked priests Hophni and Phinehas, whom God had condemned (cf. 1 Sam 2:12–17, 22–25).[20] The outcome was disastrous. The Philistines defeated the Israelites, killed Hophni and Phinehas, and captured the ark (1 Sam 4:10–11).

So when a discerning reader/hearer of 2 Sam 6:2 encounters the same designation of the ark—the place of enthronement for the living divine King of hosts/armies—as in 1 Sam 4:4, the effect is an implicit warning. David should know that he must be very careful when he has the ark moved, just as the Israelites should have been more careful in the time of Hophni and Phinehas.

---

[19]   The parallel to 2 Sam 6:2 in 1 Chr 13:6 is close—יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת יֹשֵׁב הַכְּרֻבִים, "Yhwh, who is enthroned on the cherubim," without צְבָאוֹת, "of Hosts." The other (of a total of se-ven) passages referring to Yhwh as "enthroned on the cherubim" are 2 Kgs 19:15; Isa 37:16; Ps 80:2 (Eng. v. 1); 99:1.

[20]   According to 1 Sam 2:25, "it was the will of the Lord to put them to death" (ESV). For the divinely ordered holy war against Midian, Moses had sent with the Israelite army "Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, with the vessels of the sanctuary and the trumpets for the alarm in his hand" (Num 31:6 ESV). The "vessels of the sanctuary" or "sacred utensils" (NJPS) may have included the Urim and Thummim, which were consulted during war (1 Sam 14:41; 28:6), and possibly the ark (cf. Num 14:44; Josh 6:4, 6–9, 11–13; 2 Sam 11:11), which was also associated with consulting God (Judg 20:27–28 and 1 Chr 13:3), likely because of its close connection with the high priest and the Urim and Thummim that he carried in his breastpiece (Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; cf. Num 27:21).

It is not surprising that the ark shifted on the cart when the oxen pulling it jerked it for some reason.[21] Nor is it surprising that Uzza, one of the drivers, felt responsible for making sure that the ark did not disastrously fall to the ground. So he grabbed it in order to steady it. His motive was good in that sense, but in this case, the quality of motivation was completely irrelevant. YHWH was angry and struck him dead (2 Sam 6:6–7; 1 Chr 13:9–10). So once again, the outcome of improperly moving the ark was disastrous. In this instance, the mistake was the innovation (for Israelites) of using a cart to transport the ark (see further below), as other ANE peoples moved their sacred objects. Compare recognition in some cuneiform sources that "new" or "foreign" ritual techniques could be problematic.[22]

Second Samuel 6:7 says that God killed Uzza because of his שַׁל, which in this context seems to mean something like "indiscretion."[23] Obviously, he should not have contacted the ark. He should have known this because decades earlier, YHWH had struck a large number of people from Beth-shemesh who looked into/at the ark (apparently uncovering it) when the Philistines returned it to the Israelites (1 Sam 6:19). However, neither account of David's first procession in 2 Sam 6 and 1 Chr 13 cites a rule that Uzza broke. Perhaps the reader is simply expected to know this. Nevertheless, the narratives of David's second (successful) ritual procession provide more information (see below).

As when Marduk and his consort unexpectedly interrupted their return journey to Babylon during the reign of Esarhaddon (see above), Israel's deity unexpectedly brought His procession to a standstill, in this case due to a mistake by a human participant. Not surprisingly, "David was angry because the LORD had broken out against Uzzah" (2 Sam 6:8; cf. 1 Chr 13:11). His plan and high hopes were suddenly shattered. The party was over. His deity, for whom he had exerted such effort, not only disappointed him but also humiliated him in front of his entire nation. This was much worse than what Esarhaddon experienced. But just as Esarhaddon had no choice but to submit to the perceived will of Marduk and Zarpanītu, David's royal authority was powerless before that of YHWH.

---

[21] The verb here in 2 Sam 6:6 and 1 Chr 13:9 is שׁמט, "let drop," which in this context could mean that the oxen stumbled or fell (*DCH* 8:437). For other possible meanings of the verb in this context, see *HALOT* 4:1557–58.

[22] Ambos, "Types of Ritual Failure," 37–38.

[23] *DCH* 8:363. For other possibilities, see *HALOT* 4:1502. No Greek equivalent to the prepositional phrase containing this word (עַל־הַשַּׁל, "because of his indiscretion") appears here in the LXX of 2 Sam 6:7.

David's anger was combined with fear of God, so he indefinitely post-poned the resumption of the procession, taking the ark aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite, i.e., from the Philistine city of Gath (2 Sam 6:9–10; 1 Chr 13:12–13). It is remarkable that David left the ark at the home of a for-eigner whose name means, "Servant of (the god) Edom." But apparently Obed-edom was now a convert to Yhwh.[24]

This suggests that David viewed the divine outbreak against Uzza as carrying greater significance than the punishment of one individual for his mistake. Yhwh's reaction appeared to indicate His disfavor against David and all those involved in the journey.[25] David's later speech to the Levites explicitly expresses this idea: "Because you were not there the first time, the LORD our God burst out against *us*" (1 Chr 15:13 NJPS; emphasis sup-plied).[26]

4. David's Second (Successful) Ritual Procession

David regained his courage when he learned that Yhwh was blessing the household of Obed-edom because the ark was in his house (2 Sam 6:11–12a; 1 Chr 13:14). This gave hope that relocation of the ark to David's city could bring blessing there too, rather than the potential curse that the king appar-ently had feared. The deity really was beneficent and His awesome presence desirable, although He was to be treated with extreme respect and His in-structions were to be meticulously followed.

Therefore, David organized another procession, which was carried out three months after the first procession, as implied by the notice that the ark remained at the house of Obed-edom for that length of time (2 Sam 6:11; 1 Chr 13:14). It differed from the earlier procession in terms of the way in which the ark was carried, the participants, and the activities that were per-formed. These factors, some of which by contrast serve as an implicit cri-tique of the first procession, dramatically altered the atmosphere of the event.

---

[24]   David L. Thompson, "Obed-edom (Person)," *ABD* 5:5, observes: "His name and ori-gins in Gath may well place him among Philistine expatriates loyal to David (2 Sam 15:18–22; 18:2)." Cf. P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *2 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, AB 9 (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 170.

[25]   Compare the way Aaron was affected when Yhwh slew his sons for their ritual failure (Lev 10:19; cf. vv. 1–2).

[26]   This verse indicates that the Chronicler did not regard Uzza or his brother Ahio as Levites (Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29*, 587).

4.1 Mode of Carrying Sacred Object

This time the ark was carried by men. Second Samuel 6:13a simply refers to those who were carrying the ark of Yʜwʜ, without identifying them. But it can be assumed that authorized personnel would have been required for this task. It was Levites who previously had taken the ark down from the cart on which the Philistines returned it to the Israelites (1 Sam 6:15), so their special role in relation to the ark was known at that time.[27]

If men had borne the ark during the first procession, Uzza would not have died because the need to steady the object would not have arisen. The planning of the first procession was faulty, but the error was recognized and subsequently corrected.

How did those who organized the second procession, i.e., David and his advisors, know that the ark should be carried by men? Second Samuel 6 does not say, but 1 Chr 15 does as it fills in details to provide a more explicit theological perspective. According to 1 Chr 15, David ordered that Levites should carry the sacred chest the rest of the way to the City of David because earlier Yʜwʜ had burst out "because we," i.e., he and his leaders, "did not seek him according to the rule מִשְׁפָּט," (v. 13 ESV; cf. vv. 2, 12, 14), i.e., the regulation regarding the proper procedure. Here David shared responsibility for the faulty planning of the first procession and indicated that there was a rule that should have been followed. Thus, the Chronicler depicts David as a model monarch who knows earlier Scriptures (cf. Deut 17:18–20) and applies them.[28] 1 Chronicles 15:15 identifies the rule from God that had been broken: "The Levites carried the Ark of God by means of poles on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the LORD" (NJPS).

The pentateuchal instructions for carrying the ark appear in Exod 25:12–15; 37:3–5; Num 1:50; 4:5–6, 15; 7:9; Deut 10:8, according to which the ark was to be carried by Kohathite Levites with poles on their shoulders (as in Egyptian processions) that were permanently inserted through rings on either side of the ark. These directions were followed during movements of the Israelites with the ark in the days of Joshua (Josh 3–4, 6; cf. 8:33).[29] The

---

[27] Levites also bear the ark later in 2 Sam 15:24.

[28] Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29*, 613.

[29] In the book of Joshua the ark is said to be carried by "levitical priests" (3:3; 8:33) or just "priests" (3:6, 8, 13–15, 17; 4:9–11, 16, 18; 6:6, 12). This similarity with Egyptian practice accords with the narrative in the book of Exodus, according to which the sanctuary and its furnishings were constructed soon after the Israelites departed from

poles were long (1 Kgs 8:8), so the Levites could carry the ark while remaining some distance from it.

Thus, 1 Chr 15 interprets the event that is sparsely recorded in 2 Samuel by placing it against the background of the pentateuchal instructions. According to Chronicles, the procedural rule recorded in the Pentateuch was available to David and his leaders, whether or not the Pentateuch was edited in its final form at that time.[30] Why didn't David command that this divine instruction be followed for the first procession? He and his advisors were negligent, failing to consult the will of God as revealed through Moses (1 Chr 15:13, 15). They thought they knew what to do, based on their own wisdom, and likely influenced by the practice of other ANE peoples. It is true that the Philistines, who had no Levites, had returned the ark to the Israelites on a new cart pulled by animals (1 Sam 6:7–14). But God expected his covenant people, the Israelites, to do as He had commanded them.

4.1 Participants and Activities

Aside from men carrying the ark, 2 Sam 6:13–15 describes the second resumed procession as a much more religious ritual event than the first.[31] It included the blowing of at least one *shofar*, an instrument that could be used on sacred occasions (cf. Lev 25:9; Ps 81:4 [Eng. 3]; 98:6; 150:3), David wearing a linen ephod, which was like a priestly garment (e.g., Exod 28:4, 6–8, 12; 1 Sam 2:18, 28), and sacrifices: "When the bearers of the Ark of the LORD had moved forward six paces, he [David] sacrificed an ox and a fatling" (2 Sam 6:13 NJPS).[32] Compare the Assyrian sacrifices during the return of Marduk's idol to Babylon (see above).

Egypt. For other connections between the Israelite sanctuary and Egypt, see, e.g., L. S. Baker Jr., "Archaeological Backgrounds of the Sanctuary: A Search for Egyptian Cultural Influence in the Construction of the Hebrew Tent-Sanctuary" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2019).

30 The overall relationship between the understanding of the cult in Samuel as compared to Chronicles is beyond the scope of the present article.

31 Pointed out to me by Jacob Milgrom (private communication), referring to the addition of sacrifices.

32 With the plain sense of the MT and, e.g., A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, WBC 11 (Dallas: Word, 1989), 105, against, e.g., P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., who interprets this verse to mean: "whenever the ark bearers advanced six paces, he would sacrifice a fatted bull" (P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, AB 9 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984], 162, 166, 171). Robert P. Gordon suggests: "The implication of the present verse is that thanksgiving was offered to God

Chronicles supplements what is known from 2 Sam 6, shaping the reader's theological understanding by adding further religious details, including elements relating to pentateuchal ritual instructions (see above). For the second procession, David involved many priests and Levites in addition to the Levites bearing the ark, and he ordered them to prepare by consecrating themselves (1 Chr 15:4–14). David wore not only a linen ephod; he was also wrapped in a robe of fine linen, as were the Levites carrying the ark and the singers (v. 27). Instead of a notice regarding sacrifices by David, we read here: "Since God helped the Levites who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, they sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams" (v. 26 NJPS).

As mentioned above, Chronicles identifies the mistake in the first procession as the failure to have the Levites play a central role by carrying the ark (1 Chr 15:12–15). This diagnosis that YHWH's outbreak was caused at least partly by absence of the Levites interprets the cause of the ritual failure as more complex than simply a wrong move by one ritual participant, namely, Uzza. "In the Chronicler's retelling of his source, the failure of the first ark procession becomes a lesson about the need for the priests and Levites to play a central role in cultic affairs."[33]

The fact that the second procession included a number of elements that were not present in the first procession does not necessarily mean that they had been omitted by mistake. It appears that the other religious features, which enhanced the solemnity of the event, were designed as extra "insurance" to honor YHWH in a way that would be pleasing to Him so that He would be happy to move to the City of David without further incident.

Thus far I have discussed discontinuity between the two processions in 2 Sam 6 and 1 Chr 13, 15. However, these journeys were also similar in some important respects. Both were organized as occasions in which many people, including the army, participated in rejoicing with music and dancing, and the king played a prominent role (2 Sam 6:1–2, 5, 12, 14–16; 1 Chr 13:5–6, 8; 15:25, 28–29). A procession with the ark accompanied by such celebration and a royal leader was a religious innovation for the Israelites, analogous to joyful activity involved in cultic processions outside Israel, but this

---

for an auspicious beginning to a hazardous undertaking" (Robert P. Gordon, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, Library of Biblical Interpretation [Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1986], 233; cf. 1 Chr 15:26—"Since God helped the Levites who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, they sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams" [NJPS]).

[33]   Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29*, 587.

was not problematic as long as the ark was properly carried by the author-ized cultic personnel.

As the Anatolian deity Telipinu was entertained and honored by sport competition during his procession, David also carried out vigorous physical activity by dancing before Yhwh to honor Him (2 Sam 6:14, 16; 1 Chr 15:29), something that no Israelite leader had done before. Because David was the king, his self-assumed role was highly unusual. There is no indication that the Hittite crown prince lowered his dignity to participate in singing or dancing, as David did. Such activities belonged to entertainers. David was humbling himself as a servant of Yhwh, highlighting the ultimate theocratic rule of Israel.

David's processions involved himself and other leaders, explicitly in-cluding "the elders of Israel and the commanders of thousands" in 1 Chr 15:25 (ESV), with cultic personnel specially featured in the second proces-sion (esp. vv. 26–27). So these events reflected Israelite society to some ex-tent. However, Samuel and Chronicles do not describe a carefully choreo-graphed and fixed marching order of individuals and groups that would have the effect of affirming social stratification, as in the procession at the Babylonian New Year Festival (see above). Indeed, David's behavior seems calculated to insist that he was one with his people before Yhwh, rather than above them.[34] That his attempt to project humility succeeded is confirmed by the contemptuous reaction of his wife, Michal, the daughter of Saul (2 Sam 6:16, 20–22), a king who had not adequately submitted himself to Yhwh's authority (e.g., 1 Sam 13, 15).

When Yhwh's ark was placed in the tent in Jerusalem that David had set up for it, "David sacrificed burnt offerings and offerings of well-being be-fore the LORD" (2 Sam 6:17 NJPS; cf. 1 Chr 16:1–2). The fact that sacrifice in this context happened to coincide with Hittite practice when (the idol of) Telipinu was returned to his temple (see above) was irrelevant. Within the Israelite ritual context, it was only fitting to celebrate Yhwh's arrival in this way, just as Lev 8–9 describe consecration and inauguration sacrifices when the deity took up residence at His Tent of Meeting.

5. Conclusion: The Nature of God

This article has illuminated dynamics and concepts involved in a particular

---

[34]   Cf. one purpose of the law of the king in Deut 17:20: "that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers" (ESV).

instance of ritual failure recorded in biblical narrative accounts. In the absence of Israelite precedent for a king to bring the ark of the covenant into his capital city, David's people initially followed common non-Egyptian ANE protocol by conveying the sacred chest on a cart. However, it appears that there was danger that the ark would be viewed as another ANE divine symbol and that the Israelites could suppose that they were able to control YHWH, as they had attempted to do when they took the ark from Shiloh into battle against the Philistines (1 Sam 4:3–11, esp. v. 3b).

By executing Uzza for touching the ark, YHWH asserted His nature as a volitional, personal, dynamic being who would go to Jerusalem only on His terms.[35] To David's credit, he got the message and radically revised the resumed procession, this time following the Torah rule for transporting the ark, emphasizing the transcendence of the deity through the participation of cultic personnel and the performance of sacrifices.

Ritual failure is distressing, but it can also be instructive in highlighting non-negotiable boundaries of interaction with a deity, which reflect the deity's nature.[36] This instruction makes an especially deep impression when the failure carries empirically discernible consequences that thwart the realization of the desired efficacy, as when the goal of installing the ark in the City of David was interrupted by Uzza's obvious physical demise.[37] The suddenness and severity with which YHWH struck Uzza, as He had struck the men of Beth-shemesh who looked into the ark decades earlier (1 Sam 6:19), effectively demonstrated that He was an awesome being who required the utmost respect and obedience to His rules. One man died, but the potency of the warning may have spared the lives of many more.

---

[35] Compare Exod 40:34–35, where YHWH's glory filled the tabernacle before the ritual consecration and inauguration of the sanctuary (Lev 8–9), showing that His movements were not dependent on human activities (Roy E. Gane, "Leviticus," in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, ed. John H. Walton [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009], 1:299).

[36] Cf. Ute Hüsken, "Ritual Dynamics and Ritual Failure," in *When Rituals Go Wrong: Mistakes, Failure, and the Dynamics of Ritual*, ed. Ute Hüsken, Numen Book Series: Studies in the History of Religions 115 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 361—"examples of 'ritual failure' and of 'mistakes' in the ritual context do give an indication of decisive norms" (cf. 337–38).

[37] Hüsken identifies several kinds of ritual efficacy, including "operational efficacy," which "relates to the empirically detectable physical, psychological or social effects of a ritual" (Hüsken, "Ritual Dynamics and Ritual Failure," 351, following Moore and Myerhoff), and he goes on to point out: "Diverse modes of efficacy refer to diverse ways a ritual can fail" (p. 352).

A Reflective Study of the Translation of the Hebrew נֶפֶשׁ and רוּחַ as 靈魂 "Soul" in the Chinese Union Version (CUV)

ANDY TSOI KASHING

Andrews University, MICHIGAN

Abstract

There is no concept of a soul that loses its body after death, and continues to live independently, in the Hebrew Bible. Even though the word 靈魂 ("soul") is used in the Chinese Union Version (CUV) translation, there is not even one original Hebrew text of נֶפֶשׁ (*nepeš*) and רוּחַ (*rûaḥ*) that supports the idea of the immortality of the soul. Therefore, the better translation of נֶפֶשׁ in the Chinese Bible would be 人的生命 ("human life") or 整全的人 ("wholistic person"), רוּחַ and would be better translated as 靈 ("spirit") or 生命 ("life").'

Keywords: Bible Translation, Chinese Versions; Hebrew *nepeš* and *rûaḥ*, death, afterlife.

1. Introduction

The world of the dead is covered with the veil of mystery. Practically, in every culture we find beliefs in the existence of the soul or spirit after death, and Chinese civilization is no exception. There is a term 魂 ("soul") related to this belief in a "dead soul." In ancient times, the word 魂 ("soul") contained rich meanings, such as "human's natural Yang energy (陽氣)," "an element which constitutes man," "the soul is in charge of the human spirit,"

and "the soul is the spirit," etc.[1] However, it is much simpler to understand the 魂 ("soul") in the modern context, and two authoritative Chinese and English dictionaries provide us with clear definitions of what the term means today. In *The Oxford Chinese Dictionary*, one of the meanings of the Chinese word 魂 ("soul") came from the ancients' imagination that the human soul can leave the body and continue to live and wander in the world after death. Thus, 魂 ("soul") refers to the independent existence without the body, such as 鬼魂 ("ghost") and 靈魂 ("soul").[2] Besides, according to *Longman Chinese Advanced New Dictionary ("朗文中文高級新辭典")*, the term 靈魂 ("soul") refers in a religious sense to something immaterial attached to the human body and can exist independently of it.[3] The term 靈魂("soul") is from the Chinese death culture—a soul that loses its body after death. Further, the Chinese Union Version Bible (CUV) often translates the Hebrew words נֶפֶשׁ (*nepeš*) and רוּחַ (*rûaḥ*) with 靈魂 ("soul"). The CUV translates נֶפֶשׁ with 靈魂("soul") 23 times,[4] and רוּחַ 2 times.[5]

The goal of this essay is to analyze and discuss whether or not the Hebrew words נֶפֶשׁ and רוּחַ should be translated with 靈魂 ("the soul after death"). This interpretation leads to the fundamental question of this article: Do the Hebrew Scriptures agree with the above Chinese notion of the afterlife?

---

[1]   Jin Ye Xu, *The Kangxi Dictionary* (Taiwan: Culture Book, 1976), 1461. There were different interpretations of the term 魂 ("soul") in ancient times based on the different perceptions of the composition of human beings in ancient China. For further studies, see 易傳.繫辭 ("Book of Changes : Xi Ci I").

[2]   Julie Kleeman and Harry Yu, eds., *The Oxford Chinese Dictionary: English-Chinese-Chinese English* (New York: Oxford University, 2010), 324, 893, 744.

[3]   Li Qun Ye, *Longman Chinese Advanced New Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Hong Kong: Pearson, 2003), 1342–43.

[4]   The lexeme נֶפֶשׁ is rendered as 靈魂("soul") in CUV in the following cases: Gen 35:18; 1 Kgs 17:21–22; Job 33:22, 28, 30; Ps 16:10; 22:20(21); 23:3; 26:9; 30:3(4); 34:22(23); 35:3, 12(13), 17; 71:23; 86:13; 89:48(49); 109:31; 116:4; Prov 23:14; Isa 38:17.

[5]   The lexeme רוּחַ is rendered as 靈魂("soul") in CUV in Ps 31:5(6) and Eccl 3:21. Although only Ps 31:5(6) is translated with 靈魂 ("soul") in CUV, Eccl 3:21 uses the similar word 魂 ("soul") in translating the רוּחַ. Thus, both passages should be included in a study of the idea of "soul" as it relates to the Hebrew Bible. See *Mandarin Bible - Chinese Union Version* (Shanghai: American Bible Society, 1920), 105–9.

2. How Do the Chinese Understand the Term 靈魂 ("Soul")?

The concept of a soul separated from the body after death has long existed in traditional Chinese beliefs. It describes the belief in the existence of another world after death. This belief has deeply influenced the Chinese Christians' perception of death, most notably through four major impulses: Confucian, Taoism, Buddhist philosophy, and Chinese folk beliefs.

Confucian concepts of the afterlife have varied over time. In this paper we will take the understanding of the afterlife in *The Analects of Confucius* (論語) as representative. First of all, Confucianism does not discuss much what happens after death. The Confucian philosophy focuses on personal cultivation, family ethics, and social responsibility while the human is alive. Confucius (ca. 551–ca. 479 BC), the founding sage of Confucianism, once said: 未知生，焉知死 ("How can one know death without knowing life?").[6] In other words, if there is time to discuss or think about the invisible world after death, it is still better to focus on what is alive here and now. Besides, when 季路 (Ji Lu), a student of Confucius, asked him about ghosts and spirits, Confucius replied: 未能事人，焉能事鬼? ("Before we are able to serve the living, how can we think about serving the spirit of death?").[7] On another occasion, Confucius announced that 子不語怪、力、亂、神 ("I do not talk any of monstrosities, violence, or gods in any spirituality").[8] To this end, Confucianism initially did not have much in-depth discussion on the soul, and it even adopted a non-discursive attitude towards death or the question of life after death. On the contrary, Confucian scholars attached more focus to the human issues of the living still alive.

Taoism, on its side, contains two systems that should be distinguised: Philosophical Taoism (道家) and Religious Taoism (道教). First, 道家 (Philosophical Taoism) was closer to the time of Confucius. It viewed death simply as a natural process. There was the contrast between life and death. 莊子 (Zhuangzi) used to say: 死生，命也；其有夜旦之常，天也 ("Death and life are destinies, just like the alternation of the night and the day; they are a natural phenomenon").[9] In the face of the impermanence of life and death,

---

[6]   De Li Song, *The Analects of Confucius*, ed. Chen Yan Wang and Fei Dai (Beijing: University of International Business and Economics, 2010), 217–18. The translations from Chinese are my own unless otherwise stated.

[7]   Song, *Analects of Confucius*, 217.

[8]   Song, *Analects of Confucius*, 183–84.

[9]   Gu Ying Chen, *Zhuangzi's Notes and Translations in Today*, Part 1 (Beijing: Chung Hwa,

道家 (Philosophical Taoism) advocates accepting death as normal, and thus to conform to nature. For example, 莊子 (Zhuangzi) also stated: 不知說生，不知惡死…受而喜之，忘而復之 ("Not knowing how to love life, not knowing how to hate death ... accepting all encounters with joy, and restoring the original state of being without any obsession").[10] In other words, 道家 (Philosophical Taoism) teaches people to obey nature and that if people can get rid of their attachment to life and death, they can live with ease and comfort. Because of this view, 道家 (Philosophical Taoism) does not enter into any further discussion on the spiritual realms.

Second, although 道教 (Religious Taoism) developed from the 道家 (Philosophical Taoism), the doctrine of 道教 (Religious Taoism) is more complex and comprehensive. It combined Taoist philosophy, shamans, qigong, Chinese medicine, and belief in polytheistic worship.[11] Unlike 道家 (Philosophical Taoism), 道教 (Religious Taoism) does not readily accept natural death and advocates eternal life and how to become immortal.[12] The essential book for Religious Taoism, the *洞玄靈寶諸天世界造化經* (*Dong Xuan Ling Bao Zhu Tian Shi Jie Zao Hua Jing*), formulates the doctrine of death and the afterlife in Religious Taoism as follows: 又眾生死時，形滅而神移 ("when living beings die, their forms are extinguished and their gods/spirits are moved to somewhere").[13] In short, 道教 (Religious Taoism) believes that the human body is destroyed, but the soul is not. This idea also provided the foundation for believing in the soul's suffering after death in later Chinese folk beliefs.

Buddhism influenced beliefs already in ancient China.[14] Buddhism asserts that human life is 非常非斷, which means that human death is not the end, but life after death follows.[15] According to Buddhist philosophy, the human form (身體) will eventually perish, in contrast to the human soul (靈魂) which is indestructible. All souls are constantly reincarnated in the "Six classes of beings (六道)," and this cycle of reincarnation is regarded as "Sam-

---

1983), 195–96.

[10]   Chen, *Zhuangzi's Notes and Translations*, 186–87.

[11]   Bing Chen, "The Taoist Concept of Life and Death and Its Relationship with Buddhism," *Religious Studies* 4 (1997): 11.

[12]   Chen, "Taoist Concept of Life and Death," 9.

[13]   Chen, "Taoist Concept of Life and Death," 10–12.

[14]   Hui Ming, *Fully Understand the Buddhist Scriptures Once—Read a Piece of Buddhist Scriptures, Less Trouble*, 2nd ed. (Taiwan: Sea Dove, 2021), 34.

[15]   Zhan Guo Chen and Yu Qiang, *Beyond Life and Death—The Wisdom of Life and Death in Traditional Chinese Culture*, ed. Si Peng Wang (China: Henan University, 2004), 176–77.

sara (輪迴)."[16] After the wicked die, they will descend to hell to be judged, and two kings of hell will judge them: Yamarāja (閻羅王) and Ksitigarbha (地藏王). Yamarāja (閻王 or 閻羅王) is a word transliterated from Sanskrit यमराज. The original meaning is "to bind," specifically to bind the guilty. Originally, in ancient Hindu mythology, Yamarāja was a god who governed the underworld.[17] Buddhism accepted the doctrine of hell, and the concept of Yamaraja continued to be used as the god of hell.[18] Finally, Yamarāja becomes the king of hell who controls evil souls.[19] Another is Ksitigarbha (地藏王), which is one of the four great Bodhisattvas. He is also known as Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, is again transliterated from the Sanskrit क्षितिगर्भ.[20] In Buddhist lore, Ksitigarbha once said: "Until the hells are empty (of suffering souls), I will not become a Buddha" (地獄不空，誓不成佛). Since his vow to release all souls from purgatory in hell, Ksitigarbha is also known as the lord of the underworld.[21]

The formation of modern "Chinese folk beliefs" would not have been possible without the influence of other religions, including the Religious Taoism's (道教) concept of separating the body and soul, and the Buddhists' concept of judgment after death. The two Buddhist gods of the underworld, Yamarāja and Ksitigarbha, have slowly evolved into (or infiltrated) Chinese traditional folk beliefs. At the beginning of ancient Chinese culture, there was no concept of a king of hell. It was only after Buddhism came to China that the belief in hell began to gain popularity in China.[22] In the first century

---

[16]　The six classes of beings include the way of gods (天道), Asuras (阿修羅), human beings (人道), animals (畜牲道), hungry ghosts (餓鬼道), and hell-beings (地獄道) (Ming, *Fully Understand Buddhist*, 34–37). Other thinks that, the Six Paths of Buddhism are the Three Paths of Brahma, adding another three more, finally formed into the six reincarnations (Tian-Min Gong, *Nine Lectures on Brahmanism and Buddhism* [Taiwan: Taosheng, 2006], 29–30).

[17]　The oldest surviving collection of Indian poetry, *The Rig Veda* (梨俱吠陀), already contains a legend about Yamarāja. See Shu Jia Zhou, *Gods of Hong Kong: Origins, Temples and Worship*, ed. Jing Wei Bai, 2nd ed. (Hong Kong: Chung Hwa, 2022), 120.

[18]　Che Xu, *Ghosts of the Underworld* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Open Page, 2020), 109.

[19]　There are eight cold hells, eight hot hells and eighteen level hells in the Buddhist Scriptures (Zhou, *Gods of Hong Kong*, 120–21).

[20]　Xu, *Ghosts of the Underworld*, 2–3. Ksitigarbha is the Buddhist Bodhisattva name. His records are written in the *Daśacakra Kṣitigarbha Sūtra* (地藏十輪經).

[21]　Zhou, *Gods of Hong Kong*, 104–5. See also Xu, *Ghosts Underworld*, 2–3. The Sakyamuni Buddha ordered Ksitigarbha to be the leader of the underworld and manage the underworld.

[22]　Xu, *Ghosts Underworld*, 109.

AD, around the Han Dynasty (漢朝), Buddhism was introduced to China through the Silk Road. Over the next ten centuries, Buddhist culture eventually developed into a concept of faith with Chinese characteristics, including the concept of the world after death.[23] In other words, the Chinese concept of death is a blend of Buddhist philosophy and traditional culture. Although some Buddhist rituals and philosophies are not widespread, the concept of death remains staple in Chinese folk beliefs. The Chinese believe there is a king of hell who governs all dead souls. Eventually, the king called Yama (閻王) became the folkloric lord of the underworld, commonly known as Yan Wang or Yan Wang Ye, who was in charge of human life, death, and reincarnation.[24] The Yama (閻王) is the most widely recognized Chinese folk god and the Chinese people's most familiar god of the underworld.[25]

In summary, Chinese folk beliefs have undergone a long process of evolution under the influence of Taoism and Buddhism, culminating in the formation of the concept of the immortality of the soul and the concept of suffering after death. This is now recognized as traditional folk beliefs by the Chinese people. The 靈魂 ("soul") is understood as leaving the body after death, and goes to the underworld (陰間) to be judged by Yama.[26] This makes it easy for Chinese reading 靈魂 ("soul") in the CUV to confuse this with the Chinese folk beliefs about life after death. The following section will explore more about the origin of the Chinese Union Version and the relationship between Chinese theology and translation.

---

[23] Ming, *Fully Understand Buddhist*, 24–27. In about 60 AD, Emperor Ming of the Han Dynasty (漢明帝) sent Jumotan (攝摩騰) and Arista Faran (竺法蘭) to translate the Buddhist Scriptures into Chinese. And the first Chinese Buddhist Sutra, "Forty-two Chapters" (四十二章經), was written in China. See Jing Yin, *Introduction: 2600 Years of Buddhism*, 2nd ed. (Hong Kong: Chung Hwa, 2022), 105–9.

[24] Che Xu and Yan Li, *Hundred Buddhas in the Buddha World* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Open Page, 2020), 136–37.

[25] This concept of the Yama figure then evolved into the "Ten Kings of Hades" (十殿閻王), which created a "Yin Cao Palace" (陰曹地府) in imitation of the ancient judicial system of the human world. This is a complete underworld capture, interrogation, adjudication, judgment, and edification system. See Che Xu and Tai Yun Chen, *Hundred Gods in the Chinese Folk*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Open Page, 2020), 46–49.

[26] Xu and Li, *Hundred Buddhas*, 136–37.

3. The Influence of the Chinese Union Version on the Development of the Doctrine of Death in Chinese Theology

3.1 Origin of the Chinese Union Version

There are records in the literature that the Bible was translated into Chinese in the seventh and eighth centuries AD.[27] However, since the missionaries in China have independently translated the Bible, there are as many as thirty translations. In 1890, the "European and American Missionary Bible Translation Conference" led by the Bible Society in Shanghai decided to launch a unified translation. Eventually, the Mandarin Union Version (or the Chinese Union Version—CUV) was published in 1919.[28] In 1934, the Mandarin Union Version accounted for most Chinese publications of the Bible—more than 90 percent. Although the Union Version has been published for a hundred years, it is still widely used by Chinese Christians. It is the essential translation of the Bible in the history of Chinese Christianity.[29]

The Chinese Union Version is based on the English Revised Version. If there are any differences, the King James Version will be used as a reference. In addition, the CUV uses the original languages from the Massoretic Text (MT) for the Old Testament and the *Textus Receptus* for the New Testament for the translation.[30] The CUV is deeply influenced by the King James Version regarding language translation. The CUV is intended, like the English King James Version, to be a Bible for audiences from different social classes.

---

[27]   David Lee, "Systematic Theology: The Doctrine of the Future," ed. Wen-Chi Guo (Hong Kong: Evangel Press, 2013), 360–61.

