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EDITORIAL

On the 25th anniversary of CTS, we find the people of Sri Lanka staring into the abyss of national disintegration. The Easter Sunday bombings shocked us out of any illusion that the fear of organized terrorism was behind us and that, despite the reckless shenanigans of our politicians, we could still hope for a better future for our children in our motherland.

In the aftermath of the bombings, we are alarmed by how far radical Islam has spread among parts of the Muslim community. We are also dismayed by the widespread anti-Muslim hatred among the Sinhala and Tamil citizenry. The crisis also laid bare the hopelessly fragmented and dysfunctional state of government; the vulnerability of our economy; and the ideological divide between Sri Lankans who see the solution to the nation's woes as the establishment of a strong Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony, and those who dream about a pluralistic society with greater regional autonomy and civil liberties.

These are the stark social realities within which Sri Lankan Christians are alternately viewed as a victims or culprits.

The articles published in this volume were all written prior to the tragic events that now dominate our conversations. Therefore, they do not directly address them. However, some of articles do relate to the underlying factors concerned. Mano Emmanuel questions the viability of reconciliation processes that downplay the role of truth-seeking and truth-telling as a critical factor. Nina Kurlberg explores Miroslav Volf's 'theology of embrace' in relation to the refugee and immigraion debate in the UK, a discussion that has no small significance to Sri Lanka's own anti-Muslim xenophobia against Pakistani and Afghan refugees, many of whom are, ironically, fleeing Islamic persecution in their own countries. Simon Fuller's expert analysis of the Qur'anic text that is the *locus classicus* of Islam's most

fundamental disagreement with Christianity naturally has bearing on the dialogue between the two faith communities.

The only redemptive feature in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks was the sincere and unhesitating declarations of forgiveness and non-retaliation by Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith and Pastor Roshan Mahesan. The whole nation, and the Muslim community in particular, was deeply moved by this extraordinary demonstration of the way of Jesus and His Kingdom. In his sermon at the seminary's 25th anniversary thanksgiving service (25 May), Principal Ivor Poobalan upheld the church of Antioch (Acts 11:19-30) as the model of a community born out of terror yet giving birth, in turn, to major theological, ecclesiological, and missiological developments for the progress of the Christian movement. It is fervently hoped that God would work as powerfully in our hearts and minds, and that He would inspire much good out of the evil we have suffered. Indeed, we hope that we will be able to communicate some of those transformational results in the pages of this journal.

We also wish to thank the scholars (who must remain anonymous) who peer-reviewed the articles and offered valuable feedback to the contributors of this volume.

G P V Somaratna and Prabo Mihindukulasuriya
Co-Editors

July 2019

REVISIONIST DEBATE ON HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE HOLINESS CODE

DENISA POOBALAN

Abstract: *In the light of the ongoing debate, this article interacts with and evaluates the concerns and arguments raised by both the revisionists' pro-gay readings and the traditional interpretations of Lev. 18:22 and 20:12. By means of an exegetical study it attempts to determine if in fact the Levitical prohibitions in the Holiness Code condemns homosexuality absolutely, or if the prohibitions are limited to the patriarchal context of the biblical era in which maintaining separateness, purity and gender roles was paramount. This study determines that the homosexuality prohibitions, set within a context that deals with sexual relationships and the family in the Holiness Code, are absolute and universally binding.*

Keywords: *Homosexuality, Holiness Code, revisionist hermeneutics*

I. INTRODUCTION

The subject of homosexuality may be described as the most conflictual and divisive issue the church has had to grapple with between the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Up until the last century, for the entire span of its history, the church interpreted the Bible, and especially texts that explicitly refer to homosexual behaviour, as universally and unequivocally condemning homosexual practice. Nevertheless, beginning in the mid-twentieth century there has been, as it were, a turning of the tide. This has resulted in an interpretive conflict, with some holding on to historical interpretations that show homosexual activity as incompatible with Scripture and others challenging those traditionally-held interpretations and favouring a pro-gay revised reading of these same texts.

Derrick Sherwin Bailey was an Anglican priest whose initial booklets *The Problem of Homosexuality* (1954), *The Homosexual, the Law and Society* (1955), and *The Homosexual and Christian Morals* (1955) were instrumental in initiating the decriminalization of homosexuality in England and in prompting the Church of England's involvement in the issue. Bailey was among the first to promote alternate readings of undisputed Bible texts such as Genesis 19.[1] He was followed by John Boswell, a historian and professor at Yale, who was perhaps best known for paving the revisionists' way with his ground-breaking but controversial books. In these, Boswell argues that homosexuality was accepted as a normal part of sexual behaviour by the early church and urban Roman society.[2] Bailey and Boswell were followed by other influential contributors.[3]

Early responses to these revised readings were offered by Richard Hays,[4] David Wright,[5] Ronald M.

[1] Derrick S. Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, Reprinted. (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1975).

[2] John E. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); John E. Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe* (NY: Villard Books, 1994).

[3] Letha Scanzoni and Virginia Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor? A Positive Christian Response.* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1978); Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Victor P. Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul: Selected Issues*, 1st ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979); Daniel A. Helminiak, *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality* (San Francisco: Alamo Square Press, 1994); Daniel A. Helminiak, *Sex and the Sacred: Gay Identity and Spiritual Growth* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2006); William L. Countryman, *Dirt, Greed, and Sex* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988); Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1996); Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1998).

[4] Richard B. Hays, "Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell's Exegesis of Romans 1," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 184–215.

[5] David F. Wright, "Homosexuals or Prostitutes? The Meaning of ΑΡΣΕΝΟΚΟΙΤΑΙ (1 Cor. 6:9, 1 Tim. 1:10)," *Vigilhe Christlanae* 38, no. 2 (1984): 125–153.

Springett,[6] Marion L. Soards,[7] Thomas Schmidt,[8] Stanley Grenz,[9] and Donald Wold.[10]

Among those who favour a pro-gay reading of Bible texts, interpreters such as Walter Wink, Phyllis Bird, Dan O Via, Bernadette Brooten and Dale Martin admit that the Bible is consistently negative about homosexual practice. In the words of Walter Wink "the Bible clearly considers homosexuality a sin, and whether it is stated three times or 3,000 is beside the point…The issue is precisely whether that biblical judgment is correct".[11] As Phyllis Bird asserts "Sexuality as we understand it today is not known in the Bible…We cannot get a readymade sexual ethic or even an adequate foundation for it from the Bible. In this field we must look to the ongoing revelation of science and of newly emerging voices of experience".[12] Therefore the church must not absolutize and consider universally applicable the laws on ethical issues, but only appropriate scriptural teachings of love and justice.[13]

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[6] Ronald M. Springett, *Homosexuality in History & the Scriptures* (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1988).

[7] Marion L. Soards, *Scripture and Homosexuality: Biblical Authority and the Church Today* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1995).

[8] Thomas E. Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1995).

[9] Stanley J. Grenz, *Welcoming but Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).

[10] Donald Wold, *Out of Order: Homosexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998).

[11] Walter Wink, "Biblical Perspectives on Homosexuality," *Christian Century*, November 7, 1979.

[12] Phyllis A. Bird, "The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation Concerning Homosexuality: Old Testament Contributions," in *Homosexuality, Science, and the "Plain Sense" of Scripture*, edited by David L. Balch (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 168.

[13] Bird, "The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation," 143–144; Dale B. Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 49–50; Dan O. Via and Robert A. J. Gagnon, *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2003), 14, 93 and 38: "If looked at in the light of contemporary knowledge and experience, we

However, other more recent pro-gay interpreters such as James Brownson[14] and Matthew Vines[15] assert that a deeper interaction with scriptural teachings will enable a better understanding of how a homosexual lifestyle may be compatible with the broader concepts of Scripture. Even though the Bible speaks into these matters, Christians have understood them wrongly. New situations require new ways of seeing the texts, its pattern and configurations, without compromising one's commitment to the centrality of Scripture.

Traditional interpreters differ in the weight they give to the different texts that address homosexuality, especially in how they view the significance of such texts in the light of contemporary views of same-sex relations. However, they all agree that while the Bible does not condemn those who struggle with same-sex attraction, it does without exception condemn those who practice homoerotic sex.

The biblical texts that explicitly address the subject of homosexuality are: Genesis 19:1-11, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, 1 Cor. 6:9-11 and 1 Tim. 1:9-10, Rom. 1: 26-27. However, in this article we will limit our discussion to matters pertaining to the references to homosexuality within the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-26). In the light of the on-going debate and the claim that these texts offer no probative value to the discussion on modern homosexual practice, it is imperative that the validity of those assertions be evaluated. Our approach will be, first, to listen to the pro-gay readings of these particular texts. Thereafter we will present the counter-

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can justifiably override the unconditional biblical condemnations of homosexual practice."; Andrew Goddard, "James V. Brownson, Bible, Gender, Sexuality: A Critical Engagement," *The Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Studies*, November 2014; Brooten cited in Preston M. Sprinkle, "Romans 1 and Homosexuality: A Critical Review of James Brownson's Bible, Gender, Sexuality," *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, 2014, 520.

[14] James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2013).

[15] Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian* (NY: Convergent Books, 2014). Adobe PDF eBook.

arguments based on a critical examination of the texts, before reaching a conclusion.

Terms such as homoerotic unions, same-sex unions, and practicing homosexuals or lesbians will be used to refer to same-sex partnerships and individuals who engage in same-sex erotic behaviour. Those who are attracted to their own gender but are not practicing homosexuals will be referred to as same-sex attracted. The term homosexuality may also be occasionally used when making a general reference to the whole subject.

Those who embrace the view that the Bible does condemn homosexual practice will be referred to as traditionalist, and those favouring a revised pro-gay reading will be referred to as revisionist (for want of better terms).

II. TEXTS: LEVITICUS 18:22 AND 20:13

> *You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination* (*tôʿēbâ*). 18:22 (ESV)
>
> *If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination (tôʿēbâ); they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.* 20:13 (ESV)

Leviticus 18 and 20 are part of the Holiness Code (Lev. 17-26), a section that prescribes standards of personal holiness, for priests and laity. For the most part, the two chapters cover similar subjects. Nevertheless they differ in form. Leviticus 18 is apodictic, which means it only prohibits certain behaviours, while Lev. 20 is casuistic, because it also prescribes the punishment for engaging in prohibited behaviour. Most scholars agree that it is polemical in nature, with a framework that repeatedly warns and calls Israel to reject the practices of the nations (18:3 (2x), 24, 26, 27, 29, 30) and align with the ways of Yahweh.[16]

With regard to dating, scholars are divided between an early Mosaic, pre-exilic and/or exilic/post-exilic date.

[16] Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, vol. 3, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979), 250, 277.

Some also believe that individual laws from different periods (earlier and later) were incorporated in the final post-exilic composition of these series.[17]

Revisionists argue that the Levitical prohibition of homoerotic acts is rooted in a patriarchal culture that did not understand sexual orientation. Therefore they are irrelevant and do not provide adequate grounds to prohibit modern faithful same-sex relationships.

III. REVISIONIST READING: PATRIARCHY AND PURITY

1. 'Abomination' and death penalty: Inadequate indicators of sin

Four Hebrew words are translated as 'abomination'. Of these the most common is *tôʿēbâ,* used 117 times in the OT. Revisionists contend that it is often used in conjunction with pagan practices and idolatry and even means 'idol' (e.g. Isa.44:19). OT 'abominations' such as sex with a menstruating woman (Lev. 18:19), interest on loans (Ezek. 18:13), and eating certain animals (Deut. 14:3-21) are not even thought of as sins today. Therefore 'abomination' (or *tôʿēbâ* in 18:22 and 20:13) as used in the OT is not a synonym for what Christians call 'sin' or moral evil.[18]

In the OT the death penalty was prescribed for a range of offences including taking interest for loans (Ezek. 18:13) and breaking Sabbath laws (Ex. 35: 2). While Israel may have had legitimate reasons[19] for such harsh punishments,

[17] Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 37; Also see Wenham, *Leviticus*, 3:8–13.

[18] Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance*, 100; Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 56; Jay Michaelson, "Does the Bible Really Call Homosexuality an 'Abomination'?," *Religion Dispatches*, July 29, 2010, accessed May 31, 2016, www.religiondispatches.org/ archive/ sexandgender/ 2826/ does_ the_ bible_ really_ call_ homosexuality_ an_ "abomination": "taboo" is preferred because it is a "cultural prohibition—something which a particular culture abhors but another culture enjoys" .

[19] The death penalty was administered when a priest's daughter engaged in prostitution (Lev. 21:9) or children disobeyed parents (Deut. 21:18-21). This helped the community maintain identity and solidarity.

Christians today do not consider these as offences or moral sins. Therefore the punishment or death penalty in Lev. 20:13, does not, by current Christian standards, indicate the severity of the sin. If other offences that carried the death penalty are no longer considered sinful, why continue to regard homosexuality as sin?[20]

1.1. Uncleanness not Sin

Via identifies two kinds of evil that Israel must combat. One is sin and the other uncleanness. Sin is an attitude or act, done consciously with intention, involves morality and is rebellious against God and society. However, the evil of impurity or uncleanness is a condition to do with physical contact, not necessarily involving hygiene or dirt, and may be reversed by ritual cleansing. It is not rebellion, nor does it involve motive. Consequences are automatic and sometimes life-threatening. The purity laws reflect God's holiness and perfection. Bodily discharges (Lev. 15:1-2, 19), deformity, imperfections, unusual attributes (Lev. 21:16-24; 11:9-12) and mixing of kinds make one imperfect and unclean (see Lev. 18:23, 6-18). Homosexuality involves a mixing of kinds when a man takes the role of male and female. Therefore it belongs to the category of uncleanness, not sin.[21]

Boswell agrees that anything that compromises Jewish purity or distinctness is a *tôʿēbâ*. Thus homosexual prohibitions, like eating pork or sex with a menstruating woman, had to do with maintaining Jewish ritual purity (see 18:3), not with inherent or intrinsic evil. The Greek clarifies this by using two different terms to translate *tôʿēbâ*: ***anomia*** for justice violations, and ***bdelygma*** for purity violations.[22]

Bird explains that *tôʿēbâ* was not used in older texts (Gen. 34:7; Jud. 19:23) but only in later Deuteronomic

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[20] Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 57.

[21] Via and Gagnon, *Homosexuality and the Bible*, 5–7.

[22] Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance*, 100–102. See LXX Deut. 7:25-26, 3 Kings 14:24. For a contrary view, see Wold cited in Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 117.

writings, when separation from the 'nations' was required for purity. Thus it was not an ethical term but one that portrayed pagan practices as defiling. Perhaps "a deep sense of revulsion and/or ambivalence toward a practice that is perceived as 'unnatural'" would designate it a *tôʿēbâ*.[23]

1.2. Transgression of boundaries and compromising identity not sin

Bird explains that during the exilic and post-exilic period when "old kinship-based mechanisms of social control [were] threatened", purity of the people and land was paramount.[24] Homosexuality was not a pre-exilic issue for rural Israel. Even the Genesis 19 and Judges 19 incidents demonstrate that homosexuality had to do with the "foreign". Yet for Israelites living in foreign lands and exposed to pagan sexual practices, injunctions against homosexuality (absent in older OT law codes) became necessary. This rhetoric was meant to infuse abhorrence towards pagan practices and thus maintain separation, purity and identity.[25] Thus *tôʿēbâ* functioned as a boundary marker; it was associated with cultic practices and mostly used in exilic texts like Ezekiel (43x). Separation was based on praxis rather than geography and ethnicity. In this way Israel's identity and solidarity were maintained. In Leviticus it functions retroactively, being applied to a prior epoch in Israel's history.[26]

Martti Nissinen concurs that *tôʿēbâ* "denotes a transgression of a divinely sanctioned boundary. It is often used in connection with different, usually not fully defined, customs of a mostly cultic nature affiliated with worship of foreign gods."[27] In Nissinen's opinion these prohibitions, as

[23] Bird, "The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation," 162.

[24] Bird, "The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation," 156.

[25] Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 38; Bird, "The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation," 160–161.

[26] Bird, "The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation," 151–152; 155–156.

[27] Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 39.

some argue (because of reference to Molech in Lev. 18:21),[28] are not restricted to cultic worship. Besides, there is little evidence to suggest that *haqqĕdēšîm* 'sacred prostitutes' mentioned in Deut. 23:18-19 and associated with pagan worship, had anything to do with homosexual practice. Bird insists that there is no evidence of homosexual cult prostitution in Canaanite religions and even thinks that *haqqĕdēšîm* might be a literary creation not a historical fact.[29]

In Nissinen's view Israel's goal was the protection of its distinct identity. To achieve this, Israel associated archaic sexual taboos (such as homosexual acts) with pagan cults, and portrayed neighbouring nations as perverse (in the framework of Lev. 18:1-5, 24-30; 20:7-8, 22-26). In addition, injunctions against these taboos along with life-threatening punishments for nonconformists were incorporated into the Holiness Code (a catechism for males). Thus absolute separation was enforced to achieve Israel's goal.[30] Therefore, homosexual practice was prohibited not because it was morally wrong, but because it was a boundary marker that ensured absolute separation and the preservation of identity. Daniel Boyarin and Saul Olyan agree that *tôʿēbâ* had to do with transgression of boundaries; with taboos rather than ethics.[31]

Therefore the death penalty and *tôʿēbâ* are not valid indicators of the evilness of homosexuality. They do not provide a good enough reason to judge it as sin or condemn those who practice it.

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[28] See Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 129.

[29] Ibid., 39–40; Bird, "The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation," 160–161.

[30] Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 37, 42–44.

[31] Daniel Boyarin, "Are There Any Jews in 'The History of Sexuality'?," *Journal of the History of Sexuality (University of Texas Press) 5*, no. 3 (January 1995): 342–344; Also see Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 56.

2. Patriarchy and Gender Roles: Mistaken Sociological Constructs

2.1. Social Status and Anti-Mixing not Homosexuality

According to ANE law codes such as the *Middle Assyrian Laws,* homoerotic acts with a partner of equal status, was an offence punishable by castration, because the active partner was guilty of taking away the male honour of the receptive "comrade".[32] There were no laws against master-slave or other such unequal alliances. Vines argues that even though status distinctions are absent in OT laws, and punishment is equally meted out to both partners (an OT characteristic), the prohibitions in Leviticus as Philo clearly articulates in his comments on Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, are based on social status.[33]

However, according to Boyarin, in the biblical culture there are no distinctions with regard to status, whether social or other. Nevertheless, distinctions based on gender role were enforced to prevent gender confusion or mixing (as in Deut. 22:5 regarding crossdressing).[34] For Nissinen, mixing results in the loss of 'manly honour'. Prevention of homoerotic activity was part of this anti-mixing policy.[35]

2.2. Misogynistic culture not gender non-complementarity

Traditional readings of Scripture suggest that same-sex relations is prohibited in Leviticus because of gender non-

[32] Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 45. See laws 18-20 in James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Relating to Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 181 (appendix A).

[33] Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 59: For Philo males were of a higher status. This is why he condemned the feminizing of males.

[34] Boyarin, "History," 341–342: The homosexuality prohibition next to the bestiality prohibition (Lev. 18) that uses the rare *tebel* meaning confusion or mixing suggests a strong literary connection between them as both acts demonstrate confusion of categories.

[35] Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 42–44; Boyarin, "History," 341–343; Via and Gagnon, *Homosexuality and the Bible*, 6–7: Olyan also refers to the mixing of defiling body fluids as the reason for the homosexuality ban; See Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 134.

complementarity (Gen. 2), the belief that God made man and woman to sexually complement each other anatomically. But revisionists like Vines believe that the real reason behind abhorrence of male-male relationships has nothing to do with anatomical complementarity but with misogynistic attitudes. Philo (1st century) and Clement of Alexandria (2nd century) make this obvious by their demeaning rhetoric of how men, who take the role of women, are degraded by feminizing themselves.[36]

Phyllis Bird argues that the Genesis 19 and Judges 19 narratives clearly illustrate that rape and homoerotic relations are treated with the same revulsion. Israel's "undergirding code of sexual behavior governed by views of gender roles and sexual honor" is violated by a 'simple' request for homoerotic relations in Judges 19.[37] The pleas to use as substitutes the females and spare the males of this *nĕbālâ* 'outrage' (Jud. 19:23), a word used to describe the rape of Dinah (Gen. 34:7) and comparable to *tôʿēbâ*, shows that homoerotic relations were as offensive as rape because male honour was violated.[38] Therefore, says Vines, the concerns of OT prohibitions are not about "how bodies fit together" but about "the proper ordering of gender roles in a patriarchal society".[39] Nissinen agrees with Bird that in the case of lesbianism there was no demeaning of status because a woman was not required to take a lesser role; hence the silence on lesbianism. This too reflected the cultural bias towards males.[40]

Patriarchy, a flawed system, is reflected in OT laws (Lev. 27:1–8; Deut. 21:15–17). Nevertheless this is "a reflection of ancient culture rather than a foundational precept for God's people".[41] The homosexual prohibitions also reflect cultural attitudes of patriarchy adopted by ancient Israel.

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[36] Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 58.
[37] Bird, "The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation," 148.
[38] Bird, "The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation," 147-148.
[39] Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 59.
[40] Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 43.
[41] Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 61.

Paul, however, makes it clear that men and women are of equal status and value; that patriarchy has no place in God's kingdom (Gal. 3:28). Therefore, Vines concludes that the law pertaining to homosexual practice, which is rooted in patriarchy (not in gender non-complementarity), should not have any place in the Kingdom of God.[42]

2.3. Dishonouring act not orientation

Boyarin and Olyan emphasize that only penetration (the act that dishonors the male), is prohibited in the Torah. There is no injunction against other erotic acts between same-sex partners.[43] Nissinen agrees that "it was the act [because it represented a mixing of gender roles,] that was condemned, not same-sex desire, the existence of which is not even acknowledged".[44] Lesbianism is therefore a non-issue.

Bird explains that the Genesis 19 and Judges 19 narratives show that the Israelites did not see the possibility of, or experience homoerotic relationships as between two equal partners. The men in Judges 19 simply requested homoerotic sex, and it was termed a *nĕbālâ* 'outrage' (Jud. 19:23). The Levite would be dishonoured if he obliged by being the passive male. In this patriarchal culture this would be worse than the rape of a woman.[45]

3. OT covenant and laws: Obsolete and irrelevant strictures

Vines argues that the OT covenant which is replaced by the new covenant is obsolete and outdated (Heb. 8: 6, 7, 13). The OT law (a 'yoke of slavery' Gal. 5:1 and 'curse' Rom. 10:4; Gal. 3:13) is abrogated by Christ's work on the cross. Therefore Christians are free from the law (Col. 2:13-14). They no longer adhere to laws regarding clean and unclean animals,

[42] Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 60–61.

[43] Boyarin, "History," 336, 338–9; Olyan cited in Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 58.

[44] Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 44.

[45] Bird, "The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation," 148–149: Bird also cites Nissinen as confirming this view.

planting methods, clipping of hair, tattoos and so on, also found in Leviticus.[46]

Vines notes that even though the Jerusalem council deemed necessary that Gentile converts observe laws on sexual immorality, Christians today fail to uphold them. The practice of polygamy (Deut. 21:15-17), divorce on the basis of indecency (Deut. 24:1), levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5-6), marriage to the rapist (Deut. 22:28-29) and so on are not Christian norms. Therefore if some sexual laws are dispensable, why do Christians insist on upholding laws prohibiting homosexual behaviour?[47]

Bird points out that law codes were modified depending on contexts and issues faced by the Israelites. The Holiness Code, compared to the older codes, addressed issues (including homosexuality) faced by Israelites living in a new situation (in foreign cities where pagan practices were rife). Likewise, Leviticus 20 is a later composition based on Leviticus 18. They "are essentially duplicate statements…differing only in style" and "positioned differently" so as to "creat[e] different contexts of interpretation".[48] In like manner, the church too must be willing in love to change. It must see as its model the different and evolving legal codes (Holiness, Deuteronomic, Covenant) and use them as a precedent to deliberate, clarify, change, create and re-create if necessary, the rules and general norms expressed in the OT. Old answers will not suffice in this new situation; they are not "timeless decrees".[49]

Besides, laws that have been categorized by Christians as belonging to the 'moral' category have been deemed relevant but those that are categorized as 'ceremonial' have been disregarded. If these distinctions of

[46] Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 53–54.

[47] Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 55–56.

[48] Bird, "The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation," 149.

[49] Bird, "The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation," 155–156; 162–163.

'moral' and 'ceremonial' did not exist in the OT, why make these distinctions now?

IV. EXEGETICAL ISSUES

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 have traditionally, for almost two millennia, been interpreted as universal and absolute prohibitions of homosexual relationships. OT commentaries do not offer much in the form of defending this position because it was not an issue of contention until the 20th century. It is only in the recent past, beginning in the 1980s, that any serious defence of the traditional position became necessary. Scholars James DeYoung, Robert Gagnon, Kevin DeYoung, and Ian Paul among others have responded to the new interpretations.

In what follows, we consider the role of OT laws, *tôʿēbâ,* gender roles and homoerotic activity in challenging the view that homosexuality is compatible with Scripture.

1. Relevance of Leviticus for Christians

Why do Christians uphold laws that are outdated and irrelevant to modern society? Is not the OT law abrogated by Christ and his work on the cross?

Christians have seen three categories of laws in Leviticus, namely moral, civil and ceremonial. Nevertheless such clear-cut divisions did not exist in the Torah, or the Holiness Code as "ritual and moral, eternal and contingent, are combined"[50] and are not easily differentiated. Gagnon suggests that "most of Leviticus 18-20 can be thought of as an expanded commentary on the ten commandments…"[51] DeYoung too sees a strong resemblance between the Decalogue (Ex. 20 and Deut. 5) and Lev. 18 and 20.[52]

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[50] Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 121.

[51] Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 121. Also Robert P Gordon, "Leviticus," Revised Edition., New International Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 205.

[52] James B. DeYoung, *Homosexuality: Contemporary Claims Examined in Light of the Bible and Other Ancient Literature and Law* (Grand

OT "ethics are fundamentally *theological*…they are at every point related to God – to his character, his will, his actions and purpose."[53] Even those purity laws that are often viewed as only to do with the 'external' "were an outward reflection of central religious convictions, including obedience to God's desire that Jews be holy to him as he was holy, indeed that they should be a living reflection of God's holiness in the midst of an unclean world".[54] Christopher Wright explains that the social laws of Israel must be seen as having 'paradigmatic' value for Christians today. While there cannot be 'literal imitation' it must not be discarded as irrelevant and only applicable within a particular historical framework.[55] Christians today are not free to 'pick-and-mix' the laws of their choice. Then, on what basis do they decide which laws persist in the NT era?

For the church which comes under the Christological framework of the NT era, the NT is the determining factor by which, with the help of the Holy Spirit, it is guided in this process. Because the life, death and resurrection of Christ are what enabled this transition from the old to the new, the OT and its laws are applied as it were, through a Christological grid. This does not in any way change the God-centeredness and the holiness requirement that the old laws achieved, but it sets a new pattern for achieving that same goal. Christ who re-emphasized the OT imperative "'Be holy because I…am holy" (Lev. 19:2; 11:44) when he said "be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect" (Mt. 5:48, NIV) was the 'game changer', the one who set the pattern for the church on how to move forward with the application of OT laws in this new season.

Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2000), 53–54: It begins and ends with "I am the Lord your God."

[53] Christopher J. H. Wright, *Living as the People of God: The Relevance of Old Testament Ethics* (Leicester, England: IVP, 1983), 21.

[54] David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity: Unlocking the New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 277.

[55] Wright, *Living as the People of God*, 43–45.

First, he renders some laws redundant - by his death as "the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (Jn. 1:29). His once-for-all (1 Pet. 3:18; Heb.10) sacrifice accomplished the required holiness that was previously achieved through repeated cleansing and purification rituals. Thus he did away with the need for regular sacrifices and all the laws pertaining to that system. By gifting the Holy Spirit to indwell the body of Christ, the new temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17) he made redundant the rituals and laws pertaining to the priesthood (Heb. 5:5, 4:14) and Temple. By breaking down the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles by his death (Eph. 2:14) and gifting the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles (Acts 10) he made the laws pertaining to land ownership and separation (food laws, circumcision and external cleanness), unnecessary. By closely associating with those considered impure such as the leper (Mt. 8:3), the demon possessed (Mt. 8: 28-34), and the corpse (Mk. 5:21-43) he showed that real purity was not to do with the externals but with ethical behavior that emanated out of internal purity (Mk. 7; Lk. 11: 37-41).[56]

Second, he re-emphasized laws that prohibited vices because they defiled the Christian and marred his reflection of God's holiness. Laws pertaining to marriage, divorce and adultery were reinforced with greater strictness (Mt. 19). Jesus told the adulterous woman "go and sin no more" and did not pursue the OT death penalty option for this *tôʿēbâ* but gave her a chance to change and receive forgiveness (Jn. 8:1-11). While *tôʿēbâ* emphasized the seriousness of the sin, Jesus by his actions demonstrates that even these sins may be forgiven. Revisionists assert that Jesus never said anything about homosexuality. Since Jesus' interactions were mostly within the Jewish community that detested and did not practice it, there was never a need to refer to it. Nevertheless

[56] William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), 168–171: the law that prohibited sexual intercourse during menstruation (Lev. 18:19), though belonging to the "sexual" category, was part of the impurity laws that considered bodily emissions as unclean.

it is worth recalling that he endorsed marriage by referring to the creation of "male and female" and the one flesh union of 'man' and 'wife' (Mt. 19: 4-6). Jesus also forcefully condemned injustice and hypocrisy with great passion (Mt. 15; Lk. 11: 37-41).

Third, Jesus re-defined certain laws, among them the Sabbath being the most conflictual. Sabbath restrictions were to be seen in a new light as being "for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mk. 2:27). Therefore it was acceptable to pick corn to satisfy hunger or bring restoration to the person under bondage.[57]

The 1st century church continued to develop this basic pattern set by Jesus: It deemed unnecessary those laws that hindered the integration of the Gentiles into his Kingdom such as the external cleansing, food and circumcision laws (Acts 15; Gal. 2:11-21). Following in the footsteps of Christ, it encouraged interaction between Jews and Gentiles, thus promoting greater missionary endeavours as it became "all things to all people so that by all possible means [it] might save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). It insisted on sexual purity, and prohibited practices such as incest, homosexuality and adultery, issues faced in a growing Gentile church (Col. 3:5; 1 Cor. 5 and 6; Eph. 5:3). However, as Jesus did in the case of the adulterous woman, the church too extends mercy, compassion and acceptance to those who repent and return (see 2 Cor. 5-8). Sexual impurity defiles the body of Christ which is the temple of God (1 Cor. 6:12-20). Paul even discouraged polygamy and encouraged monogamy as he taught that leaders must be "the husband of but one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2, 12). He also warned against idolatry, slander, theft, greed and other ethical violations (1 Cor. 9-10). In this Christian era of grace where the holiness of God was still the goal (1 Pet. 1:16), "separation from vice" rather than "separation from Gentiles in and of themselves" was the core of Christian purity and practice.[58]

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[57] See deSilva, *Honor*, 280–297.
[58] deSilva, *Honor*, 294 also 280-297.

The most telling evidence, that 18:22 and 20:13 have continued relevance for those living under the New Covenant, is that Paul, the apostle who argued for the ineffectiveness of the Law, re-iterates the homosexual prohibition and the punishment that will come upon those who violate it. In his Epistles to the Romans (1:26-27), 1 Corinthians (6: 9-11) and 1 Timothy (1: 9-10), Paul locates homoerotic acts among other acts of rebellion that lead to eternal death.[59]

2. Relevance of tôʿēbâ

"Fundamentally *tôʿēbâ* denotes the persons, things, or practices that offend one's ritual or moral order."[60] Thus when Yahweh declares something as a *tôʿēbâ* (abomination, detestable, abhorrent), it is because it is "incompatible with his character and must be rejected and abhorred by any Yahweh worshipper".[61] Yahweh followers who demonstrate a similar attitude towards what is abhorred by him, will ensure that purity is maintained and God's character is clearly represented to the nations. In Leviticus *tôʿēbâ* is often used in connection with cultic cleanness and separation, but in Proverbs it clearly describes sins or moral deficiencies such as deceit (11:1, 20), lying (12:22), wickedness (15:8, 9, 26) and pride (16:5).[62] Furthermore, in Jer. 7:9-10 Baal worship, murder, swearing falsely and adultery are abominations. Boswell's assertion that the LXX makes clearer distinctions between purity violations and ethical violations is

[59] Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 121–122; Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 24–25. For a fuller discussion of Paul's view on homosexual practice see chapters 4 and 5; See also Webb, *Slaves* for his explanation on how Christians must employ the "redemptive-movement hermeneutic" in deciding between laws that are transcultural and laws that are not.

[60] William A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 4, NIDOTTE (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 314.

[61] VanGemeren, ed., NIDOTTE, 4:315.

[62] VanGemeren, ed., NIDOTTE, 4:314–318.

noteworthy. While *anomia* is used for justice violations in Leviticus and most of Deuteronomy (excluding 25:16), *bdelygma* is used for cultic 'uncleanness'. But, even though this distinction is evident in Leviticus and Deuteronomy it is absent in Proverbs. At least nine of the eleven occurrences of *bdelygma* in Proverbs refer to morality.[63]

Ezek. 18:10-13 (an undisputedly exilic writing, at a time when Israel was most exposed to pagan customs) demonstrates the broadness of this term: idol worship, as well as moral evils such as defiling a neighbour's wife, oppressing the poor, robbery and so on are *tôʿăbat*, and punishable by death. More importantly the plural *tôʿăbat* in Lev. 18 itself (vs. 26, 27, 29, 30) also refers to incest, adultery, child sacrifice and bestiality. These will by no means be considered taboos, pagan customs or outdated Jewish purity rituals even today, but are universally condemned as inherently evil and morally deficient.[64] Therefore, as demonstrated above, *tôʿēbâ* is a broad term, used to proscribe that which God abhors; that which is incompatible with his character and purposes, whether they be taboos or sins.[65] To suggest that it was used only because homosexual practice was 'unclean' and associated with pagan religions and not because it was inherently evil is invalid.

Even if homosexuality was a pagan practice and/or was associated with idolatry, why can it not at the same time be inherently evil? For example, the practice of child sacrifice was an inherently evil practice but it was also adopted and incorporated into Ammonite worship of Molech (Deut. 12:31). Therefore it does not have to be mutually exclusive; either a taboo or inherently evil. Even

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[63] In Prov. 11:1, 20; 12:22; 15:9, 26; 16:12; 20:23; 27:20 and 29:27 (twice) it refers to ethical violations and in 15:8 and 21:27 it refers to unworthy sacrifice.

[64] Since sex with a menstruating woman, a practice not considered sinful today is included among the sins that are called abominations in Lev. 18, revisionists discount all evils mentioned in Lev. 18 as inherently evil but treat them as impurity issues.

[65] Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 118–120.

today Christians will not partake in some religious, superstitious and cultural practices, not just because they are practised by those of other religions or cultures, but because they are detested by God and 'abominations' in his sight. Thus, adultery, incest and homosexuality (prohibitions in Lev. 18 and 20), acts that destroy the sanctity of marriage and family, whether associated with idolatry and ancient taboos or not, are serious affronts to God's character. Therefore they are *tôʿăbat*. The seriousness of these evils is emphasised by the death penalty, and also by the *kārat* ("cut off", 18:29), which is "a conditional divine curse of extinction" that ensures the obliteration of the offender's line in the land.[66]

It is abundantly clear that the purity of Israel was paramount, and 'absolute separation' was a means by which to achieve it. Accordingly, *tôʿēbâ* (6x in Leviticus) also functions as a 'boundary marker', a boundary set by God to prevent the adoption of Egyptian and Canaanite practices that were hated by God (See Prov. 6:16; Deut. 12:31). A violation of these boundaries would amount to a deliberate and rebellious affront of God. Therefore the only suitable punishment was death and expulsion from the land.[67]

Gagnon argues that the homosexuality most known to Israel during the pre-exilic period, was that which was practised by temple prostitutes. Reference to the *qādēš* (sacred male prostitute) and *qĕdēšâ* (sacred female prostitute) is evidence that homosexuality was practised in Israel as idolatrous worship (Deut. 23:17-18; 1 Kings 14:21-24, 15:12-14, 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; Job 36:13-14). Male prostitutes could not have been engaged in heterosexual activity because Israelite women would not have been exposed to outsiders, because paternal lineage would be compromised. The practise of barren women seeking impregnation was also unknown in the ANE. Besides, homosexuality was practised by the *assinnu, kurgarrû, and kulu'u*, men castrated for the purpose of cult

[66] DeYoung, *Homosexuality*, 56; Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 120.

[67] Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 121; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 3:252–253.

worship. The use of ***keleb*** (dog), an epithet for those engaging in homosexual activity, in Deut. 23:17-18 also supports the idea that homosexual cult prostitution was not only known, but also detested in Israel.[68] This religious practice was the most accepted form of homosexuality in Mesopotamia at the time. Therefore today "we think that the banning of male cult prostitution does not take into account consensual, non-cultic, loving homosexual relationships" but in the ANE "to ban homosexual cult prostitutes was to ban all homosexual intercourse".[69] If the intention was to ban only homosexual cult prostitutes the term *qādēš* would have been the obvious choice.[70]

If Mosaic authorship of Leviticus is preferred, it is clear that homosexuality was practised by the Canaanites and adopted by some Israelites as early as the Judges period. The Israelites were commanded to completely destroy (*ḥāram*) the Canaanites. Nevertheless their failure to do so is documented and bemoaned in Jud. 1-2: The Benjamites "did not drive out the Jebusites…to this day [they] live there with the Benjamites" (1:21). By Judges 19, some Benjamites, (who lived in close proximity to Jebus), were violently seeking homoerotic sex, a practice they were probably unaccustomed to until they settled alongside the Jebusites.

3. Relevance of gender roles and misogyny

There is no denying that OT culture was patriarchal and some OT laws seem to treat women unfairly by depicting them as less important or of a lower status than men (e.g. Num. 5:11-31). Yet, even though biblical authors operated

[68] Contra Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 41.

[69] Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 131 and also 100-110, 130. Gagnon and James DeYoung read incest and homosexuality in the Ham narrative and connect the evil of the Canaanites (Ham's descendants) to Ham's sin (Gen. 9:20-27). Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 63–71; DeYoung, *Homosexuality*, 56. Schmidt too sees an allusion to incest, rape and homosexuality in the statement "saw the nakedness of his father" Schmidt, *Straight*, 88.

[70] Ian Paul, *Same-Sex Unions: The Key Biblical Texts* (Ridley Hall, Cambridge: Grove Books, 2014), 15.

from a patriarchal worldview, it is surprising to read accounts of women recognized for their strengths (Esther, Ruth), made leaders (Deborah in Jud. 4), given inheritance rights (Num. 27:1-12) or treated as equals (the one-flesh status of Adam and Eve). Therefore it is probable that even though the wider culture had a low view and afforded little value to women, biblical culture pushed against the cultural grain and advocated for greater value and protection for women (e.g. the incest laws offer protection for women within extended families and limit any unbridled patriarchal dominance; the law prohibiting sex during menstruation, contrary to expressed opinion, offer the women a level of privacy and rest during an unpleasant time. See Rachel's excuse in Gen. 31:35).

According to Boyarin neither the Bible nor the Talmud knows of an entity called sexuality i.e. a sexual identity that differentiates between a male and female. Therefore the issue in Leviticus has to do with gender role (active and passive) rather than homosexuality.[71] Contrary to his observations, gender roles with regard to sexual activity do not feature in the creation of male and female or in biblical teachings on marriage. Discussion on penetrative and receptive roles in relation to marriage or male-female relationships are also absent in Scripture. The Song of Songs, exclusively dedicated to this subject, does not even hint at gender roles but only refers to distinct male and female anatomical features. It is also interesting to note that Nissinen's 'phallic aggression' (see ch.3) is not evident in the war victory song by the author/s of Judges; rather, the envisaged trophies were "a woman or two for each man" (5:30). Even if the blurring of distinctive sexual identities or anatomical distinctions dominated the ANE culture, there is no evidence of such blurring of the created order in the Scriptures.

[71] Boyarin, "History," 344, 353–355.

4. Relevance of sexual act and sexual orientation

Boyarin and others suggest that penetration is the only act that is prohibited. Does this mean that all other erotic activity including lesbian activity is permitted?

Paternity issues, the importance of chastity and a lack of interest in women's affairs are cited as reasons for the non-existence or silence about lesbianism in Leviticus.[72] It is also likely that in a close knit culture like Israel, where mothers, daughters, grandmothers, aunts and other family members young and old interacted closely or lived together, it would be near impossible to develop or sustain an exclusive and secretive physical relationship. It is possible therefore that lesbianism was rare, or unknown.

The verb *šākab* ("lying down") could mean anything from death (Isa. 14:8), to rest or sleep (Jud. 19:4), keeping the other warm (Ecc. 4:11) or sexual intercourse (Gen. 39:7). Therefore while one cannot deny the sexual element in the context of Lev. 18 and 20, it would be difficult to insist that the prohibition included all intercrural activities, besides intercourse. Nevertheless, from a different perspective, it would be hard to imagine that the prohibitions against incest or adultery for example, only prohibit the act, and permit other sexual interactions. It would be even harder to imagine that the law would allow no recourse to a husband whose wife is engaging in physical intimacy with another, and only resisting intercourse.[73] Therefore it is not unreasonable to suggest that *šākab* in this instance prohibits all homoerotic behaviour, including intercrural activity.

Unlike narratives which describe, Levitical injunctions prescribe desired behavior and proscribe forbidden acts. For those Israelites familiar with the Sodom narrative and yet uncertain about whether the primary sin was inhospitality, the Levitical *tôʿēbâ* no doubt offers a vital clue (cf. Ezek. 16:50). Furthermore for those puzzling over whether Leviticus only prohibited homosexual acts related

[72] Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 145.
[73] Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 143.

to cult prostitution, the unqualified injunctions clarify that it is absolute and all-inclusive. For those reflecting on whether the proscriptions did not address homosexual orientation, Gagnon says:

> Since the Levitical prohibitions are based on the Creator's design for the creation, not on human desires for alternative expressions of sexuality, participation in homosexual intercourse by men with an "exclusive homosexual orientation" would have made no difference to the legislators. Would awareness of an "exclusive orientation to bestiality" have made sex with animals any more tolerable for the legislators of the Holiness Code?[74]

It would be a mistake to presume that the forbidden 'orientation' is given by God. Just as a polyamorous adult[75] could claim his unrelenting desire is an 'orientation' from God, paedophiles (those whose sexual orientation is towards children) could also claim that their orientation is a gift from God. Therefore, what right has society to forbid such 'God-given' desires, especially if such a consensual relationship is forged with an older child? The propensity or strong and unrelenting desire to do what is forbidden is a result of humankind's fallenness (beginning in Gen. 3) – it is not a part of the Creator's design.

V. CONCLUSION

Leviticus 18 and 20 primarily deal with laws that relate to sexual relationships and family. As such, it is a polemic against sex outside marriage and deals specifically with incest, adultery, bestiality and homosexuality. The specific mention of *tôʿēbâ* in 18:22 and 20:13 emphasizes Yahweh's abhorrence of homosexual practice as a "pervert[ing of] the

[74] Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 140 n220.

[75] Celina Durgin, "Polyamorists Come out of the Closet," *National Review*, June 18, 2014, accessed October 6, 2016, http://www.nationalreview.com/article/380609/.

heterosexual relationship ordained by him (Gen. 2:24)" in creation;[76] a distortion of his created order for sexuality – and so, though it may be accepted by culture, it is prohibited by God. Furthermore, it is not just an obscure command in the 'outdated' laws of the OT, but one that is carried into the NT and into new situations with added conviction (Rom. 1: 26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-1 and1 Tim. 1:9-10). The proscribed death penalty (or premature death) for participants and threat of expulsion for communities that tolerate such behaviours surpass all ANE penalties for such violations (18:24-30).[77] Finally, the prohibition is all inclusive and without qualification, unlike the ANE laws; status, age, or circumstances do not exempt from this absolute prohibition.