[28]   Cho Yuen Lam, *Faithfulness and Manipulation: A Study of Chinese Translations of the Contemporary Christian Bible* (Hong Kong: Lingnan, 2003), 21–23. The Simplified? Literal New Testament Translation (淺文理) was first published in 1902. The Literal New Testament Translation (深文理) was also published in 1907. Finally, in 1919, the complete translation of the Mandarin Chinese Union Version (官話和合本) was officially published.

[29]   George K W. Mak,"'United Version Bible'—The 'Definitive Version' of the Chinese World?," *CSCCRC* 42 (2021): 1–2.

[30]   Lam, "Faithfulness and Manipulation," 44–45.

3.2. The Influence of the Chinese Union Version on the Development of the Doctrine of Death in Chinese Theology

The development of biblical theology is inseparable from the translation of the Bible. Dualism (body-soul separation) has been mixed into many Christian theological discussions for centuries. But how does this dualism realte to the biblical text? Part of the answer involves translation issues. Around 250 BC, the Septuagint Bible translated Hebrew anthropological terms into Greek. This translation may include terms for the parts of the human being familiar to the minds of Christians influenced by Greek philosophy. This could have had an impact on the perception of anthropology of LXX readers. An example of this is the Hebrew word נֶפֶשׁ (*nepeš*), translated as ψυχή (*psuchē*) in the Septuagint, and later translated into English as "soul."[31] Nancey Murphy explains that the passages supporting dualism which can be found in the Bible, are almost always the outcome of poor translations. The Greek translations are mixed with what Greek philosophers would mean in that era. However, none of the meanings of original Aramaic and Hebrew terms are exactly the same as the Greek. Presently, those faulty doctrines are passed down to Christians with older English Bible translations.[32] Seligson also saw the deficiencies of translations and said that even if the modern Bible uses the word "soul," נֶפֶשׁ is different from the contemporary concept of "soul."[33]

Chinese Christian theology is neither immune to such dualistic concepts. An extremely influential theologian in Chinese Christianity of the twentieth century, Watchman Nee (1903–1972), developed his "tripartite anthropology." With this he meant that humans are divided into three components: the flesh, the psychos, and the spiritual. Nee found a basis in the 1 Thess 5:23 saying, "may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless" (ESV).[34] Whereas the original word for "soul" in 1 Thess 5:23 is ψυχὴ (*psuchē*), the CUV translated it as 魂 ("soul"). Besides, the same word 魂 ("soul") was

---

[31] Nancey Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 16–18.

[32] Murphy, *Bodies and Souls*, 37.

[33] Miriam Seligson, *The Meaning of* מת נפש *in the Old Testament* (Helsinki: Societas Orientalis Fennica, 1951), 21–23. Unfortunately, the author does not give any definition of the "modern meaning" of the word "soul."

[34] Jason Hing-Kau Yeung, *Encountering Systematic Theology* (Hong Kong: Tien Dao, 2000), 75.

used by Nee when he literally translated Gen 2:7. He maintained the understanding that נֶפֶשׁ should be translated as 活的魂 ("the living soul"). We will discuss Gen 2:7 more in the following section. In short, Nee advocated that Chinese Christians should conquer the "body" and "mind" to release the "spirit," for example in his two important books, *The Spiritual Man* and *The Release of the Spirit*.[35] Eventually, the result of his theology made Christians pursue only spiritual things, and his theology aroused the negative attitude of Christians toward the world at that time.[36] This theological view of the separation of the body and the soul has also caused much controversy and discussion around the doctrine of the soul among contemporary Chinese theologians.[37]

As we can see, the translation of CUV has significantly influenced the direction of the development of the Chinese theology of death. Besides, since the concept of the soul after death is found in Chinese folk beliefs, this easily leads to a misunderstanding of the concept of death in the Hebrew Bible when the Chinese Christian reads the term 靈魂 ("soul") in CUV. We should now discuss if the theological understanding of the "soul" in contemporary Chinese theology is representative of the Hebrew Bible? This is an important question I intend to answer in this article. The following section will delve into the original Hebrew words translated as 靈魂 ("soul") in CUV: נֶפֶשׁ and רוּחַ.

4. The Chinese Translations of נֶפֶשׁ and רוּחַ

There are two major words, נֶפֶשׁ and רוּחַ, translated as 靈魂 ("soul") in the CUV. The term נֶפֶשׁ is used 756 times in the OT.[38] Although the term נֶפֶשׁ has been translated as 靈魂 ("soul") several times, it is clearly not the only way it is translated in the CUV. More often, CUV translates נֶפֶשׁ as "life" (生命/性命/命 e.g., Job 2:4), "living creature" (活物 e.g., Gen 9:10), "heart"

---

[35]   Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual Man Collection* (Taiwan: Taiwan Gospel Bookroom, 1992), 1–5. Futhermore, see more in Hui Er Yu and Johannes Malherbe, "The Semantic Field of the Hebrew Word נֶפֶשׁ in the OT," *Conspectus* 27 (2019): 115. The lexeme נֶפֶשׁ is rendered as 靈魂 ("soul") 23 times and 靈 ("spirit") 4 times in the CUV. However, this translation was criticized by Watchman Nee, who believed that the only meaning of נֶפֶשׁ was "soul."

[36]   Yeung, Encountering Systematic Theology, 75.

[37]   Ken-Pa Chin,"The Theological Anthropology of Watchman Nee: In the Context of Taoist Tradition," *Sino-Christian Studies* 12 (2011): 160–62.

[38]   Charles A. Briggs,"The Use of נפש in the Old Testament," *JBL* 16.1/2 (1897): 17.

(心 e.g., Jer 22:27), "person" (人 e.g., Gen 45:25-27). The verbal form נפשׁ can be translated as: 活著 ("to live," e.g., Ps 49:18), 活潑 ("to be active," e.g., Ps 38:19), 存活 ("to survive," e.g., Ps 34:12), and so on.

The *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* gives a more detailed classification: 1. Concrete meanings (breath and throat/gullet). 2. Desire, including (a) hunger, (b) vengeance, (c) wish, (d) negative aspects, and (e) expressions. 3. Soul, such as (a) desirous, (b) hungry/sated, (c) melancholy/happy, (d) hoping, (e) loving/hating, (f) alive. 4. Life: (a) maintenance, (b) threat. 5. Living being: (a) the person in the laws, (b) in enumerations, (c) general expressions, (d) pronouns. Last, 6. נֶפֶשׁ with death, which is the corpse.[39] Thus, נֶפֶשׁ is a complex and multifaceted term. The question is, does נֶפֶשׁ include the meaning of the soul after death? In CUV translation, נֶפֶשׁ only is translated 23 times as '靈魂-soul.'

Table 1: The OT Scriptures were translated from נֶפֶשׁ *to* 靈魂 *(soul) in CUV, along with different versions of the Chinese Bible and the King James Version Bible*

	Texts (in HB)	HB Term	KJV	CUV	RCUV	Douay	Lyu Jhen Jhong
-	Gen 2:7	לְנֶפֶשׁ	Soul	有靈的[40]	有靈/生命	有靈	有生命
1	Gen 35:18	נַפְשָׁהּ	Soul	靈魂	一口氣	斷氣	繼氣
2	1 Kings 17:21	נֶפֶשׁ־	Soul	靈魂	生命	靈魂	魂
3	1 Kings 17:22	נֶפֶשׁ־הַיֶּלֶד	Soul	靈魂	生命	靈魂	魂
4	Job 33:22	נַפְשׁוֹ	Soul	靈魂	性命	靈魂	性命
5	Job 33:28	נַפְשִׁי	Soul	靈魂	性命	性命	性命

[39] Ernst Jenni, Claus Westermann and M. E. Biddle, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 1:946–47. The *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* also agrees that נֶפֶשׁ has various meanings, including: 1. Throat and gullet. 2. Desire. 3.Vital self and reflexive pronoun. 4.Individuated life. 5.Living creature or person. And the last 6. the נֶפֶשׁ of God (G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, Heinz-Josef Fabry and David E. Green, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (*TDOT*) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 9:497–519. Moreover, *TDOT* mentions that נֶפֶשׁ is commonly understood in OT usage, which is why it is necessary to coordinate and understand the meaning of the separate (scriptural) texts individually (*TDOT*, 9:504.

[40] In the translation of CUV, the נֶפֶשׁ in Gen 2:7 is not translated as 靈魂 ("soul"), but 靈 ("spirit"). However, both translations have the same direction—to separate human beings into two independent elements of body and spirit, thus destroying the "holistic" concept of the human being. This is a crucial text for understanding whether human beings have a soul or not. Thus, in the following I will explore further the meaning of נֶפֶשׁ in Gen 2:7.

6	Job 33:30	נַפְשׁוֹ	Soul	靈魂	性命	性命	生命
7	Ps 16:10	נַפְשִׁי	soul	靈魂	靈魂/我	我	我
8	Ps 22:20 (21)	נַפְשִׁי	Soul	靈魂	性命	靈魂	我
9	Ps 23:3	נַפְשִׁי	Soul	靈魂	靈魂/心靈	心靈	精神
10	Ps 26:9	נַפְשִׁי	Soul	靈魂	性命	靈魂	性命
11	Ps 30:3 (4)	נַפְשִׁי	Soul	靈魂	性命	我	我
12	Ps 34:22(23)	נֶפֶשׁ	Soul	靈魂	性命	生命	性命
13	Ps 35:3	נַפְשִׁי	Soul	靈魂	我	我	我
14	Ps 35:12 (13)	נַפְשִׁי	Soul	靈魂	我	心靈	我
15	Ps 35:17	נַפְשִׁי	Soul	靈魂	性命	我	我
16	Ps 49:15	נַפְשִׁי	Soul	靈魂	命	我靈	性命
17	Pss 71:23	וְנַפְשִׁי	Soul	靈魂	性命	靈魂	性命
18	Pss 86:13	נַפְשִׁי	Soul	靈魂	性命	靈魂	性命
19	Pss 89:48 (v49)	נַפְשׁוֹ	Soul	靈魂	自已	自已	自已
20	Pss 109:31	נַפְשׁוֹ	Soul	靈魂	死罪	罪	死罪
21	Pss 116:4	נַפְשִׁי	Soul	靈魂	我	性命	性命
22	Prov 23:14	וְנַפְשׁוֹ	Soul	靈魂	性命	靈魂	他
23	Isa 38:17	נַפְשִׁי	Soul	靈魂/生命	性命	生命	性命

Another term that is translated as 靈魂/魂 ("soul") in CUV is רוּחַ. The word רוּחַ occurs 378 times in OT,[41] plus 11 times in the Aramaic of Daniel.[42] Different theological dictionaries agree that רוּחַ has multifaceted meanings.[43] The majority of translations in CUV are 靈 ("spirit" e.g., Gen 1:2), 風

---

41   Charles A. Briggs,"The Use of Ruaḥ in the Old Testament," *JBL* 19.2 (1900): 132.

42   Heinz-Josef Fabry, Helmer Ringgren, G. Johannes Botterweck and David E. Green, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 13:372.

43   The *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* mentions that the most basic meaning of רוּחַ is "wind" and "breath." The wind has two dimensions: on the one hand, it is the manifestation of a physical phenomenon, while on the other hand, it is associated with Yahweh, because the origin of the wind is a mysterious and unknown source, which is very similar to the activity of God. In addition, the breath can also be used as a representation of the power that comes with breathing (*TLOT*, 1498–530). Next, the *TDOT* divides רוּחַ into three meanings, including "wind" (natural wind and divine wind), "breath" (one of the elements that make up human beings), and "spirit" referring to the vitality of human existence, spirit mobility, and emotion (*TDOT*, 13:372–401). Felix H. Cortez states that רוּחַ has a wide range of meanings. It may mean breeze,

("wind" e.g., Gen 3:8), 心 ("heart" e.g., Gen 26:35), 氣息/氣 ("breath/air" e.g., Gen 6:17), 靈性/精神 ("spirituality" e.g., Jud 15:19), and 心靈 ("mind" e.g., Job 10:12). Nevertheless, only twice is the word translated as 靈魂/魂 ("soul") in the CUV, only in Eccl 3:21 and Ps 31:5(6).

Table 2: The OT Scriptures were translated from רוּחַ *to* 靈魂 *(soul) in CUV, along with different versions of the Chinese Bible and the King James Version Bible*

	Texts (in HBS)	HBS Term	KJV	CUV	RCUV	Douay	LYU, JHEN JHONG
1	Eccl 3:21	וְרוּחַ	spirit	獸的魂	獸的魂	氣息	獸的魂
2	Ps 31:5(6)	רוּחִי	spirit	靈魂	靈	靈魂	靈

4.1 The lexeme נֶפֶשׁ in the Context of the Origin of Life in Gen 2:7

Apparently, rather than looking up the meaning of "soul" in the theological dictionary, a better way to disern whether Scripture teaches that man has a soul separate from the body, is going to Scripture itself. Regarding the origin of human life, a most critical passage is Gen 2:7.[44] Although Gen 2:7 is not the first time the lexeme נֶפֶשׁ is used in the OT, it should be acknowledged as a key passage, since it describes the process of how man was created by God.

<div dir="rtl">

וַיִּיצֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עָפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה
וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים
וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה:

</div>

wind, breath, feeling, mind, and heart. Regarding humans and animals, רוּחַ is something God gives or removes, causing them to live or die. Last, רוּחַ does not dwell in the body, but only gives it life. Th lexeme רוּחַ does not have an independent life (Felix H. Cortez, "Death and Future Hope in the Hebrew Bible," in *What Are Human Beings that You Remember Them?*, ed. Clinton Wahlen [Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2015], 97). Furthermore, Richard M. Davidson emphasises that when רוּחַ is applied to human nature, it is often used to refer to a complicated and unified "physical-psychic composition," with either emphasis on "physical vitality" (best interpreted as "breathing") or mental vitality (best explained as "spiritual") (Richard M. Davidson, "The Nature of the Human Being from the Beginning: Genesis 1–11," in *What Are Human Beings that You Remember Them?*, ed. Clinton Wahlen (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2015), 24.

[44]   Richard Pleijel,"To Be or to Have a Nephesh?," *BZAW* 131.2 (2019): 195–96.

And the Lord God formed the Adam from the dust of earth,
And he blew in his nose the breath of life (חַיִּים).
And the man became a living being (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה).[45]

One pattern we notice is that the three verbs in v. 7 all begin the three clauses, and indicate a sequence of actions. In the first clause and action, God made the human physical body, וַיִּיצֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם ("and the Lord God formed the Adam"). The human body was formed materials from the dust of the earth. Next, the second clause and action describe how God breathed the breath of life (נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים) into human noses. Thus, the human beings has two components, the physical body with material form and the breath of life with non-material form. The third clause and action is a declaration, a statement about the הָאָדָם (hā-ʾādām) human being. The statement begins with וַיְהִי (wayəhî), a standard narrative construct to declare an occurrence of something.[46] The third clause is a summary of the human being, which is נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה (nepeš ḥayāh), having the form (the first clause) plus the breath (the second clause). From this point of view, the process of the creation of the human in the Bible does not mention or support any non-material existence of a "soul." On the contrary, נֶפֶשׁ is composed of the physical body and the breath of life together as a whole of human being. Similarly, Hans Walter Wolff emphasizes in his classic book *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, that "man does not have נֶפֶשׁ, he is נֶפֶשׁ, he lives as נֶפֶשׁ."[47] This life equation of A plus B equals C can also be seen by other scholars.[48]

---

[45] The translation is my own.

[46] Matthew H Patton and Frederic Clarke Putnam, *Basics of Hebrew Discourse: A Guide to Working with Biblical Hebrew Prose and Poetry*, ed. Miles V. Van Pelt (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 71–73.

[47] Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropologie Des Alten Testaments* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 10.

[48] Hui Er Yu cites Ellis R. Brotzman, mentioning that the "dust from the ground" as the material, plus "the breath from God" as the immaterial, equals Adam (man) as a "living נֶפֶשׁ." In other words, Adam is essentially נֶפֶשׁ, a person, an individual (Hui Er Yu, "Putting 'Whole Man' into the Old Testament: Psalms as an Example of Rethinking נפש Translation," *Jian Dao* 56 [2021]: 74). See also Yu and Malherbe, "Semantic Field," 119–20. Davidson agrees that the dust of the ground—the physical material—plus the breath of life—the divine life principle, equals נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה (the living being) according to Gen 2:7 in Davidson, "Nature of the Human Being," 24. According to Cortez, the נֶפֶשׁ is equivalent to the end result of the integration of the breath of God with the dust of the ground (Cortez, "Death and Future Hope," 98). Moreover, Wolff puts more emphasis on the breath of life that God has given to human beings. Although man is indeed defined as נֶפֶשׁ in Gen 2:7, the man was not simply created from the dust of

The lexeme נֶפֶשׁ is the whole human being, and can also represent everything pertaining to a human being. The lexeme נֶפֶשׁ often refers to a person in legal texts or in lists of people groups (both male or female), such as Lev 17:10. In Lev 23:30 it refers to the person, and in Exod 12:4 and Jer 52:29 to a people group.[49] Leviticus 17:10 states:

וְנָתַתִּי פָנַי בַּנֶּפֶשׁ הָאֹכֶלֶת אֶת־הַדָּם
וְהִכְרַתִּי אֹתָהּ מִקֶּרֶב עַמָּהּ:

I will set my face against that person who eats blood
and will cut him off from among his people (ESV).

Thus, the נֶפֶשׁ is the one who is eating blood, and it can be either אִישׁ וְאִישׁ (*ʾîš wəʾîš*) in Lev 17:10,13, this pharse refers to "any man"(NET) in Israel or any other person. Another example is found in Jeremiah 52:29, when the eight hundred thirty-two נֶפֶשׁ ("individuals") are captured from Jerusalem. Wolff calls this a "collective use of נֶפֶשׁ," and more examples are shown in the offspring numbers in Gen 46:15–25; there are 33 נֶפֶשׁ of Leah, 16 נֶפֶשׁ of Zilpah, 14 נֶפֶשׁ of Rachel and 7 נֶפֶשׁ of Bilhah.[50] It can be seen that נֶפֶשׁ is not only a part of a person, it also represents the entire life of a person. The Bible may use this word to refer to a singular individual (Lev 17:10; 23:30), a plural person (Exod 12:4), or the representative of the entire collective (Jer 52:29).[51] On the other hand, נֶפֶשׁ can also represent some inner part of humans. The lexeme נֶפֶשׁ can refer to human organs, such as the throat and neck, the breathing, life, living being, and the desire of humans.[52]

Unlike other dualistic cultures, the Hebrew Bible consistently believes that the human is a complete individual, a נֶפֶשׁ. As Davidson mentions, the entire Hebrew Bible paints a holistic picture of human beings. After the rise of the biblical theology movement around the 1950s, there is no room for seeing the platonic dichotomy of body and soul, or dualism, in the Hebrew

---

the ground. Only the breath produced by the Creator made him a living נֶפֶשׁ, a living being, a living person, and a living individual (Wolff, *Anthropologie Des Alten Testaments*, 21–22).

49 Yu and Malherbe, "Semantic Field," 119–20.

50 Wolff, *Anthropologie Des Alten Testaments*, 21–22.

51 Yu and Malherbe, "Semantic Field," 119–20.

52 Cortez, "Death and Future Hope," 98. Moreover, Yeung extended the understanding of desire even more, stating that נֶפֶשׁ can also convey various movements of emotion, will and thought, such as sorrow (Gen 42:21), panic (Ps 6:3), and even hunger (Num 11:6), and religious thirst, cf. Yeung, *Encountering Systematic Theology*, 77–78.

Bible.[53] The understanding among the Hebrews was a kind of anthropological wholism, "the human is a psychosomatic whole"—and modern biblical scholars almost universally admit this.[54]

Last, I will borrow Gerhard von Rad's embellishments as a conclusion. If someone wants to distinguish different components in the human, the only thing that can be differentiated is the natural body from life, not the body from the soul. The marriage of the divine breath with the physical body makes humans a "living soul," whether from the physical or psychological association.[55] Clearly, the human is body and breath of life together, and there is no other immortal entity, like the "soul," separate from these.

4.2 The Lexeme נֶפֶשׁ in the Context of Death

Generally, Christians believe that the existence of the disembodiment of the "soul" does not happen when one is alive, but when a person dies and is separated from the shackles of the body. Then the "soul" can allegedly leave free. Although in the previous section, we clearly saw that נֶפֶשׁ represents a complete human being, not an element of a human being, this does not solve all questions of "whether a human being has a soul."[56] In short, even if the human was created as one, some believe it is still possible that the body and soul are separated at death.[57]

---

[53]   Davidson, "Nature of the Human Being," 24–25.

[54]   Davidson, "Nature of the Human Being," 30. See more discussions on dualism in Yeung, *Encountering Systematic Theology*, 77–78. Yu and Malherbe agree and quote Owen's note on the dualism of separating body-soul, that the word "soul" scarcely means anything.

[55]   Davidson, "Nature of the Human Being," 25.

[56]   Some scholars believe that the human being is not composed of a whole, but rather of two or three elements, one of which is the soul. This gave rise to the later doctrine of the separation of the soul from the body. For example, the Chinese theologian, Nee mentioned in his book *The Spiritual Man* that the soul is released after death (Yeung, *Encountering Systematic Theology*, 75). See Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual Man Collection*, 1–5.

[57]   Pleijel challenges the possible meanings of נֶפֶשׁ. He cites a 2008 archaeological study of inscriptions found on the Katumuwa stele in Zincirli of Turkey. This stele was dedicated to a royal official named Katumuwa during an Aramaic funeral (probably from the 8th century BC). In this inscription is written about the "נבש of Katumuwa" (a different spelling of the ancient Hebrew נפש). In the inscription, the stele said that the "נבש of Katumua" had the ability to eat and drink. Pleijel catches this as a clear example, expressed in an Aramaic funeral setting, that while נבש (or נפש) abandons the

Similar arguments exist based on the CUV translation of "soul" in Gen 35:18, the first translation in CUV of נֶפֶשׁ as 靈魂 ("soul"). Here it is said that Rachel's 靈魂 ("soul") left and she died immediately. The CUV is 他將近於死, 靈魂要走的時候 (literal translation: "She is about to die and her soul is leaving translation"). This text describes the moment of death. Two things are said to happen simultaneously: the departure of the 靈魂 ("soul"), and the passing away at death. Further, the second and third occurrences of נֶפֶשׁ translated as 靈魂 ("soul") is found twice in 1 Kgs 17:21–22. This passage states that when the 靈魂 ("soul") entered again into the child's body, then "he will live" (1 Kgs 17:22). It seems like the CUV supports the above theory about the separation of the "soul" and the "body" by its translation, and it relates this separation to the time death.

Table 3: The action terms of the Hebrew texts of Gen 25:18 and 1 Kgs 17:21-22

Texts	Clause of נֶפֶשׁ	Action with נֶפֶשׁ	Stem	Outcome
Gen 35:18	וַיְהִי בְּצֵאת נַפְשָׁהּ And it came to pass, as her soul (נֶפֶשׁ) was in departing (KJV)	יצא	Qal, Inf C	כְּמֵתָה ("as death")
1 Kgs 17:21	תָּשָׁב נָא נֶפֶשׁ־הַיֶּלֶד הַזֶּה עַל־קִרְבּוֹ I pray thee, let this child's soul (נֶפֶשׁ) come into him again (KJV)	שׁוב	Qal, Imp	
1 Kgs 17:22	וַתָּשָׁב נֶפֶשׁ־הַיֶּלֶד עַל־קִרְבּוֹ וַיֶּחִי and the soul (נֶפֶשׁ) of the child came into him again, and he revived (KJV)	שׁוב	Qal, Way-yiqtol	וַיֶּחִי ("live")

Beyond the Chinese translation, these three verses are also often cited in discussing the theological issues related to the existence of the soul.[58] Some

physical body or person, this would be a "defunct-soul" (Pleijel, "Have a Nephesh?," 202–5). The author also quotes Matthew J. Suriano, claiming that נפש is a term for the late king, thus, this stele seems to be a piece of evidence challenging the holistic inter-pretation of נפש in the Hebrew Bible.

58   As Cortez mentions, in can be argued that it is not the "breath" that leaves but the "soul" (Cortez, "Death and Future Hope," 97). Discussing 1 Kgs 17:21–22 and Gen

read נֶפֶשׁ in these passages as supporting dualism. However, this interpre-
tation of נֶפֶשׁ as "soul" lacks the support of how other Scripture passages
used נֶפֶשׁ.

There are better ways of understanding the lexeme נֶפֶשׁ, than as an bod-
iless and independent "soul." The lexeme נֶפֶשׁ in Gen 35 and 1 Kgs 17 can
be read in at least to alternative ways. One possibility is that נֶפֶשׁ can be
understood as "life." In a general sense, the existence or non-existence of life
determines death, and the loss of life means the imminence of death. As
Briggs points out, the most direct fact is that without the נֶפֶשׁ there is no
more a living person, until life may be restored.[59] If נֶפֶשׁ is to be translated
as "soul," Schuele categorically retorted, "the idea of an immortal *soul*, how-
ever, is entirely absent from the Hebrew transmission of OT."[60] He refers to
some passages in the Pentateuch using נֶפֶשׁ, pointing out that נֶפֶשׁ often re-
fers to the physical body. One example is the purity of a Nazirite who is not
allowed to approach the "dead נֶפֶשׁ," the dead body in Num 6:6 (cf. Lev
21:11). Touch is forbidden, and even getting close is not allowed, since it
may cause Nazirites to become unclean. Additional background infor-
mation is provided on how dead bodies create uncleanness in Num 19:14–
15. Simply put, the translation of נֶפֶשׁ as "dead soul" is not found in any
translation; instead, the word is usually merely translated as dead person or
corpse. Back to the definition of death, death is the opposite of life. If the
"dead נֶפֶשׁ" is translated as dead soul, which continues to survive in the
afterlife disguised, there is no death. Schuele also clarifies the difference be-
tween life and death; נֶפֶשׁ is considered the life of every creature because all
life is connected with God and can "participate in life itself." Conversely,
when the living being is disconnected from the "fountain of life" (Ps 36:10),
when one is cut off from God, that is tantamount to "dying and being
dead."[61] Finally, Gane points out that the phrases נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה (*nefeš ḥayāh*) or

---

35:18, Ernest D. Burton concluded that נֶפֶשׁ as a living being (Ernest D. Burton, "Spirit,
Soul, and Flesh: Ii. נֶפֶשׁ, תּוֹד, and שָׂכֹד in the Old Testament," *AmJT* 18.1 [1914]: 68–69).
Moreover, Pleijel follows Richard Steiner's definition of נֶפֶשׁ, which is "an entity that
can be located in space." He finds the preposition על used in 1 Kgs 17:22 as critical,
regardless of whether על should be translated as "upon" or "(in)to," the preposition
indicates that נפש is "one object entering another object." According to Pleijel this sup-
ports seeing נפש as separate from the child itself (Pleijel, "Have a Nephesh?," 201–2).

59   Briggs, "The Use of Nefesh," 18.

60   Andreas Schuele, "The Notion of Life: נפש and רוח in the Anthropological Discourse
of the Primeval History," *HBAI* 1.4 (2012): 486.

61   Schuele, "The Notion of Life," 486.

נֶפֶשׁ מֵת (*nefeš mēt*) indicate the aliveness or dead state of a creature, human or animal. When a creature is alive, it has the ability to move around and survive (cf. Gen 7:21; Lev 11:46). However, when a living being dies, it loses the locomotion ability (cf. Lev 21:11; Num 6:6). Thus, the most appropriate understanding of נֶפֶשׁ מֵת is a "corpse," not a "dead soul."[62] In other words, although נֶפֶשׁ is often translated as "soul," it is clear that the "dead נֶפֶשׁ" in the Bible is just an unconscious corpse. This does not offer any support to doctrine of dead souls. In short, when death occurs, the person loses his life, and only the unconscious body (corpse) remains. The same principle can be applied to the other passages mention. In Gen 35:18, "Rachel's נֶפֶשׁ leaving" simply means her "life" ceased. Also, the וַתָּשׇׁב נֶפֶשׁ־הַיֶּלֶד in 1 Kgs 17:22 can literally be read as the "child's life returned."

As discussed above, the equation of life with נֶפֶשׁ is clearly seen in Gen 2:7. The breath of God added to the formed dust of the ground constitutes a "living נֶפֶשׁ" (living human). Naturally, when the breath of God is subtracted from the living being, life will not exist and the creature will be lifeless—dead. From this point of view, the breath of God, נִשְׁמַת (*nišəmat*), and the living being, נֶפֶשׁ, are inextricably linked.[63] Yeung says that when the נִשְׁמַת ("breath") stops, נֶפֶשׁ ("life") naturally ends. Thus, the action of the נֶפֶשׁ is the activity of the whole life.[64] Again, נֶפֶשׁ is a "composite entity," and when life disappers, only a corpse is left. Likewise, when the breath leaves Rachel in Gen 35:18, she is no longer נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה, a living being. And when God returns the breath to the child in 1 Kgs 17:21–22, the child becomes a נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה, living being, again.[65] Yu and Malherbe follow Brotzman's summary and linking of these three verses, stating that "death is described as the *going out of the breath* while the restoration of life is described as the *returning of the breath.*" It is an unequivocal declaration in the Bible, that the breath animates the body, and the absence of the breath brings death.[66]

In conclusion, נֶפֶשׁ is not a "soul" that continues to life independently after death. Only the unconscious body remains when the life or breath is gone, and the lack of life or breath means death. Moreover, נֶפֶשׁ מֵת has nothing to do with the "soul" after death, but simply refers to a lifeless

[62] Roy Gane, "The Nature of the Human Being in Leviticus," in *What Are Human Beings that You Remember Them?*, ed. Clinton Wahlen (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2015), 45–46.

[63] Yu and Malherbe, "Semantic Field," 118–20.

[64] Yeung, *Encountering Systematic Theology*, 77–78.

[65] Cf. Cortez, "Death and Future Hope," 98.

[66] Yu and Malherbe, "Semantic Field," 118.

corpse (cf. Lev 21:11; Num 6:6). Lastly, I agree with Cortez's summary of death as a deterioration of creation and the life process, and at a point in time the deterioration results in death. He epitomizes that the best explanation for death is the reversal of the description of God's creation of human beings. God combined dust and breath to create living beings in creation. Thus, the Scriptures describe death as the disintegration process of human beings: the life of breath leaves, humans die, and their bodies return to the dust of the earth.[67]

4.3 The Lexeme נֶפֶשׁ and the Place of Death

From our discussion above, it has become clear that נֶפֶשׁ is a proxy for "life" and "breath" in the narratives of the Pentateuch and 1 Kings, and not related to the idea of an existing "soul" without the body. In the poetry of the Hebrew Bible the נֶפֶשׁ is associated with the pit and Sheol, which makes it easy for readers to understand this as relating נֶפֶשׁ to the afterlife in the biblical records.[68] For this reason, the following will focus on the use and meaning of נֶפֶשׁ in the poetry of the Hebrew Bible. Since the texts using נֶפֶשׁ in the Psalms and Job are numerous, this article will mainly focus on the passages where CUV translates נֶפֶשׁ as 靈魂 ("soul").

4.3.1 The Lexeme נֶפֶשׁ in the Context of the Pit

The use of the lexeme שַׁחַת, the "deep pit," in the Hebrew Bible can be divided into two broad categories. One is a physical pit, which may be naturally formed or manufactured. The latter are pits dug into the ground, sometimes modified with slate or clay (e.g., Exod 21:33). Physical holes were used to collect and store water and other substances, even used as graves. The other is the spiritual pit, considered a source of danger in ancient periods because it was deep and filled with the unknown. This pit is used symbolically to describe the doom that awaits those who turn to evil. Furthermore,

---

67   Cortez, "Death and Future Hope," 96–97.

68   Pleijel explains that נֶפֶשׁ is something that exists in a certain space or place, so after a person passes away, נֶפֶשׁ cannot still exist in the human body, but instead leaves and goes to another site. Psalm 49:16 states: "God will ransom my נפשׁ from the hand (power) of Sheol." Ps 116 and Job 12 speaks of נֶפֶשׁ in a similar vein. See Pleijel, "Have a Nephesh?," 202–3. Pleijel cites the research of Steiner, who refers to several rabbinic sources, and points out that the passages in Job and Psalms can be understood similar to a sleeping man's soul, which is deposited in the hands of God in heaven until it reawakens.

the pit is also synonymous with "Sheol," שְׁאוֹל, a place representing the domain of the dead (Prov 1:12; Ps 16:1). In Rev 9:1–11 and 11:7 it is described as the source of the destruction of the earth and the seat of demons.[69]

In the book of Job, CUV translates נֶפֶשׁ as 靈魂 ("soul") in three main pasages: Job 33:22, 28, 30. These three texts have a common feature, that is, they all connect נֶפֶשׁ and שַׁחַת. The "pit" in Job is an spiritual pit, but also a metaphor, associating the pit with Sheol, which is death. In fact, the second clauses in Job 33:22 also have a corresponding extension, and the last word לַמְמִתִים (*laməmitîm*) as *hiphil* participle, functions as the noun "Death." We see a balanced structure in this text:

וַתִּקְרַב
a לַשַּׁחַת
b נַפְשׁוֹ
b² וְחַיָּתוֹ
a² לַמְמִתִים

As we mentioned, the word שַׁחַת ("pit") is used in a similar way as מות ("to dies"). In this verse the two words are parallel in a and a², both in construct with the preposition לְ. Further, in b and b² the words נַפְשׁוֹ ("his soul") and וְחַיָּתוֹ ("and his life") are used in a similar construction (prepositin + noun).[70] In other words, when נֶפֶשׁ is associated to the deep pit, this means that "life" is no more. Thus, the most immediate meaning of his נֶפֶשׁ is his 'life' in Job 33:22.