Therefore, basing the reading of Leviticus and homosexual practice on shaky social constructs such as patriarchy and gender roles, rather than on the tangible and scripturally-attested category of sexuality, and dismissing it by suggesting that it was only relevant to ethnic Jews at the time, is at best unwise, and at worst a deliberate disregard of truth.

[76] VanGemeren, *Dictionary*, 4:316.

[77] For further discussion and a comparison of penalties in the Torah, Sanhedrin and Mishnah see DeYoung, *Homosexuality*, 55–58.

SOUTH ASIA AND LONG-DISTANCE TRADE IN EARLY ISRAEL

PRABO MIHINDUKULASURIYA

Abstract: *The discovery of Phoenician flasks containing South Asian cinnamon in early Iron Age Israel reveals ancient long-distance trade connections with South Asia. This article examines the OT for possible textual references to that trading activity, including a close reading of the narrative of Solomon's maritime venture with the Phoenicians, references to exotic products, possible loanwords from Indian languages, and the hypothesis that the Song of Solomon was influenced by Tamil sangam poetry. While there is satisfactory evidence for the use of South Asian products in Early Israel and the diffusion of Indian loanwords, there is no evidence for direct contact between Israelites and South Asians in that period. Both commercial and linguistic transferences appear to have been mediated by Arabian and Persian intermediaries.*

Keywords: *Ancient Israel, cinnamon, Indian loanwords, long-distance trade, Ophir, Phoenicians, South Asia.*

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Cinnamon in Phoenician flasks

In 2013, Israeli archaeologists announced the first compelling evidence for long-distance trade between Ancient Israel and South Asia. Ten small ceramic flasks unearthed at Tell Qasile, Dor and Kinneret, contained cinnamaldehyde and benzoic acid, the signature chemical compounds of cinnamon (*cinnamomum zeylanicum/verum*), a plant indigenous to Sri Lanka, South India and Myanmar.[1] The flasks were of Phoenician design, and dated between

[1] Dvory Namdar, Ayelet Gilboa, Ronny Neumann, Israel Finkelstein and Steve Weiner, "Cinnamaldehyde in Iron Age Phoenician Flasks Raises the Possibility of Levantine Trade with South East Asia," *Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry* 12, no.3 (2013): 1-19.

1100 – 950 BC, a period which coincides with the reigns of kings David and Solomon. Because the flasks containing cinnamon were found in both religious and domestic buildings, archaeologist Ayalet Gilboa concluded that cinnamon in the form of aromatic oil appears to have been in fairly common usage.[2] She commented further on how the South Asian spice might have been shipped and processed along the way.

> Cinnamon was usually transported as quills made from dried inner stem-bark of this species. The cinnamon in the flasks, therefore, represents a *secondary industry* related to the spice trade. Namely, in some centers in Phoenicia, cinnamon (and most probably other fragrant substances) was immersed in as yet unidentified liquids and then distributed in locally made flasks within Phoenicia and its environs, and also to other neighbouring regions, such as Philistia and Cyprus.[3]

According to the Greek historian Herodotus (400s BC), Phoenicians and Arabs had long been the intermediaries who introduced cinnamon, cassia and other aromatic products into the Mediterranean. He stated that although "the sticks which the Phoenicians have taught us to call 'cinnamon'" were gathered by the Arabs, they themselves "cannot [or perhaps, would not] even say where it comes from and where in the world it grows."[4] He speculated that cinnamon grew in Ethiopia. The new findings prove that cinnamon was traded in the eastern Mediterranean for at least five hundred years before Herodotus, and that it came from much farther away than Ethiopia.

The discovery of the cinnamon flasks in Ancient Israel was preceded by two related finds. In 1985, black

[2] Ayalet Gilboa and Dvory Namdar, "On the Beginnings of South Asian Spice Trade with the Mediterranean Region: A Review," *Radiocarbon* 57, No. 2 (2015): (265-283) 271-272.

[3] Gilboa and Namdar, "On the Beginnings," 272 (original italics).

[4] Herodotus, *Histories*, 3.111.

pepper grains of Indian origin were found in the mummy of Pharaoh Ramesses II (1200s BC);[5] and in 1995, a cinnamon flower was found in a Late Iron Age (600s BC) context on the Aegean island of Samos.[6] Prior to this latest discovery, some scholars assumed that the names *qinnamon/qinnamōmon* and *kassia* found in the Old Testament (Exod. 30:23; Prov. 7:17 and Song of Sol. 4:14) originally referred to some other aromatic plants that perhaps grew closer to Israel.[7] We now know that the 'cinnamon' and 'cassia' of the Old Testament were indeed the same plant products that are indigenous to and, therefore, must have been shipped from South Asia.

2. Phoenician and Arab intermediaries

This new evidence does not prove that there was direct commercial contact between Israel and South Asia during the reigns of David and Solomon. It is much more likely that spices from the region reached Israel through a chain of intermediaries who passed on the merchandise in stages along overland and maritime trade routes.

Egyptologist and biblical scholar Kenneth Kitchen has proposed that the unnamed "Queen of Sheba" was prompted to visit Solomon because she was concerned that the long-established overland trade route through her Southwest Arabian kingdom was threatened by Solomon's alliance with Hiram of Tyre, which gave the Phoenicians access to the Red Sea route. While the maritime alliance with the Phoenicians was advantageous for acquiring heavy cargoes such as timber and precious metals, Kitchen argued, "she could have pressed upon a Solomon the superiority of the camel-route for light-weight, high-value goods such as

[5] Arlette Plu, "Bois et graines. In La momie de Ramses II" in *Contribution scientifique à l'égyptologie*, edited by L. Balout and C. Roubet (Paris: Éditions Recherches sur les Civilisations, 1985), 166-174.

[6] Dušanka Kučan, "Zur ernährung und dem gebrauch von pflanzen im Heraion von Samos im 7. Jahr- hundert v. Chr.," *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 110 (1995):1-64.

[7] For references, see Gilboa and Namdar, "On the Beginnings of South Asian Spice Trade," 265-266.

aromatics and spice."[8] Reflecting age-old stratagems of trade diplomacy, the Sabaeans "gave the king 120 talents of gold, and a very great quantity of spices and precious stones. Never again came such an abundance of spices as these that the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon" (1 Kings 10:2, 10; 2 Chron. 9:1, 9). Such 'tribute' represented a guarantee that Solomon and his elites would enjoy a steady flow of gold and exotic luxuries for their aesthetic projects and consumption. In return, the queen had demands of her own, because as we are told, "King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all that she desired, whatever she asked besides what was given her by the bounty of King Solomon" (1 Kings 10:13; 2 Chron. 9:12). Reportedly, the agreement was mutually profitable with Solomon's treasury received annual revenues "from the traders and the wares of the merchants and all the kings of the Arabs and the governors of the country" (1 Kings 10:15; 2 Chron. 9:14 NASB).

Many centuries later, in the Hellenistic Period, when Greek knowledge about South Asia expanded as a direct consequence of the eastward conquests of Alexander the Great. It was then that "India" was identified as the real source of many of the spices that were previously assumed to have grown in Arabia or Ethiopia. Alexander's admiral Nearchus (about 360-300 BC) discovered that "the Assyrians imported cinnamon and other spices" at the Arabian promontory of Maceta (Ras Musandum).[9] Alexander's botanist Theophrastus (about 372-287 BC) found out that

> As to all the other fragrant plants used for aromatic odours, they come partly from India whence they are sent over sea, and partly from Arabia, for instance, *komakon*-- as well as cinnamon and cassia… Cardamom and *amōmon* some say come from Media;

[8] Kenneth A. Kitchen, "Sheba and Arabia" in *The Age of Solomon: Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium*, edited by Lowell K. Handy (Leiden/NY/Köln: Brill, 1997), 139.

[9] Nearchus, quoted in Arrian, *Anabasis Alexandri* VIII: *Indica*, 32.

> others say that these come from India, as well as spikenard and most, if not all, of the other species.[10]

It is also in the Hellenistic Period that we learn how the Sabaeans and neighbouring nations transhipped commodities originating from South Asia. Agatharchides (100s BC), the Greek historian and geographer, stated that "there is no nation upon earth so wealthy as the Gerrheans and Sabaeans, from their situation in the centre of all the commerce which passes between Asia and Europe. These are the nations…which furnish the most profitable agencies to the industry of the Phoenicians… ."[11] Artemidorus (around 100 BC) reported that in Arabia, "Those who live close to one another receive in continuous succession the loads of aromatics and deliver them to their next neighbours, as far as Syria and Mesopotamia…[and] from their trafficking both the Sabaeans and the Gerrhaeans have become richest of all."[12]

In the light of the new archaeological evidence that South Asian cinnamon was available in Israel as early as 1100-900 BC, it is highly probable that the resilient system of segmented trade practiced by the Sabaeans and other South Arabian peoples went back centuries into the past.

II. 'OPHIR' IN SOUTH ASIA?

1. King Solomon's maritime expeditions

Generations of Bible scholars and historians have been intrigued by the accounts of Solomon's sea-borne expeditions to "Ophir" in partnership with Hiram of Tyre who provided him with ships and experienced Phoenician "sailors who knew the sea" (1 Kings 9.27; 2 Chron. 8:18, see below). That Solomon sent his own seafaring men on the

[10] Theophrastus of Eresus, *Inquiry into Plants* 9.7.2.
[11] Agatharchides of Cnidus, quoted in Photius, *Bibliotheca* 7.
[12] Artemidorus of Ephesus, quoted in Strabo, *Geography* 16.4.19.

joint venture indicates that the Israelites also had some experience in seafaring.[13]

Interestingly, Herodotus preserves an account (presumably of Egyptian origin) that, four hundred years after Solomon, Pharaoh Necho II (around 610-595 BC) had "dispatch[ed] ships with Phoenician crews with instructions to return via the Pillars of Heracles [i.e. Straights of Gibraltar] into the northern sea [i.e. the Mediterranean] and so back to Egypt…"; and how "…the Phoenicians set out from the Red Sea and sailed into the sea to the south [i.e. Indian Ocean]…[taking] over two years before they rounded the Pillars of Hercules and arrived back in Egypt."[14] Historians generally accept this account as reliable because of the detail that beyond the southern extremity of Africa, the sailors observed that the sun rose on their right; a detail that Herodotus himself disbelieved at the time.

The original version of the Israelite-Phoenician expedition in 1 Kings (written about 550 BC) is repeated with minor differences in 2 Chronicles (about 350 BC). The scribal emendation from "ships of Tarshish" (1 Kings 10:22) to "ships went to Tarshish" (2 Chron. 9:21) was evidently a mistake.[15] "Ships of Tarshish" were a class of cargo vessel so named because they were typically used for transporting resources extracted from the westerly Phoenician outpost of Tarshish, most probably Tartessos near Gadis (Cadiz) in the Iberian peninsula.

1 Kings 9:26-28	2 Chron. 8:17-18
[26]King Solomon **built a fleet of ships at** Ezion-geber, which is	[17]Then Solomon **went to** Ezion-geber and Eloth on the

[13] For studies on ancient Israel's maritime activity see, for example, Raphael Patai, *The Children of Noah: Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998); Nadav Kashtan (Ed.), *Seafaring and the Jews* (NY: Frank Cass, 2001).

[14] Herodotus, *Histories* 4.42.

[15] The same mistake is made when the original narrative that Jehoshaphat "made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold…" (1 Kings 22:48) is rendered "to go to Tarshish" (2 Chronicles 20:36). Both accounts agree that "the ships were wrecked at Etzion-geber."

near Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. [27]And Hiram sent with the fleet his servants, seamen who were familiar with the sea, together with the servants of Solomon. [28]And they went to Ophir and brought from there gold, **420** talents, and they brought it to King Solomon.	shore of the sea, in the land of Edom. [18]And Hiram sent to him **by the hand of his servants** ships and servants familiar with the sea, and they went to Ophir together with the servants of Solomon and brought from there **450** talents of gold and brought it to King Solomon.
1 Kings 10:11-12	2 Chron. 9:10-11
[11]Moreover, **the fleet of Hiram**, which brought gold from Ophir, brought from Ophir a very great amount of **almug** wood and precious stones. [12]And the king made of the **almug** wood supports for the house of the LORD and for the king's house, also lyres and harps for the singers. No such **almug** wood has come or been seen to this day.	[10]Moreover, **the servants of Hiram and the servants of Solomon**, who brought gold from Ophir, brought **algum** wood and precious stones. [11]And the king made from the **algum** wood supports for the house of the LORD and for the king's house, lyres also and harps for the singers. There never was seen **the like of them before in the land of Judah.**
1 Kings 10:22	2 Chron. 9:21
[22]For the king had a fleet of **ships of Tarshish** at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks/baboons.	[21]For the king's **ships went to Tarshish** with the servants of Hiram. Once every three years the ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks/baboons.

The narrators reveal virtually nothing about Ophir, except the commodities and fauna acquired from there, which were "gold[,]…a very great amount of almug wood and precious stones" (1 Kings 10.11-12; 2 Chron. 9:10-11 var. "algum wood"); and "gold, silver and ivory, and apes and peacocks [or baboons]" (1 Kings 10:22; 2 Chron. 9:21). We shall presently

discuss whether these and the terms used for them offer any clues to the location of Ophir.

It is worth observing here that spices are not part of the cargo from Ophir. Spices are attributed solely to the Sabaeans. The supply of "precious stones," however, is common to both to the Sabaeans (1 Kings 10:10; 2 Chron. 9:9) and to the Ophir expeditions (1 Kings 10:11; 2 Chron. 9:10). Also note that whatever "almug/algum" wood was, it was not found only in Ophir. Solomon, who was evidently knowledgeable about plants (1 Kings 4:33), also wrote to Hiram to "Send me also cedar, cypress, and algum logs from Lebanon, for I know that your servants have skill to cut timber there" (2 Chron. 2:8).

Further clues to Ophir's location can be inferred from the expedition's point of departure and duration. The ships were assembled and launched at "Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth [modern Eilat] on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom" (1 Kings 9:26; 2 Chron. 8:17). This can only mean that it was reached by sailing down the Gulf of Aqaba, along the Red Sea, and possibly the Indian Ocean.

The duration of each expedition was "three years" (1 Kings 10:22; 2 Chron. 9:21). This does not mean that their destination was so remote that it required a voyage lasting one-and-a-half years each way. As a common feature of ancient long-distance seafaring, a three-year duration would have included the time of actual coastal sailing, but also the time required for preparing and repairing vessels, and collecting and storing consumable food and water along the way. To acquire sufficiently large quantities of the desired commodities, ships would have to anchor at safe havens while crews trekked into the interior to mine for minerals, cut down trees, hunt wild animals for their skins and tusks, or capture them for live transport. Then there would be the need to wait for seasonal changes in wind direction and other favourable sailing conditions. If it was necessary to acquire the imports by trading with local communities, they would need sufficient time to collect and prepare those items in large enough quantities to carry back in the shiploads to

make the long and expensive expeditions worthwhile.

There is some archaeological evidence outside the Bible that Ophir was indeed a real place, and that it was a source of gold. A Paleo-Hebrew inscription from Tell Qasile dating to the 700s BC reads, "Gold from Ophir, for Beth-Horon […] 30 shekels."[16] 'Ophir gold' is also mentioned elsewhere in the Bible (Job 22:24; 28:16; Ps. 45:9; Isa. 13:12).

The identification of Ophir with India goes back at least to time the when Jewish scholars translated their Hebrew scriptures into Greek around 250 BC in Alexandria. In this Septuagint (LXX) translation, the personal name Ophir is simply transliterated *Ouphir* (Gen. 10:29), but the place name is rendered as some variation of *Sophir*,[17] which was the Egyptian Coptic name for India. The Coptic *Sophir* was very likely derived from the Pāli *Suppāraka* (Sansk. *Sūrpāraka*), the ancient port of northwestern India, which was also know to the Greek mariners as *Suppara*.[18] However, the Septuagint translators probably chose *Sophir* because of the new knowledge they had gained about India and its ports due to the diplomatic and trade connections recently initiated by their Greek rulers, the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. For this same reason the Septuagint either transliterated Tarshish as Tharthesios or substituted it with *Karchēdōn*, the "Carthage" familiar to them (LXX Isa. 23; Ezek. 27:12, etc.) Apparently, they no longer knew the original location of Tarshish, which was very probably Tartessos, the Phoenician colony in southern Spain.[19]

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[16] B. Maisler, "Two Hebrew Ostraca from Tell Qasîle," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 10, no. 4 (Oct 1951), 265-67.

[17] *Sōphēra* (1 Kings 9:28), *Souphir* (10:11), *Soupheir* (1 Chron. 29:4), *Sōpheira* (2 Chron. 8:18) or *Sōpheir* (Job 28:16).

[18] *Perisplus Maris Erythraei*, 52.17.

[19] John Day, "Where Was Tarshish?" in *Let Us Go Up to Zion: Essays in Honour of H. G. M. Williamson on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. I. Provan and M. Boda (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 360–69. See also Edward Lipiński, *Itineraria Phoenicia, Studia Phoenicia XVIII* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers & Dept of Oriental Studies, 2004): 225-266.

Two hundred years later, the Jewish historian Josephus (around AD 37-100) referred to "the land anciently called Sōpheir, but now the Land of Gold; [which] belongs to India."[20] His location of Ophir in "India" was also very likely due to recent Hellenistic writings about India, among other things, being famous for gold. Josephus claimed to have read Megasthenes (around 350-290 BC),[21] and the lesser-known historian Philostratus (around 31 BC) who wrote about India.[22] Megasthenes wrote hyperbolically about the abundance of gold and silver in India and how these were extracted by giant ants.[23] He also recorded that the inhabitants of Taprobanê (Sri Lanka) "are more productive of gold and large pearls than the Indians."[24] Such notices could easily have influenced Josephus to locate Ophir in India, just as he located the Bible's other gold-bearing region, Havilah (Gen. 2:10-11), also in India.[25]

Havilah is first mentioned in connection with the unidentified river "Pishon" which "flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there" (Gen. 2:10-11). The minerals and aromatic resin mentioned here were extracted from locations in North East Africa, Arabia and parts of South Asia. Therefore, it is impossible to isolate one specific location. This is also complicated by the fact that there are two 'Havilahs' in Gen. 10, where the 'Table of Nations' represents a proto-historic list of Noah's descendants who evolved into the nations that the ancient Israelites would encounter in the course of their history. One 'Havilah' was the descendent of Ham through Cush (v. 7). The other 'Havilah' was the descendant of Shem through

[20] *Antiquities of the Jews*, 8.6.4. Also 8.7.

[21] *Jewish Antiquities* 10.11.227.

[22] *Jewish Antiquities* 10.11.228. Samuel Rocca, *Herod's Judaea: A Mediterranean State in the Classical World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 93-94.

[23] Megasthenes' *Indika*, fragments preserved in Diod. 2. 36; Strabo 15.1.36, 44, 57, etc.

[24] Quoted in Pliny, *Nat. Hist*. 6.24.1.

[25] Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.38.

Joktan (v. 29), whose habitations "extended from Mesha in the direction of Sephar to the hill country of the east" (verse 30). These places were all associated with the Arabian peninsula and adjacent areas.[26]

From Josephus onwards, many Jewish and Christian writers tended to superimpose biblical sacred geography onto exploratory Hellenistic cartography. This trend reached its peak with Cosmas Indicopleustes (AD 500s), who wrote that

> In scripture the Indian region is called Euilat (Havilah). For it is thus written in Genesis: *Now the river goeth out from Eden to water Paradise. And from there it was parted and became four heads. The name of the first is Phison (Pishon); that is it which compasseth the whole land of Euilat, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; there is the carbuncle and the jasper stone*; where the writer clearly calls the country Euilat. This Euilat, moreover, is of the race of Ham. For thus again it is written: *The sons of Ham, Cush and Misraim, Phut and Caraan the sons of Cush, Sabâ and Euilat*; that is the Homerites and Indians, for Sabâ is situated in the Homerite country, and Euilat is in India. For the Persian Gulf divides those two countries. And that country has gold according to sacred scripture.[27]

Other Christian scholars in Late Antiquity were more careful. At around the same time as Cosmas, the Armenian *Geography* attributed to Ananias of Širak (probably 591-636 AD) acknowledged that "In Holy Scripture we have found nothing definite about geography and are thus obliged to consult pagan [authors] who have developed geography by

[26] Gordon R. Lewthwaite, "The Geographical Horizons of the Early Israelites: the Table of Nations Revisited," *California Geographer* 27 (1987), 60-61.

[27] Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography*11. Trans. J. W. McCrindle (London: Hakluyt Society, 1897), 372-73 (original italics).

land and sea voyages, and have also confirmed it through geometry."[28]

2. Ophir and Punt

Clues to Ophir's location could also be discerned historically from records of similar expeditions by rulers of Israel's neighbouring states.

The biblical narrative of Solomon's Ophir enterprise followed the well-documented pattern of Ancient Near Eastern rulers who, when their political and economic power had reached a certain level of confidence, invested in long-distance ventures which gave them direct access to high-value resources from distant locations, eliminating their dependence on intermediaries. The maritime expeditions of the Egyptian pharaohs to the "Land of Punt" are a classic precedent for such royal prestige projects, and may offer some important clues.

Beginning with the first recorded expedition to Punt in the reign of Sahura (around 2487-2475 BC), which brought back fragrant gums, resins, staves of black wood, myrhh and electrum, more expeditions were sent out by several pharaohs during the Middle Kingdom Period (2040 - 1782 BC), from Mentuhotep III (around 2004-1992 BC) to Amenemhat IV (around 1786-1777 BC).[29] In the New Kingdom Period (1570-1069 BC), Hatshepsut (around 1473-1458 BC) and her co-regent Thutmose III (around 1479-1425 BC) sent expeditions. Then, after a long interval, Rameses III (1186-1155 BC) and, finally, Rameses IV (1155-1149 BC) undertook successful documented voyages. The most detailed record of a Punt expedition is the one sent by Hatshepsut. Its mission was to rediscover the route to Punt and bring back live myrrh trees to create a terrace symbolizing Punt's idyllic 'sacred space' within the new

[28] Robert H. Hewsen, trans. *The Geography of Ananias of Širak (AŠXARHAC`OYC`)*, (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1992), 42.

[29] Kathryn A. Bard and Rodolfo Fattovich, *Seafaring Expeditions to Punt in the Middle Kingdom: Excavations at Mersa/Wadi Gawasis, Egypt* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2018), 176.

temple complex of Amon at Thebes. It also brought back an impressive inventory of exotica and slaves.

> The loading of the ships very heavily with marvels of the country of Punt; all goodly fragrant woods of God's-Land [a synonym for Punt], heaps of myrrh-resin, with fresh myrrh trees, with ebony and pure ivory, with green gold of Emu, (*ʿmw*), with cinnamon wood [*ti'sheps*], khesyt wood, with ihmut-incense, sonter-incense, eye-cosmetic, with apes, monkeys, dogs, and with skins of the southern panther, with natives and their children. Never was brought the like of this for any king who has been since the beginning.[30]

The biblical narrator was evidently following this style of 'royal discourse' when he stated of Solomon's wealth that "Never again came such an abundance of spices as these that the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon" (1 Kings 10:10b); "No such almug wood has come or been seen to this day" (10:12b); and "The like of it was never made in any kingdom" (10:20b).

The Egyptian story of the *Shipwrecked Sailor* (about 1900 BC) may hold another clue to the Solomonic account. Among the presents given by the 'serpent king' of Punt to the sailor were ivory and two kinds of monkeys, *gf* (pronounced *qôfe*) and *ky*. W. F. Albright proposed that these might be the meanings of the two obscure Hebrew words *qōphīm* and *tukkiyyīm*, with *t-* being the Egyptian feminine article.[31]

Archaeologists Kathryn Bard and Rodolfo Fattovich studied the Egyptian written sources relating to Punt in terms of its topographical features (a mountainous region

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[30] J. H. Breasted (trans. and ed.), *Ancient Records of Egypt, Volume 2, The Eighteenth Dynasty* (Urbana/ Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1906; repr. 2001), 109.

[31] W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Old Testament Library), (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 212.

with access to the sea), mineral (gold, electrum, semi-precious stones) faunal (baboons, hounds, ivory, animal skins, ostrich eggshells and feathers, bovines), and botanical resources (dom palms, frankinsence, myrrh, ebony, kohl, throw sticks), as well as its anthropological elements (pygmies, sedentary farmers, pastoral and nomadic populations).[32] Based on these clues and their major archaeological discoveries at Mersa/Wadi Gewasis (the ancient port of Sa'aw on the Red Sea), they concluded that "Punt corresponds to the coastal plains (and immediate hinterland) of Eritrea, from Aqiq to Adulis, where Egyptian ships could meet both the nomads from the African hinterland and traders from the opposite side of the Red Sea in Yemen."[33] This conclusion supports the wide consensus among most scholars on the subject.[34]

Even so, there is reason to believe that Punt was a region to which products were brought from regions farther away. If transplantation of live incense-bearing trees was the primary purpose of the Hatshepsut expedition, it is curious that only myrrh trees were so transported but not cinnamon and cassia trees. If it were possible, the Egyptians would certainly have brought back those trees as well. Instead, cinnamon and cassia product were brought back "in the form of logs, bundles or 'measures'."[35] According to Egyptologist Lise Manniche, this strongly suggests that "Wherever the land of Punt may have been located, cinnamon trees did not grow there. Punt was once part of the chain of commerce which spread from the East to Africa

[32] Bard and Fattovich, *Egyptian Seafaring Expeditions*, 156-175.

[33] Bard and Fattovich, *Egyptian Seafaring Expeditions*, 175.

[34] For a full discussion see Catherine Lucy Glenister, "Profiling Punt: Using Trade Relations to Locate 'God's Land'," Unpublished MPhil dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 2008. See also, Kitchen, "Sheba and Arabia," 143-147.

[35] Lise Manniche, *Sacred Luxuries: Fragrance, Aromatherapy, and Cosmetics in Ancient Egypt* (Cornell University Press, 1999), 17.

and Europe, and cinnamon was one of the costly commodities which made the long journey."[36]

Interestingly, the earliest reference to spices in the Bible is connected to Egypt. The cinnamon and cassia used for the sacred anointing oil (Exod. 30:22-24) were donated by Israelite exodees (35:28), who had apparently obtained them, along with other valuables from their sympathetic Egyptian neighbours (12:35-36; 25:6). Manniche explains how high-value aromatics obtained by Egyptian elites for temple offerings found their way to ordinary households:

> In a papyrus listing the revenue ceded to the various gods by Ramesses III, there is frequent mention of measures of cinnamon. Once in the temple, the goods would pass into the hands of the priests who would either recirculate them in exchange for other commodities, or, since they formed the medical profession as well, used it in their preparation of drugs. There is no evidence of it having been burnt in front of the god whose property it was. The king's gift to the god Amun included one whole log, 246 measures and 82 bundles. When new feasts were instituted by the king 220 bundles and 155 measures were included among the allowances.[37]

Although the historical narratives of Solomon's reign do not specify the kinds of spices brought into Israel, the poetic and wisdom literature attributed to his renaissance do mention some of the exotic commodities with which Israelite consumers were becoming familiar. The Book of Proverbs mentions "myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon" (7:16-17), and the Song of Songs, "nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes with all chief spices..." (4:13-14).

Later prophetic writings continued to identify Sheba as the source of spices. Among the international trading

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[36] Lise Manniche, *An Ancient Egyptian Herbal* (London: British Museum Press, 1989), 90.

[37] Manniche, *An Ancient Egyptian Herbal*, 90.

partners of the Phoenician kingdom of Tyre, Ezekiel (around 622 – 570 BC) lists "The merchants of Sheba and Raamah... [who] traded... the best of all kinds of spices, and all precious stones, and gold" (27:22). "Vedan and Javan from Uzal entered into trade for [Tyrian] wares; wrought iron, cassia, and sweet cane were bartered for your merchandise" (27:6). Jeremiah (around 650-570 BC) speaks of "frankincense that comes from Sheba" and "sweet cane from a distant land" (6:20). These references indicate that even three or four centuries after Solomon's reign, the spice trade was still in the hands of Phoenician and Arab intermediaries, and that the Israelites were not directly engaged in it. According to the biblical account, the later kings of Israel and Judah never reached the levels of consumption and revenue from international trade achieved during the reign of Solomon. Jehoshaphat's (about 873-849 BC) venture to construct "ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold" failed at the very outset because "the ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber" (1 Kings 22:48; 2 Chron. 20:36-37).

We have no direct evidence of the Israelites' knowledge of 'India' until the Persian period, within which histological context the Book of Esther explicitly names "India" for the first time (1:1; 8:9). As we shall see, there is ample philological evidence that words from Indian languages were first borrowed into Persian and only then passed on into Hebrew usage. However, some scholars have long argued that phonetic similarities between the Hebrew names of spices and their equivalents in Indian languages, as well as affinities between the formal and thematic features of the Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon) and early Tamil *Sangam* poetry are evidence of direct cultural contact between ancient Israel and South India.

III. SONG OF SONGS INFLUENCED BY TAMIL *AKAM* POETRY?

1. Similarities and possibilities

In 1973, Hebrew scholar Chaim Rabin drew attention to similarities between the Bible's Song of Songs and the *akam*

(love) poetry of the Tamil *Sangam* anthologies. He also proposed the possibility that the Hebrew names of spices mentioned in the Song are derived from their Indian originals.[38] He claimeded that these resemblances "suggest that the Song of Songs was written in the heyday of Judean trade with South Arabia and beyond (and this may include the lifetime of King Solomon) by someone who had himself travelled to South Arabia and to South India and had there become acquainted with Tamil poetry."[39]

Philologist and biblical scholar Peter C. Craigie, critiqued Rabin's hypothesis from the perspective of his own comparative study of devotional poetry in the Bible and Tamil literature.[40] He agreed that literary similarities do indeed abound between the two traditions, and drew attention also to the comparable development, in later centuries, when both Hebrew and Tamil secular love poetry were appropriated as *allegorical* expressions of spiritual adoration between the divine lover and the human devotee. However, Craigie argued that these resemblances were due "partly to the common nature of human experience and partly in the religious response to that experience;"[41] and that they "do not indicate, nor need they imply, any kind of historical interrelationship between the Hebrew and Tamil traditions."

Taking his cue from Rabin and Craigie, Indian biblical scholar Abraham Mariaselvam produced a masterful comparative analysis of the Song of Songs and classical Tamil *akam* poetry, focusing on every important aspect of their thematic content and formal poetics.[42] Although on a purely literary level, the two bodies of poetry were

[38] Chaim Rabin, "The Song of Songs and Tamil Poetry," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 3, no. 3 (December 1973): 205-219.

[39] Rabin, "The Song of Songs," 216.

[40] Peter C. Craigie, "Biblical and Tamil poetry: Some further reflections," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 8, no. 2 (1979): 169-175.

[41] Craigie, "Biblical and Tamil poetry," 174.

[42] Abraham Mariaselvam, *The Song of Songs and Ancient Tamil Love Poems: Poetry and Symbolism* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1988), especially 153-139.

demonstrably "very analogous – even similar – almost 'sisters'";[43] there were significant dissimilarities as well.[44] For example, Mariaselvam showed that while the Song was composed in the form of dialogue, the *akam* poems were predominantly monologues. Again, while marriage was the expressly stated desire in the *akam* poems, it was only implicit in the Song. After his extensive analysis, Mariaselvam concluded that pending further comparative studies with corresponding literatures of cultures geographically closer to Israel (which could more easily explain the compositional features of the Song), it could only be said that there was a "possibility" of literary dependence.[45]

It is noteworthy that Mariaselvam did not believe that the smaller units in the Song of Songs, which bear the strongest resemblance to *akam* poems, could be dated to the period of Solomon, and therefore stand as evidence for direct contact between South India and Israel during the 900s BC. He preferred a date "much after the return from the Exile and just before or even during the Hellenistic period." As for the chronology of Tamil *Sangam* literature, he believed that the earliest works "go back at least to the beginning of the 3rd century BC" with the beginnings of Tamil literary production itself commencing "at least in the 5th-4th centuries BC."[46] This is obviously too late for any historical encounter between South India and Israel during the Solomonic period of the Bible.

IV. INDIAN LOANWORDS IN THE BIBLE?

1. Indian loanwords

Attempts to trace the origins of some Hebrew words back to their supposed roots in Indian languages go back at least to the 1600s when European Bible scholars first gained access to South Asian 'oriental' languages such as Sanskrit and

[43] Mariaselvam, *The Song of Songs*, 277.
[44] Mariaselvam, *The Song of Songs*, 240-248.
[45] Mariaselvam, *The Song of Songs*, 285.
[46] Mariaselvam, *The Song of Songs*, 100.

Tamil. Philologists suggest that some Indian words may have entered the Hebrew language by diffusion (passing from one language region to another), while others were absorbed through firsthand encounter between ancient Israelites and South Asians through direct long-distance trade. The following is a composite list of possible Indian 'loanwords' in the Hebrew Bible, as discussed by Robert Caldwell,[47] Chaim Rabin,[48] Abraham Mariaselvam,[49] and Sylvia Powels-Niami.[50]

Caldwell			
Hebrew	Meaning	Indian	Possible intermediary language(s)
tukkiyīm (1 Kings 10:22, etc.)	peacocks (?)	Tam. *tōkei* (anything that hangs down, esp. peacock's tail; peacock)	
almug (1 Kings 10:11-12); *algum* (2 Chron. 9:10-11)	Sandalwood (?)	Tam./Mal. *aragu/alagu* (beautiful); Skt. *valguka* (beautiful)	
ʾahālôt (Ps. 45:9, etc.); *ʾahālîm* (Prov. 7:17, etc.)	aloes	Tam/Mal. *akil*; Kan. *agil*; Tulu *agilu*; Skt. *agaru-/aguru-*; Pal. *agalu/aggalu/akalu*	

[47] Robert Caldwell, 'Introduction,' *Comparative Grammar*, 2nd ed. (London: Trübner & Co., 1875), 92-93.

[48] Chaim Rabin, "Lexical Borrowings in Biblical Hebrew from Indian Languages as Carriers of Ideas and Technical Concepts," in *Between Jerusalem and Benares: comparative studies in Judaism and Hinduism*, edited by Hananya Goodman (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 25-32. Also see, Rabin, "Rice in the Bible," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1966): 2-9; "The Song of Songs and Tamil Poetry," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 3, no. 3 (December 1973): 205-219.

[49] Mariaselvam, *The Song of Songs*, 284-285.

[50] Sylvia Powels, "Indische Lehnwörter in der Bibel," *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik 5*, no. 2 (1992): 186-200.

Rabin			
Hebrew	Meaning	Indian	Possible intermediary language(s)
daharōt (Judg. 5:22, etc.); *dōher* (Nah. 3:2)	to trot	Skt. *dor-*	
resen (Ps. 32:9, etc.)	bridle	Skt. *raśanā*, *raśanā* (rope, bridle)	
sūs (Gen. 47:17, etc.)	horse	Skt. *aśva*	Aram. *sūsyā*; Akk. *sisū*
addīrīm (Judg. 5:25, etc.)	magnificent, mighty	Skt. *ādrta* (honoured)	
miggen (Gen. 14:20, etc.)	to give, to bestow	Skt. *mahga* (gift)	Hurr. *makanni*
Tarshish (1 Kings 10:22, etc.)	Tarshish	Tam. *toya* (water) + *rāši* (a heap)	
šenhabbīm (1 Kings 10:22, etc.)	ivory (lit. teeth of *habb-īm*)	Skt. *ibha-* (elephant)	E. Egyp. *'bw*
qōphīm (1 Kings 10:22, etc.)	baboons, apes (?)	Skt. *kapi-* (monkey); Parji *kovva*; Gondi *kowwē*	Akkad. *uqupu*; Sum. *ugu-bi*; Egyp. *gf, gyf*
minnīth (Ezek. 27:17)	rice (?)	Tam. *unti* (boiled rice); Kurukh (Oraon) *mandi*	Possibly, Akkad. *mint-* (?)
pannāgh (Ezek. 27:17)	butter (?) hashish (?)	Tam. *vennai*; Kan. *benne* Skt. *bhangā*	 Per. *bang*
Powels-Niami			
bûs (1 Chron. 4:21, etc.)	fine linen	Skt. *pañci-;* Tam. *pañci/pañcu*; Kan. *pañci/pañjike*	
karpas (Esther 1:6)	cotton/fine linen	Skt. *kārpāsa-/kārpāsī-*; Pal. *kappāsa-*	
karkōm (Song of Sol. 4:14)	saffron	Skt./Pal. *kunkuma-*; Pkt. *kumkuma-*	Akk. *kurnanû*
nērd (Song of Sol. 1:12, etc.)	nard	Skt. *narada-/nalada-*; Tam. *narantam*	

Hebrew	Meaning	Indian	Possible intermediary language(s)
karmîl (2 Chron. 2:7, etc.)	crimson	Skt. *krmi*	
pitdāh (Exod. 28:17, etc.)	topaz	Skt. *pīta-*	
sappîr (Exod. 24:10; etc.)	sapphir	Skt. *sanipriya-*	

Two main difficulties prevent us from establishing plausible etymological connections between Hebrew loanwords and possible Indian root-words.

1. Uncertain Hebrew meanings

The first difficulty is that in many cases we simply cannot be certain what a particular word actually meant in Biblical Hebrew. The word *tukkiyīm* is a good example. In his celebrated work on the Tamil language, Bishop Robert Caldwell (1814-1891) wrote that "The oldest Dravidian word found in any written record in the world appears to be the word for 'peacock' in the Hebrew text of the Books of Kings and Chronicles…about 1000 B.C."[51] The pioneer Orientalist Max Müller (1823-1900) even theorized that "If this etymology be right, it would be an important confirmation of the antiquity of the Tamulic [sic] languages spoken in India before the advent of the Aryan tribes."[52] Although Caldwell's dating of the Tamil language and Müller's migration theories have been significantly refined by subsequent scholarship, it is hypothetically possible that *tukkiyīm* was derived from Tamil *tōkei*. As Mariaselvam has shown, although *tōkei* usually meant something that 'hangs down (tail-like),' it was also used for 'peacock' in early Tamil

[51] Caldwell, "Introduction," 91.

[52] *Lectures on the Science of Language: Delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in April, May, & June, 1861*, 4th ed. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1964), 209.

poetry.[53] However, the meaning of the Hebrew word *tukkiyīm* is far from certain.

In 1 Kings 10:22 and 2 Chronicles 9:21 the term occurs in combination as *šenhabbīm, qōphīm* and *tukkiyīm*. It is translated in English as either "peacocks" (eg. KJV, RSV, NASB, CEV, NIV, ESV, etc.), "baboons" (eg. NIV, NJB, NCV, etc.) or "monkeys" (eg. NKJV, NAB, REB, etc.). A century before Albright, Caldwell had already recognized that the first two words had better etymologies in Old Egyptian.[54]

The composition of the Hebrew Books of Kings and Chronicles probably reached their final form between 550 BC – 350 BC. However, the English translations get their clues about the Hebrew meanings from the Greek Septuagint. The two older versions of the Septuagint (Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus) translated the three Hebrew words as "stones carved and hewn." Only a later version (Codex Alexandrianus) rendered them "ivory, apes and baboons (or, peacocks)." By 250 BC Jewish scholars had apparently forgotten what these archaic Hebrew terms meant, and had to rely on guesswork. Josephus was similarly uncertain, and wrote "ivory, and Ethiopians, and apes."[55] In post-biblical Mishnaic Hebrew a completely different word, *tavvas* (probably from Pers. *taus*), is used for peacock. Therefore, even if Tamil *tōkei* was used for peacock several centuries before it first appears in the earliest surviving Tamil literature, the phonetic resemblance alone is insufficient to determine that a linguistic borrowing took place because the original meaning of Hebrew *tukkiyyim* is uncertain.

2. Uncertain Indian meanings

Conversely, the second difficulty is that in some cases, we have no evidence that the Indian word denoted what its phonetically similar Hebrew word denoted. *Almug* (1 Kings 10:11-12) or *algum* (2 Chronicles 9:10-11) was a kind of timber

[53] *Kuṟuntokai* 26.2; 347.3.
[54] Caldwell, "Introduction," 92.
[55] Josephus, *Antiquities* VIII.7.2.

from Ophir which king Solomon used to make staircases and musical instruments. Previously, he had ordered *algum* logs, along with cedar and juniper, from adjacent Lebanon for the construction of the temple (2 Chronicles 2:8). Presumably, the tree grew both in Ophir and Lebanon, but that is all the information we have to make an identification. In his book on biblical plants published in 1748, the Swedish clergyman, botanist and philologist Olof Celsius (1670-1756) was the first to suggest that *almug/algum* could be sandalwood, among fifteen other possibilities.[56] In 1847, the orientalist Christian Lassen (1800-1876) supplied the Sanskrit *valgu/valguka* as the word's Indian cognate.[57] In 1875, Caldwell ventured further that the Sanskrit *valguka* "seems to be identical with, or derived from, the Tamil-Malayâlam *aragu* or *alagu*, beauty."[58] He also added that the Hebrew *ahalim/ahaloth* (aloes) was "derived rather from the Tamil-Malayâlam form of the word, *aghil*, than from the Sanskrit *agaru*, though both are ultimately identical." However, the Sanskrit *valgu* (beautiful) was never used for sandalwood; and its derivative *valguka* is not attested with this meaning in any extant Sanskrit literature.[59] As for Tamil or Malayalam *agaru/alagu*, the word was never used for sandalwood in the literature of either language at any time. Instead, scholars propose the more likely Ugaritic cognate *almg* and/or the Akkadian *elammakku*. Both of these are listed as timbers in ancient texts, although the botanical identification of the tree remains unknown.

3. Persian mediation

[56] *Hierobotanicon* I, 172.

[57] *Indische Alterthumskunde* I, 538.

[58] Caldwell, "Introduction," 92.

[59] Jonas C. Greenfield and Manfred Mayrhofer, "The 'Algummīm/'Almuggīm-Problem Reexamined," in Hebräische Wortforschung, Festschrist zum 80. Geburtstag von Walter Baumgartner, edited by Benedikt Hartmann, et al., Vetus Testementum Supplements, Vol. 16 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967, 2015), 83-89.

Hebrew philologists who have examined Rabin's ideas generally agree that some words do appear to have their origins in Indian cognates. They disagree that this was due to direct cultural contact between the speakers of the two languages in biblical times. Athalya Brenner has shown that the Hebrew terms *kōper*, *nērd*, *karkōm*, *qānêh*, *qinnāmôn* and *'ahālôt* all resemble their Persian cognates more closely than their ultimate Indian roots. Taking *karkōm* (Pers. *kurkum*; Sanskr. *kunkuma*) and *nērd* (Pers. *nardin*; Sanskr. *nalada*) as paradigms, she suggests that "[they] entered Hebrew not directly from its source language (probably Sanskrit) but through the mediating contact with Persian."[60] Similarly, after a careful comparison of possible Indian 'loanwords' in Hebrew and their cognates in closely related languages, Sylvia Powels arrives at the following conclusions, worth quoting in full.

> […T]he ways of communicating the cultural words are very different in each individual case and each word has its own history. It is worth noting that words from the Dravidian linguistic area are also represented: *'ăhalîm/'ăhalôt* ← Tamil/Malayālam *akil*, Kannada *agil*; *bu/ûs* ← Tamil *pañci/u* → Samskrit *pañchi/ī*. These are Indian commercial products that had already arrived in the Middle East by land and sea. For words originating from the Indo-Aryan, we can distinguish between several levels of mediation. At the earlier level, there seems to have been no mediation through the Persian. Criteria for this are parallel forms in Akkadian (*nērd* ← Akk. *lardu/laradu* ← Sanskrit *nar/ladu*-) or phonetic similarity of the Hebrew form with the Indian form in contrast to the Iranian form (*karmîl* ← Sanskrit *krmilika*- → Middle/ New Persian *kirm*). *Qiddāh* is also an older form, possibly corresponding to a Phoenician word not handed down.