If "near the pit" points to death, in the same sense, far from the pit means far from death. The only verb in Job 33:22 is וַתִּקְרַב ("and they draw near"). In Job 33:30 we find the opposite direction of movement, i.e., away from the pit: מִנִּי־שָׁחַת נַפְשׁוֹ לְהָשִׁיב ("to bring his soul back from the pit"). The meaning of the root word שׁוּב is "turn back, and return" to a place.[71] And here

---

[69] The pit is used symbolically to describe the destruction awaiting those who are wicked: those who plot evil will fall into their own "pit" (Ps 7:15[16]; Prov 26:27). Those who sin will fall into the pit created by God's judgment (Isa 24:17–18). See David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1061.

[70] Although it is not clear that Job 33:22 refers to Gen 2:7, it is worth noting the parallel between נַפְשׁוֹ and חַיָּתוֹ in Job 33:22 and לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה in Gen 2:7.

[71] The word שׁוּב as infinitive construct always point to a place, such as Exod 4:21 referring to a return to Egypt (Francis Brown, Samuel R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 996.

his נֶפֶשׁ returns מִנִּי־שָׁחַת ("from the pit"). It results in regaining the light of life, בְּאוֹר הַחַיִּים ("the light of life"). The word "light" can have different meanings in the Hebrew Bible. And Jamieson, Fausset and Brown suggest that it has to do with life, as in Job 3:16, 20; Ps 56:13, and Eccl 11:7.[72] The הַחַיִּים that follows indicates the same element of life as the breath of life used in Gen 2:7. In other words, when נֶפֶשׁ stays out of the pit, that person continues to have a life. The last verse, Job 33:28, reads, "He has redeemed my נֶפֶשׁ from going down into the pit, and my life shall look upon the light" (ESV). Verses 28 and 30 both express the significance of the rescue from שָׁחַת. Verse 28 uses פָּדָה ("to ransom, rescue"), and verse 30 uses לְהָשִׁיב ("returning or bringing one back") to describe this rescue. Other texts use הַגּוֹאֵל ("to redeem," Ps 103:4) and וַתַּעַל ("to go up, bring up," Jonah 2:7) to express similar ideas. Although the above passages use different verbs, those verbs can all express the same meaning of being rescued from the pit. We can see this pattern of "characteristics and associations form an analogous imagery of the grave."[73]

Table 4: The lexeme נֶפֶשׁ *in Job 33:22, 28, 30 translated as* 靈魂 *("soul") in CUV*

Texts	CUV translation	The נֶפֶשׁ	Action with pit	Result (ESV)
Job 33:22	他的靈魂	נַפְשׁוֹ	וַתִּקְרַב לַשַּׁחַת	who brings death.
Job 33:28	我的靈魂	נפשׁי	מֵעֲבֹר בַּשָּׁחַת	my life shall look upon the light.
Job 33:30	人的靈魂	נַפְשׁוֹ	לְהָשִׁיב מִנִּי־שָׁחַת	be lighted with the light of life.

In short, the "pit" is just a metaphorical way of speaking about a place of death. When נֶפֶשׁ is dead or alive that determine whether one is in the Pit or not. However, there is no indication in these passages that נֶפֶשׁ as a bodiless "soul" survive in the death zone (pit). Therefore, נֶפֶשׁ is still connected with life in the book of Job.[74]

---

[72] Robert Jamieson, Andrew Robert Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Washington, DC: Faithlife, 1997), 337.

[73] Eriks Galenieks, *The Nature, Function, and Purpose of the Term Sheol in the Torah, Prophets, and Writings* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 2005), 586.

[74] Briggs, "The Use of Nefesh," 18. It is worth noting that none of the other occurrences of נֶפֶשׁ in Job are translated in CUV as 靈魂 ("soul"), but instead are translated as 生命" ("life") or 心 ("heart").

4.3.2 The Lexeme נֶפֶשׁ in the Context of Sheol

The pit is not the only metaphor used for death in the Hebrew Bible. The the term שְׁאוֹל, Sheol, is used for the same purposes. Similar to the case of שַׁחַת, the "deep pit," the psalmist often connects "his נֶפֶשׁ" with Sheol. One example is found in Ps 30:3(4):

יְהוָֹה
a הֶעֱלִיתָ מִן־שְׁאוֹל
b נַפְשִׁי
a² חִיִּיתַנִי מִיׇּרְדִי־בוֹר

In the first clause, "you have brought my נֶפֶשׁ up from Sheol," the phrase מִן־שְׁאוֹל (*min-šəʾôl*) is highlighted by the word order; the author moves this phrase before the נַפְשִׁי (*napəšî*). Not only that, these two clauses build a neatly parallel structure. The two main verbs הֶעֱלִיתָ (*heʿĕlîta*) and חִיִּיתַנִי (*hyîtanî*), are both in qatal 2ms. The complement phrase מִן־שְׁאוֹל explains that the action is from the place of Sheol, which corresponds to מִיׇּרְדִי־בוֹר (*mîyôrətî-bôr*) in the second clause.[75] The בוֹר (*bôr*) can also be translated as the pit, occasionally used for graves or the "realm of the dead."[76] Besides, Galenieks collected relevant Scripture passages regarding the function of ירד (*yarad*). Similar formulas are seen in other OT texts, such as יוֹרְדֵי־בוֹר in Isa 38:18 ("those who go down to the pit"), מֶרֶדֶת שַׁחַת in Job 33:24 ("going down to the pit"), כָּל־יוֹרְדֵי עָפָר in Ps 22:30 ("all go down to the dust"), יָרַדְתִּי הָאָרֶץ in Jonah 2:7 ("I decended to the land"), כָּל־יֹרְדֵי דוּמָה in Ps 115:17 ("they that go down in silence"), and יֵרְדוּ/יוֹרֵד שְׁאוֹל in Job 7:9 and Ps 55:16 ("he who goes/they go down to Sheol").[77] In other words, ירד (*yarad*) is not just an expression of action or direction. The lexeme ירד in these phrases creates a new meaning representing death. Terms like בוֹר, שַׁחַת, and שְׁאוֹל are used to refer to death (e.g., Prov 1:12, Job 14:13).[78]

Another verse related to נֶפֶשׁ and שְׁאוֹל is Ps 86:13, וְהִצַּלְתָּ נַפְשִׁי מִשְּׁאוֹל תַּחְתִּיָּה ("you have delivered my נֶפֶשׁ from the depths of Sheol"). Similar to

---

[75]   The מִיׇּרְדִי־ is infinitive construct and function as a noun within the construct chain. Thus, the phrase מִיׇּרְדִי־בוֹר can be translated as "from among those descending to the Pit."

[76]   *The NET Bible, First Edition: A New Approach to Translation, Thoroughly Documented with 60,932 Notes by the Translators and Editors* (Ricardson, TX: Biblical Studies Press, 2005), 939 (see Ps 30:3–17).

[77]   Galenieks, *Nature, Function, and Purpose of Sheol*, 584.

[78]   Galenieks, *Nature, Function, and Purpose of Sheol*, 584–85.

Psalm 30 and Job 33, it begins with the divine action וְהִצַּלְתָּ (*wəhiṣalətа*), car-
rying the poet's נֶפֶשׁ out of שְׁאוֹל. The only difference is that, compared with
Ps 30, Ps 86 elaborates with the adjective תַּחְתִּי ("depths"). The term תַּחְתִּי is
only used 19 times in the OT, and most of them are linked with Sheol, pit,
and the earth. Table 5 gives an overview of these.

Table 5: The nouns associate with the Hebrew verb תַּחְתִּי (taḥətî) in the OT phrases

Texts	Phrase of תַּחְתִּי	The term with תַּחְתִּי	Verb
Deut 32:22	עַד־שְׁאוֹל תַּחְתִּית	שְׁאוֹל	וַתִּיקַד
Isa 44:23	תַּחְתִּיּוֹת אָרֶץ	אָרֶץ	הָרִיעוּ
Ezek 26:20	בְּאֶרֶץ תַּחְתִּיּוֹת	אָרֶץ	וְהוֹשַׁבְתִּיךְ
Ezek 31:14	אֶל־אֶרֶץ תַּחְתִּית	אָרֶץ	נִתְּנוּ לַמָּוֶת
Ezek 31:16	בְּאֶרֶץ תַּחְתִּית	אָרֶץ	וַיִּנָּחֲמוּ
Ezek 31:18	אֶל־אֶרֶץ תַּחְתִּית	אָרֶץ	וְהוּרַדְתָּ
Ezek 32:18	אֶל־אֶרֶץ תַּחְתִּיּוֹת	אָרֶץ	None
Ezek 32:24	אֶל־אֶרֶץ תַּחְתִּיּוֹת	אָרֶץ	יָרְדוּ
Ps 63:10	בְּתַחְתִּיּוֹת הָאָרֶץ	אָרֶץ	יָבֹאוּ
Ps 86:13	מִשְּׁאוֹל תַּחְתִּיָּה	שְׁאוֹל	וְהִצַּלְתָּ
Ps 88:7	בְּבוֹר תַּחְתִּיּוֹת	בּוֹר	שַׁתַּנִי
Ps 139:15	בְּתַחְתִּיּוֹת אָרֶץ	אָרֶץ	רֻקַּמְתִּי
Lam 3:55	מִבּוֹר תַּחְתִּיּוֹת	בּוֹר	קָרָאתִי

Except for the terms בּוֹר (Ps 88:7; Lam 3:55) and שְׁאוֹל (Deut 32:22; Ps
86:13), which are used twice each is association with תַּחְתִּי, the most com-
mon term related to תַּחְתִּי is אֶרֶץ ("earth"). As Galenieks points out, in these
passages שְׁאוֹל, בּוֹר, and אֶרֶץ refers to the same location, the grave, through
the same modifier תַּחְתִּי ("lower" or "below").[79] In the rest of biblical poetry
"the term Sheol functions as a poetic synonym of the grave."[80]

*Table 6: The OT passages where CUV translated נֶפֶשׁ when associated with Sheol
as 靈魂 ("soul")*

Texts	Hebrew translation	ESV translation
Ps 16:10	כִּי לֹא־תַעֲזֹב נַפְשִׁי לִשְׁאוֹל	For you will not abandon my נֶפֶשׁ to שְׁאוֹל ("the grave").
Ps 49:16	נַפְשִׁי יִפְדֶּה אַךְ־אֱלֹהִים מִיַּד־שְׁאוֹל	But God will ransom my נֶפֶשׁ from the power of שְׁאוֹל ("the grave").
Ps 89:49	מִיַּד־שְׁאוֹל נַפְשׁוֹ יְמַלֵּט	Who can deliver his נֶפֶשׁ from the power of שְׁאוֹל

---

[79]   Galenieks, *Nature, Function, and Purpose of Sheol*, 584.

[80]   Galenieks, *Nature, Function, and Purpose of Sheol*, 582.

	סֶלָה:	("the grave")?[81]
Ps 88:4	נַפְשִׁי בְרָעוֹת כִּי־שָׂבְעָה	For my נֶפֶשׁ is full of troubles,
	הִגִּיעוּ: לִשְׁאוֹל וְחַיַּי	and my life draws near to שְׁאוֹל ("the grave").
Prov 23:14	תַּצִּיל מִשְּׁאוֹל וְנַפְשׁוֹ	You will save his נֶפֶשׁ from שְׁאוֹל ("the grave").

What the psalmist often attempts is not to describe a scene of a "soul" in hell after death, but rather to explain "the hope to leave death" or "encountering the dilemma of death." Typically when the psalmist uses the lexeme נֶפֶשׁ it can best be understood as "life" or the psalmist himself, not the "soul." Sometimes the psalmist poetically describe themselves as already in שְׁאוֹל, and sometimes as saved by God from שְׁאוֹל. And sometimes the location of the speaker is not clear, nor what event brought him in the situation.[82] Cortez concludes that although we cannot be sure about the precise location of the psalmist, it is clear that he can still call on God for help, and is still alive, having thoughts and ability to compose poems.[83] Therefore, these so-called experiences in the afterlife are just expressions of literary creativity, and not actual events.

4.4 The Lexeme נֶפֶשׁ in the Context of Salvation

In the previous section, I argued that the psalmist used the metaphor of the underworld or death to express his plight and hope to be rescued by God. Sometimes, however, the poet focused even more on the need and desire for salvation. One example is Ps 22:20(21): "Deliver my נֶפֶשׁ from the sword, my life from the hand of the dog." The structure of the verse can be illustrated as follows:

הַצִּילָה
a   מֵחֶרֶב נַפְשִׁי
a[2]   מִיַּד־כֶּלֶב יְחִידָתִי

Again, we see a clear, balanced, and parallel structure. The verse begins with a vital verb, נצל ("to deliver" or "to escape"). The following two phrases parallel each other as shown. The first set of parallels is between

---

81 Cf. Cortez, "Death and Future Hope," 104. Psalm 49 is concerned with the suitability of the underworld as the ultimate destiny of those who believe in God.

82 Cortez, "Death and Future Hope," 103. An example of an analogous modern idiom is "it was sheer hell." The speaker does not claim to have been in hell, but draws from this image to create a forceful expression.

83 Cortez, "Death and Future Hope," 102–3.

מֵחֶרֶב (*mēḥereb*) and מִיַּד־כֶּלֶב (*miyad-keleb*). Both tell of the poet's plight, per-haps war and enemies, but we do not know the exact circumstances. In the second set of parallels, נַפְשִׁי (*nepəšî*) corresponds to the poet's life, יְחִידָתִי (*yəḥîdatî*).[84] Thus, through this parallel structure, the interpretation of נַפְשִׁי is not a "soul" but his "precious life" (ESV, NET).

Another similar pattern is found in Ps 35:17. The structure can be seen as follows:

הָשִׁיבָה
נַפְשִׁי a
  מִשֹּׁאֵיהֶם b
  מִכְּפִירִים b²
יְחִידָתִי a²

This verse begins with the imperative word הָשִׁיבָה (*hašîbah*), meaning "to rescue." The parallel structure again forms two sets of phrases. Both מִשֹּׁאֵיהֶם (*mišoʾêhem*) and מִכְּפִירִים (*mikəfîrîm*) use the preposition מִן (*min*) to indicate a place where the poet needs to escape from. The two subjects, נַפְשִׁי and יְחִידָתִי (*yəḥîdatî*), are balanced against each other. Again, נֶפֶשׁ in this verse does not indicate any bodiless "soul," but is given as synonymous with the life of the poet. While CUV translates נֶפֶשׁ in Pss 22:20 and 35:17 as 靈魂 ("soul"), the parallel structure in the Hebrew texts shows that נֶפֶשׁ should rather be understood as the "life" of the poet himself. Analogous records are also found in other scriptures, as illustrated in table 7.

Table 7: Passages in the Psalms related to salvation where CUV translated נֶפֶשׁ with 靈魂 ("soul")

Texts	Clauses of נֶפֶשׁ	CUV translation	NET
Ps 34:23	נֶפֶשׁ יְהוָה פּוֹדֶה עֲבָדָיו	靈魂 ("soul")	his servants
Ps 35:3	יְשׁוּעָתֵךְ לְנַפְשִׁי אֱמֹר אָנִי׃	靈魂 ("soul")	me
Ps 109:31	מִשֹּׁפְטֵי לְהוֹשִׁיעַ נַפְשׁוֹ	靈魂 ("soul")	lives
Ps 116:4	אָנָּה יְהוָה מַלְּטָה נַפְשִׁי	靈魂 ("soul")	me

---

[84] The lexeme יָחִיד only appears 12 times in the Old Testament, and the basic meaning is "only" and "only one." In poetry יְחִידָה can be understood as "my only one," which BDB believes represents the poet's only life. See Pss 22:21; 35:17 (BDB, 402).

Most Bible translations render נֶפֶשׁ here as "life", not "soul" (e.g., NET, RSV, NASB and JPS). Likewise, other Chinese translations support rendering נֶפֶשׁ as 人的生命 ("human life") or 整全的人 ("wholistic person"), but not 靈魂("soul").[85] Therefore, how נֶפֶשׁ should best be translated does not pose a major difficulty. The usage here of נֶפֶשׁ is similar to the narratives of the Pentateuch and 1 Kgs.[86] In conclusion, there is no single passage that supports the idea of the immortality of the soul, thus, the Chinese translations of the נֶפֶשׁ as 靈魂 ("soul") in CUV is not fit on the meaning of soul under the Hebrew understanding.

4.5 Humans and Animals Shares a Common Life: Ecclesiastes 3:21

In addition to the analysis of נֶפֶשׁ, we also need to consider the passages where CUV translates רוּחַ (*rûah*) with 靈魂 ("soul"). Ecclesiastes 3:21 is an example of this. Interestingly, there are two occurrences of רוּחַ in this verse, but CUV translates these two רוּחַ into two different ways, namely "soul" and "spirit." The 人的靈 ("spirit of man") is going up, while the 獸的魂 ("soul of animal") going down to the ground. The Chinese Catholic commentary explains that humans have "souls" and "breaths," while animals only have "breaths." They use Eccl 9:10 to argue that human souls go to hell after death, or alternatively go to God, who created them (cf. Eccl 12:7).[87] Jamieson agrees that the text strongly expresses a difference between the רוּחַ of man and beast. He finds that "their destinations and proper element differ utterly," and due to this difference, the spirit of man ascends because it belongs to the high; but the beast that descends to the earth below.[88] Ecclsiastes 3:21 raises the question, will the spirit/soul ascend or descend after death? Horne asks if we here see the "sage's recognition of Hellenistic

---

85 Such as 思高聖經譯釋本 (Douay version), 和合本修訂版 (RCUV), and 呂振中譯本 (LUV).

86 Examples of passages where נֶפֶשׁ should be understood as "life" are Ps 86, Ps 116, Ps 35, and Ps 31. See Burton, "Spirit, Soul, and Flesh," 71–72. He highlights some idiomatic phrases in the Bible, such as "my life shall live," "as thy life liveth," "to smite a life," "to stay a life," or "the life dies." Briggs takes Ps 22:21; 34:28; 49:9,16; 89:49; 116:4–5, 8 as examples of passages where נֶפֶשׁ is best understood as "life" (Briggs, "The Use of Nefesh," 20–21).

87 Studium Biblicum O.F.M., *Wisdom Books*, 4th ed. (Hong Kong: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum H.K, 2015), 186.

88 Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory*, 406–7.

anthropology?"[89] Or is this an influence of the new teachings that came into vogue in the late biblical period?[90]

Ecclesiastes 3:21 is not a doctrinal discussion about the "soul," but belongs to the discussion of the judgment in Eccl 3:16–22. This paragraph starts with an author's observation and puzzlement about the order of the world in v. 16, "the place of justice … the place of righteousness, there was wickedness" (ESV). Qoheleth observed that reality is not what it is supposed to be. Nevertheless, in the next verse, he affirms that "God will judge the righteous and the wicked" (ESV). This statement establishes the extent of God's judgment, including the righteous and the wicked, meaning all humans.[91] It is worth noting that in the face of the injustice in the world, according to v. 16, Qoheleth considers two explanations in vv. 17 and 18, both beginning with אָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְּלִבִּי ("I said in my heart"). Moreover, Qoheleth looks at the social injustice among humans, linked to "their own corruption and death" as a fallen humanity (Eccl 3:18–21).[92] In the face of death, there is nothing special about man. He fares similar to animals, and the same happens to the "wise" and the "fool" (Eccl 2:16).[93] The righteous and the wicked die alike, as the animals die, and all life returns to the dust (Eccl 3:20).[94] Mangum and Runge conclude, "we (righteous and the wicked) come from the same dust, are equally activated by the breath/spirit (רוּחַ), and then return to that dust."[95] Barry emphasizes that verse 20 describes death as the

---

[89] Milton P. Horne, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2003), 436.

[90] Robert Alter, *The Wisdom Books: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: Norton, 2010), 352–58. The author believes that the "beast alike descends into the earth" can also mean "the underground world," and thus indirectly strengthening the rationale for the existence of the soul.

[91] The Hebrew word כֹּל, "all" or "each," appears seven times in Eccl 3:17–20 (Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, *Andrews Bible Commentary: Light, Depth, Truth* (*ABC*) (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2022), 1:798–99.

[92] *Lexham Context Commentary: Old Testament* (*LCC*), vol. 3, eds. Douglas Mangum and Steven Runge (Bellingham: Lexham, 2020), Eccl 3:18–22. There are other explanations for Eccl 3:18. Jerry Shepherd et al. argue that the lack of justice in v. 16 causes Qohelet to see "God as the divine test-giver." An in this test God shows humans that they are not different from animals. See Jerry E. Shepherd, Allen P. Ross, George Schwab, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2017), s.v. Eccl 3:18–22.

[93] Rodríguez, *ABC*, 1:798–99.

[94] Amy Plantinga Pauw, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 159–60.

[95] Mangum and Runge, *Lexham Context Commentary,* s.v. Eccl 3:18–22.

final outcome of humans and animals, but it does not imply a statement about any afterlife.[96] It can be seen that the description of רוּחַ in verse 21 is based on the comparison between humans and animals. Qoheleth emphasizes that there is no difference between the two, especially in matters of death.

The passage continues to explore the concept of death. As for the description in v. 21 that רוּחַ will rise up or fall down to the ground, Qoheleth uses the interrogative clause מִי יוֹדֵעַ ("who knows?") in v. 21. One alternative is to see this clause as a rejection. Schuele believes that Eccl 3:21 actually means to reject any discussion of whether the spirit/soul in humans is superior to the spirit of other creatures because "spirit" is something beyond human limits. According to Qoheleth, human beings find themselves in a world where God has assigned the appropriate time, עֵת (*ʿēt*), and no part of man—neither the material nor spiritual—is exempt from the rhythm and order of the created world.[97]

Besides seeing Qohelet as rejecting any discussion, another interpretation is that the Qoheleth simply does not know, or does not see that it matters. Understood in this way, the reality after death is not the main focus of Ecclesiastes. Instead, his focus is upon the mortal life, seen in his discussion in vv. 16–18. Another hint is from vv. 19–20. These verses affirm that humans and animals have the same רוּחַ. Additionally, v. 20 confirms that both humans and animals were created from dust. These familiar elements, רוּחַ and עָפָר (*ʿāpār*), remind the reader of the equation of "dust" and "breath" when God created man in Gen 2:7. This associates רוּחַ closer to the "breath of life," as seen above, than the "immortal soul.".[98] Barry also sees Qohelet as emphasizing the limitations of human knowledge, not an immortal soul after death.[99]

---

[96]   John D. Barry, *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2020), s.v. Eccl 3:19–21.

[97]   Schuele, "The Notion of Life," 498–99. Alter also rejects that the Bible is talking about the human soul here. He emphasized that this may be a newly emerging culture of the Hebrews at that time, which Ecclesiastes opposes. See Alter, *The Wisdom Books*, 350–65.

[98]   DCH points out that the word הֶבֶל in the phrase כִּי הַכֹּל הֶבֶל in Eccl 3:19 may also be understood as "breathing," just as in Isa 57:13. In Isa 57:13, הֶבֶל and רוּחַ create a balanced structure, and the two terms have a similar meaning (*The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, eds. David J. A. Clines, Philip R. Davies and John W. Rogerson [Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2011], 2:485).

[99]   If Qohelet wanted to discuss the ascension of the human soul, he possibly would find Eccl 12:7 to be the more appropriate statement. Thus, he would likely not see Eccl 3:21 as a statement about what happens after death. See Barry, *Faithlife*, s.v. Eccl 3:19–21.

4.6 The 靈魂 ("Soul") Returning Back to God's Hand: Psalm 31:5

Another text where CUV translates רוּחַ as the 靈魂 ("soul") is Ps 31:5(6). As mentioned before, some scholars support dualism, believing that the נֶפֶשׁ and רוּחַ both refer to the soul of a human, so when נֶפֶשׁ leaves the body it leaves the body behind, while the רוּחַ returns to God's hand, according to Ps 31:5.[100] However, I cannot agree that the biblical texts teach that רוּחַ is identical to the נֶפֶשׁ (or that the רוּחַ returning to God's hand means to die).

Psalm 31 is a hymn of prayer to God from a believer in pain. The psalm can be roughly divided into three parts. The first part, vv. 1–8, is the inter-section of the poet's voice and confidence. In the second part, David care-fully describes the details of grief, including the crisis of the body: eye dis-ease, physical and mental disease in v. 9, and a heart full of sorrowful sighs in v. 10. Being forgotten and discarded creates an environment of crisis in v. 12, and slander and murder are described in v. 13. Lastly, David declares his joy and trust in the Lord and encourages others to emulate him.[101] While facing great difficulties, the psalmist is willing to put himself (or "my רוּחַ") into God's hands in v. 5.

But what does it mean to be "in the hands?" This phrase בְּיָדְךָ (bəyādəkā) is common in biblical texts, with a total of 65 occurrences in OT.[102] For most of them, "in your hands" does not necessarily represent the idea of death or an afterlife, but "in control." The same sense can be applied to Ps 31:5, and it can be understood that the poet is willing to hand himself over to the hands of God for God to save him, based on God's faithfulness and love in vv. 1–4.[103]

---

[100] Yeung, *Encountering Systematic Theology*, 75–76. *The Geneva Bible* supports this inter-pretation, that the psalmist desires God to take care of him in this life and even hopes that "his soul" will be saved after death ("Geneva Bible: Notes" [Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2016], 240).

[101] Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory*, 356.

[102] The term בְּיָדְךָ is widely used in the OT Scriptures, not only in Psalms. It is used when God speaks with Gideon (Judg 7:9), in military jargon (Gen 14:20, Num 21:34, Deut 2:24, 30; 21:10, Josh 6:2; 8:1, 18; 10:8; Dan 2:38; 1 Chr 14:10, etc.), in the more general sense "being under someone's control" (Job 1:12, Josh 9:25; Ps 10:14).

[103] Same as Barry's insight that "the psalmist entrusts himself to Yahweh's faithful care" (Barry, *Faithlife*, s.v. Ps 31:5).

The term "hand," יָד (*yād*), appears 4 times in Ps 31; these four יָד make an ABA'B' structure.

Table 8: The four phrases with יָד *(yād) in Psalm 31*

The texts	Who's hand?		Who is in the hand?	
Ps 31:6	בְּיָדְךָ	In God's hand	רוּחִי	My רוּחַ
Ps 31:9	בְּיַד־אוֹיֵב	Hand of enemy	וְלֹא הִסְגַּרְתַּנִי	(delivered) me
Ps 31:16a	בְּיָדְךָ	In God's hand	עִתֹּתָי	My times
Ps 31:16b	מִיַּד־אוֹיְבַי	Hand of enemy	הַצִּילֵנִי	(Rescue) me

It is worth noting that the object in someone's hand points to the same person—the poet himself. Except for the first case of "my רוּחַ" (31:6), which is somewhat ambiguous but that I take to also likely refer to the poet himself, the three others clearly point to the author himself. The second and fourth times are "me" (first person, common singular suffix), and the third time is עִתֹּתָי ("my time") in God's hands.[104] None of the four descriptions mention death or the afterlife. Therefore, according to the context, the term רוּחַ in Ps 31 does not refer to the "soul" after death, but more likely represents the poet himself or the poet's life. The contrast between the two completely different hands, בְּיָדְךָ (*bəyādəkā*) of v.6 and בְּיַד־אוֹיֵב (*bəyad-ʾôyēb*) in v. 9, convey the psalmist's desire for God to save him from the hands of his enemies, but also to return to the hands of God.[105]

5. Conclusion: The of Meaning of נֶפֶשׁ and רוּחַ as it relates to the CUV Translation

The term נֶפֶשׁ (*nepeš*) is crucial for an understanding of humanity and life in the Old Testament. The Scriptures confirm that humans (the living being) are created as a "whole," without a separation of "body" and "soul." The biblical writers may have used an invisible "life" or "breath" to denote life's leaving and death. However, no biblical verse supports the idea that a person can continue to live in an afterlife as a bodiless "soul." Whether it is narrative or poetry, the best translation of נֶפֶשׁ is "life." Occasionally, it also can be rendered as "breathing" or representing "an individual." Therefore,

---

[104] The phrase עִתֹּתָי, "my time," is equivalent to "my life" in Ps 31:16 because time is the course of life. See Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory*, 356.

[105] Cf. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory*, 356. Also in Barry, *Faithlife*, s.v. Ps 31:5.

among the 23 times CUV translates נֶפֶשׁ as 靈魂 ("soul"), none of these biblical texts explicitly support the notion of an immortal "soul." A better Chinese translation is 人的生命 ("human life") or 整全的人 ("wholistic person").

The same applies to רוּחַ (*rûaḥ*). As has been seen, neither of the two verses, Eccl 3:21 or Ps 31:5(6), supports the idea of an immortal soul. According to Eccl 3, humans and animals have the same value. There is no high or low status of the "soul." Psalm 31 regards רוּחַ as the author himself, not his soul without the body. Therefore, רוּחַ is best translated as 靈 ("spirit") or 生命 ("life").[106]

---

[106] Cf. Cortez, "Death and Future Hope," 97. CUV typically translates רוּחַ as "wind" or "spirit," and only in Eccl 3:21 and Ps 31:5 is it rendered as 靈魂 ("soul"). However, even these two "soul" translations are not supported by other Chinese translations (和合本修訂版 in RCUV, and 呂振中譯本 in LUV).

Toward Shinto-sensitive Christian Mission in Japan: The Critical Contextualization and Inculturation Approaches

MARCELO REIS SOARES
Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo, SÃO PAULO

MARCELO E. C. DIAS
Southern Asia Division, NEW DELHI

Abstract

Christianity has struggled in Japan for centuries. A major part of the reason is the lack of cultural sensitivity in mission approaches. Any Christian mission approach in Japan must take the Shinto influence into consideration. Japanese culture has been shaped by other philosophical systems, such as Buddhism and Confucianism. However, Shintoism is the basis for the construction of this cultural identity.

This research seeks to explore Shinto-sensitive Christian missions in Japan. After a brief introduction to the history of Catholic and Protestant missions in Japan and their current challenges, this article compares two current missionary methodologies, inculturation (Catholic) and critical contextualization (Protestant). They are based on different theological lines, neoliberalism[1] and neo-orthodoxy.[2] Both

---

[1]   According to David J. Hesselgrave, neo-orthodoxy is distinct from liberalism in so far as it asserts that the Bible is more than sufficient, or even the best literature, and does not presuppose a continuity between the human and the divine. He claims that the Bible contains the word of God in imperfect form on account of its human authors (David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 2nd. ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991], 141).

[2]   According to Hesselgrave, neoliberalism leaves it up to people to approach both the biblical text and the cultural environment in order to see beyond the shortcomings of

suggest faith development while respecting and affirming the local culture. They acknowledge God's revelation and celebrate His presence in a particular context. After this initial review, conventional ways are questioned, and a new proposal is suggested to combine both approaches by missionaries in Japan. Examples of missiological approaches to Shinto values used to build bridges are included in the last section.

Keywords: Christian Mission, Japan, Shinto, Inculturation, Critical Contextualization

1. Introduction: A Brief History of Catholic Mission in Japan

The first Christian missionary delegation that went to Japan landed in Kagoshima, in the south of Kyushu, on August 15, 1549, marking the beginning of the Jesuit missions in the country. Ikou Higashibaba mentions that the methodology of Francis Xavier, the first Jesuit missionary in Japan, was to get in touch with local university students, resulting in the baptism of five hundred Japanese in 1551.[3] However, the first missionaries had their strategies frustrated being rejected by the religions in Japan.

Samuel Lee comments that the Jesuits opted for an adaptation strategy.[4] In order to communicate the Christian faith in a more clear way, they

---

both, discover the contemporary word and work of God, and join Him in the "say" and "do" (Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 141).

[3] Ikuo Higashibaba, *Christianity in Early Modern Japan: Kirishitan Belief and Practice* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 2. A legacy of this process was a Japanese catechism that spoke of God's creation of the heavens and the earth, the fall of the angels, Adam and Eve, an account of Noah and the Flood, the building of the Tower of Babel, and the beginning of idolatry; the destruction of Sodom, the preaching of Jonah in Nineveh, the story of Joseph, the son of Jacob, the captivity of the children of Israel in Egypt and their release by Moses; the Commandments on Mount Sinai and the entry of the Jews into the Promised Land; the fall and inheritance of King David, the prophet Elisha, Judith and Holofernes, the statue of Nebuchadnezzar, and the prophet Daniel; the Incarnation, an extensive description of the life and sufferings of the Redeemer, His resurrection and ascension, and His return in the moment of the Last Judgment; the reward of the good in the eternal bliss of heaven, and the punishment of the wicked in the eternal torments of hell.

[4] Samuel Lee, *The Japanese and Christianity: Why Is Christianity Not Widely Believed in Japan?* (Amsterdam: Foundation University Press, 2014), 1164.

tried conforming to Japan's religious customs and manners, becoming part of Japanese society, and functioning within Japan's way of life. It was decided to use various terms from Buddhism to translate Christian theology into Japanese, for example, the term *Dainichi*, a Buddhist word for "god," was translated into Latin, *Deusu*. What characterized the Jesuit approach, nearly thirty years after Xavier, was its adaptation to Japanese political, social, and religious situations.

The adaptations did not seem efficient due to the lack of deeper understanding and serious consideration of the local culture. Even so, according to Ikou Higashibaba, within the first decade, six thousand new Christians joined the religion.[5] Soon after, Christianity in Japan had its most accentuated growth in the 1570s, with the sum of one hundred thousand Christians in the country.

Higashibaba explains that the acceptance of Christianity by a regional lord meant that the new religion could become the faith of his state, namely, the "unified religious standard that was applied to all inhabitants."[6] The Christian faith was given to commoners as the faith of the community, not of individuals. From the missionaries' perspective, such a way of entering the Christian faith involved a problem in the quality of faith. In the Japanese religious context, however, such a social system helped the Christian faith to spread rapidly among the people. Therefore, the Jesuit success was due to the political strategies of the Japanese themselves. Lee says that Xavier considered his mission a success despite the cultural and linguistic problems he encountered.[7]

In the 16th Century, the rejection of Christianity happened at the same time as other missionary groups became aware of the country and outlined their strategies.

> The first Franciscan mission was established in 1593, and Dominicans and Augustinians followed later. The arrival of the three groups of friars marked the beginning of a bitter rivalry and territorialism. It was particularly violent among the Jesuits and the Franciscans. The Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians were well informed of the successes of the Jesuits in Japan and were desperately anxious to reap the harvest in that field—partly out of jealousy and partly out of a conviction that they could repair the political damage done by the

---

[5]   Higashibaba, *Christianity in Early Modern Japan*, 12.

[6]   Higashibaba, *Christianity in Early Modern Japan*, 13.

[7]   Lee, *The Japanese and Christianity*, 254.

Jesuits. In fact, they considered the Jesuits' mistakes to be the real cause of Hideyoshi's persecution in 1587.[8]

Due to several political factors, as the document that banned Christianity and ordered the expulsion of all missionaries in 1614,[9] Christianity was weakened and entered an era of persecution. Milton Terry demonstrates that Japan closed its doors over two hundred years to all foreigner influences.[10] Lee points out that the connection of Japanese Christianity with the pope left Japanese rulers worried.[11] Such rulers were seeing Christianity as a potentially subversive force, so persecution prevailed, and Christianity was expelled.[12] The 250 years of persecution of Christians only ended in the eighteenth century. In this period, Christians became known as *kakure kirishitan,* "hidden Christians," since they had to live out their faith privately to avoid the Japanese hostility.

After that period of persecution, the Meiji era (1868–1912) arrived and brought "westernization" with it. Ideas such as "military strength," "rich nation," and the need for technology and science took hold of the Japanese. However, according to Lee, in the religious dimension there were thinkers who accepted Western innovation but defended maintaining the Japanese religion. Others believed that all the success of the West was due to the combination of culture and religion experienced in developed countries.[13] In the Meiji era, Catholic missionaries could enter the country again. From this point on, Japan also began to have a different experience with Christianity, due to the introduction of Protestantism. [14]

---

[8]　　Lee, *The Japanese and Christianity*, 274.

[9]　　M. Antoni J. Ucerler, "The Christian Mission in Japan in the Early Modern Period," in *A Companion to the Early Modern Catholic Global Missions*, ed. Hsia Ronnie Po-Chia (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 328.

[10]　Milton Spenser Terry, *The Shinto Cult: A Christian Study of the Ancient Religion of Japan* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1910).

[11]　Lee, *The Japanese and Christianity*, 303.

[12]　Scott W. Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Missions: Participation in Suffering and Glory* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).

[13]　Lee, *The Japanese and Christianity*, 332.

[14]　John Breen, "Shinto and Christianity: A History of Conflict and Compromise," in *Handbook of Christianity in Japan*, ed. Mark R. Mullins (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 249.

2. The Catholic Church's Current Challenges in Japan

Japanese cultural expression within the Catholic Church in Japan has always been a difficult subject. Even after the Second Vatican Council began to implement far-reaching changes, the first generation of Japanese Roman Catholics who attempted inculturation encountered opposition from the Catholic elite. Alec R. LeMay claims that it is a challenge for the church today to present a coherent picture of what it means to be Roman Catholic and Japanese at the same time.[15]   For example, in 1969, the English version of *Chinmoku* (*Silence*) by Endō Shūsaku was banned for parishioners. Another example is the beatification of Peter Kibe (1587–1639) and the 188 martyrs of whom they preached that "the most important thing is the teaching of the Gospel."[16] These exemples clarify the misinterpretation of the gospel by the Japanese Catholics who LeMay complained about. Chinmoku is an example of missionary behavior among a missiological community and prioritizing the teaching of the Gospel is the duty of all Christian.

Another issue with inculturation is that current Catholic churches in Japan are multicultural. Planting an all-Japanese church is ignoring members who come from other cultures and have been loyal to the church for a long time. LeMay observes that Japanese parishioners have tried to keep a "pure culture" while expelling the international community, precisely to inculturate an essentialized and romanticized Japanese culture at any cost.[17] The consequence of this enculturation means liberating local churches by giving them the opportunity to create their own expressions of the gospel, yet rejecting foreign church members, robbing them of the chance to participate through their own cultures. For LeMay, inculturation in Japan must focus on multiculturalism.[18] Churches in Japan cannot confuse inculturation with an imposed monoculturalism. It is rather an opportunity to explore God's revelation in Japanese culture through the tools available. Brighenti mentions some concepts that are incompatible

---

[15]   Alec R. LeMay, "Inculturation and the Roman Catholic Church in Japan," *Horizontes Decoloniales* 3 (2017): 111–12.

[16]   Peter Kibe as quoted in LeMay, "Inculturation and the Roman Catholic Church in Japan," 111.

[17]   LeMay, "Inculturation and the Roman Catholic Church in Japan," 113.

[18]   LeMay, "Inculturation and the Roman Catholic Church in Japan," 117.

with inculturation, namely: "integration," "adaptation," and "accultura-tion":[19]

1. "Integration" is transculturation, in the sense of forced accul-turation, either by physical or symbolic violence, therefore a deadly process, as it implies the elimination or replacement of one cultural system by another.

2. "Adaptation" concerns the adjustment or accommodation to the target culture of evangelization, both of the evangelist and the evan-gelical message. There is a translation into more superficial and sectorial planes of the cultural reality and, therefore, unstable or transitory.

3. "Acculturation" is the process of interaction between two or more cultures, through which there is a transposition of symbols and meanings, producing a loss of original elements of cultures and generating a syncretic culture. It is an ambitious passage from one culture to another, which is always problematic since, given the near impossibility of completely leaving one's own culture to assume another, acculturation can lead to uprooting or deculturation.

3. A Brief History of the Protestant Mission in Japan

Protestantism entered Japan in the Meiji era, at a time when the Eastern country was opening to the Western world. Lee says that Protestants were sent to the country by two groups: missionary boards and church agencies.[20] The missionaries who set foot on Japanese soil in 1858 were sponsored by one of these. Protestants were in fact invited or offered jobs by Japanese institutions such as schools. Those who went as missionaries were generally Puritans and Evangelicals. They were from revivalist traditions such as Pietism, the Great Awakening, and the Methodist movement.[21]

Initially, the church grew so fast that many Christians believed that Japan could soon become a Christian nation. All this growth was due to the

---

[19]   Agenor Brighenti, *Por uma Evangelização Inculturada: Princípios Pedagógicos e Passos Metodológicos* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1998), 19.

[20]   Lee, *The Japanese and Christianity*, 1193.

[21]   Lee, *The Japanese and Christianity*, 1205.

acceptance of Western culture by the Japanese. When Japan later became a nationalist country, the church began to encounter difficulties.[22]

Between 1887 and 1907 the Shinto state, Imperial Japan's ideological use of the Japanese folk religion and traditions of Shinto, was established in Japan. During that period, nationalism grew stronger than Westernism, and the country established an institutional system centered on the emperor, which was supported by the Shinto state. Some academics believe that the Shinto state was established, with the deification of the emperor as one of the central doctrines, to curb the growth of the presence of Western Christianity in the country, that is, Shinto was institutionalized to stop the process of Christianization.[23]

During that period, missionaries had a lot of difficulties in Japan as they were forced to agree with the government.[24] They had to leave the country after the beginning of the war in 1941. When the Pacific War ended and the occupation of Japan by the Allied forces began in 1945, Shintoism was abolished as a national religion, emperor worship was banned, and missionaries were able to return to their activities. The postwar constitution guaranteed freedom of religion and separation of religion and state.[25]

4. Culturally Sensitive Mission

The ultimate goal of missionary communication is to present the supra-cultural message of the gospel in culturally relevant terms. There are two potential risks that must be avoided in this effort: (1) the perception of the communicator's own cultural baggage as an integral element of the gospel, and (2) syncretic inclusion of elements from the receiving culture that would alter or eliminate aspects of the message on which the integrity of the gospel depends. Missionaries of all ages have had to deal not only with their own inculturation, but also with customs, languages, and belief systems of different people groups.[26] Therefore, the study of cultural anthropology is instrumental for missionaries to be effective.[27]

---

[22]   Lee, *The Japanese and Christianity*, 1209.

[23]   Lee, *The Japanese and Christianity*, 1213.

[24]   Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 86.

[25]   Lee, *The Japanese and Christianity*, 1230.

[26]   David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1989), 1.

[27]   Alan R. Tippett, *Introduction to Missiology* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library,

For Paulo Suess the paradigm of "evangelization of cultures" presupposes the approximation of the gospel to a given culture.[28] The gospel has always been expressed in cultural ways. Mission is about missionaries from a certain culture communicating the good news to social groups of another culture.

5. Culturally Sensitive Mission Approaches

Hesselgrave has pointed out that different missiological methodologies follow specific theological streams.[29] He cites four different ways of contextualizing the message. The first is the liberal one, which is supported by philosophical, scientific, and critical thinking, validating religious experience that is lived in sincerity, resulting in a syncretism represented by the exchange of ideas coming from different religions. This type of contextualization is based on dialogue.

At the other extreme of the continuum is the orthodox way, which employs the methodologies of the biblical apostles. The proposal is to teach the people with whom they come into contact, understanding that the people need to hear the established truth. Didactics is their tool.

In the middle, Hesselgrave suggests neo-orthodoxy and neoliberalism. He finds similarities between these two. They employ prophetic contextualization through dialectics. Prophetic contextualization refers to their identification with the prophet as the biblical prototype who hears and delivers a word from the Lord vis-à-vis a given historical situation. In the dialectic of human situations the divine word is discerned and delivered.[30] Such models intend to bring about both spiritual and social change. This discussion by Hesselgrave is summarized and adapted in the following table:

Orthodox matrix	Neo-orthodox matrix	Neoliberal matrix	Liberal matrix
Apostolic Contextualization	Prophetic Contextualization	Prophetic Contextualization	Syncretic Contextualization
Didactics: teaching the truth	Dialectic: discovering the truth	Dialectic: discovering the truth	Dialogue: Seeking the truth

1987), 113.

[28] Paulo Suess, "Evangelizar os Pobres e os Outros a Partir de suas Culturas: Uma Proposta de Fundo para Santo Domingo," *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira* 52 (1992): 370.

[29] Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 138–43.

[30] Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 141.

Hesselgrave argues that contextualization can be thought of as an attempt to communicate God's message in a way that is faithful to the Bible.[31] The current trend of contextualization seems to be the discovery of truth through dialectics. Dialectics is a way of bringing the biblical message and culture together to discover the truth of the gospel and live a life in Christ, as well as a way of bringing the orthodox and the liberals together in the *missio Dei*.[32]

Stephen B. Bevans also warns Western missionaries about specific cultural dynamics.[33] The author invites people who are doing contextual theology outside their context to approach it with humility and honesty, as they will always be on the margins of the society where the missionary chose to work and will never really be a direct part of it. This is how they can meaningfully contribute to the understanding of the Christian faith in the cultural and social context. In other words, genuine contextual theology can emerge from genuine interaction between participants in a given culture and those outside it. This is not easy and requires true spirituality. On the part of the culture non-participant, it demands a spirituality of "letting go" (that means not letting the ethnocentrism be in charge of missionary decisions), while on the part of the culture participants, the exercise demands a spirituality of "speaking openly" (that means letting the culture speak as it is).

Among the different proposed methodologies for how missionaries should deal with cultural dynamics, in the following we will analyze and compare one model for inculturation and one for critical contextualization. While Brighenti's work suggests seven steps for the inculturation of the gospel, Paul G. Hiebert develops the concept of critical contextualization in his studies.[34]

6. A Method of Inculturation

For Brighenti the church was born inculturated in Israel, in a small group of

---

[31]   Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 143–44.

[32]   *Missio Dei* is a term that describes God's initiative in mission.

[33]   Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 21.

[34]   Brighenti, *Por uma Evangelização Inculturada*; Paul G. Hiebert, *O Evangelho e a Diversidade das Culturas: Um Guia De Antropologia Missionária* (São Paulo: Vida Nova, 1999).

people that understood that mission was both local and universal.[35] He argues that it was precisely this double character of the church—local and universal—that made inculturation possible in Israel. It also supported the understanding that the salvific mission should address all peoples, which sparked the first conflict within the incipient Church and required the so-called "Council of Jerusalem" (Acts 15).

Brighenti explains that the use of the term "inculturation" since it is composed of a central root "culture," flanked by a prefix and a suffix. The prefix "in" refers to a movement from the outside and in. From the perspective of the mystery of the Incarnation, the gospel is incarnated in cultures to enlighten, elevate, and complete them. The suffix "tion" indicates a process or a pastoral task, that is, the mission to transform cultures through the mystery of Christ for the sake of every human being.[36]

Inculturation offers Christ and His gospel as a gift to all cultures. This communication must be free, characterized by love and truth, giving each one the right to accept that gift or not. The evangelist is only a mediator who must renounce ethnocentrism.

In the final chapter of *Constants in Context,* Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder propose the idea of a "prophetic dialogue," as a synthesis of the three main theologies of mission articulated in the second half of the twentieth century: (1) Mission as participation in the mission of the divine Trinity (*missio Dei*); (2) Mission as a liberating service of the Reign of God; and (3) Mission as the proclamation of Jesus Christ as the universal savior.[37] Bevans and Schroeder describe prophetic dialogue as an understanding of mission today involving several elements such as witness and proclamation, liturgical action and contemplation, inculturation, interreligious dialogue, working for justice and commitment to reconciliation.[38] All contribute to a missionary practice that is both dialogical and prophetic, faithful to contemporary context as well as to the constants of Christian faith.

In another work, the same authors expand on the foundational understanding of the Church about a Trinitarian theology of mission.[39] As a

---

[35] Brighenti, *Por uma Evangelização Inculturada*, 9.

[36] Brighenti, *Por uma Evangelização Inculturada*, 21.

[37] Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 281–347, esp. p. 284.

[38] Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 284.

[39] Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 158.

source of love that overflows and gives life, quoting the document *Ad Gentes*,[40] they propose that God the Father created the universe and humanity in His image. But since humanity refused to live in a relationship with Him, He attempts to rescue humanity through Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit throughout history is part of the same plan.[41]

Thus, the "prophetic dialogue" develops within that missiological context characterized by the trinitarian salvific activity toward human beings. Bevans and Schroeder explain that dialogue draws primarily from the *missio Dei* theology, with its emphasis on the sanctity of the world, cultures, religions, human experience, and context in general.[42] One should understand that all are wonderful gifts from God while respecting the dignity and freedom of human beings and approaching them with humility and vulnerability.

Upon reviewing history and current challenges, it is clear that the Catholic Church in Japan has never experienced complete inculturation due to the challenges faced in its history, such as the Japanese persecution of the church and the difficulty in retaining its members. Proposals that allow the Shinto culture to assimilate the gospel with its cultural matrices are needed. Brighenti suggests that, methodologically, a process of inculturated evangelization involves at least seven steps, which is described below.[43] The first three constitute implicit evangelism; the next three, are an explicit evangelization; and the last, as a result of the previous six steps, is already the emergence or renewal of a Church with its own identity. The goal is, at first, to confirm the Shinto cultural matrices and second upon this basis to clarify what the gospel message has to offer for the Shinto culture.

Brighenti explains that the first step consists of free and respectful insertion in the context in which one wants to trigger a process of inculturated evangelization.[44] It is related to solidarity with the different aspects of a people's culture.

Brighenti says: "A second methodological step consists in establishing a dialogic relationship between pastoral agents and culture members, in such

---

[40]   Paulo VI, *Decreto do Concílio Vaticano II: Ad Gentes. Sobre a atividade missionária da Igreja* (1965), 2.

[41]   Paulo VI, *Ad Gentes*, 3–4.

[42]   Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Diálogo Profético: Reflexões sobre a Missão Cristã Hoje* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 2016), 172.

[43]   Brighenti, *Por uma Evangelização Inculturada*, 34.

[44]   Brighenti, *Por uma Evangelização Inculturada*, 34.

a way that, in a climate of trust, both parties express their existential world, pronounce their own word and encourages the capacity to listen and to appropriation that requires an authentic conversation."[45] Once the elements of a religion and culture are understood with empathy, the initial contact with the given culture is one of sympathy, without judgments or impositions, also without ignoring subjects that may be difficult to discuss.

Brighenti points out that the third step is to identify and recognize the values of the culture and its religion as "Seeds of the Verb," which is represented as the echo of God's voice in cultures through its symbolic and ethical dimensions. In that case, religion itself would be a reaction by the culture to these "Seeds of the Verb."[46] There are both positive and negative reactions, either by accepting the "Seeds" or by rejecting them, in addition to ambiguous questions that are difficult to discern. It is important to deal with the challenges, but also to recognize the values as "Seeds of the Verb."

In the fourth step, after showing that the god of culture was the God of Jesus, Brighenti suggests sharing all positive aspects of the Christian faith, which means to show all the contributions by Christianity to that specific culture.[47] The beginning of explicit evangelization is given by this attitude. In addition, it shows that the kerygmatic announcement must be centered on Jesus, explaining God and the Kingdom, as well as the project of salvation for humanity, thus confirming the "Seeds of the Verb" in addition to a call to conversion.

As part of the fifth step, Brighenti explains that those changes caused by a reciprocal evangelization between the missionary and the members of a culture trigger a common critical reflection of both parties.[48] It is a common critical reflection or joint community discernment, in the sense of each helping the other not to absolutize one's own culture in the face of the transcendence of the gospel. If, on the one hand, culture members need to distinguish the gospel from its cultural guise or the version of Christianity with which it is presented to them, on the other hand, evangelization agents need to allow themselves to be questioned or criticized by culture members in relation to their own version of Christianity. It is a struggle against ethnocentrism.

---

[45]   Brighenti, *Por uma Evangelização Inculturada*, 35.

[46]   Brighenti, *Por uma Evangelização Inculturada*, 35–36.

[47]   Brighenti, *Por uma Evangelização Inculturada*, 36.

[48]   Brighenti, *Por uma Evangelização Inculturada*, 37.

Brighenti's sixth step is "a symbiosis between the Gospel and culture, both on the part of the members of the culture who come into contact with the Gospel, and on the part of the evangelizers who … established a dialogical relationship with the new members."[49] From that moment on the church begins to look more like the local culture.

In the seventh and last step, a new church emerges, with its own "physiognomy." The members of the new church, according to Brighenti, have their cultural identity respected, as well as the identity of the gospel developed.[50] The new community is called to discipleship and mission—a "discipleship that consists of the commitment to transform their socio-cultural context in view of the establishment of the Kingdom and the mission as the sending to all peoples to offer the gift of the Good News."[51]

The endoculturation of the Church does not consist in the creation of a new Church in the sense of a schismatic movement, much less in the reproduction of a pre-established model, but in the emergence of a Church in and of the same Church of Jesus Christ—culturally new and, consequently, pluricultural. There should be mutual respect between the institutional and world church and the cultural and local church.

7. A Method of Critical Contextualization

In this study we have also selected a neo-orthodoxy methodology for analysis, critical contextualization. This is a methodology widely adopted by Protestant missionaries. To conduct critical contextualization, first of all, Hiebert encourages gathering information about a specific culture in a non-critical way, followed by the analysis of the customs associated with their faith.[52] This approach can also be seen as recommending first an implicit evangelization, and then an explicit evangelization.

Hiebert discusses three dimensions of culture: the cognitive, affective, and evaluative. He identifies the relevant themes of the culture under study which the missionary must be aware of in the first contact. These cultural themes must be accepted at first in a sympathetic and empathetic way. Later they can be critiqued while seeking to understand all of them.[53]

---

49 Brighenti, *Por uma Evangelização Inculturada*, 38.

50 Brighenti, *Por uma Evangelização Inculturada*, 39.

51 Brighenti, *Por uma Evangelização Inculturada*, 39.

52 Hiebert, *O Evangelho e a Diversidade das Culturas*, 186.

53 Hiebert, *O Evangelho e a Diversidade das Culturas*, 30.

According to Hierbert, cognitive themes are those that deal with shared knowledge.[54] Without such knowledge, communication and community life are impossible. Knowledge provides the conceptual content of a culture, and organizes and categorizes it into larger systems of knowledge. Some cultures divide the rainbow into seven colors, for example, while others, such as the *Telugus* in southern India, divide it into two: *erras*, warm colors, and *patsas*, cool colors. It is knowledge that defines what exists and what is invented.

People interact with reality using cognitive themes. For example, Christians speak of God, angels, the devil, sin, and salvation. Hindus, in turn, speak of *devas* (gods), *rakshasas* (demons), *karma* (the cosmic law that punishes and rewards gods, human beings and animals, as well as determines their future lives), and *moksha* (release from the endless cycles of births and re-births, commonly referred to as salvation). Other people attribute illnesses to witchcraft. It is through common beliefs that communication and community life are possible.[55]

Culture also encompasses people's feelings. Attitudes, notions of beauty, food and clothing preferences, personal tastes, and the way they rejoice and suffer are examples of how affective themes work in culture. Depending on the culture, for example, some tribes solve their problems with aggression or with calm and self-control.[56]

Different religions use meditation, mysticism, and substances to achieve inner peace and tranquility, while others have parties, dances, frenetic music, and self-flagellation to reinforce the ecstasy. Cultures vary in how they deal with emotions. Products that make people different, such as clothes, food, houses, furniture, and transport, among others, are part of the affective themes. Otherwise all food and clothing would be the same.

Finally, emotions, such as love, hate, respect, and joy are communicated through gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, etc. In expressive cultures art, literature, music, theater, and dance manifest such themes and ways of seeing the world.

Hiebert shows that the aesthetic culture is often poorly understood by missionaries and encourages them to research affective themes in the cultures in which they work, as these things show how people live on a daily

---

[54]   Hiebert, *O Evangelho e a Diversidade das Culturas*, 30–32.

[55]   Paul G. Hiebert, *Transformando Cosmovisões: Uma Análise Antropológica de Como as Pessoas Mudam* (São Paulo: Vida Nova, 2016), 59–61.

[56]   Hiebert, *O Evangelho e a Diversidade das Culturas*, 32–33.

basis.[57] The result is seen among lay members, as well as their clergy leaders. The missionary who is concerned with an approximation of culture, with incentive to research and observation of expressive culture, is led to approach and respect the environment in which he or she is seeking to contextualize the message.

Prejudices toward cultural aspects, particularly in relation to affective themes in a culture, can represent barriers to the transmission of the Christian message. Christ Himself dressed and ate according to His cultural environment. He participated in parties and attended synagogues. He even mingled with marginalized subcultures and interacted with people of different professions. Such behaviors of Christ demonstrates how the Christian message can interact with the affective themes of the culture.

Hiebert also argues that every culture has values. Since human relations are judged as moral or immoral, each culture determines what is right or wrong.[58] For example, in American culture it is worse to tell a lie than to hurt someone's feelings, but in Lebanese culture, it is more important to console someone even if it means twisting the truth a little. Every culture has its own moral code and its own culturally-defined "sins." That cultural baggage is manifested in two ways: behavior and everything created by humans, i.e., products. These two ways allow human beings to see, hear, and experience the culture of the other.[59]

Understanding the themes of a specific culture also helps missionaries to prepare for the culture shock. Hiebert defines that psychological discomfort as the disorientation that one experiences when all the maps and cultural guidelines that one learns as a child no longer work, therefore, one becomes confused, frightened, and angry, not knowing what to do.[60] This whole shock process makes a sympathetic reception of the culture challenging.

Hiebert also affirms the importance of theological presuppositions for missionary activity, stating that they cannot be separated from Anthropological models of theology.[61] The history of humans needs to be understood within cosmic events, pointing to a God who participates in human history, since the mission is His (*missio Dei*). Through His actions, one

---

[57]   Hiebert, *Transformando Cosmovisões*, 134.

[58]   Hiebert, *O Evangelho e a Diversidade das Culturas*, 33–34.

[59]   Hiebert, *O Evangelho e a Diversidade das Culturas*, 35.

[60]   Hiebert, *O Evangelho e a Diversidade das Culturas*, 66.

[61]   Hiebert, *O Evangelho e a Diversidade das Culturas*, 16–17.

understands the main foundations of God's being manifested in cultural and human environments. Therefore, in the action of God, theology and anthropology meet. Concepts such as the *missio Dei*, the kingdom of God, the church, and the priesthood of all believers are essential to the practice of critical contextualization.

Another central concept for Hiebert is worldview, which he defines as "the assumptions and fundamental cognitive, affective and evaluative structures that a group adopts in relation to the nature of reality and that it uses to organize its life."[62] It involves the images or mental maps that people make of the reality of all the things that human beings employ to live their lives. It is the cosmos that is considered true, desirable, and moral by a community. Basically, the lived experiences transit through the beliefs, feelings, and values of a culture, resulting in decision-making to produce the resulting behavior.

Hiebert points out five functions of the worldview that operates in human beings.[63] A cosmovision gives (1) *cognitive foundations* that base all explanations for life and (2) *emotional security* in a world of crises that plague life all the time. That is why rites such as weddings, funerals, initiations, celebrations, and gatherings of a community are important. It provides (3) a *legitimation of deeper cultural norms,* which offer the ideas of justice and sin, as well as dealing justly and punishing wrong. The worldview (4) *integrates the culture* while organizing ideas, feelings, and values in a general plan and giving a unified view of reality, and (5) *monitors cultural change*. There is always a constant confrontation of ideas, behaviors, and products that can come from different places and will challenge the personal worldview. The worldview dictates what can be readjusted or rejected, also reinterpreting some assumptions. Such changes are the objective of observation by the missionaries, because in them there is found the core of their activities: to transform worldviews.

The missionary's objective should not be to dominate or abandon the worldview a person has, but to redeem it. One should take others' worldview seriously. One might even disagree with aspects of it, but the desire to understand and share the good news of the gospel with such a specific group demands sensitivity to the culture. A worldview represents how things really are perceived, a real map about truth and meaning. If the world

---

[62]   Hiebert, *Transformando Cosmovisões*, 31.

[63]   Hiebert, *O Evangelho e a Diversidade das Culturas*, 48–49.

view is not shaped by the gospel, there is a risk that changes will happen only in behavioral patterns.

After considering the more implicit process of contextualization, Hiebert turns to the explicit dimension, while proposing three different approaches toward cultural traditions.[64] The first is the denial of the old, which happens when the missionary rejects contextualization. This rejection is rooted in the ethnocentrism of the missionary when they compare the gospel with their own culture. This attitude has two consequences: The gospel becomes foreign to the local culture and is soon rejected, or the old continues to undergird the culture so there is syncretism. A second attitude is that of uncritical acceptance, resulting in almost no change, as one judges that all cultural manifestations are essentially good. Hence, there is a disregard for cultural and corporate sins thwarting the gospel invitation to change. This also results in syncretism.

The third option is the critical contextualization proposed by Hiebert. As part of this approach, Hiebert suggests four steps in how to deal with cultural traditions. First, one gathers information about a tradition or a cultural element; second, he or she studies biblical teachings that apply to that element with a local congregation, who develops a theology based on exegetical precision and the cultural reading of the Bible; then they evaluate their own customs in the light of the biblical teachings; and, lastly, they create a new contextualized Christian practice. For the last step, he insists that the local people need to be the ones to decide what to keep, what to throw out, and how and what to modify. Suggested verbs to define this process are "create," "reject," "accept," "modify," "replace," or "tolerate."

8. Toward Culturally Sensitive Christian Mission in Japan

After analyzing two missiological proposals based on two different theological approaches, one can identify a common ground between them, as anticipated by Hesselgrave as discussed earlier in this article. Neoliberalism and neo-orthodoxy arise as alternatives for the conservative missionary activities that have not been successful in the Japanese context.

It is observed that current missiological initiatives have not been properly tried out as an academic application by the church in Japan. Throughout history, neither Catholicism nor Protestantism have managed to

---

[64] Hiebert, *O Evangelho e a Diversidade das Culturas*, 188.

develop methodologies that confirm the Japanese identity that Shinto culture develops, nor been able to associate this identity with the confirmation of the lived gospel. Both inculturation and critical contextualization were incompletely applied in solving the problem of the lack of acceptance of Christianity by the Japanese.

Both proposals begin with the *missio Dei* and are based on the theology of the Trinity, in the salvific sacrifice of Christ, and in the spreading of the kingdom. It is believed that both philosophical and pedagogical aspects can join forces and find space in Christian missions in a country like Japan. Also, both ways follow a different path than the one taken in the first introduction of Christianity in Japan. Atsuyoshi Fujiwara points out that the missionaries believed in the superiority of Christianity over Japanese religion.[65] Xavier wrote that the mission in Japan would run well because there was no presence of Jews or Muslims there. Another missionary idea of Xavier was to debate against Buddhist scholars and leaders of that age, revealing no consideration for the religion of Japan or any other.

The combined method of inculturation and critical contextualization, as here proposed, takes into consideration the Shinto influence in Japanese culture. As presented, one should begin with implicit evangelization, through the affirmation of the local culture. It requires one to be open to understanding and experiencing aspects of the gospel in new ways so that the culture to be evangelized is prioritized and given opportunities to read and live the gospel message. It is a fight against ethnocentrism followed by a sympathetic and empathetic affirmation of the culture, seeking, for example, to learn about how God communicated with those people before the arrival of the missionary.

Then, a secondary phase of explicit evangelization is proposed. Through inculturation there is a common critical reflection done in the community. That is also part of the critical contextualization, which gathers cultural information, joins a group of local people, compares the information with biblical principles, and makes decisions about what to eliminate, replace, tolerate, maintain, and modify. Both proposals expect new believers to get engaged in evangelization and discipleship to keep the cycle going.

---

[65] Atsuyoshi Fujiwara, *Theology of Culture in a Japanese Context: A Believer's Church Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 197.

9. Toward Shinto Sensitive Christian Mission in Japan

The problem of Christianity in Japan is not an easy question to solve. The challenge of evangelization in Japan is real for both Catholics and Protestants, which points to the problem of Christianity in general. The situation is aggravated by denominational competition, with no discernible solution to a common problem. Mark R. Mullins highlights the problem by claiming that competition and conflict between various denominational missionary churches has led many Japanese to consider Christians as sectarian groups, since each one claims to be uniquely legitimate.[66] In fact, missionaries have been trying to find a solution for centuries.

Cultural and religious differences between Christians and Shintoists are enormous, and convergences need to be well thought out. But Shinto has not been taken seriously enough when it comes to Christian missions, something that in effect has undermined evangelism in Japan.[67] Careful research provides an honest and careful look at the values of the religion that profoundly impacted Japanese society. In searching for the "Seeds of the Verb," Christians will discover the "face" of Christ in a religion that they originally did not realize.

As Eiko Takamizawa indicates, in the history of the Catholic Church in the pre-modern era, there was a non-Christian approach both from missionaries and Christian *daimyos* to the local Japanese. Today the Protestant church is questioning whether it will take the same approach that failed previously.[68]

In addition to understanding Shinto, missionaries must allow themselves to be impacted by Shinto values. As Koyama indicates, one can only realize Asian theology through living, debating, eating, and being responsible for them.[69] It is not about ignoring problems between culture

---

[66]   Mark R. Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 28.

[67]   Marcelo Reis Soares, "Xintoísmo e Cristianismo: Convergências, Diferenças e Proposições" (MA thesis, Pontíficia Universidade Católica do Paraná, 2022), 15.

[68]   Eiko Takamizawa, "Is Japan a Mud Swamp? Exploring Causes of Kirishitan Persecution in Japan's Edo Period," in *Emerging Faith: Lessons from Mission History in Asia*, ed. Paul H. de Neui (Littleton, CO: William Carey Publishing, 2020), 224–45.

[69]   Kosuke Koyama, "We had Rice with Jesus!," in *Asia Expressions of Christian Commitment: A Reader in Asian Theology*, ed. T. Dayanandan Francis and F. J. Balasundaram (Chennai, India: The Christian Literature Society, 1992), 15.

and missionaries but becoming aware of consistencies, in the first place, which allows one to critique the whole.

The visions of divinity and humanity in Shinto are in touch with the here and now and are truly concerned with human life, which has also been redeemed and valued by the death of Christ. Shinto purification does not place humanity as the main enemy, but rather the impurity that needs to be washed away.[70] For a Christian mind, sin is the true enemy and not humanity itself, which fosters a humanized view of others. The lack of a Shinto eschatological vision may balance out the problems of an overemphasis on the endtimes which could come with conspiracy theories. Once one focuses only on what will happen later, there can be a problem in not perceiving current issues. Shinto invites you to solve the problems of the present. Therefore, Shinto morality, even without a pre-established code, points to values that do not need to be written on a piece of paper but are truly incarnated in the Japanese people's lifestyle.

It is noted that there are differences and convergences between Shinto values and the Christian faith. Taking into consideration a plural Christianity, not every Christian may agree with all aspects. Some expressions of Christianity may find it easier to connect with Shinto. For example, there are several topics that can be explored when building bridges with Shintoism as an integral way of life, such as, honoring what is spiritual, valuing nature, values embodied in human life, the need for purification, and so on.

Differences between the two religions could also be mentioned. Those who would have been approached with sympathy and empathy, after an implicit evangelization, should establish agreements on specific terminology. One example is the understanding of peace as *wa*, which has similarities with the idea of *shalom*, even if *shalom* seems to be more complete. Even so, both *wa* and *shalom* invite the Western understanding to be reviewed to ask what peace really means, thus highlighting the trans-culturation process as a first challenge for missionaries who travel to a country far from their own.[71] Local missionaries could help the foreigners to understand better the meaning of *wa* and *shalom*.