[60] Athalya Brenner, "Aromatics and Perfumes in the Song of Songs," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 25 (1983), 77.

> At the younger stage mediation during the Persian period took place over Iranian sources, cf. Hebrew *karpas* ← New Persian *kirpās* ← Sanskrit *karpāsa-*. Again, the Sanskrit form is more similar to the Hebrew form than the New Persian; i.e. Hebrew *karpas* goes back to an older Persian form.
> The oldest cultural words — *qinnāmôn*, *šenhabbîm* and *ko/ôf* — are not genuine Indian loanwords. *Qinnāmôn* could be a home-grown Phoenician term referring to the outer shape of the commercial product; *šenhabbîm* and *qo/ôf* are among the oldest cultural and migratory words and have developed semantically related forms due to a common occurrence in both areas - both Egyptian and Indian.
> The words *qᵉsî'āh* and *karkōm* are not identical. Cassia was imported from China via intermediate ports in India and South Arabia; *karkōm* "saffron" has — originating from Asia Minor — already in ancient times spread to both East and West and therefore appears already in Old Indian.
> The names of minerals are a particular problem. Neither Hebrew *sappîr* nor *pitdāh* can be convincingly explained from Indian etymologies. Sanskrit *śanipriya-* is exclusively lexical and not given as a name for a precious stone in Indian literature. Sanskrit *pīta-* denotes a larger number of different objects and plants that have a yellow or golden colour.[61]

In summary, the linguistic evidence indicates that some Indian loanwords did enter the Hebrew vocabulary through other intermediary languages at different periods in history. The resulting phonetic resemblances do not prove that there was direct contact between ancient Israelites and South Asians in pre-exilic times, that is, before the 500s BC. However, there is clear evidence now that South Asian

[61] Powels, "Indische Lehnwörter," 199-200. I am grateful to Denise Becker for assistance with translation.

commodities, especially spices such as cinnamon, did reach ancient Israel through Sabaean and Phoenician intermediaries from about 1100 BC, and Egypt through Puntite trade several centuries earlier.

4. Precious stones

Of the twenty-seven gemstones mentioned in the OT, we can be almost certain that the frequently mentioned *sappîr* (eg. Exod. 24:10; 28:18; 39:11; Job 28:6, 16; Song of Sol. 5:14; Isa. 54:11; Lam. 4:7; Ezek. 1:26; 10:1; 28:13) was lapis lazuli, and that its only known ancient source was Badakhshan in northeastern Afghanistan.[62] According to James Harrell *et al*,

> This gemstone was transported to Egypt as early as Predynastic times and continued to be used in jewelry, scarabs, amulets and various inlays throughout the Pharaonic period. In the Late Bronze Age, lapis lazuli is included in the lists of tribute coming from Assur to Thutmose III, "fine lapis lazuli of Babylon." The Egyptian court of Akhenaten and Tutankhamun (1353–1327 BC) received gifts of lapis lazuli from king Burra Buriyash of Babylon according to four Amarna Letters (EA 7, 8, 9 and 10). The Assyrian Asshur-uballit likewise included lapis lazuli in his gifts to Pharaoh (EA 15 and 16) and specifically mentions a "seal of genuine lapis lazuli." The tomb of Tutankhamun revealed numerous pieces of elegant jewelry that used lapis lazuli, including the famous golden burial mask. Among the royal jewelry found at Tanis from the later second and early first millennia BC, lapis lazuli is present.[63]

[62] James E. Harrell, James K. Hoffmeier, and Kenton F. Williams, "Hebrew Gemstones in the Old Testament: A Lexical, Geological, and Archaeological Analysis," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 27.1 (2017): 1-52.

[63] Harrell, et al, "Hebrew Gemstones," 20. Footnotes omitted here.

Therefore, they assume that "a long and complex trade route existed to bring this precious stone to Egypt and other points along the way."[64] Two stelae (no. 182 and 200) from the co-regency of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III (1479-1425 BC) from Serabit el-Khadim in the Sinai, specifically refer to "lapis lazuli of Asia (*sst*),"[65] indicating that it "could have been received by the Egyptian agents in Sinai via trade."[66]

It is also possible that *ʾōḏem*, the first stone on Aaron's ephod (Exod. 28:17; 39:10; Ezek. 28:13), was carnelian, which was extracted from deposits in Gujarat. Carnelian beads were exported from cities in the ancient Indus Valley civilization where light yellow or brown chalcedonic quartz was heat-treated to produce the rich red-orange colour of carnelian regularly used in ancient seals and jewellery.[67]

The Hebrew names of a few other gemstones in the Old Testament were mistranslated into Greek names of stones known (from Hellenistic times) to originate from South Asia. As Harrell *et al* observe, "the LXX translators often did not know the Greek equivalents of the Hebrew gemstone names and so instead used the names of contemporary gemstones with which they were familiar."[68] Thus *bĕdōlaḥ* (Gen. 2:12) was rendered *anthrax* (LXX) or *bdelion* (Aquila, etc.), resulting in the English "bdellium" (cf. KJV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, ESV). However, it is more likely that *bĕdōlaḥ* is the aromatic substance referred to in Neo-Babylonian texts as *budulḫu*, probably frankincense or myrhh resin. This makes more sense because Havilah is mentioned as its source (Gen. 2:11).[69]

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[64] Harrell, et al, "Hebrew Gemstones," 19.

[65] Alan H. Gardiner, T. Eric Peet and Jaroslav Černy, *The Inscriptions of Sinai, Part II* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1955), 154, 162.

[66] Harrell, et al, "Hebrew Gemstones," 23.

[67] J. M. Kenoyer, *Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 160-62; quoted with other sources in Harrell, et al, "Hebrew Gemstones," 11, fn. 42.

[68] Harrell, et al, "Hebrew Gemstones," 5.

[69] Harrell, et al, "Hebrew Gemstones," 36-37.

V. LONG-DISTANCE TRADE AND GOD'S ECONOMY

South Asia's presence in the periphery of biblical geography is attested throughout ancient Israel's narrative history as early as the exodus, and later, during the monarchic and post-exilic periods. There is no hard evidence for direct contact between South Asians and Israelites in this period. On the other hand, there is compelling evidence that South Asian trade goods and loanwords reached Israel through intermediaries. Merchandise originating from the Indian Ocean region was passed on from group to group through segmented long-distance trade until they reached consumers on the eastern Mediterranean seaboard. The Old Testament writers not only made occasional reference to these exotic commodities in their historical narratives, but they also reflected on the whole experience of long-distance trade in their hymns, prophetic oracles and wisdom sayings.

The psalmists were awestruck by the mysteries and dangers of the ocean. The fact that humankind could navigate its vastness stood as proof of God's power and goodness over His creation.

> Here is the sea, great and wide,
> which teems with creatures innumerable,
> living things both small and great.
> There go the ships…
> (Ps. 104:25-26; cf. Ecclus. 43:23-25)

> Some went down to the sea in ships,
> doing business on the great waters;
> they saw the deeds of the Lord,
> his wondrous works in the deep.
> For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
> which lifted up the waves of the sea.
> They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths;
> their courage melted away in their evil plight;
> they reeled and staggered like drunken men

and were at their wits' end.

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.
He made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
Then they were glad that the waters were quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
(Ps. 107:23-30; cf. Wisd. of Sol. 14:1-5)

The Israelite prophets were keen observers of regional economic power and repeatedly warned Tyre of God's judgement against its idolatrous and unjust dominance of sea-borne commerce (Isa. 23; Ezek. 27-28). Yet, they also envisioned God's redemptive power to convert Phoenician naval capability for good (Isa. 60). The wisdom tradition also commented on the marvel of maritime trade. "Three things are too wonderful for me; four I do not understand" the sage mused, of which one was "the way of a ship on the high seas" (Prov. 30:18-19). The wife of noble character was compared to "the ships of the merchant" because "she brings her food from afar" (Prov. 31:14).

Based on the development of these insights by Paul in the New Testament, the Early Church Fathers coined the term "God's economy" (*oikonomia tou theou*) to describe how the Creator continues to govern His creation in order to sustain life and growth, and also acts in history to redeem and renew His creation from the effects of human rebellion.[70] As I have stated elsewhere, it is simply breath-taking to contemplate how in His divine economy,

> [T]he Lord required for His worship spices from a part of His earth that the Israelites did not yet know of. It is a vivid glimpse of a Creator who delights in the natural treasures of his own good creation, distributed throughout diverse ecological niches.

[70] Taking his cue from Paul (eg. Ephesians 1:10; 3:2, 9), Irenaeus expanded on the idea in his *Against Heresies*, and was followed by others.

> And even if the ancient Israelites may not have known the nations and lands of South Asia by name, perhaps vaguely as "a distant land" (cf. Jer. 6.20), they were nevertheless connected by long-distance trade to the network of nations in whose midst, and for whose sake, God was working in Israel's own history.[71]

[71] Prabo Mihindukulasuriya, "The Fragrance of Life: Cinnamon in the Bible," *Journal of the Colombo Theological Seminary* 8 (2009), 171-181. http://www.academia.edu/PraboMihindukulasuriya/Papers/1382173/The_ Fragrance_of_Life_Cinnamon_in_the_Bible

"WE PREACH JESUS CHRIST [AS] LORD": THE SIGNIFICANCE OF Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον (2 COR. 4:5) FOR APPREHENDING PAUL'S CHRISTOLOGY

IVOR POOBALAN

Abstract: *Christological debate through the centuries has oscillated between arguments for 'high' and 'low' views about how divinity relates to Jesus Christ. This has inevitably focused on Pauline theology due to Paul's enormous influence in the formation of early Christian thought. Scholars are evenly divided on whether Paul had a 'low' or 'high' Christology. By an exegetical enquiry into the significance of Paul's unique Christological assertion in 2 Cor 4:5 we argue that Paul must be placed firmly on the side of the latter.*

Keywords: *Incarnation, Christology, Lord, Pauline theology, divinity of Christ.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Christology takes us to the very heart of Christian theology.[1] It refers to the systematic reflection on the person and the actions of Jesus of Nazareth who lived within the period of 5 BC to AD 30 in Roman Palestine.[2]

[1] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003), 9-10: "The person of Jesus Christ stands at the center of Christian faith and theology . . . In this sense, no study comes closer to the core of Christian life and theology than Christology. Jesus' brief life on earth, his death on the cross, and his disciples' claims regarding the resurrection and ascension lay the historical and religious foundations for Christianity."

[2] Gerald O'Collins, *Christology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1: "In seeking to clarify the essential truths about him, it investigates his person and being (who and what he was/is) and work (what he did/does)."

But Christological 'agreement' has been a major point of contention through the history of the Church. In determinations about 'heresy', often the position that an individual or group takes with regard to the nature and person of Jesus constitutes the litmus test. Those whose opinion about Jesus have contradicted orthodox Christian beliefs have been deemed heretical and cultic; whether the Arians of the early period, the followers of Islam from the Middles Ages, or the more-recent Jehovah's Witnesses. Nevertheless, even among those that make up the communion of orthodox Christianity, sharply contrasting views are found about exactly who Jesus Christ was, and how he relates to the world and the Church.

The New Testament provides the earliest witness to Christological thinking because the documents that later formed the New Testament were all written in the first century AD over a period of no more than sixty years. Among these twenty-seven books, the letters of Paul are the oldest and give us the earliest insights into the Christ-talk of Christian communities of the time.

Those that argue that the evidence of the New Testament points to Jesus's unambiguous claims to divinity and pre-existence during his life on earth are said to hold to a 'high Christology'. On the other hand, if any consider the divinity of Jesus as something that was *conferred* on him at some point in his life – at birth, or baptism, or resurrection – or, 'divinity' perhaps as an ideological construct (to add *gravitas* to early Christianity's beliefs about its founder), are said to have a 'low Christology':

> Although this might be considered an oversimplification, the ultimate issue has to do with the Son's pre-existence; that is, does an author consider Christ to have had an existence as (or with) God before coming into our history for the purpose of redemption, which included at the end his resurrection and subsequent exaltation to "the right hand of God" in fulfilment of Psalm 110:1? If the answer to that question is yes, then one speaks of an

> author (e.g., the Gospel of John, the author of Hebrews) as having a high Christology. If the answer is either no or ambiguous at best, then the author (e.g., James) is credited with a low Christology.[3]

So did Paul hold to a 'high' or 'low' Christology? While the scholars are evenly divided on the answer to this question, the present author finds the former position compelling. Our examination of the Christological weight of the unique phrase Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον in 2 Cor. 4:5 supports the view that, at the very earliest period of the formulations of Christian theology, Jesus Christ was recognised as uniquely and co-equally divine with the Father. The attribution of the title, "LORD" (κυριον) to Ιησουν Χριστον in 2 Cor. 4:5 is a stunning assertion by Paul that the subject of his preaching ministry, Jesus Christ, is none other than Yahweh (κυριος) of the Jewish faith and Scriptures.

Before we look more closely at how this Pauline phrase unequivocally promotes Paul's highly exalted view of Jesus, we look briefly at the background to the high-low debate that has polarised Christology today.

II. CHRISTOLOGY IN THE HISTORY OF WESTERN THOUGHT[4]

The status of Jesus Christ in Western Thought has oscillated between 'high' and 'low' depending on the cultural and philosophical milieu in which the subject has been taken up. Initially the fluidity arose from the fact that, while the NT explored several aspects about the person and work of Jesus,

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[3] Gordon Fee, *Pauline Christology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), 9; for a summary of the issue in the development of Christology see, James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996), 1-11.

[4] This section expands on material covered in the forthcoming, "Christology: Rooted and Responsive" in *Asian Christian Theology – Evangelical Perspectives*, eds. Timoteo Gener and Stephen Pardue (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2019).

it did not anticipate some of the questions that would arise as the Gospel moved from its Palestinian-Jewish beginnings to the wider Greco-Roman world. Bradley Hanson suggests that the authors of the NT left two important questions unresolved:

- What, more precisely, is the relationship between the 'Son of God' and 'God the Father'?
- What is the relationship between the eternal Word of God and the man Jesus?[5]

1. Nicene and Chalcedonian Christology

The first question became more urgent because of the teachings of an Alexandrian presbyter named Arius (AD 260 – 336), who made much of the subordination of the Son. He argued that the Father alone was eternal, and that the Son was created by the Father before the beginning of the world, and thereafter became the agent of the creation of everything else; a Logos that acted as a unique intermediary between the Father and the created universe. Arius distinguished the Father and the Son (he had nothing to say about the Holy Spirit), but held strictly to the inferiority of the Son: "there was a time when he was not". A generation before Arius, one Sabellius had insisted that Father, Son and Holy Spirit were simply three modes of manifestation of one divine person.

The Arian controversy dominated the proceedings of the Council of Nicea (AD 325), and resulted in the Nicene Creed, which redressed this erroneous view. Of the 175 words of the Greek version of the Creed, 110 are dedicated to describe the nature and the work of the Son (only 15 words speak of the Father, and 28 words about the Spirit!), and with every phrase it counters both Sabellianism and Arianism. Nicea definitively established that the Son is at one and the same time a distinct being, co-eternal with the Father, and of the same nature (*homoousios*) as the Father. This formulaic

[5] See Bradley Hanson, *Introduction to Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997), 144.

view was further ratified in terms of the Trinity by the First Council of Constantinople in AD 381.[6]

The second unresolved issue – how the eternal, pre-existent Logos relates to the historical Jesus – would become the focus of the church for the next several decades. The debate was between Christians centred in Alexandria and that of Antioch. The former emphasised John 1:14 and argued that it was the *divine, eternal Logos* that was born of Mary, lived and taught about the kingdom of God and eventually died and was raised. The reason for this insistence was their conviction that only God can save humanity from its predicament of sin. Their extreme emphasis on the divinity of Christ, however, overshadowed and even undermined his genuine humanity, and tended in the direction of early Docetism; that the Word only 'seemed' to become human.

The opposing Christological camp was the Antiochene Christians, whose theologians were convinced that a robust belief in the full humanity of the divine Son was essential to explain how Jesus saves: "we humans can only be helped by a Savior who, through his own genuine moral development, brings into existence a new sinless person".[7] In his famous words, Gregory of Naziansus asserted: "That which he has not assumed he has not healed"![8] The Antiochene view, however, was also fraught with danger: it could lead to the position that Jesus Christ was constituted of two distinct beings – a good man and God – in close cooperation.

This debate was settled at the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), which included the following in its definition:

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[6] For a complete discussion of how Christology developed from Ignatius of Antioch (AD 107) to the First Council of Constantinople, see O'Collins, *Christology*, 153-183.

[7] Hanson, *Christian Theology*, 145.

[8] In Epistle 101, "Critique of Apollinarius and Apollinarianism," https://earlychurchtexts.com/public/gregoryofnaz_critique_of_apollinarianism.htm. Accessed, 23 June 2019.

> One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, made known in two natures [*physis*] without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, the difference of the natures being by no means removed because of the union, but the property of each nature being preserved and coalescing in one *prosopon* (person) and one *hypostasis* – not parted or divided into two *prosopa*, but one and the same Son, only-begotten, divine Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.[9]

In actuality it took the Church a total of six councils between the fourth and seventh centuries to arrive at a general consensus about these pressing concerns.[10] Thereafter this 'high' Christology was more or less a settled matter – derived from the teachings of the New Testament and interpreted through the various formulations of the Church Councils – until the dawn of the Enlightenment.

2. Age of Reason and liberal Christology

The end of the Thirty Years War (1648) marked the beginning of the Age of Reason in which, "the *philosophe* replaced the theologian as the fount of all wisdom, and 'enlightenment' became the order of the day".[11] Human reason, and not a sacred text nor institutional tradition, had final authority in determining what was 'true'. Naturally this mood eventually led to an assault on the Bible's authoritative status in the theological task:

> Biblical criticism was a natural result of this new openness to the independent use of human reason.

[9] Hanson, *Christian Theology*, 146. For a fuller discussion on why the ontological conclusions of Chalcedon have abiding and global significance for Christology today, see Kevin Vanhoozer, "Christology in the West: Conversations in Europe and North America" in *Jesus Without* Borders, eds. Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue and K. K. Yeo (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 11-36.

[10] Vanhoozer, "Christology in the West," 15.

[11] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996), 225.

> Whereas in the past the biblical text had been taken as a trustworthy historical account, now it faced mounting doubts and denials . . . it was not left to the Holy Spirit but to the human spirit and human reason to judge whether the text was convincing.[12]

With this new sense of freedom Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768) launched the first great reinterpretation of Christology on the basis of historical criticism. He alleged that Jesus was a mere Galilean man interested only in a political revolt against Roman authority. But his plan to engineer a mass uprising in Jerusalem had failed, and he had been crucified. Out of the deep disappointment following his unexpected execution, his disciples stole the body of Jesus and invented a myth about Jesus the spiritual saviour whose death and resurrection has implications for all humanity.[13]

Another philosopher who significantly undermined traditional confidence in the historical dependability of the New Testament witness is Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781). His argument was founded on the premise that, "accidental truths of history can never become the proof of the necessary truths of reason".[14] In other words, since historical truths are not repeatable and universal like mathematical truths, they are inferior to what he calls "necessary truths of reason". This way of thinking immediately undermined the value of the Gospel narratives that spoke of the incarnation, miracles, and resurrection of

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[12] Kärkkäinen, *Christology*, 87.

[13] Hanson, *Christian Theology*, 122. Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to New Testament Christology* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994), 10: "Such liberalism dismisses NT Christology as unimportant or as a distortion, and has often been closely associated with the thesis that Jesus was just an ethical instructor or social reformer who was mistakenly proclaimed to be divine by overenthusiastic or confused followers".

[14] G. E. Lessing, *Theological Writings*, selected and trans. H. Chadwick (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1967), 53; cited in O'Collins, *Christology*, 8.

Jesus (all "accidental truths of history"). In one blow their testimony, as truths on which we may construct the church's Christology, was ruled out of court.

Reimarus and Lessing then launched what has come to be known as the *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, an enquiry based on a belief in the radical discontinuity of the 'Jesus of history' from the later interpretations of Jesus as a divine redeemer, the 'Christ of faith'. This minimalist conviction about Jesus became the *sine qua non* of liberal Christology and was later forcefully advanced by hugely influential figures such as Sören Kierkegaard, Adolph Von Harnack, and Rudolph Bultmann.[15] Bultmann used the notion of discontinuity between the 'Jesus of history' and the 'Christ of faith' to construct his own existentialist interpretation of Christian faith as "trusting in God in each moment" as set forth in Jesus's *teachings*. His life, relationships, atoning death, and physical resurrection, did not have to be factual nor was it necessary, because Christian faith comes about when a person encounters the *teaching* of Jesus about the kingdom of God.[16]

3. 'New Perspective' Christology

Two publications in the 1980s illustrate the contrasting positions scholars arrive at with regard to where exactly *Paul* may be placed on the Christological spectrum. James Dunn's *Christology in the Making* first appeared in 1980 and set out to inquire into the doctrine of the incarnation, particularly into the origin of this central Christian belief. He was fully aware that, following the Enlightenment, "the traditional doctrine of the incarnation had come under increasing pressure to explain and justify itself".[17] Dunn wishes to tread carefully, and at the outset poses some questions to guide his inquiry: "How did the doctrine of the incarnation originate? How and when did it first come to expression? What precisely was it

[15] See, O'Collins, *Christology*, 5-8; Hanson, *Christian Theology*, 123-124.

[16] Hanson, *Christian Theology*, 124-125.