The union of the theological matrices of Christianity can propose solutions to different challenges in Japan. An example is the hierarchical

---

[70]   Soares, "Xintoísmo e Cristianismo," 121.

[71]   Martin Heißwolf, *Japanese Understanding of Salvation: Soteriology in the Context of Japanese Animism* (Carlisle: Langham, 2018), 1:10038–41, Kindle.

(traditional) teaching setting, which usually takes place in a more orthodox context of discipleship. Due to the impact of Confucianism on Shinto, the Japanese tend to feel very comfortable with that model. Another example is liberation theology's interest in addressing contemporary social challenges. That emphasis can be helpful in the context of Japanese culture, which is influenced by the focus upon the "here and now" of Shinto.[72] It is evident that initiatives must not be seen in a simplistic way but as part of an integral culture that perceives problems in a holistic way.

The Japanese see Christianity as a Western endeavor that is threatening their lifestyle. Christians need to understand that Christ is already living with the Japanese in order to communicate the gospel within a Japanese identity. Therefore, Christian missionaries must allow for a "Japanese gospel" which contextualizes, inculturates, and also challenges Japanese culture.

The same discussion applies to current Christian expressions in Japan. Through contextualization and inculturation of the message, it is believed that the church can survive in the country and reverse the negative Christian experience in Japan. Furthermore, this whole process can produce a church attentive to the real problems of current Japanese society and thus make a difference that really makes a difference.

10. Conclusion

The analysis of two missiological methods that come from the two main strands of Christianity, Catholicism and Protestantism, can be placed in dialogue with each other and solutions be proposed for their common challenges. Both inculturation and critical contextualization propose a starting point in the local culture, and validating the revelation of the gospel found in the local culture before the arrival of the missionary. Both start from an implicit evangelization, based on sympathy, empathy and study of the culture, and they recommend secondarily that the missionary engage in an explicit evangelization. This will aid in detecting cultural issues and overcoming real or apparent contradictions with biblical values.

Concrete proposals for how the church should act in the Japanese environment start with the lack of experience of this missiological process. It would be premature to show definitive results, considering that it is admitted that the mission principles espoused here are not being implemented. The limited numbers of new persons being engagement in

---

[72]   Heißwolf, *Japanese Understanding of Salvation*, 1:9216–25, Kindle.

the mission in Japan, and the limited bibliography that talks about the missiological implications in this context, demonstrate that new method-ologies of mission have not been explored by the majority of the Christians in Japan. Therefore, the present research challenges new missionaries in new ways. What is proposed by this research are basic steps for the church toward the sharing of the gospel in that society. Some of the ideas presented here serve as pointers for how to start evangelistic initiatives that respect the Japanese and considers Shinto. Hope fuels the desire to present Jesus in a way in which He is recognized by the Japanese, who—like all human beings—are called to seek the path of grace and freedom offered through the lordship of Christ.

Mission results could be different only when Christian leaders and missionaries see the need for contextualized approaches in Japan. We suggest abandoning the focus on denominational competition, validating the "Seeds of the Verb" in Shintoism, and encouraging the Japanese to read the biblical text themselves in their cultural setting. Therefore, the results obtained would not be so much the transformations of Shinto, but the changes in the experience of Christianity in Japan, including a whole new way of looking at Japanese culture and Shintoism and transformation of the host culture as a well.

The culturally sensitive missionary should appreciate Shinto, and long for a gospel recognized by everyone who has been impacted by the Shinto worldview and searches for Christ. Christians can appreciate Shinto values such as the concern for humanity and nature as a whole, for honoring human life, for emphasizing the need for purification, for valuing those who have already died, and for living the "Seeds of the Verb." It is possible to present the Christian faith to the Japanese in a way that their oriental values and priorities are enhanced by the gospel.

AN EXPLORATION OF CHAPLAINCY ISSUES IN THE ADVENTIST CHURCH IN AFRICA AND THE WAY FORWARD

VICTORIA T. AJA

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES

Abstract

Chaplaincy is a specialized ministry. In contrast to the North American Division (NAD) of Seventh-day Adventists, chaplaincy is still evolving in the Seventh-day Adventist Divisions in Africa. This study explores chaplaincy issues and the way forward in the Seventh-day Adventist Divisions in Africa. As indicated by the literature reviewed, personal experience, and observations, and the results of the pilot study conducted, the issues currently confronting chaplaincy in Seventh-day Adventist Divisions in Africa include insufficient awareness of the essence of chaplaincy among church leaders, a shortage of professional chaplains, and tensions regarding chaplains' contributions to the Great Commission. Furthermore, the study identified the following as the path forward for the growth of chaplaincy in the Seventh-day Adventist Divisions in Africa: Educating leaders to gain a better understanding of the essence of chaplaincy, investing in the workforce, and creating awareness of the contributions of chaplains to the Great Commission. It is hoped that the findings of this study will enhance chaplaincy growth in the Seventh-day Adventist Divisions in Africa.

Keywords: Chaplaincy, Adventist Church, Africa

1. Introduction

Chaplaincy in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Divisions in Africa is still developing compared to the North American Division (NAD) of Seventh-day Adventists. This work aims to increase the understanding of chaplaincy and its benefits within the context of church ministry among SDA Church leaders in Africa. This exploratory study is divided into three main sections. The first section highlights the historical foundation of chaplaincy, the educational qualification of professional chaplains, the biblical foundation for chaplaincy, and the hub of the chaplains' work. The first section is foundational to the second and third sections. The second section focuses on chaplaincy issues in the SDA Divisions in Africa, and the third section suggests the way forward—navigating the chaplaincy issues for effective chaplain ministries. The SDA Divisions in Africa are East-Central Africa Division (ECD), Southern-Africa India Division (SID), West-Central Africa Division (WAD), and the Middle East and North Africa Union (MENAU). The Middle East and North Africa Union is attached to the General Conference of SDA, so it is excluded from this exploration.

To accomplish the purpose of this study, I reviewed chaplaincy literature, conducted a pilot study to collect data on the state of chaplaincy in the Divisions, and drew on my experiences as a professional chaplain who has served as a campus and healthcare chaplain in SDA institutions in Nigeria for over two decades. This article suggests areas for additional research on the chaplaincy ministries of the SDA Church in Africa.

2. Definition of Terms

"Professional chaplains": These are chaplains who are formally trained in the arts of chaplaincy, endorsed, and board-certified (BCC). The terms "formally trained" and "professional" chaplains are used interchangeably in this article.

"The church leaders": The executive officers at the Divisions, Unions, Conferences, and institutions (schools/colleges/universities/hospitals).

3. Historical Foundation for Chaplaincy

The name "chaplain," as we know it today, originated from the fourth-century legend of Martin of Tours, who showed unprecedented compassion to a needy beggar. As the story goes, it was a cold winter day when Martin, a soldier, saw the beggar. Not having money to give to the beggar, Martin

halved his cloak using his sword. He gave half to the beggar and covered himself with the other half. The story continues that while sleeping that night, Martin had a vision. In the dream, he saw Jesus wearing the half cloak he gave to the beggar. As a result of the encounter, Martin became a Christian. He eventually resigned from the army and became dedicated to the service of Jesus. Martin later became the bishop of Tours. After his death, his cloak (Capella) became a sacred relic and was kept in a shrine—a place of worship or chapel. The custodians of the sacred relics were called *chapelain*, from which the name "chaplain" was derived. The legacy of Martin of Tours gives a clue to the nature of the work of chaplains.[1]

In the twenty-first century, chaplains serve in a wide variety of settings, including hospitals, hospices, prisons, schools, colleges, universities, workplaces, law enforcement agencies, fire departments, and the military. Military chaplaincy is one of the earliest organized forms of chaplaincy. Slomovitz, in his book, *The Fighting Rabbis: Jewish Military Chaplains and American History*, alluded to military chaplains' activities in the eighth century.[2]

The origin of the workplace/industrial chaplaincy dates back to the seventeenth century. It was first established in Massachusetts to cater to workers' spiritual needs regardless of their religious group. The correctional and prison chaplaincy dates back to the 1880s. The origin of campus/school chaplaincy could be credited to the "haystack prayer meeting" at Williams College in 1806. The students organized the prayer meeting to nurture their own spiritual life or dimension.[3] Before the era of modern healthcare chaplaincy, churches have always had representatives ministering in the hospitals.[4] Contemporary healthcare chaplaincy traces its roots to the 1920s,[5] and since then, it has not stopped widening its horizon.

The existing body of literature on the origins of chaplaincy in Africa as a collective entity is limited, indicating a need for further research in this

---

[1] Naomi K. Paget and Janet R. McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2006), 2–3.

[2] Albert I. Slomovitz, *The Fighting Rabbis: Jewish Military Chaplains and American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 2.

[3] Paget and McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain*, 86.

[4] Kelly Ewan, "The Development of Healthcare Chaplaincy," *The Expository Times* 123.10 (2012): 469–78.

[5] Tim Ford and Alexander Tartaglia, "The Development, Status, and Future of Healthcare Chaplaincy," *Southern Medical Journal* 99.6 (2006): 675–80.

area. Notwithstanding, chaplaincy is not a new term in Africa. David N. A. Kpobi wrote about "African chaplains in seventeenth-century West Africa."[6] Missionaries coming from Europe and America and going to West Africa were referred to as chaplains. Though the missionaries were called chaplains, their main goal was evangelizing the African people to convert them to Christianity. Kpobi's work focuses on the entrance of Christianity in West Africa rather than the history of chaplaincy in West Africa.

A considerable amount of literature exists about chaplaincy in South Africa. The formal institution of Military Chaplaincy was created in 1914 and was recognized as a self-governing part of the South African armed forces in 1973.[7] The Association of Clinical Pastoral Education in South Africa was established in 1975.[8]

Despite its long-standing roots in Africa, chaplaincy lacks pervasive popularity and has yet to experience exponential growth even in the twenty-first century. Writing about South African correctional chaplaincy, Maxwell M. Mkhathini wrote:

> When reviewing the history, the key factual reality is that chaplaincy has not been given the prominence it deserves because people do not know or undermine what it stands for, what justifies its existence and what it can contribute to South African society.[9]

While the historical development of chaplaincy in Africa, spanning the colonial era to the postmodern periods, is significant, the paramount concern lies in the extent to which Africa has embraced and utilized chaplaincy for its intrinsic advantage.

Chaplaincy is not a new concept within the SDA Church in Africa. Nevertheless, the written record regarding the nascent stages of establishing

---

6   David N. A. Kopi, *African Chaplains in Seventeenth Century West Africa*, n.d., chapter 6, https://www.dspace.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/21579/007_Chapter6_p140-171.pdf.

7   Izette Bredenkamp and André Wessels, "The Early History of South African Military Chaplaincy: A Case Study of the Variance between British Imperialism and Afrikaner Nationalism, c. 1914–1973," *Journal for Contemporary History* 39.2 (2014): 60–80.

8   Olehile A. Buffel, "The Potential of Clinical Pastoral Education in Facilitating Contextual, Effective and Affordable Pastoral Ministry for Impoverished Black Communities in South Africa," *Black Theology* 20.3 (2022): 235–50.

9   See Maxwell M. Mkhathini, "A Critical Analysis of the Chaplaincy in the South African Department of Correctional Services after 1994," (2016), 2, https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/56962/Mkhathini_Critical_2016.pdf?sequence=1-&isAllowedy.

chaplaincy in the SDA Church in Africa is either non-existent or difficult to locate. None of the searches I conducted yielded significant results. Notwithstanding, there is no doubt that oral history concerning the inception of chaplains in the SDA Church in Africa exists. As far back as the early 1960s, the West Nigeria Conference of SDA has designated some pastors to serve as chaplains in one of its well-known hospitals, SDA Hospital Ile-Ife, Osun State.[10]

In light of the limited amount of scholarly literature on the origins of chaplaincy within the SDA Church in Africa, the SDA African Church needs to undertake research initiatives examining the ministry's formative years and contemporary development. The inquiries may aid the church in evaluating the impact of the ministry on the church's mission and life and its overall performance compared to other continents around the world. The expansion of chaplaincy in the SDA Church in Africa is indisputable. However, as expounded in this article, the ministry continues to confront some obstacles.

4. The Educational Qualification of Professional Chaplains

Chaplaincy, as we know it today, has come a long way. It is a specialized ministry that requires training and certification. Typically, one needs no less than 72 units of graduate courses in theology or religion to become a professional chaplain. Further, a professional chaplain must have at least four Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) units from approved CPE centers.[11]

N. Keith Little writes: "Clinical Pastoral Education is professional training for pastoral care."[12] It is a professional education that transcends religious affiliations. Pastors, priests, rabbis, imams, and theological students can participate in supervised experiential learning.[13] CPE employs an action-reflection learning method using real human experience—the living human

---

10   Mrs. R. M Solademi, personal communication, February 19, 2024.

11   "Adventist Chaplaincy Institute Handbook," n.d.

12   N. Keith Little, "Clinical Pastoral Education as Professional Training: Some Entrance, Curriculum and Assessment Implications," *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 64.3 (2010): 1–8.

13   "What is CPE?," in *Social Justice CPE* (n.d.), https://www.socialjusticecpe.org/what-is-cpe.

document.[14] Furthermore, in addition to developing pastoral/spirit-ual skills, which focuses on the spiritual and emotional concerns of patients or clients, CPE helps its recipients develop personal spiritual formation and self-reflection skills, which assists the individual to develop an awareness of who they are as ministers and how their attitudes, values, assumptions, strengths, and weaknesses influence their pastoral/spiritual care.[15] This process also increases the individual's self-confidence and emotional resilience.

It is worth noting that a chaplain is foremost a pastor. However, not all pastors are chaplains. The distinction is not that one is better than the other; they perform different functions and serve in different settings. Unlike the pastor, who serves a religious group or assembly that gathers at a particular place, a chaplain is a clergyperson officially attached to a social institution that is usually not the church. Chaplains officially work in correctional, military, educational, and hospital settings. Others work in counseling centers and even the corporate or business world—workplace settings.[16] Most importantly, chaplains undergo specific training to provide spiritual care to individuals going through crises.[17] Of vital importance to the specialized ministry is the ecclesiastical endorsement. A professional chaplain must be endorsed by his or her faith/religious group.

5. A Biblical Foundation for Chaplaincy

The biblical underpinnings of chaplaincy extend beyond the selective extraction of biblical verses to justify the role and responsibilities of a chaplain. While the terms "chaplain" and "chaplaincy" are not found in the Bible, the foundation for chaplaincy is the Bible. Chaplains are ministers who concern themselves with reaching out in various ways to those who are hurting and in crisis. Caring for the suffering received a key focus in the incarnational ministry of Jesus Christ. Ellen G. White wrote, "Would you trace the footsteps of Christ, behold Him in that hovel, ministering to the poor; see Him at that sickbed, comforting the suffering, and speaking hope and courage to the desponding."[18] The account in Matt 25:31–46, the parable of the sheep

---

14   Paget and McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain,* 20.

15   Buffel, "The Potential of Clinical Pastoral Education," 235–50.

16   Jaco J. Hamman, "Being a Chaplain: Call, Conversation, and Charity," *Reformed Review* 57.3 (2004): 1–19.

17   AdventHealth University, "Chaplain vs. Pastor: What's the Difference?" (2021), https://www.ahu.edu/blog/chaplain-vs-pastor.

18   Ellen G. White, "Co-workers with Christ," *Review and Herald* (July 30, 1901).

and the goat, is an indication that Jesus Christ values ministries that take cognizance of the plight of the poor, the sick, the prisoners, and the dregs of society.[19]

The Gethsamane account shows that Jesus values the presence of people in a time of need. When He found His disciples sleeping, in contrast to His expectation that they would watch with Him, He said to them, "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" (Matt 26:40). Elaborating on the text, the Pulpit Commentary stated: "[When] He [Jesus] rose from prayer and returned to his three apostles, seeking their sympathy and the comfort of their presence in his lonely desolation, [he] Findeth them asleep; sleeping. The comfort which his man's nature craved was denied him."[20]

To keep watch with, or stay awake with, is called the ministry of presence in chaplaincy. The ministry of presence is at the heart of chaplaincy ministries ; it plays a vital role in bringing comfort to those hurting and in crisis and, of course, gladdens the hearts of those rejoicing.

The inclusive nature of chaplaincy reverberates through Jesus Christ's method of reaching people. "The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"[21] Likewise, chaplains minister to the needs of all people—people of all faith and religious groups, and people of no religion. Attending to all people and meeting their spiritual, physical, emotional, and social needs sometimes leads to deeper religious/spiritual discussions between chaplains and clients.

6. The Work of the Chaplain

One may ask, what exactly do the chaplains do? Regardless of the type of chaplaincy (military, campus, hospital, correctional, workplace, etc.), the chaplain's core duty is to offer clients quality pastoral/spiritual support. The care is comprehensive in that it gives attention to the spiritual and emotional needs of the client. Chaplains aim to assist individuals suffering or in crises,

---

[19]   Paget and McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain,* 5–6.

[20]   Bible Hub, "Matthew 26:40" in *The Pulpit Commentary*, https://biblehub.com/comentaries/matthew/26-40.htm.

[21]   Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 143.

to find meaning and purpose in life, and develop meaningful relationships with the transcendent (God, in the Adventist context), self, and others. Chaplains perform spiritual screenings/assessments to identify spiritual distress or struggle and then use the findings to design spiritual interventions to restore the emotional and spiritual well-being of clients. They offer and provide spiritual counseling, guidance, and other specific spiritual care services as required by their employing institutions and as needed by clients.

7. Chaplaincy Issues in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa

The Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries (ACM) has come a long way in focusing and "professionalizing" chaplaincy in the SDA Church globally for effective pastoral/spiritual care. The General Conference ACM Director (2015 to 2022), chaplain Mario Ceballos, pushed the frontiers of ACM, his influence reaching SDA churches in Africa. The story of the birth of the new dawn of chaplaincy ministries in Africa would not be complete without referring to the contributions of chaplain Mario Ceballos. He facilitated the chaplains' ecclesiastical endorsement, Clinical Pastoral Education, and Clinical Pastoral Orientation (CPO) in ECD, SID, and WAD. Clinical Pastoral Orientation is a form of chaplaincy training designed for individuals who have yet to obtain Clinical Pastoral Education.

The SDA Church in Africa is beginning to recognize chaplaincy as a specialized ministry requiring specialized training. The three Divisions may not all be at the same level regarding growth; some may be ahead of others. Yet, from all indications, chaplaincy in the Adventist Church in Africa is still evolving. As with every developing program or organization, enrooting comes with many challenges. Based on the available reviewed literature, my experience and observations, and the outcome of the pilot study, the significant issues confronting SDA Chaplaincy Ministries in Africa now are insufficient awareness of the essence of chaplaincy a shortage of professional chaplains, and tensions concerning chaplains' contributions to the Great Commission.

8. Insufficient Awareness of the Essence of Chaplaincy

After completing a bachelor's degree in theology, without any background knowledge in chaplaincy, I was posted at an Adventist hospital as an

assistant hospital chaplain and a school chaplain; and to be supervised by a pastor, the head chaplain, who had no training in chaplaincy. Though that was about three decades ago, the practice of employing individuals without a background in chaplaincy as chaplains is still prevalent.

A study conducted in one of the Adventist secondary schools in Tanzania revealed that most participants (students and staff) do not understand the difference between a pastor and a chaplain. The proprietors themselves suppose that any pastor with theological training is eligible to serve as a school chaplain.[22] Similarly, the poll's result on "Inquiry on Chaplaincy Ministry in SDA Church in Africa" (see Appendix B) revealed that the practice of appointing pastors with no formal training in chaplaincy as chaplains in schools, university campuses, hospitals, and circular university campuses is still prevalent in all of the three Divisions.

Furthermore, and in the same vein, non-professional chaplains are often appointed as directors of the chaplaincy at the SDA Conferences, Unions, Divisions, and educational institutions (primary, secondary, and tertiary levels). As a formally trained chaplain with four CPE units, I served as a chaplain for almost eight years under a chaplaincy director and a university church pastor who had no formal training in chaplaincy. When I rose to the position of chaplaincy director, my work was still overseen by the university pastor, who did not receive formal education in chaplaincy. The situation indicates an insufficient awareness of the essence of chaplaincy among leaders. A hospital chaplain from SID, alluding to leaders' insufficient awareness of the essence of chaplaincy, said,

> Individuals are pronounced to be chaplains without having any basic training. Individuals who are not doing well in mainline ministry and have disciplinary issues are reassigned to be chaplains. Yet our schools and hospitals should have committed workers—highly trained and efficient in areas of competency.[23]

There is a need for further studies on African SDA Church leaders' awareness of the essence of chaplaincy and its importance within and out-

---

[22] Mwimo Amina, "A Strategy for Improving Chaplaincy Services at Mbeya Adventist Secondary School, in Southern Tanzania Union" (MA thesis, Adventist University of Africa, 2020).

[23] Personal communication, April 22, 2020.

side of its establishments — schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, correctional institutions, etc.

9. Shortage of Professional Chaplains

In comparison to 32 years ago, when I commenced my career as an untrained chaplain, and nine years ago, when I completed a doctoral degree in healthcare chaplaincy, there is currently a growing number of individuals in the SDA church in Africa who showing interest in pursuing a career in chaplaincy.

The Adventist University of Africa (AUA) recently began to provide a Master's degree in the field of chaplaincy. In 2019, Babcock University partnered with WAD and, under the aegis of the global ACM, established a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) center on the main campus of Babcock University Teaching Hospital. The developments and efforts towards the growth of Chaplaincy ministries in SDA Church in Africa are commendable. Yet still, based on personal observations and the results of the pilot study, it is evident that there are insufficient professional chaplains throughout all three divisions of the SDA.

Thirteen individuals from the three divisions, who responded to the survey, reported a total of 22 professional chaplains. Of the 22, only three completed between three and four units of CPE; only two were Board Certified Chaplains (see Appendix C). Reporting 22 professional chaplains and stating that only two were Board-Certifies shows an insufficient awareness of who a professional chaplain is even among the respondents. Because so few people responded to the question, the exact number of professional chaplains serving in the three Divisions is inconclusive. Nevertheless, the number is still insignificant compared to the enormous ministry field. Odonkor (2017) noted:

> There is currently no Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries capacity development plan to clinically train pastors as chaplains in the South Ghana Conference (SGC) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This has resulted in the absence of professional chaplains within the denomination in South Ghana.[24]

---

[24] Nathan. T. Odonkor, "A Chaplaincy Training and Support Program to Equip Pastors for Ministry in the South Ghana Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2017) 178.

The shortage of professional or adequately qualified chaplains within the three divisions should not serve as a rationale for assigning individuals without formal chaplaincy training to the role of chaplains. If this is indeed the underlying rationale, it is plausible that the SDA Church in Africa would have allocated resources towards enhancing its chaplaincy capacity, similar to its efforts in other domains such as leadership, Old and New Testaments, and mission studies. The scarcity of professional chaplains can be attributed to a limited understanding of the nature of chaplaincy and its significance within the context of gospel ministry among church leaders.

10. Chaplains' Work and the Great Commission

How chaplains contribute to the mission mandate is an ongoing discussion. In churches where the emphasis is on mission and evangelism, chaplains are sometimes confronted regarding the extent to which they are fulfilling their mission mandate. It is not uncommon to hear leaders say to parish priests not to be "mere chaplains to their congregations."[25]

Mario Cebalo alluded to how chaplains are sometimes questioned about their role in the evangelistic mission of the church. He narrated his encounter with a senior church leader:

> During a working lunch, a senior leader of my denomination asked me, "Isn't evangelism the most important role of our church?" My response was, "Of course! That is how we fulfill our mission." During my long trip home following that meeting, I began to ponder this profound question that challenges chaplains and their role in the evangelistic mission of the church.[26]

Similarly, upon Dick Stenbakken's return from Vietnam as a United States Army chaplain, he was asked by a pastor why he decided to leave ministry to become a chaplain. According to Dick Stenbakken, "The semi-smirk on his [the pastor's] face made his meaning crystal clear: chaplaincy is not real ministry."[27]

---

[25] Miranda Threlfall-Holmes and Mark Newitt, "Introduction," in *Being a Chaplain* (London: SPCK, 2011), xviii.

[26] Mario Ceballos, "A Hole in the Bucket," *Ministry International Journal for Pastors* 90.7 (July 2018): 5, https://cdn.ministrymagazine.org/issues/2018/issues/MIN2018-07.pdf.

[27] Dick Stenbakken, "I Have Not Left the Ministry!," *Ministry International Journal for*

Feeding the idea that chaplains are anti-mission is the notion that chaplaincy training focuses majorly on human psychology. I recall an instance wherein a professor of mission conveyed to me that chaplaincy is primarily rooted in psychology rather than religion or theology. Individuals who hold such perspectives overlook the fact that professional chaplains undergo initial training as pastors before pursuing a specialization in the field of chaplaincy. A further rationale for such a perspective is the inability of some individuals to see the interconnectedness of psychology, religion, theology, and human matters. This lack of understanding is not exclusive to the field of chaplaincy.

Mark R. McMinn explicated the perplexity experienced by some Christian counselors about the interplay between psychology, religion, and theology.[28] They argue that secular counseling theories are incompatible with biblical principles and practices upheld in dealing with human issues, and that the Bible is a comprehensive resource for resolving all human matters. Conversely, some embrace the amalgamation of psychology, religion, and theology to address issues about the human condition. McMinn proposes incorporating Christian theology, psychology, and personal spirituality as a more practical approach to counseling; however, he calls for careful examinations of every counseling theory underpinning existing techniques to determine their compatibility with Christian teachings.

11. Navigating the Chaplaincy Issues for Effective Ministries

11.1 Educate Leaders for Better Understanding

Education is vital to the acquisition of knowledge. It is adjudged a vehicle for positive changes in all strata of life. For chaplaincy to thrive in all three Divisions, the leaders need to have a clearer understanding of chaplaincy—the chaplains' work, the benefit of chaplaincy ministries to the SDA Church and all and sundry, and how chaplains contribute to the Great Commission. On October 23, 2020, a chaplain, in an online chat during the third Adventist Chaplains World Congress, wrote: "We should tactfully and with prayer involve our leaders to understand the chaplains' role."

Pastors 90.7 (July 2018), 6–9, https://cdn.ministrymagazine.org/issues/2018/issues/-MIN201807.pdf.

[28] Mark R. McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 2nd ed. (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, rev. 1996, repr. 2011), 3–33.

Martin Feldbush, the General Conference ACM Director, 1990–2000, noted that far gone is the era when chaplaincy was considered the job for anyone or everybody, or a ministry setting where ministers who cannot make it in the parish, are almost ready to retire, are too lazy to do anything else, or ministers whose leaders do not know what to do with them are asked to serve as chaplains.[29]

The Church leaders need to understand that despite emphasizing evangelism and mission, the world is becoming more secular, which calls for reevaluating our mission strategy. Chaplains have a lot to contribute to theology and ministry practice—they can show the church "how faith and ministry can flourish in an explicitly secular and even, on occasion, hostile environment."[30] In his keynote address at the first International Chaplaincy Conference, conducted at Babcock University Ceballos Mario said,

> Chaplains are specially trained ministers inside "closed" institutional settings where the church might not otherwise be present.... [They] are an extension of the church—the instruments of the church caring for people as Christ cared—preaching, teaching, healing, [and] counseling inside the using agency. Chaplains are the only face of the church to a host of people during crisis times in their lives. Chaplains are where the people are.[31]

Chaplaincy is indispensable to the church. It is not inferior to any of the church's other ministries. Chaplains fulfill the church's mission in distinctive ways. They address the spiritual needs of their clients, influencing their lives with love and hope.

Furthermore, it is crucial to educate the Church leaders about their current practice of having non-Board-Certified Chaplains as the head of the chaplaincy departments at the Division, Union, Conference, and educational institutions, including the current practice of having one person serve as the youth and chaplaincy director at the Division level. This practice is also common at the Conference/Union levels. Youth and chaplaincy ministries are two vast ministry fields, each requiring complete dedication. It is

---

[29] Martin Feldbush, "History, Mission & Scope of Adventist Chaplaincy " (Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries Department of the General Conference, n.d.).

[30] Threlfall-Holmes and Newitt, "Introduction," xviii–xix.

[31] Ceballos Mario, keynote address at the first International Chaplaincy Conference, conducted at Babcock University, Ogun State, Nigeria, on December 9–12, 2021.

good to note that WAD has taken the lead in separating the two offices at the Division level; hopefully, it spills over to the Unions and Conferences.

Similar to the above-narrated situations, pastors with no formal training in chaplaincy are assigned or double up as chaplains on SDA campuses/schools and hospitals. Such a practice is no longer acceptable. Gone is the era when "chaplains and clergy seemed interchangeable."[32] The current understanding of the meaning of the word chaplain worldwide does not give room for such interchange.

11.2 Invest in Workforce Development

As previously indicated, there are insufficient professional chaplains in all three Divisions.[33] The three Divisions have approximately 90 educational institutions and 186 medical institutions. In addition, the Conferences and Unions often send pastors to provide chaplaincy ministries in non-SDA higher institutions. The Adventist Church in Africa has not reached near workforce saturation regarding training and hiring professional chaplains.

While the seminars and workshops on chaplaincy, occasionally held at Conferences, Unions, and Divisions, often lasting one or two weeks, offer valuable insights, they cannot substitute for comprehensive professional training in chaplaincy. Similarly, obtaining endorsement as a chaplain without completing formal training in chaplaincy is insufficient. Out of the total sample size of thirteen participants that participated in the survey, a significant majority of twelve respondents expressed the belief that a pastor's effectiveness as a chaplain is contingent upon receiving appropriate training in chaplaincy (see Appendix D).

11.3 Chaplains and the Great Commission

How the chaplains relate to the Great Commission is a question that deserves an answer. In response to my colleague in mission and others who assume that chaplaincy education is anchored in psychology, chaplaincy education does not consist of a slew of psychology courses. A professional chaplain is foremost a pastor with basic knowledge of theology/religion. The chaplain must be in good standing with his/her faith/religious group

---

[32]   Michele Le Doux Sakurai, "The Challenge and Heart of Chaplaincy," *Journal of the Catholic Health Association of the United States* 84.1 (2003): 26–56.

[33]   Statistics Research General Conference Office of the Achieves, "Adventist Yearbook," (n.d.), www.adventistyearbook.org.

and be endorsed (ecclesiastical endorsement) by the same group. Regarding the connection between chaplaincy and psychology, the knowledge of human nature and behavior is vital to chaplaincy ministries; and based on the importance, I would suggest integrating a few more courses in human psychology and counseling into the chaplaincy education curriculum than is integrated currently.

The hub of the work of chaplains is spiritual care. Chaplaincy is not anti-religion. As part of CPE level 1 objectives and outcomes, as approved by the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, CPE interns must articulate the central themes and core values of their religious/spiritual heritage and the theological understanding that informs their ministry,[34] and must continue to do so throughout his/her career life.

In the recent past, there has been an ongoing discussion about the demand for nontheistic chaplains by the US Army's nontheists.[35] The demand for nontheistic chaplains speaks volumes about the essence of chaplaincy. Some individuals have adjudged a nontheistic chaplain an oxymoron.[36] Thus, a nontheistic chaplain is the opposite of what chaplaincy stands for. Although chaplains' training underscores a nondiscriminatory approach to spiritual/pastoral care, chaplaincy is spiritual.

Chaplaincy is not anti-mission. Paget and McCormack stated:

> Without proselytizing, the Christian chaplain evangelizes the world through his or her character, integrity, compassion, and witness. As chaplains minister to the spiritual needs of people, they engage in spiritual conversation that often leads to opportunities to share their personal faith and religious beliefs. When direct evangelistic conversations don't materialize, Christian chaplains do pre-evangelism—laying the foundation for future opportunities to share the gos-pel.[37]

---

[34] Cf. Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, "Standard of Spiritual Care and Education Manuals," (2020).

[35] Antony Barone Kolenc, "Not 'For God and Country': Atheist Military Chaplains and the Free Exercise Clause," *University of San Francisco Law Review* 48.3 (2014): 395–456.

[36] "Atheist Chaplains: An 'Oxymoron' or a Reality?," *The Humanist* (March 18, 2015), https://thehumanist.com/news/international/atheist-chaplains-an-oxymoron-or-a-reality.

[37] Paget and McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain*, 117.

Relatedly, ACM accentuate the mission of the Church by promoting Christ's method of ministry as articulated by Ellen G. White:

> Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men [*sic*] as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He invited them, "Follow Me."[38]

Chaplains demonstrate a willingness to align with the objectives of the Church, albeit employing methodologies tailored to their specific circumstances.

There are cases of clients accepting Christ as their personal Savior and clients converting to the Adventist faith through Adventist chaplains' ministries. Chaplain Mabvuto Chipeta, during the third ACM World Congress, narrated some of his clients' conversion stories. Similarly, a chaplain at one of the Adventist hospitals in Uganda and currently a CPE intern in one of the SDA hospitals in Southeast Asia narrated how six ex-patients converted to the Adventist faith through a healthcare follow-up program. It is a truism that chaplains do not proselytize; nevertheless, they do not beg questions revolving around faith and religion when clients ask them why they believe what they believe.

Furthermore, a director of Clinical Pastoral Education at an Adventist Hospital in Southeast Asia expressed that chaplaincy aligns with the principles and objectives of mission work. The individual emphasized that while chaplains refrain from proselytization when providing spiritual care to patients within the hospital, they offer Bible studies on the hospital premises for staff, students, and patients who express interest. They give out Christian literature to patients and conduct one-on-one Bible study at patients' request.[39]

According to the "Adventist Chaplaincy Institute Handbook," a crucial requirement for an Adventist Board-Certified chaplain is the ability to effect-ively articulate a theology of spiritual care integrated with a theory of pastoral practice, Seventh-day Adventist principles, and beliefs. Adventist chaplains utilize their religious, theological, and spiritual heritage to provide clients care.[40] Adventist professional chaplains, and all professional

---

[38]   White, The Ministry of Healing, 143.

[39]   Rey Salo, personal communication, March 28, 2021.

[40]   See the "Adventist Chaplaincy Institute Handbook," https://www.adventistchaplaincyinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/ACI-Handbook_2023-copy.pdf.

chaplains, of course, possess the necessary skills and knowledge to provide spiritual guidance and support to those belonging to diverse faith groups and religious traditions and those who do not adhere to any one belief system without compromising their own beliefs.

The focal point of chaplaincy ministries revolves around providing pastoral care. Based on the available evidence, one can infer that Adventist chaplains do not hold an anti-mission stance. It is essential that Adventist Church leaders in Africa acquire a comprehensive understanding of the operational dynamics of chaplains in connection to the Great Commission. "Chaplaincy is an equally valid and viable expression of ministry on par with more traditional expressions of pastor and evangelist. They are an integral element of the Adventist ministry."[41]

12. Conclusion and Recommendations

12.1 Conclusion

The present study is a pioneering examination of chaplaincy issues within the Adventist Church in Africa. The poll findings and my observations as a professional chaplain indicate that the chaplaincy ministry within the Adventist Church in Africa is still evolving. The current challenges confronting chaplaincy ministries within the Adventist Church in Africa encompass a deficiency in comprehending the nature of chaplaincy, an insufficiency in the number of qualified chaplains, and conflicts arising from differing perspectives on the role of chaplains in fulfilling the Great Commission. Adventist Church leaders in Africa need to understand that the chaplain's role is paramount in the Adventist work/mission as it imitates Christ's incarnational ministry.

12.2 Recommendations

1. More study on the knowledge and attitudes of Adventist Church leaders in Africa about the work of chaplains is required. It is a given that program success requires leadership buy-in and understanding.

---

[41] Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries General Conference, "Chaplaincies/Endorsement," (n.d.).

2. Adventist Church leaders in Africa need to consider training chaplains to do the chaplain's work and hold the chaplain's office at the Divisions, Unions, Conferences, educational institutions, and hospitals. Chaplaincy is a specialized ministry that requires proper training for effectiveness.
3. More studies on chaplaincy ministries in the Adventist Church in Africa and chaplaincy in Africa, in general, are required because, as revealed by the literature reviewed, Africa, in general, is still significantly behind in empirical and theoretical studies on chaplaincy.
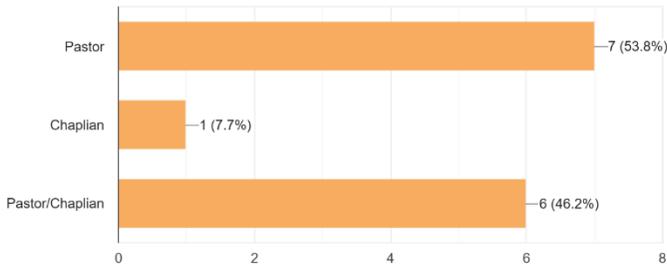
13. The Survey Results

13.1 Appendix A

The Respondents Category

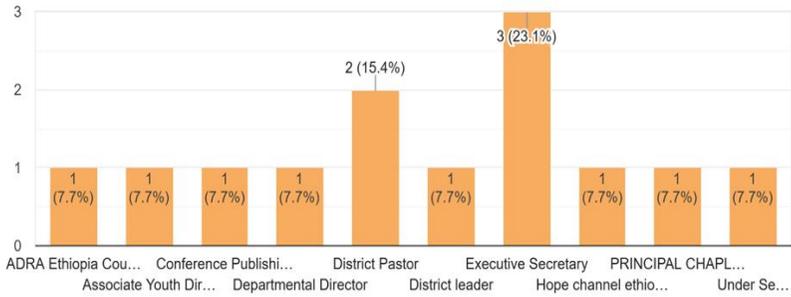1) What is your current office?
13 responses

Pastor	7 (53.8%)
Chaplian	1 (7.7%)
Pastor/Chaplian	6 (46.2%)

2) Current Administrative Position(If any)

13 responses
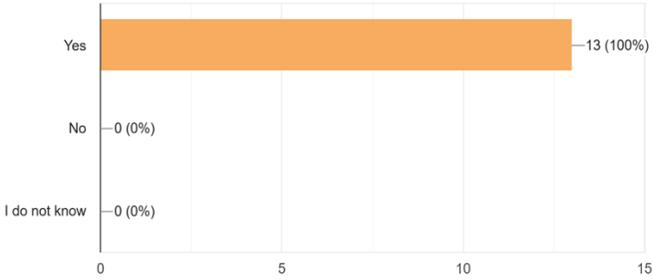

3) Your Division

13 responses
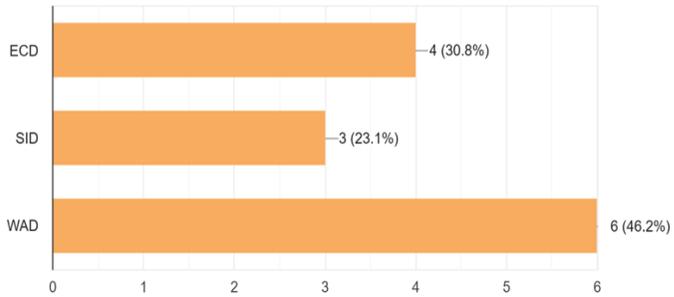
13.2 Appendix B

Pastors with no Formal Chaplaincy Education Serving as Chaplains

14) In your Division, Union, or Conference (as you indicated in question 4 above) are there pastors who have no formal education and training in chaplaincy, but serve as chaplains?
13 responses

15) If your answer to question 14 is yes, how many are they?)
13 responses
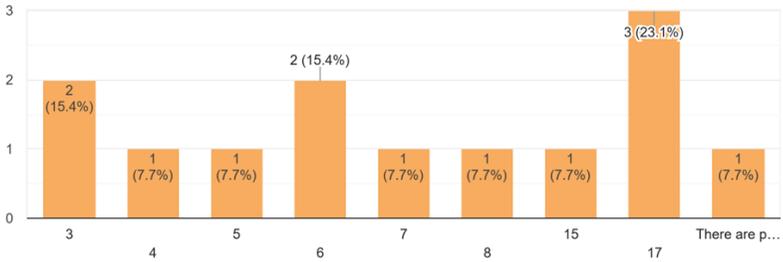
13.3 Appendix C

Number of Professional Chaplains

6) Number of professional/trained chaplains in the SDA Church employment in your Division, Union, or Conference

13 responses
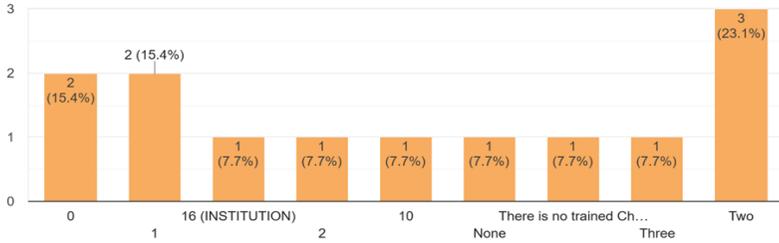
10) The number who completed three and above units of CPE

13 responses
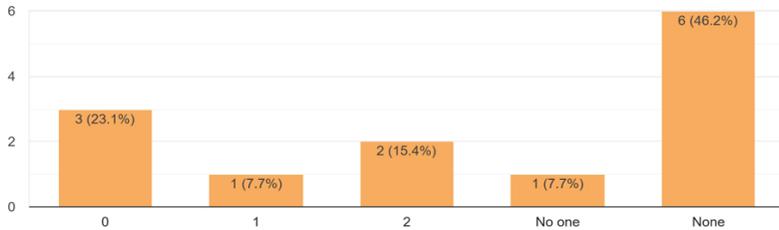
11) Number of Board Certified Chaplains (BCC)

13 responses
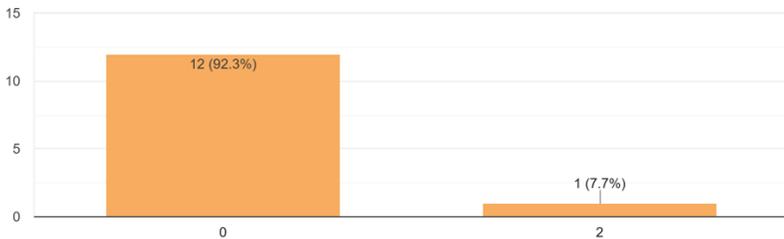
13.4 Appendix D

The Need for Formal Chaplaincy Training for Effective Ministries

27) Can a pastor function effectively as a chaplain without proper training in chaplaincy?
13 responses

Small Groups in Family Contexts: A Paradigm for the African Church

DAVID ODHIAMBO

Adventist University of Africa, Kenya

Abstract

The focal point of the local church seems to shift and continues to move from the public assembly to the private setting of the household gathering post-COVID-19 pandemic. The houses or homes have become the heart or the core of church fellowship. Moreover, with the opening up of worship places, some church members appear to pr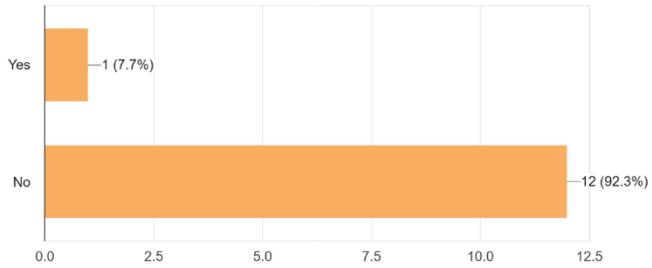efer to worship from the comfort of their homes. The development brings to the fore the family setting as the integral component of the Sabbath gathering. This paper intends to evaluate the vital role of small groups in households or the family settings of the local church within the African context. Firstly, it explores how the communal social dynamic of African families promotes fellowship and discipleship within small groups. Secondly, it examines the theological ramifications of small groups in the household context of the New Testament. Thirdly, it investigates the leadership involvement in small group settings, emphasizing and identifying the training and launching of leaders in the family context. Finally, the article surveys how evangelism finds implementation in small groups in the family contexts. The study concludes that the Christian home has become an integral component of the local church, providing a collaborative ministry environment post-COVID-19 within the African community.

Keywords: Household, Ubuntu, Small Group

1. Introduction

Before delving into the intricacies of small group, household, and ubuntu, it is important to briefly preview the impact of the covid pandemic on public worship. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic saw unprecedented changes in public worship services of the local churches. All public worship or physical gathering shifted to the houses and homes.[1] At the initial stage, the absence of members in the sanctuaries or halls of assemblies posed a dilemma for both the pastors and the congregants as it seemed to challenge authentic interactions.[2] Nevertheless, church members maintained interpersonal connections in small family-based groups via virtual platforms. Thus, the home and/or house churches represented hope while at the same time introducing a new reality in the life and practice of the church.

Furthermore, with the availability of online services, it was possible for two to three persons or even more to virtually participate in worship services from the comfort of their homes or houses.[3] In this set up, the laity and pastors conducted service without the physical presence of the congregation. As a result, the focal point of the church service underwent shifts, moving away from the traditional confines of the physical building known as the church. Instead, the church relocated to the houses and homes where "the people of God" (also known as the *ecclesia*) gathered to seek and experience the presence of God.[4]

In light of the preceding analysis, a notable resemblance can be discerned between gatherings in residential settings and the historical model of early Christian house churches.[5] One common model of early Christian house

---

1   Kyle K. Schiefellbein-Guerrero, "Worship in the Face of Corona: Ritual Place, People, Polymodality," in *Church After the Corona Pandemic: Consequence for Worship and Theology*, ed. Kyle K. Schiefellbein-Guerrero (Gettysburg, PA: United Luteran Seminary, 2023), 3.

2   Schiefellbein-Guerrero, "Worship in the Face of Corona," viii.

3   Some congregations were not prepared for the digital migration, while others were sceptical about the extended impact of the pandemic.

4   The term "people of God" infers a theological connotation, underscoring the spiritual and communal aspect of the group's identity within their faith tradition. It is used here as an ethnically open category (Acts 15:14–18; Rom 9:24–26; 2 Cor 6:16–17). See a more detailed discussion on the term in David Horrell, "'Race,' 'Nation,' 'People' Ethnoracial Identity Construction in 1 Peter 2:9," in *Becoming Christian: Essays on 1 Peter and the Making of Christian Identity*, LNTS 394 (London: T&T Clark, 2013), 133–63.

5   See I. Howard Marshall, "Church and Temple in the New Testament," *TynBul* 40.2 (1989): 204, https://tyndalebulletin.org/article/30540-church-and-temple-in-the-new-testament.

churches involved members congregating for prayer in a building that still served as a private residence (Acts 1:13; 2:46; 5:42; 12:17; etc.). In other cases, house assemblies would gather in renovated private residences, and as the congregation expanded, they would transfer to a new and larger structure dedicated solely to the purpose of being a church.[6] It is the former model that provides a suitable framework for the emerging trend of house or home churches in the post-COVID era. In the subsequent section, we will explore the characteristics of households gathering from the Jewish background before delving into the activities carried out within the early Christian church.

2. Establishment of Small Groups in the Early Christian Era

2.1 Jewish Connections

The modern church encounters significant challenges when it separates itself from the Jewish roots that are deeply embedded in the Old Testament. Unfortunately, such tendencies often fail to recognize that the Jewish expressions served as the primary frameworks for the early church.[7] Consequently, the structure and functioning of the early church were greatly influenced by the teachings and principles of the temple in Jerusalem.[8] Vincent Branick highlights the archaeological findings of the Essene community at Qumran, which reveal how religious life and practices were carried out within household settings.[9] The gatherings of Israel offer a lens through which the early church understood the meetings, especially in the functional dimensions.

The assembly of God's people in the Old Testament emerged out of the divine selection and covenant, a concept at the core of the Scriptures. In the Exodus story, it is clear that God has chosen the Israelites as His preferred people, as He liberates them from Egyptian subjugation (Deut 7:7–8). The exodus is vital knowledge needed for their assembly, for it is at Mount Sinai where the covenant between God and the Israelites is formed. This pivotal moment established the Israelites as a distinct community, bound by divine

---

6   Floyd V. Filson, "The Significance of the Early Church," *JBL* 58.2 (1939), 106, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3259855.pdf.

7   Ronald E. Heine, *Reading the Old Testament with the Ancient Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 31–32.

8   Marshall, "Church and Temple," 211.

9   Vincent Branick, *The House Church in the Writings of Paul* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1989), 36–38.

law and purpose, and it laid the foundation for their identity as a people chosen by God to uphold His commandments and to serve as a testament to His power and faithfulness.

The covenant, as outlined in texts such as Exod 19:5–6, emphasizes the communal nature of their belief system: "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure above all people, for all the earth is mine is mine; and you shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to me."[10] The prophetic books, like Ezekiel and Daniel, uncompromisingly maintain the collective obligation of the public to maintain this sacred pact (Ezek 16:16–60; Dan 9:1–10). The concept of being together, in this context, is not just a physical congregation but a collective spiritual response to the divine edict and promise—a major motif that is threaded throughout the Old Testament.

The Septuagint (LXX)—the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible—renders the Hebrew word *bayith* ("house") as *oikos* and *oikia*.[11] The Hebrew term *bayith* encompasses various meanings depending on the context.[12] It signifies a room within a building (Esth 2:3; 7:8), the entire family unit including the father (Gen 50:8; 1 Sam 1:21), wives, sons, daughters (Gen 36:6), dependent relatives (Gen 13:1), servants (Gen 15:2–3), attendants (Gen 14:14), and slaves (Gen 17:13, 27).[13] It also refers to a group of relatives that lies between the immediate family and the tribe (2 Sam 9:7), as well as encompassing household possessions such as wealth, tools, slaves, and livestock (Exod 20:17; Esth 8:1). Both within the LXX and the broader Hellenistic world, the words *oikos* and *oikia* are employed to denote both the physical structures (buildings) and the people residing inside them, with only slight distinctions in usage.[14] Religiously, the significance of the home remained intact. It was within the confines of the home where one of the most crucial religious observances, the annual celebration of the Passover feast, took place (as mentioned in Mark 14:14f).[15]

This typical transmission of faith happened during the celebration of the feasts. Philo comments regarding the celebration of the Passover are insightful:

---

10   Here and in the following I will use the NKJV translation, unless otherwise indicated.
11   Harry A. Hoffner, "*Bayith*," *TDOT* 11:110.
12   Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *HALOT*, s.v. "*bayith*."
13   Hoffner, "*Bayith*," 11:111–16.
14   Branick, *House Church in the Writing of Paul*, 37.
15   David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 557.

At this time the whole household takes on the sanctity of a temple. The sacrifice becomes a seder meal…. The whole people, old and young, ascend to the status of priests to conduct the holy service (the seder). For they all celebrate the great migration, when over 600,000 men and women happily exited from a land of cruelty and animosity towards strangers.[16]

The evidence presented establishes the significant role of Jewish families as focal points for religious practices, laying the groundwork for the development of the early Christian church. Multiple indications highlight the family as the primary environment for passing down the faith. Within the Jewish context, God instructs households to wholeheartedly love Him and diligently teach His commandments to their children (Deut 6:7). The commendation bestowed upon Abraham, esteemed as a friend of God, stems from his guidance of his children and household to faithfully follow the ways of the Lord, upholding righteousness and justice (Gen 18:19).

In concluding the Jewish connection of the house church, the archaeological findings and historical evidence presented above shed light on the significant role of the private house in Jewish religious contexts. The private home held a crucial position in religious development, serving as a foundation for faith within the Jewish religious framework. The Jewish household acted as a protective stronghold, safeguarding the people's religious practices from external disruptions.[17] Remarkably, this concept of the household as a religious center persisted and evolved into the early Christian era. Therefore, it becomes imperative to explore the nuptial stage of the New Testament church, examining how the household and homes continued to function as vital religious centers.

During the intertestamental period, the concept of a "people of God" manifests itself in numerous ways throughout the literature and historical records. The notion of a distinct Jewish community, unified by a shared identity, is evident in the repeated invocation of this terminology (2 Macc 5:19; 7:33; Jub 1:24; 1Q 9:19–20). Although the particular phrase may vary in its formulation, the same idea of a unified people still resonates.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in the mid-20th century, contain numerous references to the Jewish community's self-understanding as a covenant people, devoted to God's commandments (1Q 2.21–22; cf. Exod 18:21,

---

[16]   Philo, *QE* 1, 10.

[17]   Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in Monologue and Dialogue: Studies in Judaism* (New York: University Press of America, 2005), 32.

25).[18] The Scrolls also emphasize the importance of communal life and obedience to the divine will (1Q 1.18, 20). Moreover, the First and Second Books of Maccabees provide a comprehensive history of the struggles and successes of the Jewish community during the Maccabean revolt.[19] The historical accounts of the books delineate the tenacity and piety of the Jewish community in confrontation with outward hardships (1 Macc 2:15–22; 2 Macc 1:7–8). During the transitional period of the intertestamental era, these sectarian gatherings unmistakable expressed a character, alliance, and devotion to their spiritual legacy within the communities. The communal identity of an elect people persisted as a prominent motif during the period and formed the basis of the early Christian era.

2.2 New Testament

The continuity of this communal life served as the basis for the development of the early Christian era (Acts 1:15–16; 6:2). Within this time frame, the concept of being a chosen people was given a fresh perspective, reformulating its Jewish roots to focus on a broad range of beings who were committed to the teaching of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:14; 2:44; 4:32; 5:14). The early Christian church thus assumed the communal spirit of God's special grouping, emphasizing the concept of an *ecclesia* or a congregation of believers (Acts 11:21, 26).

This shift in the communal character included adherents of both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds, further enriching the diversity of the religion (Acts 6:1; 10:34–35; 11:1). The early Christians conceived of themselves as a direct broadening of the elect, influenced by their personalized relationship with the Almighty and stirred by the mission to promote the Good News to the world (Acts 3:15; 5:32; 9:13, 32). This reshaping of the communal founding played a critical role in moulding the Christian church out of its Jewish origins, eventually developing into a widely spread Christian faith.

As mentioned above, during the early Christian era, the formation of intimate house meetings served as a defining characteristic of the church. The

---

[18]   For a longer period it was thought that those related to the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) were the creators of the "Qumran community," a phrase indicating the archaeological and literary relics uncovered at the Qumran site. For further discussion see John J. Collins, "Sectarian Communities in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Oxford Handbook of The Dead Sea Scrolls*, eds. Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 151–73, esp. p. 158.

[19]   Antony E. Gilles, *The People of the Book: The Story Behind the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 138.

family meeting provided the basis for new communities. Luke identifies the new followers of Jesus in Philippi meeting in the home of Lydia (Acts 16:15, 40). These gatherings emerged as a result of the apostles' proclamation of the message of Christ, fostering deep connections with God and intense interactions among believers. Acts of the Apostles illustrates how these communities met from house to house (Acts 2:46; 5:42; 12:12).

In its embryonic phase, the local band of Christ's disciples assembled in intimate abodes.[20] This practice derived from the requirement for privacy and clandestine in a period when Christianity had not yet been widely accepted or become a legitimate religion (1 Cor 1:16). Worshippers gathered at the domiciles of fellow Christians to entreat, contemplate Jesus's teachings, and savor the bread of fellowship, which is viewed as an archaic representation of the Lord's supper (Acts 2:46). These home-based assemblies incited a feeling of closely-knit fraternity and enabled the flow of spiritual revelations and cheering among the original Christians. As Christianity flourished and was recognized, these petite home assemblies transformed into more formal church congregations and played an integral role in the emergence of Christian adoration as we know it today.

In the NT, the community became God's house or temple. Paul employs the spiritual temple-motif in his letters to the Ephesians: "You are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God. And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building *fitly framed* together grow unto a holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are built together for *a habitation* of God through the Spirit" (Eph 2:19–22, emphasis is mine). The Apostle Peter also takes up the spiritual temple-motif: "You also, as living stones, are being built up into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 2:5 NIV). Otto Michel fittingly asserts, "the motif of the οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ is referred to the community, yet it is not really a metaphor of the *familia dei*, οἶκος remains the actual house, a spiritual, supraterrestral, divine, and heavenly structure."[21]

Paul, in his letters, references the exchange of correspondence taking place in private homes (1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:3, 5; Phil 2; Col 4:15). Filson observes that these home and house settings not only served as the social backdrop for the church but also acted as spaces for private domestic activities.[22] In fact, a single family, such as Aquila and Prisca, became the initial

---

[20]   Otto Michel, "οἶκος," *TDNT* 5:130.

[21]   Michel, "οἶκος," 5:126–27.

[22]   Filson, "The Significance of the Early Church," 106.

nucleus of the church, with the Christian community gathering around their house church (1 Cor 16:19). As time progressed, these private dwellings transformed into assemblies that encompassed all Christian households and individuals (1 Cor 1:9).[23]

Paul identifies persons and the property of households as *oikos* and *oikia* respectively. He says that he baptized the "house [*oikos*] of Stephanas," and commends the Stephanas household *(oikia)* as the first fruits of Achaia as having "devoted themselves to service for the saints" (1 Cor 16:15f). Luke uses *oikos* as he refers to the baptism of household in Acts: Lydia (16:15); the Philippian jailer (16:31–34); Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue of Corinth (18:8; cf. 10:2; 11:14; John 4:53). In these occurrences, the Greek word *oikos* denotes wealth, possessions, or the physical room, whereas *oikia* infers the relatives, servants, or even clients of a household. Both words, however, are used interchangeably for dwelling, the family, and kin.

Paul's letters reflect his deep understanding of the familial dynamics within the early Christian community. He addresses the recipients as brothers and sisters, embodying a paternal role, as evident in his reference to himself as a father figure to his spiritual children (1 Thess 2:11). Moreover, Paul employs vivid metaphors, likening himself to a pregnant mother giving birth to the Galatians (Gal 4:19). Filson notes that while the use of family-related language predates Paul in religious groups, he uniquely applies it to the context of the house church.[24] This language is not merely a formality, but holds profound significance in Paul's writings, signifying the deep bonds and communal nature of the early Christian fellowship. Through this familial lens, Paul establishes himself as an apostle and a nurturing father figure, uniting the believers as a closely-knit spiritual family. The gathering of believers in private homes aligns both with practical considerations and Paul's theological vision for the Christian community.

It is reasonable to conjecture that the interface between the Jewish home as a religious center and the objective of the Christian home or house meetings underscores the enduring importance of the family unit in nurturing and transmitting faith.[25] The early Christian small groups, influenced by

---

[23]   Charles Anthony Stewart, "Churches," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Archaeology*, eds. David K. Pettegrew, William R. Caraher, and Thomas R. Davis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 129.

[24]   Filson, "The Significance of the Early Church," 111.

[25]   The family unit in the Greco-Roman was considered to be a "social construct which mediates relatedness.… [It] consisted of a variety of persons who were not related

Jewish traditions, found a natural extension of their worship and fellowship within the intimate settings of households. Furthermore, it is important to consider the context in which these early Christian small groups operated and the broader implications of their significance within the development of the early church.

3. Functions of the Household in the Early Christian Era

3.1 Household interactions

The household and consequently the house meetings of the early Christian era formed the basis of satisfying relationships, purposeful interactions, and designated roles. Family members played a crucial role in forming the core of the initial assembly, with their close bonds and shared faith driving the community's spiritual journey. Luke's comment on the life of apostles offers insights to their identity and mission: "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with gladness and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:46–47). Given the intense communal intimate relationships—sharing all things in common—the household members developed a sense of belonging and necessity to assign tasks within the fellowship and beyond.

3.2 Household Structures

The intimate connections of the household assemblies lead to the formation of internal structures to serve both the fellowship and the larger society. The households gathered for prayers and collections of material and financials to assist another household (Phil 4:14–18; 2 Cor 8:1–5). Moreover, baptisms of the whole households and not just individuals happened (Act 16:13–34; 17:2–9; 18:1–11). Del Birkley aptly affirms that the aspect of small group as a church involves "personal functions (aid personal spiritual growth); maintenance functions (develop function unity and koinonia); and task

---

genealogical to each other" (Ray Laurence, "From Oikos to Familia: Looking Forward," in *Families Greco–Roman World*, eds. Ray Laurence and Agneta Strömberg (New York: Continuum, 2012), 15.

functions (mobilize for commitment and ministry)."[26] The small group of a house church, therefore, facilitated personal ministry, household nurture, and evangelism. Transitioning from the analysis of household fellowship, we now turn to the African philosophy of Ubuntu, which provides a unique lens through which to view community and connection. This approach emphasizes the deep-rooted belief that individuals in society are interdependent and collectively human.

4. African Family and *Ubuntu* Small Group Typology

The object of this section is to simply extract from the African social ethos such portion of typical character consonant to house church and small group dynamics. The typology of the African family relates in various points to the house church and small group operations. In order to assess whether the African communal ethos is in line with the small group objectives, this section explores the connections between African cultural values and the life of small groups.

Historically, the African family expressed itself in the context of social bonds and cultural traditions rather than through individual traits.[27] Romose argues that the African community is a dynamic interplay between men and women, characterized by a profound commitment to each other, ultimately resulting in their collective existence.[28] The understanding of community also entails the recognition of social contracts that define their associations and responsibilities. The interconnectedness within the African community, as Romose asserts, is driven by common goals that shape individual choices and experiences. Consequently, an individual's life and personal history are intricately intertwined with the collective narrative and shared social goods of the communities in which they reside, encompassing both material and moral dimensions.

4.1 The Ubuntu Interactive Concept

The term *Ubuntu* is comprised of the prefix *ubu-* and the stem *ntu* to project

---

[26]   Del Birkley, *The House Church* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988), 143.

[27]   M. B. Ramose, "The Philosophy of Ubuntu and Ubuntu as a Philosophy," in *Philosophy from Africa: A Text with Readings*, ed. P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux, 2nd ed. (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002), 325.

[28]   Ramose, "The Philosophy of Ubuntu," 327.

the notion of being in general.[29] Scholars offer various definitions of the term *Ubuntu*. According to Michael Battle the concept of *Ubuntu* originates from the Xhosa expression *'Umuntu ngumntu ngabanye abantu'*, which means that an individual finds expression in the relationship with others.[30] He avers ubu-ntu expresses the fundamental essence and meaning of humanity of the Bantu-speaking people. To attain the full philosophical import of the term *Ubuntu* requires elaborate documentation beyond the scope of this paper.

The central notion of the African community is the configuration of people working together to create peace and love.[31] In this context, common goals within the community dictate individual choices, while the person's life and history are intricately woven into a particular group's social goods. The household, as a fundamental unit of this communal fabric, serves as a nurturing space where individuals develop their dealings with the material and moral world of the communities they belong to.

The social fabric of the African community consists of families, kinship, associations like clans, and then clubs, neighbourhoods, communities, congregations, and more extended social hierarchies.[32] Nonceba Nolundi Mabovula mentions Y. Waghid, B. Van Wyk B., F. Adams, and L. November L.'s slogan that "your child is mine [and] my child is yours," which aptly captures the flavor of African communal life.[33] It means that the child belongs to the community, and the onus remains with the community to make it a significant member of that community—an asset to all.

It is plausible to surmise that the African community embraces communal values that emphasize the individuals' connection to the collective, viewing their actions as mutually beneficial to others and themselves. Within this framework, the household assumes a vital role as a nurturing environment where these communal values are taught and embraced. It becomes a microcosm of the larger African community, fostering a strong sense of interconnectedness and shared responsibility.[34] Individuals within the household strive to cultivate peace and love, understanding that their

---

[29]   Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* (New York: Seabury, 2009), 2.

[30]   Battle, *Ubuntu*, 3.

[31]   Battle, *Ubuntu*, 15.

[32]   Battle, *Ubuntu*, 3.

[33]   Nonceba Nolundi Mabovula, "The Erosion of African Communal Values: A Reappraisal of the African Ubuntu Philosophy," https://www.ajol.-info/index.php/ijhss/article/view/69506.

[34]   Mabovula, "Erosion of African Communal Values."

choices and actions have ripple effects on both their immediate surroundings and the wider community.[35]

Kwame Gyekye also upholds the philosophy regarding the communal values.[36] He asserts that within the matrix of an African community, a person's interests are bound up with the interests of the group over a great number of issues of life and well-being.[37] Gyekye elsewhere concludes that the members of a community also consider themselves primarily as members of the group that have common interests, goals, and values.[38] This communal cultural philosophy is still an advanced communal life and is commonly known as *Ubuntu.*

4.2 Ubuntu Small Group Dynamic

The following discussion examines the *Ubuntu* socio-cultural methodology and possible developments to advance its dynamcis to communication inside the African Church after the COVID-19 pandemic, with a peculiar emphasis on family-oriented plans. Mabovula mentions Khoza Reuel Jr.'s definition of *Ubuntu* as "an African value system that means humanness or being human, a worldview characterised by such values as caring, sharing, compassion, communalism, communocracy and related predispositions."[39] She further cites Reuel to add that "although it [*Ubuntu*] is culturally African in origin, the philosophy can have universal application."[40] Evidence of the relationship between the African communal cultural systems and the small groups in the church might appear remote and complicated. However, they are discernable in several parts of the life of an African.

The Ubuntu philosophy presents a perceptible spiritual union between the African community and the small group mechanics within the church in multiple ways. There is, however, a specific difference between the two systems, which might be very difficult to detect and which is of some importance to notice. In the context of the African spirit of *Ubuntu*, Mabovula cites Reuel to observe that *Ubuntu* "constitutes the spiritual cradle of African

---

[35] Battle, *Ubuntu*, 15.

[36] Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 155.

[37] Gyekye, *Essay on African Philosophical Thought*, 155.

[38] Kwame Gyekye, "Person and Community in African Thought," in *Philosophy from Africa: A Text with Readings*, eds. P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux, 2nd ed. (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2002), 297–312.

[39] Mabovula, "The Erosion of African Communal Values," 40.

[40] Mabovula, "The Erosion of African Communal Values," 40.

religion and culture [and] finds expression in virtually all walks of life—social, political and economic."[41] There is a genuine example of the African spirit of *Ubuntu* that shows affinity with social dynamics of the small group.

4.3 Ubuntu Spirituality in Small Groups

The spiritual essence of *Ubuntu* encompasses a crucial element of small groups, house church, and family, as they contribute to personal spiritual growth and foster unity and *koinonia* rooted in a strong commitment to the collective identity.[42] *Ubuntu* places significant emphasis on sharing, shared responsibility, and communal celebration.[43] Furthermore, it cultivates harmonious human relationships while honouring and dignifying every individual. The profound impact of *Ubuntu* within a network lies in the value it ascribes to human existence and the inherent dignity of every person. The framework, especially its view of the elderly, who played an essential communal function in consolidating *Ubuntu* values. This is exemplified in John Mbiti's statement that "whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual."[44]

The basic elements of small group resonate with *Ubuntu* building the African church. Further, Graham Tomlin elucidates that "small" groups or "cell" groups bring about "the intimacy that becomes possible due to their smaller size, the emphasis lies upon sharing one another's lives, and the importance given to the small group as the basic unit of church life, cells have a greater capacity to create genuine and effective community than many other models of church life."[45] While there are local variations, it is possible to identify common elements that define small group ministries and African communal values. First and foremost, small group ministry places high value on the communal context rather than the individual. The social cohesiveness brings to the fore community outreach with quick, lasting results.