[17] Dunn, *Christology*, 2.

that was being expressed in these initial statements which now speak to us so clearly of incarnation? What does it mean to speak of 'the pre-existence of Christ' in the NT?"[18]

He follows a chronological scheme, placing the writings of Paul as the earliest Christian writings, Hebrews and John's Gospel at the latter end, and the Synoptic Gospels in between. Then he examines key Christological categories such as Son of God, Son of Man, the Last Adam, Wisdom, and Word of God, as they feature in, and 'develop' chronologically through their appearances in the NT writings, and concludes that the concept of Christ's incarnation grew to its full-blown form only by the end of the first century AD. In fact, he argues, that for Paul the divine pre-existence of Jesus Christ might not have been a settled conviction:

> It is possible that in the two passages where he speaks of God sending his Son (Rom. 8.3 and Gal. 4.4) he simply means to imply that the Son of God was pre-existent and had become incarnate as Jesus; *but it is as likely, indeed probably more likely, that Paul's meaning did not stretch so far*, and that at these points he and his readers thought simply of Jesus as the one commissioned by God as one who shared wholly in man's frailty, bondage and sin, and whose death achieved God's liberating and transforming purpose for man.[19]

Even Jesus, according to Dunn, was not so certain about his own divine pre-existence:

> We cannot claim that Jesus believed himself to be the incarnate Son of God; but we can claim that *the teaching to that effect as it came to expression in the later first-century Christian thought* was, in the light of the whole Christ-event, an appropriate reflection on

[18] Dunn, *Christology*, 5-6.
[19] Dunn, *Christology*, 46 (italics added).

> and elaboration of Jesus' own sense of sonship and eschatological mission.[20]

Larry Hurtado's *One God One Lord* was first published in 1988, and shared similarities with Dunn: "There is a certain similarity between Dunn's book and mine, in that we both investigate the historical origin of a feature of early Christianity and both concentrate on the Jewish background".[21] The main thesis of the work is that the earliest Christian communities initially leaned on Jewish concepts of "divine agency" such as personified divine attributes (Wisdom and Logos), exalted patriarchs, and principal angels, in order to first frame the significance of Jesus Christ as "God's chief agent."[22] Very early on however, Hurtado argues, there was a "Christian mutation" whereby Jesus's exalted status as God's chief agent was reconciled with the strict Jewish doctrine of monotheism resulting in a distinctively 'binitarian shape' to Christian theology. The latter was not primarily expressed through honorific titles or Christological rhetoric, but through the devotional life of the early Christians, "in which the risen Christ came to share in some of the devotional and cultic attention normally reserved for God".[23]

In his later and more comprehensive work *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*, Hurtado examines the latter issue most thoroughly. He departs significantly from Dunn's reticence, and concludes enthusiastically: "In historical terms we may refer to a veritable 'big bang', an explosively rapid and impressively substantial Christological development in the earliest stages of the Christian movement".[24]

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[20] Dunn, *Christology*, 254.

[21] Larry W. Hurtado, *One God One Lord* (London: SCM Press, 1988), 6.

[22] Hurtado, *One God*, 93; for the full discussion see 17-92.

[23] Hurtado, *One God*, 123-124.

[24] Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 135.

Martin Hengel had said it best: "The time between the death of Jesus and the fully developed Christology which we find in the earliest Christian documents, the letters of Paul, is so short that the development which takes place within can only be called amazing".[25] Hurtado adds:

> In my view it is still more remarkable that at an equally early point in the emergent Christian movement we find what I have described as a "binitarian pattern" of devotion and worship, in which Christ is treated as recipient of devotion with God and in ways that can be likened only to the worship of a deity.[26]

III. ΙΗΣΟΥΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΝ ΚΥΡΙΟΝ AS THE ESSENCE OF PAUL'S PREACHING

At this same early stage of the Church's history, however, we find another major feature in the Pauline writings that convincingly demonstrate his "fully developed Christology". We refer here to Paul's occasional ascription of the divine title "LORD" (where in context it alludes to Yahweh of the Hebrew Scriptures, which is consistently rendered as κυριος in the LXX) to Jesus Christ. In this regard, the form and force of the title Paul employs in 2 Corinthians 4:5 (κηρύσσομεν ἀλλὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον, "But we preach Jesus Christ Lord"), though little discussed by scholars, is unique and revealing.

The verse in question (2 Corinthians 4:5) is somewhat obscured because it is flanked by two eloquent and theologically-loaded statements that are strikingly constructed to parallel each other. The first (4:4) evokes God the sovereign judge of the Exodus narrative, who judicially hardened the heart of the stubborn Pharaoh, and the second (4:6) evokes God the sovereign creator of the Genesis

[25] M. Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul* (London: SCM, 1983), 31, cited in Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 135.

[26] Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 135.

narrative, who powerfully brought about light that marked the dawning of the cosmos:[27]

> 4:4 ἐν οἷς ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἐτύφλωσεν τὰ νοήματα τῶν ἀπίστων εἰς τὸ μὴ αὐγάσαι τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ
> Among whom the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers so as to not shine; the light of the gospel of *the glory of Christ who is the image of God*.

> **4:5 οὐ γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς κηρύσσομεν ἀλλὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον, ἑαυτοὺς δὲ δούλους ὑμῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦν**
> **For we do not preach ourselves, but *Jesus Christ LORD*, and ourselves your slaves for Jesus**

> 4:6 ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ὁ εἰπών, Ἐκ σκότους φῶς λάμψει, ὅς ἔλαμψεν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ [Ἰησοῦ] Χριστοῦ
> Because the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness", has shone in our hearts the light of the knowledge of *the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

For this very reason though, we may surmise, that 4:5 constitutes a pronouncement of great importance to the apostle as he brings a major section of his letter to a climax. First, we note that v. 4 and v. 6, being parallel verses, use phrases configuring the same or synonymous nouns to draw attention to their striking similarity:

> 4:4 τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ

> 4:6 πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ

[27] On this reading of 2 Cor. 4:4-6 see Ivor Poobalan, "Who is the 'God of This Age' in 2 Corinthians 4:4," Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2015. Accessible online: https://open.uct.ac.za/bitstream/item/19639/thesis_hum_2015_poobalan_ivor_gerard.pdf? sequence=

The extremely tight linguistic and grammatical connection of both phrases, controlled in common by the unique use of φωτισμός (and arguably with Hebrew poetic parallelism in the background as Paul composes), places the following elements on par with each other. It also suggests that Paul is closing this section of the "first apology" (2 Cor. 2:14-4:6) with a *major Christological emphasis, intimately associating the Christ of Paul's gospel with the God of the scriptures*:

4:4	**4:6**
τοῦ εὐαγγελίου the gospel	τῆς γνώσεως the knowledge
τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ the glory of Christ	τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ the glory of God
εἰκών τοῦ θεοῦ image of God	προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ face of Christ

Paul's midrash on Exodus 34 that had been developed within the previous section (2:14-3:18), had contrasted the 'Old Covenant' (3:14) with the 'New Covenant' (3:6); the 'letter' with the 'Spirit' (οὐ γράμματος ἀλλὰ πνεύματος). This had led to the concluding contrast between Moses (and the Jewish people) with Paul (and the Church); the former veiled from the glory of God by their dependence on the Law, but the latter unveiled and reflecting the glory of God by their dependence on the Spirit (3:12-18). This great freedom and transformation of Christian believers is in the same class as the experience of Moses at the tent of meeting, except that it does not result in a 'fading' glory but an 'ever-increasing glory' (3:18). But how does Paul speak of 'God' in this section?

Within the larger literary unit (2:14-4:6) Paul uses the noun 'God' (θεὸς) fourteen times, but it is conspicuously absent in 3:7-18. Here Paul refers to God by using the alternative "Lord", following the LXX of Exodus 34, in which κύριος unmistakeably refers to the God of Moses and the

Israelites. This latter connection has not commonly been acknowledged, but is critical to understand the later assertion that "Jesus Christ [is] Lord" (4:5)

In an article entitled "2 Corinthians III.17: 'The Lord is the Spirit'" Dunn examines the referent of κύριος when the noun is used by Paul in 2 Cor 3:16-18. He notes that "the majority of exegetes" in the twentieth century equated the κύριος of vv. 17 and 18 with Christ, but dismisses their view as inaccurate:

> This interpretation, however, must be rejected. κύριος in verse 16 is Yahweh, as we have shown; and 17a explains who this κυριος is in terms of the present argument. While κυριος in Paul does usually refer to the exalted Christ, in Old Testament citations κυριος is almost always Yahweh . . . It is not enough therefore to say that in Paul ὁ κυριος usually equals Christ, and must do so in verse 17. The determinative factor in such discussions is the context, and the context here is that of a Christian midrash on an Old Testament passage where κύριος = Yahweh.[28]

The climax of the argument then is that through the Spirit the Christian has in fact turned to the same 'Yahweh' (κύριος) of the Exodus-people of God. Once he has established this claim, Paul will move rapidly to equate Jesus Christ with God by explicitly employing the same title – κύριος – for him (4:5). And, this latter assertion will be placed within a stylized pair of statements whose striking parallels serve to show that 'The Christ' (ὁ Χριστος) and God (ὁ θεὸς) may be spoken of in stunningly interchangeable terms: "the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God" (4:4) / "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (4:6).

[28] J. D. G. Dunn, "2 Corinthians III. 17 – 'The Lord is the Spirit,'" *JTS* 21 (1970): 317-318. Also see Carol Stockhausen, *Moses' Veil and the Glory of the New Covenant*, *AB* 116 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1989): 130-131, who concurs with Dunn's reading of κυριος.

This use of κύριος in 3:16-18 – which contextually refers to the transcendent God, but has clear allusions to Jesus Christ of Christian experience – paves the way for Paul's final use of κύριος (4:5), now predicated to Jesus Christ of Christian experience, but alluding in turn to Jesus' transcendent divinity.[29]

So we may argue that these Christologically significant statements, positioned parallel to each other in 4:4 and 4:6, function as an *inclusio*, carefully bracketing the most profound statement on the Pauline *kerygma* in 2 Cor.: κηρύσσομεν … ἀλλὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον, ἑαυτοὺς δὲ δούλους ὑμῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦν, "we preach … Jesus Christ [*as/is?*] LORD, and ourselves, your slaves for Jesus."

The content of Paul's message (κηρύσσομεν) has two components communicated by means of the two parallel phrases connected by de; one serves to exalt Jesus Christ to the *highest status*, κύριος, while the other correspondingly accords to the apostles the *lowest status*, δούλοι. As the argument below will show, when Paul uses κύριος in this context he is not merely employing the common Greek idea of lordship, but rather alluding to the specific Hebrew understanding of Yahweh, as it is rendered in the language of the LXX.

Our focus on the language of 4:5 is made more compelling by the fact that Ἰησουν Χριστὸν κύριον is in itself a unique turn of phrase. In the NT, the three nouns are collocated in varying configurations,[30] and of the six verses in which they are arranged in the sequence, Jesus + Christ +

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[29] See James Scott, *2 Corinthians* (Peabody: Hendrickson/Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 87: "Both Paul and the early church understood Jesus Christ in terms of Psalm 110:1: 'The Lord says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet' . . . this psalm is part of the background for calling Christ 'Lord.' Hence, the one whom Paul preaches is none other than the co-occupant of the divine throne of glory, the Lord of all."

[30] The most common sequence is, Lord + Jesus + Christ (62 verses). Other sequences are: Christ + Jesus + Lord (9 verses), and Jesus + Christ + Lord (6 verses).

Lord,[31] five occur in the identical phrase, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν, literally, "Jesus Christ, our Lord". *Only 2 Cor. 4:5 juxtaposes the nouns in the accusative case without interference by the definite article or by pronouns* – Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν Κύριον – leading translators to provide the adverb and render it "Jesus Christ *as* Lord".

Nevertheless, its uniqueness in form, the fact that it is sandwiched by what appears to be an *inclusio* to underscore the exalted status of Jesus Christ, and the immediate background of 3:7-18 where the noun κύριος occurs just five times (and these concentrated in the climax to Paul's exegetical application of Exod. 34),[32] all challenge the exegete to consider what exactly Paul was presenting as his *kerygma* in 4:*5*.

Scholars have long recognized that embedded in the Pauline epistles are early Christian "creeds" that encapsulated the cardinal beliefs of the earliest communities of faith.[33] Evidence for the most rudimentary forms of these creeds is found in Rom. 1:2-4; 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 12:3; 15:3–*5*; 1 Thess. 1:9-10. Longer formulations are reflected in the christological hymns[34] such as Phil. 2:*5*-11 and Col. 1:15-20. These are thought to be later compositions in the pre-Pauline Christian communities, responding to "rival christologies and cosmologies".[35] Although 2 Cor. 4:*5* is not

[31] All except one are in Paul: Rom. 1:4; *5*:21; 7:2*5*; 1 Cor. 1:9; Jude 1:2*5* and 2 Cor 4:*5*.

[32] See 2 Cor. 3:16 (once), 17 (twice), and 18 (twice).

[33] See R. P. Martin, "Creed," in *Paul and His Letters,* 190 – 192; O. Cullman, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (London: Lutterworth, 1949); L. Hurtado, *One God One Lord* (London: SCM Press, 1988).

[34] For a discussion on how the hymns embedded in the NT convey early Christian devotion see, Hurtado, *One God*, 101-102: "These christological hymns exhibit the earliest observable stages of Christian reflection on the significance of Jesus and are probably the result of the fervent religious enthusiasm of the early Christian communities. Indeed, it is likely that such lyrical proclamations of Christian belief, arising from the religious experiences of the first generation of believers, set the pace for, and influenced the whole development of, christological thought" (102).

[35] Martin, "Creed," 192.

usually listed among these early Christian creedal statements, its affinities with the most noteworthy exemplars may warrant its inclusion. Three references in Paul may be set alongside 4:5, and each translated literally:

1 Cor. 12:3:	Κύριος Ἰησοῦς, "[the] LORD [is] Jesus"
Rom. 10:9:	κύριον Ἰησοῦν, lit. "[the] LORD [is] Jesus"
Phil. 2:11:	κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς, lit. "[the] LORD [is] Jesus Christ"
2 Cor. 4:5	Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον, lit. "Jesus Christ [is] [the] LORD"

If we give weight to the literal reading of the first three, it can be argued that the subject-predicate order of the traditional readings, "Jesus *is* Lord" and "Jesus Christ *is* Lord," may as easily be reversed to allow the more arresting expressions, "The Lord *is* Jesus" and "The Lord *is* Jesus Christ". If the latter expressions are admitted, we must ask if there can be any plausible reason why Paul would intend to emphasize κύριος in this way.

Again, in comparing them we find that Paul is ambivalent about the inclusion of Χριστὸς in these formulations, but the nouns Ἰησοῦς and κύριος are integral to each statement. With no doubt, for Paul, Ἰησοῦς "refers to the man from Nazareth who was crucified and raised from the dead, through whom God achieved his purposes".[36] Yet, what was Paul's referent for the term κύριος? The question opens up an unresolved debate about the foundation of Paul's κύριος-Christology.

W. Bousset's 1913 publication, *Kyrios Christos*, was the first to give definitive direction to the modern discussion on

[36] See D. R. A. Hare, "When Did Messiah Become a Proper Name?" *ExpT* 121, no. 2 (2009): 70-73.

Paul's use of κύριος as a designation for Jesus in the NT.[37] His thesis was that Paul's use of κυριος did not arise out of the traditions of Christianity that existed in its original Palestinian setting, but was essentially a product of the pre-Pauline Hellenistic Christian communities of "Antioch, Damascus, and Tarsus".[38] These regions, Bousset argued, keenly felt the influence of Eastern (Egyptian) religions centred on Osiris, Isis, and Serapis, as well as that of "Gnostic sects". The Egyptians used κύριος as an appellation for their deities more frequently than did any other species of contemporary religious groups, and Gnostic sects such as the Simonians and the Valentinians routinely employed κύριος (or κύρια) as a title for their own central figures such as, Simon, Helena, or "Achamoth (μητηρ)".[39] Notwithstanding the formative stages of the Roman Emperor cult that hailed Caesar as Lord,[40] or the "Greek translation of the Old Testament, with its translation of the name of Yahweh by means of κύριος",[41] Bousset insisted that Paul's use of the title must certainly have arisen from this peculiar religious ferment of the Syrian region:

> It was in this atmosphere that Antiochene Christianity and that of the other primitive Christian

[37] Wilhelm Boussett, *Kyrios Christos*, trans. John E. Seely (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1970 [1913]). At the mid-point of this period of Christological debate another important work appeared: Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963). Larry W. Hurtado, "New Testament Christology: A Critique of Bousset's Influence," *Theological Studies* 40 (1979): 306-317, comments: "Wilhelm Bousset's *Kyrios Christos* not only is the high water mark of the German History-of-religions school of the early twentieth century but *has determined the agenda for the scholarly study of NT Christology since the publication of the book in 1913*" (306, emphasis added).

[38] Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 119.

[39] Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 146. However, the assertion that Gnosticism, as a system of thought and practice, existed in the early first century has now been all but abandoned. The evidence clearly points to the phenomenon (including groups such as the Simonians and the Valentinians) originating from the second century AD onwards.

[40] See Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 138ff.

[41] Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 145-146.

> Hellenistic communities came into being and had their growth. In this milieu the young Christian religion was shaped as a Christ cultus, and out of this environment then people also appropriated the comprehensive formula κύριος for the dominant position of Jesus in worship. No one thought this out, and no theologian created it; *people did not read it out of the sacred book of the Old Testament*[42] (emphasis added).

Though Bousset's argument did convince a generation of scholars[43] – not least because of the huge endorsement proffered by Bultmann[44] – his views are now open to serious critique.[45] For the purposes here, it is his dismissal of the Greek versions of the Jewish scriptures as the possible background for Paul's thoughts about κύριος that is most pertinent.

The *Tetragrammaton*, יהוה (YHWH, probably pronounced 'Yahweh'), was considered unpronounceable by the Jewish people, and so in the "qere" (reading), whenever the text used "YHWH" they would vocalize אֲדֹנָי *adonay*, "LORD", or use some other suitable substitute.[46] This oral tradition was then passed on into the translations of the

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[42] Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 146.

[43] For a useful summary of Bousset's main points for how κυριος came to be used by Paul, see Hurtado, "New Testament Christology," 312-313.

[44] Hurtado, "New Testament Christology," 307: "Though it is a major characteristic of Modern NT Christology that Bousset's positions on several issues have dominated all subsequent research, it has to be said that whatever the power of the book itself, part of the continued influence of *Kyrios Christos* is owed to Bultmann, who heartily endorsed Bousset's views on nearly all points and raised up many disciples."

[45] Hurtado, "New Testament Christology," 313-316.

[46] See Hurtado, "Lord," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 560-569: "By the time of the origin of Christianity, it appears that religious Jews had already developed a widely observed avoidance of pronouncing the Hebrew name of God, Yahweh, and that various substitutes for Yahweh were used" (561).

Hebrew scriptures into Greek, whereby wherever the personal name hwhy appeared the translators substituted it with κύριος. Given that in the vast majority of the total of 6,862 verses in the LXX that feature κύριος, it translates the *Tetragrammaton* and the referent is clearly "God", it is highly improbable that this connotation escaped Paul when he conscientiously attached the title "LORD" to Jesus.[47]

Yet, it is curious that most exegetes who see various possibilities for the connotations to be attached to Paul's use of "Lord" limit themselves to the thought that lordship was only something he earned following his resurrection and exaltation to glory and, which in turn, invested in him the authority to rule.[48] They rarely discuss the possibility that the use of the term may, equally if not exclusively, connote that "Lord" described Jesus ontologically, that is to say that Jesus, somehow by nature, shared the divine status accorded to Yahweh in the Hebrew Scriptures.[49] His life, passion,

[47] Hurtado, "New Testament Christology," 314: ". . . *Kyrios* was no doubt the Qĕrê read aloud for Yahweh in Greek-speaking Jewish circles, and . . . this usage is reflected also in Philo and Josephus. Thus, to call Jesus *kyrios* was, for Greek-speaking Jews, to confer on him a divine title."

[48] See, for example, Murray Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 332: "Jesus Christ as κυριος, that is, as risen from the dead and exalted to universal dominion." Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC 40 (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 79: "those who respond to Paul's call in the Gospel attest that they are accountable to the sovereign Christ for the moral direction of their lives." Victor P. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, Anchor (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 223: "In such traditional formulations as this the title accents Jesus' status as that of one who is lifted up on high to live and reign with God." Margaret Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, Vol. I. ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 314: "It is Christ, not Paul, who exercises dominating control over believers and is preached as Paul himself is doing so."

[49] See Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 177-180. On 2 Cor. 3:16-18 and 4:5, the author graciously admits to an experience where his "mind has been changed." Having earlier (i.e. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*) viewed κύριος in 3:16-18 as a reference to God the Father, he later notes, "how Paul has been shown to apply these kinds of Septuagint phrases to

death, resurrection, and glorification, rather than earning him the status as "Lord" merely served to demonstrate this factuality. On this Hurtado's observation is pertinent:

> In some cases at least, Paul's application of *kyrios* to Jesus connoted the conviction that Jesus had been given to share in the properties and honor of God's "name" (with all that represented in the OT and ancient Jewish tradition) and bore the very glory of God in such fullness and uniqueness that Jesus could be compared and associated only with God "the Father" in the honor and reverence due to him.[50]

The suggestion that Paul was most probably referring to Jesus' divine status when he invested in him the title "Lord" is strengthened by the fact that when it occurs in Phil. 2:11 the language distinctly echoes direct speech by God in Isa. 45:23.[51]

At the same time we need not rigidly assume a single connotation for κύριος. Based on the context, or on syntactical grounds, one may discern nuances that create a range of significations for "Lord": extending from master of the Christian community (κύριος ἡμῶν, κύριος μου), to supreme universal ruler (in the model of the exalted Roman emperors), to one who was worthy of veneration, to the full status of the God of the Hebrew scriptures.[52] This allowance

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Christ in 1-2 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians . . . and will be shown to do likewise in this letter."

[50] Hurtado, "Lord," 569.

[51] "Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear" (NRSV), for context see Isaiah 45:22 – 25; also, Peter O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 241 – 242: "Here the uniqueness of the God of Israel is proclaimed and his universal triumph is hailed. The Lord, who has already declared that he will not share his name or his glory with another, swears solemnly by his own life that 'every knee will bow before me; by me every tongue will swear'. Paul reiterates this language, but now it is 'in honour of the name of Jesus' that everyone kneels."

[52] For discussion on usage of term, see Hurtado, "Lord," 562-566.

for multiple connotations is demanded by the varied ways in which Paul employs the appellation: as a proper name (κύριος), a christological title (ὁ κύριος), or by positioning it as an adjective, making "Lord" a quality of Jesus (κύριος Ἰησοῦς).