---

41   Mabovula, "The Erosion of African Communal Values," 40.

42   R. Simangaliso Kumalo, "The Changing Landscape of South Africa and Implications for Practicing ubuntu," in *Practicing Ubuntu: Practical Theological Perspective on Injustice, Personhood, and Human Dignity*, eds. Jaco Dreyer, Yolanda Dreyer, Edward Foley, Malan Nel (Zurich: LIT, 2017), 28.

43   Kumalo, "Changing Landscape of South Africa," 28.

44   John Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa* (London: SPCK, 1970), 108.

45   Graham Tomlin, "Cell Church: Culturally Appropriate?," in *Church Without Walls: A Global Examination of Cell Church*, ed. Michael Green (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 2002), 105–6.

The basic elements of *Ubuntu* influences and shapes the structure of small groups. This raises the question of how small groups are connected to and interact with the broader concept of community, necessitating further investigation. Robert Wuthnow surmises that community is the ultimate objective of small groups.[46] Community is the very foundation of the Christian faith, which stems back to the first church and is traceable in the social fabric of the African community that puts heavy emphasis on *Ubuntu*.

4.4 Ubuntu Koinonia

People gather to connect with God and one another in small groups. Wuthnow observes that small groups offer a social solvent and create favorable conditions for spiritual growth and exploration.[47] Ed Stetzer reiterates that "in most churches that are reaching postmodern community [fellowship/small groups?] is a central value in all postmodern communities whether secular or sacred."[48] The environs of small group support belongingness to its constituents, fostering communities more consistently faithful to the Gospel.

By drawing upon the theoretical framework of African communal culture, one can uncover communitarian principles that shape the philosophical underpinnings of contemporary small group ministries. African communities bring together individuals, tribes, and clans through social bonds and cultural traditions, mirroring the confessional and covenantal relationships among believers within the church. The African communal symmetric model fosters harmony and cohesion, starting at the family and small group level, and extending to encompass the global church community.

While it is possible to notice local variations, there are common elements that defines the African communities and the house church and modern small group dynamics. In this paper, I have highlighted some basic common elements of the African community that are present in the theoretical structuring of small groups. Two principles at work are discussed below, fellowship and discipleship.

---

[46]   Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey of Support Groups and Americans New Quest for Community* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 345.

[47]   Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey of Support Groups*, 345.

[48]   Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 149. See also p. 115.

4.5 Fellowship

African communities, similar to modern small groups, emphasize the importance of fellowship. Fellowship involves people coming together to share, unite, communicate, and join themselves to one another. This concept can be understood through the Greek word *koinonia*, which signifies partnership, participation, and social interaction, ultimately leading to communion.[49] The definition offers a basis of social bonding that promotes communal synergy. Craig L. Nessan argues that the essence of Christian *koinonia* is "mutual love and concern shown by Jesus to those who followed him."[50] Small groups, reasoned Betty Wieland, "are all about people because the crown of God's creation is people. Its people He want us to build, not programs."[51] The core tenets of the African communities or *Ubuntu* philosophy include caring, humility, thoughtfulness, consideration, understanding, wisdom, generosity, hospitality, social maturity, and sensitivity—all attributes fostering mutuality. Thus, there appears to be a link between the African communities and small group dynamics.

4.6 Discipleship

A very strong aspect of African community is the transmission of cultural values or standards of acceptable behaviors. Likewise, small groups grow Christian believers through the teaching of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is the most common designation of such an objective. Discipleship relates to a "lasting relationship of a pupil or disciple to his/her master or teacher …. The words connected are applied chiefly to the followers of Jesus and describe the life of faith [through obedience to Him]."[52] A disciple is identified as a learner, *mathetes* in Greek. Robert Bagley aptly observes that "spiritual parenting is a primary result of discipleship which can, and in most cases does, emerge from the small group setting."[53]

The relationship between the teacher and student leads to the transmission of practical and theoretical knowledge from the former to the latter. In a wide range of the African communities the younger generation looks up

---

[49] J. Scattenmann, "Fellowship," *NIDNTT* 1:639.

[50] Craig L. Nessan, *Beyond Maintenance to Mission: A Theology of the Congregation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 5.

[51] David Stark and Betty V. Wieland, *Growing People through Small Groups* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2004), 24.

[52] C. Blendinger, "Disciple," *NIDNTT* 1:480.

[53] Blendinger, "Disciple," 1:480.

to the older generation to acquire understanding of the standard principles regarding the communities' ethos. Such foundational knowledge offers important institutional principles when embraced in the theoretical structuring of the small groups in the African church.

While the terms "disciple" or "follower" are not widely used in African parlance, the principle of growing and building the next generation underpins African communal ethos. The home and community provide the settings for the older generation to transmit moral values to the younger generation through words and deeds. The teaching methods include stories, proverbs, wise saying, and taboos mostly conveyed during various cultural initiation ceremonies. Based on the foregoing cultural matrices, the church in African is able to build small group ministries.

Several features of the concept of *Ubuntu* align with the dynamics of small groups. *Ubuntu* emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals within a community, emphasizing the idea that "I am because we are."[54] Similarly, small groups prioritize building strong relationships and fostering a sense of belonging among their members. *Ubuntu* promotes mutual support and collaboration, which resonates with the collaborative nature of small group dynamics where members work together towards shared goals. Additionally, *Ubuntu* emphasizes the value of collective decision-making and consensus-building, mirroring the participatory approach often found in small group discussions and decision-making processes. Overall, the principles of *Ubuntu*, such as interconnectedness, collaboration, and mutual support, align closely with the dynamics and goals of small groups.

5. Conclusion

The African church has ignored the African community's theoretical framework. It has always remained the core philosophy of Christian life. From its very nature, as explored or cultivated to bear effective results, the Christian life embraces tenets espoused in the spirit of African cultural values—*Ubuntu*. Hence it is not unusual to find the general principles of the African cultural values converging with the philosophy of small group ministries.

This paper contends that the African family—the communal framework—offers an appropriate structure for small group ministry to enhance

---

[54] John Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy* (London, UK: Heinemann, 1990), 105.

discipleship, fellowship, and evangelism. It argues that the communal principles embedded in the African community offers appropriate matrices for the growth and development of the house churches of small groups in the context of Africa families post COVID-19. The African church must endeavor to arrive at some definite ideas and fundamental principles embedded in the African community to foster its growth and development.

THESIS AND DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES

> "Development of an Enhanced Bible Study Program for the Spiritual Nurturing of the Youth in Korean Union Conference"

Researcher: Jazel May Martinez-Diaz, MA in Religion, 2020
Advisor: Pavel Zubkov, PhD

Out of the 7.6 billion people in the world, according to the United Nations (2018), 55% (4.2 billion) live in urban areas. Almost half of that is in Asia. Asia's urban population is 49.7% (2.2 billion). This is nearly a third of the world's population. As the world is becoming more urbanized, there is a greater challenge for urban mission, more particularly for Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) mission. About 31% (2.4 billion) of the world's population are Christians and out of that, only 0.9% (21 million) are SDAs. In the Philippines, with the population of 106.7 million, only 1% (1.1 million) are SDAs.

Tagaytay City is one of the urbanized areas in the Philippines which is home to only about 80,000 locals, yet a regular recipient of thousands of tourists from around the world during weekends and holidays because of the cool climate, food culture, and the scenery of Taal lake. Although Christianity is the major religion of the people in Tagaytay City, the SDAs are only 0.1% of the city's population while 95% are Roman Catholics and the rest are Iglesia ni Cristo and others (Tagaytay City Ecological Profile, 2019, p. 22). The Cavite Adventist Mission (CDM), desiring to reach out to the people of Tagaytay City and aid the SDA Church growth, intends to establish centers of influence that will meet the needs of the people and will open opportunities of introducing Jesus to them and lead them to follow Him. Before the establishment of centers of influence, a needs assessment which has never been done before in Tagaytay City must be done.

This study used mixed methods of gathering quantitative and qualitative data with a non-probability cluster sampling approach to know the

needs of the people in Tagaytay City. For the quantitative data, a needs assessment survey questionnaire in establishing SDA centers of influence in Tagaytay City was used to survey 95 study samples from 3 selected urban barangays of Tagaytay City, namely: Kaybagal South, Silang Crossing East, and San Jose. The survey questionnaire includes demographic questions and questions on 4 areas of needs such as health, education, finance/employment, and emotional and spiritual well-being. There are 3 questions per area of need that are geared toward identifying the residents' needs, the accessibility of services that could suffice their needs, and their willingness to patronize the possible services to be offered. The services given as options are also the probable services that the SDA Church can offer in line with its beliefs and advocacies. There are 3 sets of semi-structured interviews done to collect the qualitative data: first, with some elderly inhabitants about the urbanization history of Tagaytay City; next, with some SDAs about past and present strategies of the Tagaytay Central SDA Church in reaching out to residents; and lastly, with key persons on centers of influence from nearby SDA conferences.

This study used mixed methods of gathering quantitative and qualitative data with a non-probability cluster sampling approach to know the needs of the people in Tagaytay City. For the quantitative data, a needs assessment survey questionnaire in establishing SDA centers of influence in Tagaytay City was used to survey 95 study samples from 3 selected urban barangays of Tagaytay City, namely: Kaybagal South, Silang Crossing East, and San Jose. The survey questionnaire includes demographic questions and questions on 4 areas of needs such as health, education, finance/employment, and emotional and spiritual well-being. There are 3 questions per area of need that are geared toward identifying the residents' needs, the accessibility of services that could suffice their needs, and their willingness to patronize the possible services to be offered. The services given as options are also the probable services that the SDA Church can offer in line with its beliefs and advocacies. There are 3 sets of semi-structured interviews done to collect the qualitative data: first, with some elderly inhabitants about the urbanization history of Tagaytay City; next, with some SDAs about past and present strategies of the Tagaytay Central SDA Church in reaching out to residents; and lastly, with key persons on centers of influence from nearby SDA conferences.

This research study recommends to CDM the establishment of a center of influence with multiple functions. It should include a job listing service, program for skills training and certification, or vocational training courses

that will empower residents for their career and employment, along with business and entrepreneurship training and financial counseling. The residents will patronize a healthy food store and wellness restaurant with cooking classes should CDM choose to provide for health and wellness needs. They will also appreciate affordable medical consultation, medicine or natural alternatives, and wellness guidance. For emotional and spiritual needs, the residents will patronize church services, Bible studies, and stress management consultations/seminars. For educational needs, the CDM can try to offer scholarship programs. With regard to CDM's challenge on expensive lots and SDAs involvement in mission, CDM can utilize the existing company church building in barangay Kaybagal South and the SDA residents nearby.

"The Mission Motif of Selected Passages of the Book of Isaiah"

Researcher: Elisha Kwabena Marfo, PhD in Religion, 2020
Advisor: Teófilo Correa, PhD

This study was directed by two main purposes: (1) to investigate the motif of mission in selected passages in the Book of Isaiah and (2) to discover the theological significance of the motif of mission and how the mission motif contributes to the overall theology of the Book of Isaiah. The twofold task was undertaken through literary and linguistic analyses and theological synthesis. The methodology and its application to the biblical text may yield profitable results and may help espouse mission as a theology of Isaiah. A review of pertinent literature has shown that despite the volume of scholarly discourse to the theology of Isaiah, there remains a question on the motif of mission.

Guided by the criteria for the selection of passages in Isaiah, the linguistic analysis was carried out where the morpho-syntactic features of the passages in the Book of Isaiah were examined. The syntactic features and patterns were described as much as possible according to their exact attestation in the mission passages of Isaiah. Furthermore, an investigation of the literary issues was carried out which yielded some themes from the pericopes. Here, the structure and theme of the mission passages were investigated to help yield a better understanding of the context in relation to the mission motif in the selected passages in the Book of Isaiah. The mission motifs that emanate from the analyses were discussed.

In the theological synthesis, the investigation established that there is a connection between YHWH, His attributes, mission, Israel, and the nations. The study revealed how YHWH relates to His mission and creation as well as to His redemptive purpose for all humanity. The study came up with 10 principles of mission as espoused from the selected passages in the Book of Isaiah. The principles postulate that mission is centered on God, requires the participation of all, and shows the response of God's people to their relationship with Him. The study also notes the theological synthesis that connects the mission motif in the selected passages with the theology of the Book of Isaiah. Attention was devoted to some Isaianic theology such as creation, covenant, salvation, judgment, and eschatology. The relationship of the mission motif of the selected passages in Isaiah to the theology of mission in the OT was investigated. The study noted the linguistic and the thematic connections and explored the contribution of the mission motif in selected passages in the Book of Isaiah to the theology of mission in the OT. In the end, some practical implications of mission that articulate the participation of YHWH's peoples in His mission today are outlined.

The study hopes that the motif of mission in Isaiah, along with the increasing number of scholarly contributions to the Isaianic literature and mission in the OT, will lead to a better appreciation and rediscovery of the relevance of what the HB says about mission. The study will achieve its goal if its readers are willing to navigate the corpus of Isaiah and, as they do, find that being aware of YHWH's mission motif enables them to traverse better and acknowledge the pointy, yet awe-inspiring, message of global, cross-cultural, and national mission aspects of the Book of Isaiah.

"The Development of a Distinctive Seventh-Day Adventist Hymnody: 1841–1886"

Researcher: Cédric Lachenal, PhD in Religion, 2020
Advisor: Kyungho Song, PhD

This dissertation studies early Adventist hymnody. A historical-theological study, it observes the propinquity between early Adventist hymns and theology. It describes the development of Adventist hymnody in the context of the Great Awakening. It observes how Evangelicalism and, more generally, how Protestantism impacted the newborn Adventist Church. Careful attention is given to the religious musical background during the

18th and 19th centuries, including the growing new genres of gospels and spirituals.

The second chapter studies the birth of Adventist hymnody. It surveys the revival background and observes how it impacted the Millerite movement. Insights on music publishing give a clearer picture of the challenges hymnbook compilers faced at the time. The chapter focuses on the leadership of Joshua V. Himes and his great influence on second advent hymnody. It shows how Himes particularly integrated the Protestant heritage and theology as the main ground for Adventist singing.

The third chapter is a historical-systematic study of the five Seventh-day Adventist pillar doctrines. The chapter shows how early Sabbatarians emphasized those five doctrines over the core doctrines they shared with other Evangelicals. Indeed, it was important for a growing movement to affirm their uniqueness. The chapter shows how hymnody helped the propagation of this identity. The chapter ends with a close look at the ministries of James and Ellen G. White. It demonstrates how J. S. White set a model of compiling, while Ellen G. White counseled the Seventh-day Adventist Church on proper singing.

The fourth chapter covers the rise of Adventist musicians and hymnbook compilers. It shows how this new generation of Adventist musicians succeeded in giving an identity to Seventh-day Adventist hymnody independently from J. S. White's strong views. The chapter showcases the compilation of the *Hymns and Tunes* (1886) as a balanced selection of Protestant, Evangelical, and Seventh-day Adventist hymns. It shows how Seventh-day Adventist hymnody perfectly reflects the Seventh-day Adventist theology.

The dissertation bases many of its assumptions on the study of the occurrence of hymns in early Adventist hymnbooks. Through Appendix B, this study gives important data on authorship, dates of composition, and origin of each hymn printed in Adventist hymnbooks. The data also include the "Protestant hymn canon" (Stephen A. Marini's list) as a strong tool of comparison. The conclusion of the dissertation gives some input for contemporary studies on Seventh-day Adventist hymnody.

"Towards a Christ-Centered Preaching Process Model: A Case Study"

Researcher: Dan Namanya, DMin, 2020
Advisor: Aivars Ozolins, PhD

Christ-centered preaching becoming a lost art in the 21st century poses an urgent need for equipping preachers for preaching more Christ-centered sermons. The damage caused by Christless preaching is the weakening of the authority of the Bible as a revelation of Jesus Christ. Moreover, Christless sermons have led to spiritual emptiness among church congregations. The purpose of this study was to create a Christ-centered preaching process model for preachers by establishing the definition of Christ-centered preaching, by uncovering the reasons why Christ-centered preaching is seldom heard in the pulpit, and by equipping preachers for presenting Christ-centered sermons every time they preach. To accomplish this purpose, a qualitative case study was conducted among selected preachers in an international church in the Philippines. Data were collected primarily through in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, and documents. Triangulation of data that included a literature review was carried out. The findings of the study revealed that Christ-centered preaching is a biblical proclamation of Christ from Genesis to Revelation by one whose life has been transformed by Jesus Christ. The reasons why Christ-centered preaching is seldom heard in the pulpit were identified to be inadequacy, background orientation, wrong focus, and personal barriers. The ways by which preachers may be empowered to preach Christ-centered sermons were grouped into 2 categories: internal and external empowerment. Internal empowerment included personal preparation, focus on Jesus, and connection with people. External empowerment includes education and equipping.

This study proposed a process model to empower preachers to preach Christ-centered sermons. The results of this study showed the need for emphasizing and strengthening the Christ-centered preaching ministry of preachers. This case study concluded with recommendations to the church, academic institutions, and preachers. The study also included suggestions for further research.

"An Analysis of the Theological Views of Baptism either as a Sacrament or an Ordinance"

Researcher: Michael Schambacher, MA in Religion, 2020
Advisor: Remwil Tornalejo, DTheol

This research analyzes and compares the scriptural-theological and historical views of baptism either as a sacrament or an ordinance by utilizing primary, unpublished, and secondary sources. Christian denominations since

earlier ages conflict with each other in their understanding and overempha-sis of baptism as a means of God's grace, regeneration, the Holy Spirit, spiri-tual gifts, forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. However, baptismal regeneration is in conflict with the biblical understanding of baptism as an outward sign of God's regenerative, transformative, and saving work as ap-pearing in the conversion process and the life of baptismal candidates be-fore baptism. Nevertheless, the conflict of baptism as an essential aspect of a believer's salvation experience without soteriological value relates to the biblical-theological concept of repentance, conversion, regeneration, and salvation. The Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church with its perspective of preparation and nurture before and after baptism rejects in its official fun-damental belief on baptism as ordinance any sacramental view or notion of baptismal regeneration. However, some scholars, pastors, authors, and members within this church uphold baptismal regeneration as similar to Al-exander Campbell's concept of baptism for the remission of sins. Such con-cept might be even his concept itself or one influenced by him or James White.

Chapter 1 introduces the conflict of baptism in Christianity by focusing on baptismal regeneration and the challenge of goal setting versus the high dropout rate of baptized members. Chapter 2 analyzes the biblical-theologi-cal understanding of baptism as related to regeneration, conversion, and re-pentance. Chapter 3 views the conflict of baptism as a sacrament or an ordi-nance within Christianity by comparing and analyzing baptism within Ca-tholicism, Presbyterianism, Lutheranism, Anabaptism, and Adventism. Chapter 4 investigates the historical development of the fundamental beliefs and baptism within the SDA Church and Campbell's influential concept of baptism for the remission of sins as related to some of the members and pastors of the *Christian Connexion-Restoration Movement* and the SDA Church. Such shows the conflict of insufficient discussion and unified un-derstanding on the practice and concept of baptism within Adventism by discussing its popular views by some scholars, pastors, authors, members, and literature within the SDA Church that promote baptismal regeneration. The summary of Chapter 5 can serve as the basis for future studies on the importance of developing a scriptural-theological understanding of conver-sion, regeneration, and salvation as prerequisite for baptism within Christ-ianity.

"Bringing the Gospel to the Rastafarian Community of Shashemene, Ethiopia: A Case Study"

Researcher: Stkesworth Shadeed, DMin, 2020
Advisor: Olaotse Obed Gabasiane, PhD

Rastafari is an Afro-Caribbean socioreligious movement that began on the island of Jamaica in the 1930s. It is composed of a number of elements including rituals and practices from the Afro-Caribbean folk religions of Jamaica as well as ideologies and doctrines from Judeo-Christianity. Rastafarians see the Western world as Babylon and Africa as the "Promised Land," from which they were taken as slaves.

The number of adherents of the movement is steadily increasing and Rastafari has spread to many countries of the world. Among the places to which the Rastafari movement has spread, perhaps none is as significant as Shashemene, Ethiopia. This is because Ras Tafari (emperor Haile Selassie I, the last king of Ethiopia) granted a portion of land to those in the Western world who wanted to return to Africa, and a number of Rastafarians from different countries have repatriated to Shashemene and formed a community there.

There have been a number of studies conducted on the Rastafari movement but mostly in terms of anthropology and culture. However, when one considers the Rastafari movement in the context of the Great Controversy and the mandate of fulfilling the great commission of making disciples of all nations, the Adventist Church must do something to minister to this people group for whom Christ has died. Regrettably, this has not been the case, especially in terms of missiological research seeking to reach Rastafarians.

To address this situation, this study presents the background, development, worldview, and religious ideologies of the Rastafari movement in order to (a) better understand Rastafarians and (b) suggest missiological strategies and methods of presenting the everlasting Gospel to them. It also presents a qualitative case study on Christian converts from the Rastafarian community of Shashemene, Ethiopia. Subsequent to that, the data acquired from literary sources and interviews were analyzed, and a systematic strategy is presented to bring the Gospel to the Rastafarians of Shashemene. This strategy highlights the bridges that can be used and the pitfalls to be avoided when ministering to the Rastafarians of Shashemene.

> "A Biblical-Theological Evaluation of the Ideas on the Person of Christ in African Christology"

Researcher: Cliford Sibanda, PhD in Religion, 2020
Advisor: Kyung Ho Song, PhD

Christ is the foundation of all Christian doctrine. A proper understanding of His person and works is an essential component of a sustainable theology. African theologians have discussed the most relevant depiction of the person of Christ for Africa. This study is an exploration of the most proper contextualized idea of the person of Christ in African Christologies. Through a descriptive-cum analytical approach, this study traces the origin of African Christologies and, thereafter, analyzes and categorizes them. Therefrom, it evaluates these ideas of the person of Christ. After surveying and evaluating the ideas of the person of Christ issuing from the aforementioned Christologies, this study proposes the most proper contextualized idea of the person of Christ.

The study is a documentary research that is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is a general introduction. It establishes the need for an African Christology. In doing so, it provides a literature review that summarizes the major contributions of scholars within and beyond Africa.

The second chapter traces the historical development of African Christologies. In the process of doing this, it pays attention to the context in which African Christologies emerged. This context includes the African worldview and the sociopolitical realities that prevailed in the continent. The third chapter describes and analyzes African Christologies. It defines some of their key terms before presenting their premises. The fourth chapter evaluates the ideas of the person of Christ in these categories. The basis of evaluation is Scripture. The fifth chapter proposes a new approach to African Christologies. The sixth chapter is the conclusion.

This paper concludes that the ideas on the person of Christ that have been suggested in African Christologies seem to have somewhat contributed to the formation of the global idea of the person of Christ. However, they have failed to make their ideas fully harmonize with Scripture. Therefore, this study submits Sanctuary Christology as the most proper idea. Also, this study encourages further inquiries on African Christology. This includes a qualitative study on how African congregants understand the person of Christ. In addition to a qualitative study, there is a need to investigate African translations of the Bible and their implications on Christology.

> "Remembering God the Creator: A Cognitive Analysis and Theology of the Hebrew Metaphors of Qohelet 12:1–7"

Researcher: Henry Sitanggang, PhD in Religion, 2020
Advisor: Carlos E. Mora, ThD

The poetic discourse of Qoh 12:1–7 conveys a substantial divergence of unique images and elusive metaphors. The metaphorical language and distinctiveness in every imagery challenge its meaning, literary unity, and the *leitmotive* of the text as a whole. Many studies have approached the text with different methods of analysis to understand the relationship between one metaphor with another. However, a close and contextual reading of the metaphors (Qoh 12:1–7) and reading from the cognitive-linguistics perspective have not been done. This dissertation investigates the literary features of Qoh 12:1–7 in their metaphorical nature, features, and representations. The understanding of the metaphors develops the theological agenda as a result of biblical and contextual analysis of the metaphors.

Chapter 1 introduces the cognitive approach as part of the systematized and principal methodology of exegesis. This integrated methodology allows a close examination of the cognitive process and experience behind each metaphor in the text. Chapter 2 evaluates scholars' interpretations of the metaphors. Scholars employing the allegorical and symbolical approaches have generally imposed anthropological imagination and spiritualization upon the text. To this type of interpretation, each image is associated with an internal part of human body which implies a person's old age or a ruined house. This inference seemingly points to the eschatological arrival. Chapter 3 exegetes each metaphorical image within the specific units (Qoh 12:1a, 1b–2, 3–5, 6, and 7,) through the lens of a cognitive approach. Chapter 4 reflects this textual analysis and contributes to the understanding of the theological views of the metaphors.

Chapter 5 shows a summary of the findings. The literary structure of the text suggests that the imperative clause (זכר) of remembering the Creator (v. 1a) is the foreground of all the evocative metaphors beginning in v. 1b to v. 7. Governed by this conceptual metaphor (remembering the Creator), one metaphor after another reveals a dualistic orientation or character between youth days and with evil days, beginning and end, brightness and darkness, rain and dryness, delight and displeasure, strength and weakness, up and down, and life and death. These falling motions conceptually project the up-down orientation of psychological debilitation like agony, suffering, and

dread of death and unpleasant death in the coming of divine judgment by means of hostile incursion and calamity.

Most of the metaphors reflect these conditions and interestingly present a successive structure of the appalling episodes. They begin with the strength of youth (12:1a), threats of death from mental and physical weakening (vv. 1b–5b), old symptoms as a suffering phase (vv. 5c, 5d), death appearance (v. 5f), deteriorating process as destruction (v. 6), and turning to dust as nothingness (v. 7). This poetic flow adduces the literary coherence and continuity of the text. The debilitating conditions are antithetical to remembering God the Creator—between being neglectful and being mindful (of good and evil aspects). Such negative images convey Qohelet's pedagogical and theological springboard to evoke one's cognizance and sensibility of God's sovereignty as Creator, Judge, and Source of life. Thus, the remembrance of God is a covenant of relationship and faithfulness to God the Creator whose desire is a gift of life for all humans.

> "Leadership by Influence in Tribal Communities: A Case Study of the Iraya Mangyan in Occidental Mindoro, Philippines"

Researcher: Christian M. Stroeck, DMin, 2021
Advisor: Cristian Dumitrescu, PhD

The Iraya belongs to the 9 native tribes in Occidental Mindoro collectively known as *Mangyans* or *Katutubos*. Since the 15th century, Katutubos have been oppressed and exploited by Spaniards, Muslim rebels, Americans, Japanese, and lowlanders. The Katutubos lost their forest, forcing them to change their lifestyle from hunting to farming. Consequently, they developed a feeling of inferiority in addition to their fear of the spirits. Through the influence of Christianity and lowlanders, the Katutubo experienced changes in their culture. Many tried to adapt to or even imitate the lifestyle of the lowlanders.

Katutubo Excel Schools Inc. (KESI) is a Christian non-government organization with the mission to equip the marginalized Katutubos. KESI provides quality education based on spiritual, academic, and practical foundations. KESI envisions its students as educated Christian ambassadors in their tribal communities.

The purpose of this study was to investigate how KESI high school students can exert leadership in their tribal communities. Therefore, first this study analyzed the concept of leadership in the tribal context. Second, the study investigated possibilities for KESI graduates to exert influence.

This qualitative research used the exploratory case study design. Data were collected through individual and focus group interviews, observations, and available literature. The research participants included KESI high school students, parents, village leaders, a village judge, a KESI alumnus, and the KESI administrator.

The study revealed a coexistence of the traditional leadership through elders and formal leadership based on local government unit structure in the tribal villages. Important themes in tribal leadership are authority, personality, and knowledge. The research demonstrated that KESI graduates will probably neither become traditional nor formal leaders. Instead of leading through position, KESI graduates will exert their influence indirectly through example in personality and spirituality, lifestyle and performance, and knowledge and education.

A contextualized tribal leadership model was developed. It explains how tribal communities can be influenced for a positive change. At the end, specific recommendations for KESI are given to equip its high school students for the task ahead. This research may benefit not only KESI but also other projects helping the marginalized tribal people of Mindoro.

"A Study of the Hebrew and Aramaic Clauses Alluding to Temple Defilement in Daniel"

Researcher: Innocent Gwizo, PhD in Religion, 2020
Advisor: Teófilo Correa, PhD

This dissertation is a study undertaken to explore 44 selected Hebrew and Aramaic clauses that allude to temple defilement in the book of Daniel. Chapter 1 is introductory. Chapter 2 is focused on the exegesis of the selected clauses alluding to temple defilement in the book of Daniel. The analysis showed that the clauses convey distinctive syntagmatic nuances and provide a textual-linguistic phenomenon through defined linguistic-literary structures that allude to temple defilement.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed that temple defilement is characterized by 5 distinct categories in the book of Daniel that include (a) holy city, (b) moral violation, (c) earthly cultic ritual defilement, (d) cosmic cultic ritual defilement, and (e) defilement through symbolism. It had been found that 3 agents are responsible for the earthly and cosmic temple defilement in the book of Daniel: (a) God's people, (b) Babylon, and (c) the papacy. The analysis also made it apparent that the earthly or cosmic temple is defiled in 5

modes that parallel the temple defilement categories. Moreover, temple defilement is a depiction of the cosmic conflict between God and evil.

Regarding temple defilement reversal, the analysis revealed the earthly or cosmic temple defilement reversal in 4 ways: (a) YHWH's word, (b) YHWH's response to prayer, (c) dedication of the heavenly sanctuary which begins with the anointing of the Messiah, and (d) cleansing of the cosmic sanctuary. The cleansing of the cosmic sanctuary declares that YHWH has made a provision to reverse its defilement. The figurative cosmic temple defilement caused by the papacy (little horn) is reversed and the sanctuary's state of holiness is restored.

The exploration also revealed the cosmic sanctuary as YHWH's throne and place of divine judgment from where He rules the universe. The cosmic sanctuary declares YHWH's justice, righteousness, and mercy. Also, the cosmic sanctuary cleansing is antitypical to the earthly sanctuary Day of Atonement. The repentant sinner receives pardon for sin through the merit of Christ's sacrifice and priestly ministry.

Chapter 3 is a presentation of some theological implications from the above analysis regarding temple defilement. The implications include (a) divine judgment, (b) holiness, (c) the people of God, (d) eschatology, and (e) cosmic conflict. Chapter 4 is the summary and conclusion of the study. The analysis of the Hebrew and Aramaic clauses provided a theological base that contributes to the theology of the book of Daniel.

A Coaching Strategy for Sustainable Leadership Succession among Small Group Units in Korean Union Conference

---

Researcher: Young Il Kwon, DMin, 2020
Advisor: Pavel Zubkov, PhD

Leadership propels any church or institution to achieve its mission and goals. The sustainability of this leadership in terms of succession can determine how continuous this effectiveness is over time, irrespective of any leadership type. Small group units in different Adventist Churches in Korean Union Conference (KUC) face challenges in terms of finding a suitable strategy to help them (churches) sustain their leadership succession, specifically among small groups.

The study, therefore, developed a coaching strategy for sustainable leadership succession among small group units in KUC using a qualitative research approach, a well-structured in-depth interview method. From the

start, 9 participants were involved in the project. However, 2 of them left, so I interviewed 7 participants: 1 pastor, 2 coaches, and 4 small group leaders. These 7 included 1 male and 6 female participants from different churches in KUC.

The findings of this study indicate that most of the small groups in the churches within KUC do not have a proper strategy for sustainable leadership succession on the aspect of coaching. Some small groups used the FAST (Faithful, Available, Spiritual, and Teachable) training, JDTS (Jesus Disciples Training School) program, and GROW (Goal, Reality, Options, and Will) coaching strategies. Nevertheless, some still requested to receive more training to be equipped to adopt a systematic approach to help improve the leadership in their churches and in their small groups.

A total of 8 themes divided into 19 categories emerged based on the 3 research objectives developed for this study. These themes include community, coaching small group leadership, training as an instrument, small group leaders' achievements, connection, strategic planning for small group leaders, characteristics of succession planning, a plan for a coaching system, and a plan for small group leaders. The study combined all these to make a strategic recommendation in the light of sustainable succession through coaching in small groups as an urgent need for the spiritual growth of church members in KUC.

"A Program to Train Mentors for Literature Evangelists in North Philippine Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists"

Researcher: Abraham M. del Rosario, DMin, 2021
Advisor: Reuel Almocera, DPS

North Philippine Union Conference (NPUC) enlists big numbers of literature evangelist (LE) recruits each year but only a few remain committed and competent. New LEs lose interest and commitment in the literature ministry. This phenomenon could be attributed to the lack of training programs for LEs which enables them to be effective and competent in this ministry.

This study was designed to enhance the LE training programs in NPUC through the mentoring/discipling approach. This research involved 9 successful LE participants (3 publishing leaders or area publishing ministry leaders, 3 credentialed LEs, and 3 intern LEs under NPUC) to determine the common factors which make them successful and committed LEs. Moreover, the participants are all Seventh-day Adventist LEs of NPUC. From the

LE participants, I found 13 characteristics and practices which made their ministry a success: (a) personal qualities, (b) professional qualities, (c) missional duties, (d) relationship building, (e) discipleship, (f) mentoring, (g) motivation, (h) inspiration, (i) modeling, (j) enthusiasm, (k) encouragement, (l) qualities of LEs, and (m) qualities of mentors.

Based on the findings and recommendations, the ACHIEVE LE mentorship training program for NPUC was developed and introduced. The program was supported by and based on the scriptural principles of mentoring in the OT and the NT. The 13 characteristics and practices were included as guiding instructions in the administration of the program. The program consolidated all the findings of the study.