In the references cited above, however (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Cor. 4:5; Phil. 2:11), the nouns (κύριος, Ἰησοῦς, Χριστός) are placed in apposition, implying that one is predicated to the other(s) (e.g., "The Lord is Jesus Christ," Phil. 2:11).[53] In these instances it is possible to argue that the nuance is intensified, and Paul is unequivocally asserting the divine status of Jesus Christ. Fee's conclusion, following his 'changed mind' on the matter, is worth reporting in full:

> Thus, in 2 Cor. 4:5 Paul is once more picking up what has become for him and his churches the primary Christian confession, noted above in 1 Cor. 12:3, and named in Rom. 10:9 as the true identifying mark that someone has been "saved": a verbal confession that κύριος Ἰησους (*the Lord is Jesus*). In Phil. 2:11 Paul asserts that this basic Christian confession will be offered by all created beings at the eschaton. In the present passage the same confession is put in reverse, since here it is not "confession" but "proclamation." That is, Paul's preaching can be boiled down in this singular reality: Ἰησους Χριστὸς κύριος (= *Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, is Lord of the universe*), to which the redeemed people respond by way of the Spirit, "The Lord is Jesus Christ." This means then that as elsewhere, in 3:16 Christ Jesus is being identified with "the Lord" = Adonai = Yahweh of the Septuagint, with all the Christological implications being at hand here as well.[54]

IV. CONCLUSION

Consequently, we conclude that a 'high Christology' is particularly evinced in Paul's formulation of creedal

[53] See Harris, *Second Epistle*, 331-332; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 223.
[54] Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 180.

affirmations, such as Rom. 10:9, 1 Cor. 12:3, and Phil. 2:11, as "confessions" for use by the earliest Christian communities. Although belonging to the same category of creedal affirmations, 2 Cor. 4:5 is nevertheless notably unique, both by its identification as Paul's essential *kerygma* or "proclamation" rather than as a "confession", and also in the word-order that renders to it a unique turn of phrase. When, therefore, Paul is able to say that the essence of his proclamation is "Jesus Christ [as] LORD" (2 Cor. 4:5), it is clear that he has reached the zenith of his Christological thought.

PAUL, WIVES AND HUSBANDS: EPHESIANS 5:18-33 AS A DYNAMIC TEXT

SANJAYAN RAJASINGHAM

Abstract: *Ephesians 5:18-33 does not provide static, once-for-all model for marital relationships. It affirms marital hierarchy by comparing the relationship between a husband and a wife to the relationship between Christ and the church. Yet this affirmation is limited. Some verses are in tension with marital hierarchy. Moreover, the passage does not argue that the hierarchical relationship between Christ and the church justifies or explains marital hierarchy. Further, despite mirroring Aristotelian household codes, the passage does not rely on an Aristotelian justification of marital hierarchy. Taken together, this suggests that the passage presents a pragmatic and contextual affirmation of marital hierarchy, rather than a principled, transcultural one.*

Keywords: *biblical egalitarianism, dynamic texts, Ephesians 5:18-33, marriage, NT household codes.*

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper will argue that Ephesians 5:21-33 is a *dynamic text*. Engaging with the work of Lincoln, Schüssler-Fiorenza, Keener and Bauckham it will propose that faithful exegesis requires us to see this text as pointing beyond its limited affirmation of marital hierarchy and towards a biblical egalitarianism.[1]

The core of this paper are arguments in favor of treating this passage as dynamic rather than static.

[1] I hold to Pauline authorship of Ephesians in this paper, following N.T. Wright and others (See NT Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (London: SPCK, 2013), 60. However, this is irrelevant to my arguments here, all of which still hold even if the author was a later follower of Paul as per Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol.42: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014) lix-lxiii.

Two of these arguments constitute its original contribution to scholarship on this passage. The first of these notes that even though the passage is modelled on Aristotelian household codes, its basis is distinctly non-Aristotelian. That is, it does not share an Aristotelian understanding of the nature of men and women. This gives us reason to see the passage's affirmation of marital hierarchy as pragmatic and contextual rather than principled and transcultural.

The second argument proposes that the passage constitutes an implied critique of the institution of the *paterfamilias* and imperial interests and that this has implications for its interpretation. The fact that the passage engages in such fundamental critique, making Christ rather than empire the reference point for family relations, is another reason to think that the writer was critical of existing social structures, and was not affirming them as timeless models.

The paper is organized into four distinct parts. Part II will analyze Ephesians 5:18-33, locating its context, purpose and main ideas. Part III will introduce the idea of dynamic texts in the work of Bauckham, and present an example of such texts from the Old Testament. Part IV will present three reasons why Ephesians 5:18-33 should be considered a dynamic text, and Part V will close with a summary.

II. EPHESIANS 5: 18-33

a. Background

The passage in Ephesians follows the standard form of a household code, introducing the three pairs of relationships that Aristotle outlines in his definition of household management:

> The parts of household management correspond to the parts out of which the household itself is constituted… the first and smallest parts of the

> household are master, slave, husband, wife, father, and children…[2]

This concern with household management, evident among many other writers, stemmed from the view that the household was the basic unity of society, and that a strong city – and by extension a strong state – required a strong household.[3] Thus the Christian concern with such codes, reflected in passages such as Ephesians 5:22-6:9, Colossians 3:18-:1; 1 Peter 2:18-3:7; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 6:1-2 and Titus 2:1-10, was part of a common current of ethical concern at the time.[4]

But why did Christian communities adopt these codes? Initial scholarship argued that they did so to prevent an anarchic response to the delay in the Parousia.[5] However, a better answer seems to be that they reflect an apologetic concern. As Keener notes, Christians needed to distinguish themselves from the eastern Mediterranean religions which were the object of slander. They had to demonstrate that Christianity was not socially disruptive but that it supported basic social structures.[6] Of course, in some ways Christian conversion was inherently disruptive. When wives or slaves converted, they would refuse to worship their husband or master's gods, and this undermined household relationships. These codes, then, were an attempt to minimize this disruption by encouraging Christians to demonstrate, as far

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[2] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.1253b.

[3] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 358; See James D. G. Dunn, "The Household Rules in the New Testament" in *The Family in Theological Perspective*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 50-51 for representative Hellenistic and Jewish examples from Dio Chrysostom, Seneca, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Pseudo-Phocylides, Philo and Josephus.

[4] D. L. Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter, SBLMS 26* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 1-20.

[5] Dunn, "The Household Rules," 54.

[6] Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 147-148.

as they could, that they shared a desire for a well-ordered society.[7] The result would not only be greater receptivity to Christianity by the general population, but also greater openness to Christianity among power-brokers at Rome who, as Keener notes, would make decisions that would affect Christians elsewhere in the empire.[8]

Overall, then, the passage in Ephesians reflected a common ethical and political concern at the time: proper household management. For Christians, it also reflected an apologetic concern – a desire to deflect suspicion and criticism of the new movement as being disruptive of social order.

b. Text

(i) Context

Ephesians was written to Gentile believers, and its main theme is cosmic reconciliation in Christ. It is this theme that leads to Paul's teaching on the difference that being in Christ makes to new believers; the household code that runs from 5:18-6:9 is an aspect of this. The verses discussing relations between husbands and wives are one part of a code that includes exhortations to fathers, children, masters and slaves.

The first thing to note is that Paul's words to husbands and wives are set in the context of two general commands. The first is his command to "live in love, as Christ loved us" (5:1).[9] Thus, love must characterize all relationships among believers, and the paradigm of loving service is Christ. Second, all believers are to be "subject to one another" or to submit to one another (5:21): mutual submission is expected among followers of Christ this second command draws on what has already been said about

[7] Dunn, "The Household Rules," 57.

[8] Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 147, fn. 80. This assumes, of course, that this epistle was written by Paul while imprisoned in Rome.

[9] Unless mentioned otherwise, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version (1989).

Spirit-filled living (5:18). Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ is simply one of the things that believers who are continually filled with the Spirit will do.

Thus, Paul's words to wives, husbands, father, children, masters and slaves are *aspects* of these two general commands. For instance the link between the general command to submit (5:21) and the command that wives submit (5:22) is clear from the fact that verse 22 does not include the verb "submit" – it borrows this from verse 21. Barth suggests that these verses could even be translated "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ, for example, wives to your husbands."[10]

It is in this context of mutual love, mutual submission, and Spirit-filled worship of Christ, that Paul addresses the three-fold relationships of the traditional household. The focus in this paper will be on the first of these three.

(ii) Wives and Husbands in Ephesians 5:18-33

Paul speaks first to wives. Wives are to submit to their husbands as they are to the Lord. Moreover, Paul says that the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church. Keener notes that among Roman, Greek and even Jewish writers at the time, the ideal wife was supportive and subservient.[11] Paul's words on submission here reflect the common understanding of how wives were meant to relate to their husbands.

Moreover, while there is controversy about whether the word 'head' means source, origin, or authority when found in 1 Corinthians 11, in Ephesians, given that the relationship between husband and wife is compared to that of Christ and the church, it is clear that some form of authority is in view.[12] Paul is accepting that in his context a

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[10] Markus Barth, *Anchor Bible Commentary, Ephesians: Translation and Commentary on Chapters 4-6* (NY: Doubleday, 1974), 610; Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 169.

[11] Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 164.

[12] Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 168.

husband had authority over his wife, and he is affirming that authority. In other words, Paul is not preaching an overthrow of existing patriarchal structures.[13]

Yet while Paul does affirm existing marital hierarchy, his affirmation is *limited*. There are tensions with such hierarchy within the text. For instance, Paul's affirmation or acceptance of existing marital hierarchy happens in the context of the general exhortation for all believers to submit to one another. Lincoln argues that this general command exists alongside a hierarchy of roles within the household, and Schüssler Fiorenza sees the general requirement requiring submission to one another as being "spelled out for the Christian wife as requiring submission and inequality."[14] Given the close connection between the two commands, however – to the point of sharing a verb – it is doubtful whether there is as sharp a division between the two commands as they suggest.[15] Rather, there is a tension here which needs to be acknowledged.

Further, we find that Paul never uses the word 'obey' in relation to the wife's response to her husband. In 5:33, a summary of his words to wives and husbands, he uses a word that can be translated either 'respect' or 'fear' (in the sense of reverence or awe) to characterize that relationship.[16] Whatever translation, this makes Paul's exhortation "quite weak by ancient standards".[17]

Adding to this tension with traditional, patriarchal structures is the way Paul addresses husbands. The household codes normally advised husbands on how to 'rule'

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[13] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 360.

[14] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (NY: Crossroad, 1994), 269.

[15] But see Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 385.

[16] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 384-385.

[17] Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 169. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 367, argues that submission would have necessarily involved voluntary obedience, but given the traditional wording of such codes – which would certainly have used 'obey' – and the fact that Paul uses that word for slaves and children but not for women, his choice of words here appear significant in their deviation from this pattern.

or 'govern' their wives.[18] Yet Paul says nothing about this. As Lincoln notes, "… in terms of contemporary instructions on marriage, this writer's exhortation to husbands is by no means conventional or matter of course."[19] Husbands loving their wives, while expected, was not one of the duties in Greco-Roman household codes.[20] Yet Paul's entire focus is on husband's loving their wives – seeking their best, willing to sacrifice even their lives for their wives. Their authority is to be expressed in self-sacrificial service. As Schussler Fiorenza says "the patriarchal-societal code is theologically modified in the exhortation to the husband… patriarchal domination is thus radically questioned with reference to the paradigmatic love relationship of Christ to the church."[21]

(iii) Tensions and Acquiescence

Therefore, on the one hand Paul acquiesces in the traditional structures of his time. He seems to accept that the husband will have authority over the wife, and that she will voluntarily submit to him. However, we have also noted multiple tensions in the passage: between the general call for all to mutual submission and mutual love, and their specific instantiations; in the lack of a command to obedience; and in Paul's failure to call on husbands to 'rule' their wives.

This raises different questions. First, why does Paul not directly critique the harmful hierarchical, patriarchal structures of marriage relationships in this passage? Why does he accept them – as he clearly does? Moreover, why does Paul introduce these tensions into the text if he had an apologetic purpose in writing – if he wanted Christians to demonstrate their support for the social order?

Bauckham's work on reading hierarchical texts provides some of the answers. The next section will

[18] Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 167; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 373.

[19] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374.

[20] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374.

[21] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 269-70; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374.

introduce his work, and suggest that this is a path forward in understanding this passage.

III. READING HIERARCHICAL TEXTS

a. Bauckham and dynamic texts

In *God and the Crisis of Freedom*, Bauckham introduces the idea of discerning the *direction* of a biblical text. He says:

> In some cases it will be important, not only to report the actual positions reached by particular biblical writings, but to also discern the direction in which biblical thinking is moving. For the Bible contains the records of a dynamic, developing tradition of thought, and the aim of interpretation should be to let Scripture involve its reader in its own process of thought, so that the reader's own thinking may continue in the direction it sets.[22]

That is, instead of a static interpretation that sees the position reached in a text as a once-for-all command, Bauckham argues for a dynamic interpretation that follows the direction of the Bible, looking beyond a text's conclusions towards the fundamental nature of God's will on any given issue. Of course, this is only possible where the text itself does not insist that its position is final and conclusive.[23]

Bauckham uses this idea to analyze egalitarianism and hierarchy in the Bible. He argues that running through the biblical tradition is a strongly egalitarian direction of thought which critiques relationships of privilege. In the Old Testament, this is grounded in God taking the side of the slaves against pharaoh in the Exodus. In the New Testament,

[22] Richard Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom: Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 7.

[23] See also I. Howard Marshall, *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004); Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press 2005).

this is grounded in God's fatherly concern for each individual person and Jesus' death being an expression of God's love for each individual person. As a result, all persons have equal value as those whom God cares for and Jesus died for.[24]

For Bauckham, this egalitarianism takes two different forms across the Bible. One form involves radical opposition to hierarchical relationships and structures, opposition that dismantles and replaces them. The other involves pragmatic acceptance of structures as a starting point, followed by their relativization and transformation.[25] This second strategy involves accepting hierarchical structures and then transforming them so that "they operate for the good of all, rather than for the particular benefit of the privileged."[26]

Bauckham proposes that the Old Testament approach to monarchy is an example of the second strategy. This involved relativizing the *power* of the monarchy as coming under God's authority, and transforming the *nature* of the monarchy by insisting that the function of the king was to serve his people.[27] For example, in the Mosaic law in Deuteronomy 17:14-20, the king is envisaged as the first among equals, is under the law, and cannot use his power to accumulate wealth and power. In Psalm 72, a coronation Psalm, the king's power is justified in terms of his role in executing justice and serving the vulnerable. Moreover, the prophets also judged kings by these new standards, for example Jeremiah's words to Josiah in Jeremiah 22:13-17. Thus the king's power was relativized – it was under that of God; it was also transformed – it had to be used for the good of the poor, the weak, and the vulnerable.[28] In Bauckham's own words, the outcome of this strategy was "to attempt to ensure that, since there is hierarchy, it should be as far as possible benevolent hierarchy, serving not the interests of

[24] Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom*, 119, 123.
[25] Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom*, 118.
[26] Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom*, 118
[27] Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom*, 122.
[28] Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom*, 122-123.

the privileged but the interests of all, especially the most vulnerable."[29] It involved pragmatic acceptance – acceptance for the time being – coupled with transformation and relativization.

IV. READING EPHESIANS 5:22-31 AS A DYNAMIC TEXT

This section will argue that Bauckham's approach to hierarchical texts – seeing them as dynamic rather than static, and seeking to discern their *direction* rather than remaining with their conclusions – is an appropriate way of reading Ephesians 5:18-33. That is, it is a dynamic text that takes an existing hierarchical structure for granted, transforms it to serve the vulnerable, and relativizes it in the light of Christ's authority. There are three reasons why this text invites a dynamic, rather than a static, reading.

First, while Paul's words in Ephesians signify an acceptance of a hierarchical relationship between husbands and wives, they do not *account for* such a hierarchical relationship in the hierarchical relationship between Christ and the church. The relationship between Christ and the church is not presented as the *rationale for* or *justification of* a hierarchical relationship between husband and wife. Marital hierarchy is not put forward as a transcultural, transtemporal ideal. Second, Paul does not even rely on an Aristotelian or even a "natural" rationale in accepting the household code's hierarchical relationship between husbands and wives. In fact, there is no indication that he has any principled rationale in mind even when he states his (limited) acceptance of that hierarchy. Third, the passage includes an implied critique of dominant social and imperial structures, suggesting that Paul did not, in general, hold to them as timeless models for all Christians at all times.

[29] Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom*, 122. Bauckham suggests that a similar reading of slavery is possible (p. 23).

a. Husbands and Wives, Christ and the Church

Do Paul's words to husbands and wives indicate that his exhortation here is rooted in a transcultural, timeless ideal of the relationship between husbands and wives? Consider again his words in 5:22-24:

> 22Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. 23For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. 24Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.

As noted before, this is clear acceptance of a hierarchical relationship between husband and wife: the husband is the head of the wife. It recalls Aristotle's view that "…household management is monarchy (for every household is run by one alone)."[30] Lincoln is also surely right when he says, "[t]he writer's point is this: the husband's headship or authority… is patterned on the unique character of Christ's headship over the Church."[31] The question however is whether, as Schussler Fiorenza argues, "The instruction to the wives clearly reinforces the patriarchal marriage pattern and justifies it christologically"?[32] Does the relationship between Christ and the church provide the *rationale* for the husband being the head of the wife? It is a *justification* of that rule?

In verse 22, we find that wives are to take their submission to the Lord as the model for their submission to their husbands. In verse 23, we are told that the husband being head of the wife is *like* Christ being head of the church. There is a relationship of authority between the two. Some have argued that the reference to husband as the head of the wife in these verses might recall Genesis 2 and Adam being the source or origin of Eve, just as Christ is the source or point of origin of the Church. I agree here with Lincoln that

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[30] Aristotle, *Politics*, I. 1255b.
[31] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 369-370.
[32] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 269.

this is unlikely, given the context in which the word 'head' is used. Moreover, there is no indication that Paul intends to argue from creation here; rather he is arguing from redemption, from the Church and Christ.[33]

To return to the passage, then, what we have here is analogy – the relationship between husband and wife is said to be *like* the relationship between Christ and the church. But do we have justification? Is Paul only acknowledging that this how this relationship operated *at the time*? Or is he saying that there is something *natural* and *God-ordained* in a relationship of hierarchy between a husband and wife?

There is nothing in the passage to suggest that Paul is making the latter, stronger, claim. If this were his claim, if Paul was trying to *ground* or *account for* hierarchy within marriage in the hierarchical relationship between Christ and the church, he would have had to use very different language. He would have had to say that the *reason* wives should submit to their husbands is because the church submits to Christ. Or that *because* Christ is the head of the church a husband is the head of the wife. This is the language of justification (rather than of acceptance) – language that is not found anywhere in the passage.

If Paul had used such language, then marital hierarchy would be grounded Christologically, and could be said to be innate, natural, and God-ordained. Of course, Paul also does not challenge a husband's authority over his wife; he sees Christ's authority over the church as a paradigm of such authority. But nowhere does he use this paradigm *to explain why such marital hierarchy exists*.

This, then, is one reason why we may treat this text as dynamic rather than static: Paul's words here are not making a static claim about what marriage should always look like. They do not ground a hierarchical relationship in Christology or creation. He simply acquiesces in what marriage was like at the time and provides a model in line with that relationship – a model, as we have seen, which was

[33] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 369.

similar to but also different from existing practices. In other words, Paul's words here amount to limited, pragmatic acceptance – they are not justification.

b. The anti-Aristotelian Paul?

Not only does Paul not justify existing marital hierarchy Christologically, he also does not justify it using Aristotelian ideas about the nature of men and women. This provides us another reason to think that Paul was not committed to marital hierarchy as a matter of principle.

(i) Aristotle, nature and household relations

Aristotle linked the nature of household relations with the nature of those involved in those relations. Thus of slaves he says "some persons are free and others slaves by nature, therefore, and that for these slavery is both advantageous and just, is evident."[34] He also says that "he is a slave by nature who is capable of belonging to another… and who participates in reason only to the extent of perceiving it, but does not have it."[35] With regard to children, he focuses on minors and sees them as individuals on the path to maturity and independence.[36]

Similarly, his justification of 'marital rule' – how he describes the husband's authority over the wife – is grounded in a particular view of the nature of men and women. According to Aristotle, "the male, unless constituted in some respect contrary to nature, is by nature more expert at leading than the female"[37] and "the relation of the male to the female is that of natural superior to natural inferior, and that of ruler to ruled."[38] This was likely because of Aristotle's view of the female psyche as possessing deliberative faculty

[34] Aristotle, *Politics*, I.1255a.
[35] Aristotle, *Politics*, I.1254b.
[36] Aristotle, *Politics*, I.1260b; Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 187-188.
[37] Aristotle, *Politics*, I.1259b.
[38] Aristotle, *Politics*, I.1254b.

but being unable to bring its desire under the control of its understanding.[39]

This understanding of the nature of men and women justifies Aristotle's particular view of the hierarchical nature of marital rule. Of course, this hierarchy is for the good of the household:[40] He says: "Rule over children and wife and the household as a whole… is either for the sake of the ruled or for the sake of something common to both…"[41] The point remains, however: an unequal marriage relationship was grounded in the view that men and women were naturally unequal.[42]

(ii) Paul's justification

It is one of the claims of this paper that Paul does not adopt an Aristotelian justification of marital hierarchy, and this opens the door to the undermining of that hierarchy. Indeed, apart from a common understanding that children were immature beings that needed guidance, we find no evidence of an Aristotelian justification in Paul's exhortations here. His words to slaves have no affirmation of a natural hierarchy. In fact, after telling slaves to obey their masters, he says that masters must "do the same" to their slaves (6:9). He also relativizes the masters' authority by reminding them that from God's perspective there is no partiality towards a master over his slave (6:9).