"Developing An Appropriate Contextualization Method Of Doing Mission among the Ozuzu and Isu Communities an Etche, Nigeria"

Researcher: Iheanyichukwu Samuel Nwogu, DMin, 2021
Advisor: Olaotse Obed Gabasiane, PhD

The cultural practices of *ituanya* in Isu and the worship of the god Amadi Oha in Ozuzu in the Mba Asa community in Etche have affected the mission growth in this area since 1928 when the Advent message came to Etche. These beliefs and ancestral heritage practices have resulted in a tremendous setback, despite several evangelistic efforts and methods adopted by the Adventist Church. The areas of Ozuzu and Isu remain behind compared with other communities in Etche because the people place much emphasis on sacrifices, the worship of gods, and initiation. Ozuzu and Isu consider their practices and worship instead of the supreme God as a protective defense for them.

The purpose of this study is to address this situation by developing an appropriate contextualization approach to use in the communities based on the participants' perception and the literature review. Thus, the aim is to develop a strategic method of doing effective missions in these communities. The findings suggest that an appropriate contextualization strategy can help lead these people to Christ, place Him in the center of their lives, and lead them to have an intimate relationship with Him. Christ is sympathetic to their conditions and problems. He sought to transform humanity, understand humanity, and attend to their needs. He showed love and faith and healed both the physical and spiritual needs of His hearers.

Ellen G. White advocates that Christ's method of contextualization is a useful strategy to reach people where they are. She further explains that humans differ in their ways and men and women must be wise to win them to Christ. The interest of the communities must be the priority of the church by providing services through community outreach. These communities' interests can be better accomplished by the church when outreach is combined with medical missionary approach, welfare services, and church building strategies before the church embarks on public evangelism. This approach will be sustained through small group formations and follow-up nurturing to retain the new converts.

> "Knowing God as an Evangelical: Towards a Canonical-Epistemological Model"

Researcher: Dan-Adrian Petre, PhD in Religion, 2021
Advisor: Gheorghe Răzmeriță, PhD

Theological knowledge formation occupies a central place in the evangelical theological pursuit. Three models represent the epistemological tendencies of contemporary evangelicalism: evidentialist foundationalism, proper functionalism, and postfoundationalism. While giving prominence to the Bible, all these models stop short of establishing a canonically-based theological epistemology, as the sola scriptura evangelical principle demands. To address this need, this research outlines a minimal, canonically-derived, theological epistemology that may foster a fuller understanding of theological knowledge formation within evangelicalism. Chapter 1 introduces the background, the problem, purpose, significance, and the scope and delimitations of this research, together with a short terminological clarification, the canonical-epistemological method used, the plan of research, and an overview of the previous research on evangelical epistemology.

Chapter 2 reviews the historical background of evangelical epistemology. It starts with the ancient Greek variants and continues with the patristic, medieval, Reformation, and incipient modern periods. To outline the contemporary epistemological variance, Chapter 3 analyzes three representative evangelical models through their highly regarded exemplars: Norman Geisler (evidentialist foundationalism), Alvin Plantinga (proper functionalism), and Stanley Grenz (postfoundationalism). Chapter 4 of this study uses cognitive analysis to explore the concept of KNOWING GOD in the Bible through the cognitive linguistic window provided by two prototypical terms, ידע and γινώσκω. The cognitive analysis results in seven epistemological implications. Chapter 5 unpacks these implications, outlining a

minimal model, called relational-participative, which is then is used to address the need of establishing a canonically-based theological epistemology.

Chapter 6 summarizes the findings of this research and presents seven conclusions. First, a modest form of foundationalism best answers the need of recognizing the primacy and normativity of Scripture. Second, theological knowledge formation is an embodied process. Third, theological knowledge formation has a participatory aspect mediated by human sensory experience which cannot be detached from cognitive processes. Fourth, theological knowledge formation takes place in history and connects the past to the future through the present covenantal obedience of the community of believers. Fifth, the proposed model emphasizes the communitarian and the individual character of theo- logical knowledge formation and gives prominence to the need for canonical correspondence over any long-lasting tradition. Sixth, the symbols characterizing past covenantal obedience can foster present theological knowledge formation. Seventh, theological knowledge formation is also fostered by participating in the centripetal-centrifugal Christian mission framed by a cosmic conflict between good and evil. The chapter ends with recommendations for further study.

"Developing Strategies to Reach the Chinese-Filipinos in Mindanao"

ResearcherCarlito P. Quidet Jr., DMiss, 2021
Advisor: Pavel Zubkov, PhD

For more than 100 years, there has only been one Chinese-Filipino Adventist Church in Mindanao. The church has not developed any methods to reach the Chinese-Filipinos. They are businessmen and very influential in the society. They own big malls, hotels, beach resorts, banks, hardware shops, and big companies. They are the richest group of people in the Philippines. Unfortunately, the Adventist Church has not developed strategies to reach them.

This study explored strategies to reach Chinese-Filipinos through missiological principles in the Bible. This applied research dissertation tried to uncover methods on how other denominations reach this ethnic group. This study sought possible avenues for the Adventist Church to reach them. Qualitative research was used to find how other denominations and the Adventist Church brought Chinese-Filipinos to their respective churches.

The introductory chapter outlines the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, justification, limitations, delimitations, methodology, interview procedure, selection criteria, research instruments, data collection process, data analysis procedure, assumptions, and ethical

considerations. Chapters 2 discusses the theological foundation of mission, missiological principles in the OT and the NT, and biblical paradigms about the needs of Chinese-Filipinos. Chapter 3 discusses the context of the study. It uncovers the history of Chinese-Filipinos in the Philippines. It elaborates the religious beliefs, cultural practices, and values of Chinese-Filipinos and concludes with the presentation of Adventist mission towards this group of influential people. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Chapter 5 presents the strategy to reach the Chinese-Filipinos in Mindanao developed based on the findings of this study, summarizes the findings, and presents the conclusion.

"Clothing Imageries of Salvation in the Book of Isaiah: An Exegetical Study"

Researcher: Tabua Kotobalavu, PhD in Religion, 2021
Advisor: Carlos Elias Mora, ThD

Recent publications on dress and clothing in the HB testify of growing scholarship in this area of study. The prophetic book of Isaiah in the HB is replete with clothing items and imageries. While scholars have interpreted each text on clothing in the book, a comprehensive examination of the usage of clothing imageries and how they communicate the salvation of YHWH is yet to be realized. This dissertation seeks to fill this gap in biblical scholarlship.

Chapter 1 of this study introduces the investigation and explains the problem it undertakes to resolve. The research approach utilized in the study is also presented in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a review of the literature that deals with clothing and salvation in the book of Isaiah. In Chapter 2, a survey of the historical, political, and socioreligious backgrounds relating to the imageries of Israel's clothing and dress found in the MT is conducted. Here, the distinct types, meanings, and functions of dress and clothing prevalent in the tenth to the eighth-century ancient Israel is gleaned.

Based on the preceding 2 chapters, Chapter 3 utilizes the grammatical-historical research approach to examine each clothing text of Isaiah in which the motif of salvation is explicitly inherent. The 5 exegetical steps of analysis are (1) identification of image, (2) establishment of image, (3) semantic and other exegetical considerations, (4) contextual situation, and (5) interpretation. Theological implications of the exegetical analysis are the focus and content of Chapter 4. The conclusion of the study, a summary of its findings, and recommendations for further studies are rendered in the final chapter.

The study concludes that clothing imageries embedded in the texts of Isaiah have an enhancing and intensifying effect on YHWH's message of salvation to His people. This conclusion affirms the intrinsic communicative properties of clothing imageries in conveying intended messages. Isaiah's pervasive use of clothing imageries demonstrates literary skill and devotion to the communication of the divine message. Through the thread of clothing imagery, the message of YHWH's work of salvation is to reach the ends of the earth.

Toward a Biblical Theology of Homosexuality: Old Testament Contributions

---

Researcher: Jae Young Sim, PhD in Religion, 2021
Advisor: Carlos Elias Mora, ThD

The two primary objectives of this research are (a) to solve several interpretive problems presented by various OT interpreters over prohibition texts and their challenging passages, which seem to discuss homosexuality directly or indirectly and (b) to construct a biblical-theological grid on the issue of homosexuality within the OT. This dissertation attempted to fill the gap between these two objectives using a biblical-theological perspective with the selected exegetical works suggested by Gerhard F. Hasel and Walter C. Kaiser. A review of pertinent literature had shown that despite the volume of scholarly discourse on the interpretation of the cited OT texts on homosexuality, there remains a question on how to interpret them correctly.

Guided by the criteria for the selection of passages in the suggested OT texts on homosexuality, I analyzed the texts through the following steps: (a) arrangement of OT suggested references on homosexuality in chronological order, (b) preliminary considerations, (c) cultural and contextual analyses, (d) literary consideration (literary context and analysis), (e) semantic and other exegetical considerations, (f) theological consideration (theological analysis), and (g) summary.

After the examination of the relevant passages dealing with same-sex relations throughout the entire HB, the following conclusion were presented: (a) heterosexual relations between a man and a woman are the only divinely designed form of human sexuality (Gen 1 and 2) and (b) homosexual practice is depicted and described as "a wicked thing" (Gen 19:6) and "an abominable thing" (Lev 18:22). The earnings of male prostitution could not be brought to the house of the Lord because it is regarded as "the price of [a] dog" (Deut 23:18). It is an "evil act" and a "shameful thing" to the Israelites

(Judg 19:23). Israel's righteous kings endeavored to drive out anyone engaged in this sexual relationship (1 Kgs 14:24, 15:12, 22:47, and 2 Kgs 23:7). The biblical writer of the Kings does not recommend such a sexual life because it could shorten one's life (Job 36:14). Prophets constantly gave an example of Sodom's great sins, including this homosexual activity, but the sins of Israel surpass the wicked city; it is compared to a whore (Ezek 16:48–50).

Furthermore, same-sex relations are explicitly defined by the HB as one of the seriously illicit sexual sins among the people of God (Lev 18 and 20). Historically, no form of homosexuality has ever been accepted in the community of Israel from the creation: homosexual rape (Gen 19 and Judg 19), consented same-sex relations (Lev 18 and 20), male cult prostitution (Deut 23:18; four Kings' references [1 Kgs 14:24; 15:12; 22:47; and 2 Kgs 23:7]), and even a homosexual lifestyle itself (Job 36:14). The HB has a strong, unequivocal, and consistent rejection of same-sex relations, including consensual homosexual relationships. Though only a few OT passages speak of same-sex relations and their practice, all of them do clearly show unqualified disapproval. There is no exception at all in the OT.

The theological synthesis presents that homosexuality is discussed from various theological angles. The discussions on the triangle of the relationship of theology to homosexuality (God, humanity, and community) explain how the HB depicts the issue of homosexuality in the different theological frames. Homosexuality in the OT is a multi-faceted theological issue in the relation of God, humanity, and the community. It cannot be understood in a single theological frame.

It is appropriate to say that the biblical-theological discussion of homosexuality in the OT leads to a better appreciation and rediscovery of the relevance of what the HB states about the issue of homosexuality. More importantly, it should be stated that the homosexual has hope in God because the only sin that God cannot forgive is the sin that is not confessed and repented. Forgiveness and reconciliation have always been open to every sinner.

BOOK REVIEWS

Moskala, Jiří, and John C. Peckham, eds. *God's Character and the Last Generation* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2018). 286 pp. US$29.99.

This volume contains 14 chapters written by 12 prominent Seventh-Day Adventist church scholars, compiled by Jiří Moskala and John C. Peckham. The book is a rebuttal of and a response of the Seventh-Day Adventist church to the last generation theology (LGT). All the topics surround the theme of how and who the primary agent is to end the great controversy. The book discusses how perfection, sanctification, purification, the identity of the 144 000, human nature, the cross, the atonement, the delay of Christ, and human nature fit into the great controversy's culmination. In the first chapter, Peckham highlights that the end of the great controversy for the LGT is in the hands of those who will live a perfect life to revendicate Christ. In other words, the end of the great controversy lies in the hands of people who will duplicate the life of Christ. The author of the second chapter, Woodrow Whidden, emphasizes the historical background and roots of the LGT. The author shows that proponents of LGT base their theology on the post-fall human nature of Christ, and that they understand the cross as not completing the work of the atonement.

One of the most significant responses to the LGT is found in chapter 3, where Martin Hannah elaborates on the nature of humanity in relation to sin. With the understanding of sin as a mere transgression of God's law, as

LGT claims, this chapter shows that sin is more than just a transgression of God's law. It is also embedded in our nature. He bases his analysis on understanding sin in the Epistle to the Romans. Also, in chapter 9, Cortez asks one of the crucial questions related to chapter 3: Why could Adam and Eve not just receive a sacrificial offering of forgiveness? The author has answered by saying that the sin committed by Adam and Eve was beyond their sphere. Their sin was the key point for the curse of the whole of humanity, and the image of God was lost through their sin. Therefore, what was lost in the Garden of Eden was restored only through Christ on the cross.

In chapter 4, Davidson explains the contrast between the protestant and catholic understanding of justification. He concludes by saying that the protestant understanding of justification is biblical because it makes Christ the center of justification. In this context, he uses the expression that we are saved by faith, which is imputed to humankind. Also, the chapter emphasizes that we are justified not by what we have done but by who God is. Following the same line of thought, Fortin, in chapter 5 says that the idea that we are justified by what we do, and that we can reach perfection and sanctification, leads to perfectionism and legalism. In chapter 7, H. Peter Swanson emphasized that there is no efficient way to measure our faith or spirituality. The methods we may use to evaluate our perfection or faith will never be sure because they make us focus on ourselves and rule out Christ, our ultimate agent for salvation. In addition, in chapter 10, Jiří Moskala emphasizes the role of Christ and the cross by citing Ellen G. White from the book *The Only Mediator* which declare that Christ was the perfect atonement for our sin. Also he adds by saying that the saying of Christ "It is finished" is a powerful confirmation of salvation for everyone who believes (John 19:30; 3:16).

One could ask the question, if none of our actions can cause the end of the great controversy, then why is Christ taking so long? Jo Ann Davidson, in chapter 13, goes through the contemporary beliefs about eschatology and then attempts to develop the biblical view of why Christ is delayed. Her conclusions shows that God's time is beyond our interpretation.

After reading the volume, one should appreciate the simplicity and the scholarship embedded in the book. Also, through chapters 1–14, one can notice that the Adventist understanding of the great controversy is that Christ is the culmination of everything, while for the Last Generation The-

ology is anthropocentric. The language that all the writers used in disagreeing with the Last Generation Theology is gracious and kind. The use of the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White is something to congratulate all the writers for. In addition, based on the limitation of the pages per article, I see that most of the writers have invested in the endnotes for references and elaborations on some of the terms that needed further explanation. In other words, throughout the reading, one can sense many questions were not answered. Therefore, I would suggest that the book be entitled *God's Character and Last Generation: An Introduction*. Here are some of the reasons for this suggested title. First, I sense the need to develop the role of the remnant and their role in the great controversy. Second, it would have been an advantage if the book would have elaborated more on the role of Christian conduct or life style in the great controversy. Though, in the book's last chapter, chapter 14, Peckham elaborates slightly on the role of the good deeds of followers of Christ on a missiological level. I think it would have been more enlightening to develop a good understanding of the role of Christian conduct in the spectrum of great controversy. And last, I would love to see the book dedicating a section to the significance of preaching the good news of salvation and its impact in the great controversy.

In conclusion, I would recommend this book to every member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but mainly to pastors and theologians because it contains good discussions of what the Bible and Ellen G. White teaches us about our salvation.

Jean-Claude Rukundo Rwarahoze
Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES

Mburu, Elizabeth. *African Hermeneutics*. UK: Langham Global Library, 2019. Pp. 223. Index 225–34. ISBN 9781783684649. Price: $ 20.

Elizabeth Mburu is an African author who has authored books and several articles, such as "From the Classroom to the Pulpit: Navigating the Challenges" in Rodney L. Reed, ed., African Contextual Realities (Cumbria, UK: Langham, 2018); "Realized Eschatology in the Soteriology of John's Gospel," Testamentum Imperium 3 (2011): 1–36; "Jesus, our Liberator: An Inter-

cultural Dialogue," SATS 31 (2021): 58–73; "The Importance of African Hermeneutics in African Theological Education" in Johannes J. Knoetze and Alfred R. Brunson, eds., A Critical Engagement with Theological Education in Africa: A South African Perspective. Reformed Theology in Africa 7 (Cape Town, South Africa: OASIS Books, 2021). She is a professor of the New Testament at International Leadership University.

The author divides the present book into two parts. The first part comprises four chapters that outline the African theological and philosophical worldviews and her proposed contextualized method. The second part, which contains six chapters, discusses the application of the method. In the introduction, the author alleges that the Bible has been interpreted through the lens of Western hermeneutics and applied to African Christians. This interpretation, she argues, does not respond to the African needs because it does not consider the African context and, therefore, creates a dichotomy in an African believer's thoughts and way of living (p. 3). In this introductory section, the author describes Paul's example of a contextualized method when he preached at Aeropagous in Athens (Acts 17). She adopts Paul's approach "of moving from the known to the unknown," arguing that this principle is adequate in presenting the gospel (P. 19).

Chapter two deals with the theological aspects of an African worldview. In this section, the author first defines what she understands as a worldview. She argues that a worldview is "a set of beliefs and values that guide one's thinking about all of life" (p. 22). Though she acknowledges a variety of worldviews in African cultures, she also points out that these cultures present certain commonalities that form a unified African worldview. Theologically, the author categorizes this worldview in three aspects: the understanding of ultimate reality, external reality, and human relationships. For each aspect, the author discusses its traditional and modern understanding within the African context, providing its implications on interpreting the Scriptures. Concerning the ultimate reality in African traditional understanding, she argues that "ultimate reality is defined as the Supreme Being" (p. 25). This supreme being is known as the creator, who is transcendent and immanent. He is approached through the medium of spirit, diviners, ancestors, etc. She also posits that this supreme being is approached chiefly in times of need in what she calls "transactional and relational" (p. 29).

On the other hand, the author contends that in modern Africa, the ultimate reality, as introduced by Christianity, left Africans with two separate

views of God (God and Jesus) that do not meet their needs. As a result, she argues, Africans portray dual allegiance (p. 30). For the external reality, she points out that Africans believe that the world is a product of the supreme being, not an outcome of evolution, as the modern understanding tends to emphasize (p. 34). Finally, the author highlights the usefulness of *Ubuntu*, a concept that explains the interrelationships among Africans. She claims that the African communal life compares to the biblical worldview. These relationships highlight mutual support and interdependence. However, these practices go beyond and portray how Africans understand the afterlife. They believe that after death, there is a continuation of life. This results in ancestral worship with the belief that they continue to interact with the living. She notes that despite some divergencies the African worldview presents from the biblical one, the similarities that both exhibit must be considered in interpreting the Scripture.

Chapter 3 discusses the philosophical aspects that form an African worldview. The author highlights five elements: "knowledge, morality, suffering, history and time, and arts" (p. 45). She argues that these elements have the same denominator, 'community or relationship.' She argues that Africans acquire knowledge through the immediate and extended family, spiritual beings, and life experiences (p. 50). In addition, the author argues that moral values derive from the community mainly with an honor and shame culture. In this culture, people cultivate commendable ethics to preserve their honor in their community or not to offend others. Further, the author avers that in some African cultures, suffering is understood as a result of breaching moral values, which displeases the supreme being who, as a result, casts calamities upon the people and nature (p. 54). Concerning history and time, she posits that Africans are more event-oriented than chronological time-oriented (p. 56). According to her, for Africans, history—that is, past and present—matters more than the future (p. 57).

Chapter 4 discusses the author's hermeneutical model, i.e., the four-legged stool, whose elements are "parallels to the African context," "the theological context," "the literary context," and "the historical and cultural context." The author adds to the model a fifth element, the "application," as the outcome of the interpretative work. The first leg involves finding the parallels/contrasts between African and biblical contexts. Once they are established, the theology of the text is examined, followed by a literary analysis of the context by paying attention to the literary genre, techniques, lan-

guage, and literary flow of the text. Further, the reader explores the historical and cultural context in which the text was communicated in, for "studying the historical and cultural background is the main way to uncovering the mindset of the author" (p. 84). The author then argues that the hermeneutical process must culminate in providing the reader with the application of the text.

The second part of the book, which covers chapters 5 to 9, begins with a concise historical context of the Bible and the major theological points found in the Old Testament and New Testament. The author discusses different genres of the Bible, which prepare the reader for the application of the four-legged hermeneutical approach to them. In addition, the author applies the four-legged principles to biblical literary genres such as narratives, wisdom, songs, and letters. In each genre, she presents the African counterpart of the given genre, sets out the hermeneutical principles, and then applies them to interpret the same genre in the Bible, using the four-legged method. However, she warns that such interpretation must be done carefully in order not to fall into syncretism. She argues that in doing contextualization, "every doctrine and practice" must be weighed by Scripture (p. 210).

The book is informative and instructive. It entails sound insights that can help contextualize the Gospel and, at the same time, help us be faithful to the teachings of the Bible. It emphasizes that African culture and worldviews should not inform the teachings of the Bible but rather should be shaped by it. The author emphasizes that the interpretative work must reach the pragmatic where the Scripture becomes part of the interpreter and the reader's life. The question for review in each chapter creates the space for the reader to apply the material gained in it. That highlights that the book's focus is application. Nevertheless, the author deliberately ignores the biblical prophetic genre and how the proposed hermeneutical tools could have profited from them in the African context. Africans had that gift of prophecy, and their prophecy could take place (Mwaniki, *Embu Historical Texts*, 24). Today, Africans face challenges in this area, where the plurality of prophecies has escalated, and addressing them using the four-legged tool approach would yield commendable results. In addition, the author discusses little the notion of shame and honor. The author should substantiate a discussion about them and how they contribute to understanding the Bible through the proposed model.

This book is a valuable tool that can benefit readers from any cultural background who would like to adapt the method to their own context. It is

also profitable for teachers and professional pastors when communicating the message of the Bible, especially in the African context.

Innocent Hatekimana Tuyishime
Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Philippines

---

Darrel M. Bock and Mitch Glaser, eds., *Israel, the Church, and the Middle East: A Biblical Response to the Current Conflict*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2018. viii+ 296 pp. Paperback US$ 24.99.

Darrel L. Bock is executive director of cultural engagement and senior research professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. A former president of the Evangelical Theological Society, he is the author of the best-selling *Breaking the Da Vinci Code* and numerous works in New Testament studies, including *Jesus According to Scripture*. Mitch Glaser is the president of Chosen People Ministries. Mitch and his wife, Zhava, are Jewish believers in Jesus and have each worked for more than twenty years in ministry among the Jewish people. Mitch holds a PhD in intercultural studies. This book is an interdisciplinary anthology that addresses the relationship between Israel, the church, and the Middle East. It is divided into four parts, (1) biblical foundations, (2) theology and the conflict, (3) Yeshua in the midst of the crisis, and (4) current challenges to peace in Israel. Thirteen scholars from various fields of study explore and analyze this multifaceted topic, providing a biblical response to the ongoing discussion.

In part 1, "Biblical Foundations," Richard E. Averbeck offers a systematized understanding of biblical covenants. Although covenants are understood differently from the perspective of covenant theology and dispensational theology, the author divides them into five covenants: the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenant. In light of these, the author draws the connection that the covenant includes the land promises as seed promises and concludes that it is "irrevocable" and "permanent" (p. 28). He quotes Paul (Rom 9:4–7, 11, 23–26; Eph 3) and reflects how the covenant includes all who have faith in Christ the Messiah. Walter C. Kaiser Jr delves into Isaiah 19 and discusses the prophecy connected with Israel and Egypt. He highlights God's judgments that are announced against the

neighboring nation of Israel, Egypt. First, there will be a political disaster where anarchy and civil war takes place. Second, an economic disaster is predicted resulting in the drying up of the river Nile, which is so important to the life of the Egyptians. Third, an intellectual disaster will come as a result of foolish decisions and a lack of wisdom. It comes as a result of her hostility towards the nation of Israel. However, despite this, God also pronounces salvation and deliverance to Egypt. At the eschaton, all the surrounding nations of Israel will be converted and will partake of the glory and remain triumphant.

Mark Yarbrough underscores the point that the overarching genre of the Bible is presented as a story. The central narrative of the story is about the Creator God making a covenant with His people, Israel. God does not abandon His people or neglect His promises. Yarbrough quotes, "We wait for the consummation of God's promises to Israel. This is a pinnacle of grace in the grand story of Scripture" (p. 61). Many scholars question the evidence from the NT in regard to the land promises of Israel. First, it is objected that the NT does not mention it. Second, these promises are seen as transferred to the church. And third, these promises are understood to have been universalized and do not involve a historic land. However, Michael Rydelnik concludes this section by underscoring the point that while the Old Testament affirms the land promises to Israel, the New Testament reaffirms the same, although in an implicit manner. He proposes, first, a hermeneutical framework that harmonizes both Testaments and, second, reading the New Testament through the lens of the Old Testament. Adhering to this will prevent supersessionism. Hence, the covenant includes the land promises to ethnic Israel and remain forever.

In part 2, the authors provide a theological understanding of Israel and the Church. Craig Blaising elaborates this understanding by defining various key concepts such as supersessionism (ethnic supersessionism and economic supersessionism), dispensationalism (traditional and progressive), and the kingdom of God. One of the central questions in his chapter is, "Does the spiritual formation of Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ remove their ethnic identities so as to disassociate them from the ethnic and national promises of the kingdom?" (p. 96). According to him, the spiritual union in Christ was recognized as transcending ethnic and national differences without erasing them. Mitch Glaser takes this concept further and highlights the dangers of supersessionism (replacement theology).

According to him, supersessionism is like a cancer that causes anti-semitism. Bridging this gap requires reconciliation not only between Israel and Palestine, but also between Western Christians on both sides of the conflict. This understanding has led to a movement known as Christian Zionism, who believe that the land of Israel rightfully belongs to the Jewish community and that the nations must support the modern state of Israel. However, he concludes that without a proper understanding of the covenant validity of the Jewish people, issues on this will continue to persist. Michael J. Vlach discusses an important aspect, namely "restorationism." By this, he means that one day, the nation of Israel will play a crucial part when Christ reigns on earth.

Vlach briefly highlights "restorationism" through church history and why the church largely abandoned it. According to him, four factors contributed to it: First, an influx of gentile converts, which resulted in *ecclesia ex gentibus* (church of the Gentiles). Second, the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, resulting in God's permanent rejection of Israel. Third, the church's re-interpretation of the Jewish Scripture. Fourth, the emergence of scriptural allegorization in the early church. Although the author provides several scholars in church history that championed "restorationism" he does not adequately provide biblical evidence that harmonizes both the OT and NT. Most verses that are used in favour of this concept are a result of proof-texting, allegorical interpretation and the influence of Greek philosophy.

In part 3, the authors explore how Yeshua is portrayed in the midst of the Crisis. Erez Soref identifies the emergence of various Messianic Jewish movements post-great awakening during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They differentiate themselves from general Christendom and make a distinction between the larger evangelical church and traditional Christian churches (Catholic and Orthodox). According to the Messianic Jews the return of Jewish people to Israel is "an act of God" (p. 144). Central to their beliefs is the coming of the Messiah and the fulfillment of prophecy. Furthermore, Tom Doyle, explores the status of the Palestinian Church within Israel in the 21st century. This is significant since Arabs were also present during the Pentecost (Acts 2:11) and showed a rather fast start-up church in that region. He highlights the point that despite the geopolitical disputes between Jews and Palestinians, the love of Christ unites the two

groups. After interviewing various groups, he summarizes that Palestinians can love Jesus and Jews, too (pp. 152–53).

In part 4, the authors discuss current challenges to peace in Israel. They pose questions such as, should Christians support the Modern state of Israel? Is it sinful to divide the land of Israel? According to a recent poll, eighty-two percent of white evangelicals believe that the land of Israel was given by God to the Jewish people. Hence, the term "Zionism" is employed for those who promote and support the cause of Israel. Mark. L. Bailey provides biblical reasons for this support. First, God made a covenant with the Jews. Their sin and unfaithfulness did not abrogate or nullify the land promises. Second, the centrality of the covenant and Christ's mission begins with Israel and then with the other nations. Third, the Scriputural mandate to display genuine Christian love that is impartial, the kind that transcends political and geopolitical lines.

Furthermore, Mike Brown, points out that most evangelicals hold fast to the belief that God will judge those who divide the land of Israel (Joel 3:2–3). He further concludes to answer this question by reminding the readers that the land of Israel belongs to God. However, they are not entitled to its full possession unless they are fully repentant. Although there are no concrete dogmatic reasons that either decision is a sin, Brown recommends that one must carefully approach this conflict keeping in mind that Israel is God's land in a unique and special way.

The book concludes with a valuable and relevant bibliography that will be helpful for readers who are interested in exploring the topic further. It also includes a Scripture, name, and subject indexes.

The book is well-written in terms of language and clarity. The authors communicate their points of view in an appealing manner. The chapters are systematically outlined, beginning with the biblical foundation and ending with current conflicts. One of the highlights of the book is found in chapter 4, "The Hermeneutics of the Conflict." Here Rydelnik, presents a fairly balanced view of Scripture where he discourages proof-texting and encourages the readers towards a macro-hermeneutical and inter-textual hermeneutics that promotes a harmonious view of Scripture. In my opinion, this is key to understanding this prevalent discussion. Another strength of this book is how the authors analyze this topic and connect it well with the modern state of Israel. The insights are fresh and up-to-date and presents testimonies and

statistics of the people who represent the Messianic Jewish community.

While acknowledging the strengths, there are also a few critiques or weaknesses to consider. Given that the book is written in celebration of Israel's seventieth anniversary, Bock and Glaser's unwavering support for Israel as the rightful heir to the land promises is clearly emphasized. Although one section is devoted to biblical foundations, the authors place greater emphasis on defending Israel than on examining the role and significance of the Church. Additionally, in part 2, Glaser focuses primarily on the dangers of supersessionism. Incorporating a more balanced discussion of other models would enhance the depth and maturity of the conversation. The book appears to take a presuppositional stance in favor of Israel and dispensationalism. However, from an Adventist position, the system of dispensationalism is not supported and is biblically incoherent. Israel and the Church are not different groups. God has one mission and purpose for His people (Gal 3:28–29). Although the Jews rejected Christ as their Messiah, salvation is still available to them through genuine faith and repentance.

Scripture portrays God as inclusive, where believers and non-believers are grafted into His covenant (Rom 11:11–31).

Furthermore, Adventist eschatology has no distinct events specifically for any ethnic group of people. All those who profess faith in Christ are part of His Church (Gk. *ekklesia*), meaning "gathering" or "assembly." In the culmination of earth's history, Apostle John attests that there are but only two groups, the righteous and unrighteous (Rev 22:11).

Overall, the book is engaging and relevant for those who are interested in ecclesiology and eschatological issues. It raises important issues for the church to address, especially when it pertains to geo-politics. It further stimulates the readers to dig deeper into this topic as a lot more can be discussed. I recommend this book to biblical and theological students and pastors who have an interest in understanding the relationship between Israel and the Church.

<div align="right">

Andrew Ben Jacob
Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES

</div>

EDITORIAL POLICIES

1. Each article submitted to *JAAS* for publication should be original and unpublished. The author should supply a digital copy via e-mail attachment (preferably as a Microsoft Word™ document file as well as a pdf). Each submitted article must be double-spaced and must include an abstract (100–120 words) and a list of relevant keywords. At this time *JAAS* will only publish in English.

2. *JAAS* follows the reference style and abbreviations indicated in *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), and thus each article submitted for publication in *JAAS* should conform to this style. When using Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic in the article the use of Unicode fonts is required, preferably the SBL Hebrew and SBL Greek fonts. All other ancient Near Eastern languages should be transliterated, following the conventions in the *SBL Handbook of Style*, 56–67.

3. Each submitted article is sent anonymously to at least two readers of the *International Review Board* who are specialists in their particular field. For this reason all identifying information (name of author, academic affiliation, physical and e-mail address) should be submitted to *JAAS* on a separate sheet. The criteria that determine the acceptance of the manuscript include (a) original contribution, (b) argumentation, logic, style, and (c) adequate documentation. A final decision on whether or not an article will be published in *JAAS* is made by the editors and the editorial board.

4. *JAAS* publishes four different categories of research: (a) major research articles (5,000–10,000 words); (b) short research notes (1,000–4,000 words); (c) AIIAS Theological Seminary thesis and dissertation abstracts; and (d) book reviews (500–1,500 words).

5. Book reviews are assigned by the book review editor. The bibliographic reference of the review should comply with the following layout:

    Title of book, by author. Trans. by [if applicable]. Name of series [if applicable]. Place: Publisher, year. Pp. [including Roman and Arabic numbers]. ISBN. Price [together with currency].

    The book review should contain a brief and objective description of the content of the book which is then followed by critical interaction, an evaluation of the contribution of the volume, and the audience for whom it is most suited. Ideally, 40–50% of the book review should be dedicated to critical interaction with the book's content.

6. Each author (and book reviewer) will receive proofs in electronic format before the final publication of the issue which should be carefully read and corrected and returned to the editor of *JAAS*. If an author does not comply with this requirement, publication of the article will be delayed.

EDITORIAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Mail Information	E-mail Information
Editor	editor: *jaas@aiias.edu; kbergland@aiias.edu*
Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary	assoc. editors: *ogabasiane@aiias.edu; drazmerita@aiias.edu*
AIIAS	book review editor: *kbergland@aiias.edu*
P.O. Box 038	journal exchanges: *jaas@aiias.edu*
Silang, Cavite 4118	*https://journals.aiias.edu/jaas*
PHILIPPINES	