Similarly, his words to wives do not suggest that he considers them naturally inferior to their husbands. He does recognize a difference between them – the husband's role involves seeking the wife's highest welfare, nourishing her, and caring for her (5:25-33). But this need not signify a lower view of a wife's *inherent worth*. In a patriarchal society where women had limited opportunities for social, economic and

[39] Fred D. Miller Jr, "The rule of reason" in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics*, (eds.) Marguerite Deslauriers and Pierre Destree (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 49-51.

[40] Aristotle, *Politics*, I.1260a

[41] Aristotle, *Politics*, III.1278b.

[42] Miller Jr, "The rule of reason," 51.

educational advancement, this description of a husband's role makes sense.[43]

In fact, in an analysis of five other examples of household codes in the New Testament, Kevin Giles notes that three of them are based on expediency (Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:4-5; 1 Peter 3:1); one on the 'law' (1 Corinthians 14:34, but given that the Old Testament law did not require subordination perhaps this refers to Jewish oral law); and one on the chronological order of creation and the wife being deceived (1 Timothy 2:11-14, but this is likely an *ad hominem* argument directed at a specific error).[44]

Thus, even in the other epistles a creation-grounded basis for marital relations is the exception rather than the rule. In any event, *this* passage contains no such justification. Paul affirms a hierarchical relationship between husband and wife. However, there is no indication in the passage that Paul has *any* principled grounds for affirming this hierarchical relationship.

Could it be that Paul's audience would have been familiar with Aristotelian justifications for marital hierarchy, and that perhaps they, and Paul, took this for granted? There are several problems with thinking that this might be the case. First, it still leaves the question of why there is no reference to an Aristotelian grounding in *any* of the other texts – why expediency is used in three of them, for instance. Second, it is not true to say that Paul took the ancient assumptions about marital relations for granted. The tensions he introduces in this passage – particularly his commands of mutual submission, and his failure to require the husband to 'rule' his wife – actually run contrary to those assumptions.

By refusing to ground marital hierarchy in Aristotelian logic, Paul undermines that hierarchy. By failing

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[43] See William Loader, *Making Sense of Sex* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 32-74.

[44] See Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Groe, IL: IVP Academic, 2002).

to ground marital hierarchy in any principled basis whatsoever, Paul leaves the door open to seeing his affirmation as merely pragmatic, and embrace a dynamic reading of the text.

c. A social and imperial critique[45]

Finally, we see that Paul's words here amount to a redefinition and transformation of the nature of the *paterfamilias*' authority with reference to Christ. Limits on the *paterfamilias*' authority were unusual, though they had recently been passed by Augustus Caesar. By redefining the *paterfamilias*' authority in the light of Christ, Paul was relativizing both the *paterfamilias* and imperial interests. He was declaring that Christ's domain extended into the family and superseded the claims of any other structure. Paul's willingness to radically question dominant social structures suggests once again that he was not committed to them, or the ideal of marital relations that they upheld.

(i) The power of the Paterfamilias

The powers of the paterfamilias were significant. Every member of a Roman Republican family lived under the *potestas* of the oldest living male in the family, the *paterfamilias*.[46] Sons remained under his power until they were emancipated or adopted, whereas daughters stayed under his authority for life, unless transferred to their husband's authority through marriage.[47]

The *paterfamilias*' powers included the power of life and death over individual family members, control over family property, and even the power to enforce moral

[45] In this section, I draw heavily from Anne Kathryn O'Keeffe, "Augustus as Paterfamilias" (MA thesis, University of Georgia, 2004).

[46] John Crook, *Law and Life of Rome* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 107.

[47] Crook, *Law and Life of Rome*, 108.

standards.[48] He played a key role in choosing a spouse for his children, approving a marriage and even undoing an undesirable one.[49] He was also responsible for the education of his children,[50] and was the religious head of his family, in charge of the worship of the family's gods.[51]

(ii) Regulating the power of the Paterfamilias

There were important inroads into these powers during the reign of Augustus Caesar, who passed a number of laws on marriage and the family. The *lex sumptuaria* of 22 BC limited the amount citizens could spend on banquets. The *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* of 18 BC created incentives for marriage and the procreation of children, disincentivized remaining unmarried, and prohibited marriage between certain classes of citizens. Finally, the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* of 18 BC made adultery an offence punishable by the state and established a board of inquiry to hear accusations of adultery. These intruded on the *paterfamilias'* power over spending, marriage, and enforcing morality within his family.[52] The overarching purpose behind this legislation was to restore Roman virtue, restore the declining aristocratic class, and thereby secure the empire.[53]

While the actual effects of these laws remain a topic of controversy among scholars,[54] what is clear is that they did

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[48] William V. Harris, "The Roman Father's Power of Life and Death" in *Studies in Roman Law in Memory of Arthur A. Schiller*, eds. Roger S. Bagnall and William V. Harris (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 81.

[49] Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (Bloomington/Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 41.

[50] Thomas Wiedemann, *Adults and Children in the Roman Empire* (Oxford/NY: Routledge, 1989), 143.

[51] H. H. Scullard, *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 19. For more detail see O'Keeffe, "Augustus as Paterfamilias," 9-39.

[52] For more detail, O'Keefe, "Augustus as Paterfamilias," 51-79.

[53] Colin Wells, *The Roman Empire* (2nd ed., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 89.

[54] O'Keeffe, "Augustus as Paterfamilias," 78-79.

enter domains traditionally reserved for the *paterfamilias*.[55] We also know that Paul would have been aware of these laws, and that they may have had an impact on his writings.[56] Thus, Ephesians was written to a context where the *paterfamilias* had significant power, and where the only regulation of this had been carried out by Augustus Caesar for imperial purposes.

(iii) Ephesians 5 and the Paterfamilias

There has been significant recent scholarship on an 'anti-imperial' reading of Paul in relation to his use of ideas like peace, salvation and adoption.[57] But perhaps Paul is also anti-imperial in a more private realm – the family? We have seen that he introduces significant tensions and restrictions on the powers of the *paterfamilias* in this passage. He advises them not to exasperate their children (6:4) and does not tell them to 'rule' over their wives or to ensure that their wives did as they were required to. He requires mutual submission and self-sacrificial love. This is clearly a limitation on, and transformation of, the *paterfamilias*' power.

While Augustus had tried to limit this power for imperial purposes, Paul was limiting and redefining it for the sake of Christ. Thus, Christ's domain included the traditional sphere of the *paterfamilias* – a sphere that even the Roman state had left largely unregulated. By making it clear that Christ had pride of place in determining how family relations should be ordered, Paul was relativizing the power of both the *paterfamilias*, the emperor, and the imperial order. He was affirming Christ's supremacy in all spheres of life.

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[55] Henry Thompson Rowell, *Rome in the Augustan Age* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 201.

[56] Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Roman 'Family Values' and the Apologetic Concerns of Philo and Paul: Reading the Sixth Commandment," *New Testament Studies* 61 (2015): 525, 544.

[57] N. T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2005), 59-79.

Based on the above, we may make a limited claim. If Paul was willing to critique deeply entrenched social structures, if he was willing to conduct an implied critique of imperial power in relation to family relations, then perhaps this gives us one further reason to think that he was not committed to how those relations operated at the time? Of course this, on its own, does not show that Paul was committed to egalitarianism in marriage. What it shows is that he had no *principled* commitment to that hierarchy. In the light of the other evidence that his limited acceptance of marital hierarchy was pragmatic rather than principled, this might give us one further reason to treat this text as dynamic rather than static.

d. Understanding Ephesians 5:18-33

Taken together, these three arguments provide us with strong reasons to think that Paul's limited affirmation of marital hierarchy was pragmatic and time-bound. There is no indication that he saw it as grounded Christologically, or in the inherent inferiority of women. In fact, Paul fails to provide any principled justification of marital hierarchy whatsoever. His words here are also an implied critique of Roman social and imperial interests – the *paterfamilias* and imperial prerogatives over the family. This suggests that he was not tied to the dominant structures that upheld marital hierarchy, and thus that a dynamic reading of the text is warranted.

V. CONCLUSION

Where do these arguments leave our approach to the text?

First, a dynamic reading of the text makes sense of its setting and purpose. As noted before, the text had an apologetic purpose: to demonstrate to the outside world that Christians were not socially disruptive, but that they supported the existing social order. Part of doing this involved a pragmatic affirmation of existing hierarchical relationships. Husbands leading wives and masters owning slaves. The reason for this pragmatic affirmation is obvious:

overthrowing patriarchy was a long-term goal of social transformation that a young, vulnerable Christian movement on the margins of the empire could not accomplish. Addressing patriarchy would require significant political will, widespread public support, and transformations in the economy, culture and social relationships. Christians were not in a position to change the social structures of the day. It is difficult to fault Paul for advocating for this.[58]

Yet despite this apologetic purpose, Paul also introduced significant tensions into the text. His words are only a *limited* affirmation of marital hierarchy. Moreover, one of the contributions of this paper is to argue that Paul's redefinition of family relations with reference to Christ relativized the power of the *paterfamilias* and imperial interests. Thus, while desiring to ensure Christianity could survive in the Roman world, Paul was unwilling to abandon the radical, egalitarian heart of the gospel. Further, another of the contributions of this paper is to demonstrate that Paul was distinctly non-Aristotelian in his writing: he did not resort to Aristotelian ideas about the natural inferiority of women to justify martial hierarchy. In fact, we find no principled justification of marital hierarchy in this passage. Both of these aspects of this passage are in line with the *direction* of biblical teaching on relationships.

Overall, therefore, these moves invite us to follow Bauckham in treating this text as *dynamic* rather than *static*. Paul's words are a limited affirmation of existing marital structures, and there is no indication that they were meant as a once-for-all model for how marriage should work. Moreover, his willingness to introduce tensions to these structures, his refusal to provide a principled basis for their existence, and his willingness to question the dominant sources of marital relationships of his time warrant our moving beyond the text. Naturally, this

[58] Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 184-186.

has implications for today. It allows us to recognize that Paul's affirmation of marital hierarchy as tentative and pragmatic, and to embrace marital relationships that reflect the mutuality and equality that are at the heart of the gospel and the biblical narrative.

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TRUTH: A MISSING INGREDIENT IN SRI LANKAN RECONCILIATION?

MANO EMMANUEL

***Abstract**: It has been said that the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" is an indispensable item in the tool kit for any country's peace process. But what place does truth really play in reconciliation? Is it, as some suggest, a Western concept which is unnecessary in some circumstances? Or is getting to the truth of the past essential for a hope for a shared future in a conflicted nation like Sri Lanka? This paper explores the challenges to truth telling in honour-shame cultures like Sri Lanka. It also proposes that the absence of truth has implications for lasting peace.*

***Key words**: Sri Lanka, reconciliation, truth, honour-shame culture.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1946 American anthropologist Ruth Benedict rose to prominence for her analysis of the Japanese culture. She labelled the culture she was examining a 'shame' culture as opposed to a "guilt culture" which is what she named her own culture.[1] A shame culture, also known as an "honour-shame" culture, or 'shame oriented culture" can be distinguished from a guilt culture by various characteristics. Perhaps most prominent of those characteristics is that it is a collectivistic culture rather than an individualistic culture. Thus it is where a person receives his or her identity (and honour) from a kin-group, most usually the family or clan. It is the group rather than the individual which is important. Therefore, the approval of the kin group is sought and retained in order to receive honour. Asian cultures are

[1] Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture,* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1946).

situated within the honour culture spectrum while Western cultures tend to be more guilt oriented. It is important to note that individuals within a culture may or may not conform to the norm. Within a culture there will be sub-cultures, (for example, youth culture) and a person's own "personal culture" derived from their upbringing. However, there are sufficient characteristics in a culture shared by sufficient numbers to place it within these broad categories. Some of these characteristics have implications for peacemaking. In fact, in this paper, we will suggest that some of these characteristics present a challenge to truth telling thus making it more difficult for post conflict Sri Lanka to foster reconciliation between conflicted communities.

II. BARRIERS TO TRUTH TELLING IN AN HONOUR-SHAME CULTURE

(i) Lying as honourable

It is said that the first casualty when war comes is truth. This is not limited to certain countries or cultures.[2] However, different cultures perceive the importance of truth in various ways. Missiologist Duane Elmer suggests that if we were to ask which is a greater sin, to lie or to lose your temper, most westerners or North Americans will say "to lie." People of many other cultures will say that losing your temper is worse. In the West, greater emphasis is placed on accuracy and truth, while in other cultures, what is important is harmonious relationships.[3]Anthropologist Paul Hiebert noted that in most collectivist, tribal and peasant groups, (that is, honour-shame cultures) morality and ethics are based on right relationships.[4]

Shame-oriented cultures tend to have relative morality rather than a universal, absolute morality. Right

[2] This claim has been attributed to sources from ancient Greece to modern America.

[3] Duane Elmer, *Cross Cultural Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), 14.

[4] Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 61.

and wrong are not absolute categories. Right is what is appropriate to the situation.[5] Citing the Indian worldview as an example, Hiebert states that actions cannot be easily labelled good and evil.[6] Right and wrong depends on who one is and the situation being faced.[7] In a similar vein, Roland Muller writes that in Middle Eastern Islamic cultures, what is important is what is honourable, and what is honourable will depend on what society finds acceptable.[8] Values which are correct for one set of circumstances may not be appropriate for another, but the principles in each case are equally honorable. Thus, for all practical purposes, a person will have multiple standards.[9]

> Since double or multiple standards of morality and conduct are normal, they present the individual with no inner conflict. . . . He may be taught charity as a personal virtue, to improve his fate and that of his ancestors and descendants, but he will have no necessary compunction or desire to champion the cause of the oppressed as a whole or to overthrow the privileged position of all oppressors. The primary guide for his behavior is his place.[10]

In a culture that is named "honour-shame" it is sometimes wondered why a person who is caught out in a lie is not ashamed. Anthropologist Julian Pitt-Rivers examining the honour cultures of the Mediterranean discovered that there is no shame in lying if there is an intention to deceive. "It is lack of steadfastness in intention which is dishonouring, not

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[5] Hiebert, *Transforming*, 342.

[6] Paul G. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 361.

[7] Hiebert *Transforming*, 342.

[8] Roland Muller, *Honor and Shame: Unlocking the Door.* (USA: Xlibris, 2000), 47.

[9] F. L. K. Hsu, *Clan, Caste and Club* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand, 1963), 2.

[10] Hsu, *Clan*, 2.

misrepresentation of them."[11] Therefore, someone who is a liar, a deceiver, who by his actions humiliates and gets the advantage over others through trickery, might be validly considered honourable. Muller says of Middle Eastern cultures that a lie, if it is uttered for honorable reasons, such as to protect the honour of the tribe or family, is acceptable. If told for selfish reasons, then it is dishonorable.[12] In Islam, the Qur'an permits the devout Muslim to lie to those outside the community of faith, under certain circumstances. Honesty is not owed to the infidel.[13]

In Sri Lankan culture, truth is not a cultural value and lying is widely accepted. From the trader or craftsman who promises delivery on a certain date but does not show up to a guest who enthusiastically accepts an invitation but does not attend, untruths, half-truths or evasiveness all display a concern for maintaining harmony rather than expressing accuracy. Local culture affirms that it is permissible to lie for a greater good.[14] A Hindu story illustrating how truth should be "pleasing to others" describes the action of a Hindu priest who sees a cow trying to escape a butcher. The butcher asks the priest which way the cow went and the priest directs the butcher in the wrong direction thus saving the cow.[15]

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[11] Julian Pitt Rivers, "Honor and Social Status," in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean* Society, ed. Jean G. Peristiany (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1966), 32.

[12] Roland Muller, *Honor*, 51.

[13] "Allah will not call you to account for thoughtlessness in your oaths, but for the intention in your hearts" (Qur'an 2:225). "And they (the disbelievers) schemed, and Allah schemed (against them): and Allah is the best of schemers" (Qur'an 3:54). The Arabic word used here for scheme or plot is *makara*, which means 'cunning', 'guile' and 'deceit'. The Islamic concept of *taqiyya* is disputed but seems to allow Muslims to deceive in certain circumstances especially when facing persecution.

[14] A popular Tamil Proverb says it is permissible to tell a thousand lies (*poy*) *to* arrange a marriage. However, within the Tamil community some insist that this proverb originally said "you need to go (*po-yi)* to a thousand people to arrange a wedding."

[15] Bansi Pandit, *The Hindu Mind* (Glen Ellyn, IL: B & V Enterprises Inc., 1993), 140.

Many of the promises made by political leaders after the war were not kept. At the beginning of this year, a petition was handed to the President of Sri Lanka asking that the promises made about restoring land in the northern part of the country be kept. Of course, it is not unusual for political leaders in any nation, to make campaign promises they either cannot or do not intend to keep. But in an honour-shame culture, a person does not owe the truth to everyone. Truthfulness is primarily owed to kin and to superiors, not to outsiders or inferiors.[16] Thus perhaps making promises to those whom one does not acknowledge as being worthy of the truth does not require carrying them out.

(ii) Honour accrues to status not virtue

But we are a religious country, we might argue. What of the values of our majority religions? How can lying be condoned when our religions condemn it? One of the five precepts of Buddhism is to refrain from falsehood. In Hinduism, truthfulness in thought speech and actions is extolled. But in honour-shame cultures, practice can differ from religious values. Some things that a community identifies as "wrong" might be "right" if done by certain people in certain circumstances.[17] Intention can be more important than action. So Hinduism suggests that sincerity is more important than speaking factually. Truth should not be spoken to hurt others.[18] It is accepted that it is impossible to live up to the ideals of pure religion. In a chapter entitled "the Ethic of Intention", Richard Gombrich says of Buddhism that while truth telling in an ideal, it is not a major value. Where it comes into conflict with other values, such as

[16] Bruce Malina and Julius Neyrey, "First Century Personality: Dyadic not Individualistic," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 37.

[17] Peter W. Gosnell, "Honor and shame rhetoric as a unifying motif in Ephesians," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 16, no. 1 (2006), 108.

[18] Pandit, *Hindu*, 139-140.

kindness, loyalty or honour, it can be easily discarded. As the title of his chapter implies, intention is more important than action.[19] So, another local proverb acknowledges that a religious leader does not practice what he preaches by saying "His mouth is full of the *Dhamma* but his stomach is full of meat."[20] And the laity accepts that inconsistency in a leader, perhaps attributing any consequences to the laws of *karma*.

Collectivistic cultures are usually high power-distance cultures. That is, they place a great emphasis on honour which is derived from status in society. One does not occupy a moral high ground. That elevated position belongs to those whom the community honours, in our case, political and religious leaders. They, like parents are given great honour. It would be an affront to their honour to question them or call them to account. They are to be trusted to know what is best for us. In the local context, leaders who act to defend national honour, or to safeguard the local religions can demand honour irrespective of their actions.[21]

Then how are political leaders to be held accountable in shame-oriented cultures? A guilt-oriented community would ask questions like "who is to blame?" or demand an apology and expect accountability. Honour-shame people do not. It would not be appropriate to ask leaders, who are in many respects, our "parents" to explain themselves. Questions, if asked will be evaded, or an explanation will be given which everyone knows to be false, but still accepts.

We might ask, how is it that some citizens do insist on asking those questions in this culture? It has been suggested that members of an honour-shame culture who are exposed to a western type education tend to become

[19] Richard F. Gombrich, *Buddhist Precept and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 306-307.

[20] A truly religious Buddhist would not eat meat of any kind.

[21] In Sinhala folklore, 'Diyasēna kumāraya' is a messiah figure who is sent to deliver the people. Political leaders who appear to fulfil this longing are revered without question.

more guilt oriented.[22] The emphasis in that type of education on accuracy, logic and linear reasoning results in a shift in the spectrum towards guilt orientation. Conflict is exacerbated when guilt oriented and shame oriented people are in conflict. They have varying expectations and they do not understand one another's discourse or motivations.

(iii) Revenge as the reaction to shame

Not everyone agrees that truth is indispensable to reconciliation. A report on the reconciliation process in Sierra Leone concluded that in some cultures the discussing of past trauma does not bring healing and can in fact be a catalyst for further violence. In Sierra Leone it was suggested that the community's traditional method of conflict resolution was through forgiveness.[23] Truth commissions have the greatest chance of success where there is a strong element of support within society and a shared desire for a changed future. Can Sri Lanka look to its past for successful models of reconciliation?

Truth Commissions by their nature require admission of guilt or complicity in violence or injustice. Such requirements would be seen as an attempt to shame those in authority. In fact, in honour-shame cultures, there is often an extreme, violent, reaction to being shamed. "Humiliation is a fertile breeding ground for hatred and for revenge-seeking."[24] To leave an insult unavenged will be interpreted as cowardice.[25] The one who has been shamed must neutralize the exposure of self in the present as well as protect herself from future shame. In such a context, those who are given the opportunity to speak truth, whether

[22] Hannes Wiher, "Shame and Guilt Cultures" (lecture notes), Colombo Theological Seminary.

[23] Rosalind Shaw, "Re-thinking Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: Lessons from Sierra Leone", https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr130.pdf

[24] Gershen Kaufman, *The Psychology of Shame* (New York: Springer, 1996) 299.

[25] Pitt-Rivers, "Honour", 26.

journalists, or witnesses find themselves at the receiving end of threats or violence.

When one party in the conflict reacts with rage the other will often retaliate similarly, giving rise to a shame-rage spiral.[26] In honour-shame cultures, objective discourse is fraught with obstacles because accusations are taken as a personal affront to honour. A lack of training in the ability to disagree, argue and debate gives rise to situations such as the pandemonium in parliament after what was labelled a" constitutional coup."[27] Policemen formed a shield for the speaker as he was pelted with missiles, and the nation watched politicians hurl furniture and smash equipment in the face of a national crisis.

Honour-shame culture people put to shame are forced to confront themselves in their weakness as well as face the world's criticism. This can create a deep resentment, even hate towards the one who has been the cause of this exposure.[28] Forgiveness does not form part of the dominant worldview in Sri Lankan culture. Neither Buddhism nor Hinduism preach the concept of forgiveness for sin. One's *karma* must be worked out through re-birth.

Thus, being confronted with demands for the truth, shame-oriented people can react with great rage. When those who expect honour by virtue of their status are challenged, they gather their kin-group around them and demand loyalty. The group then condemns their accusers as traitors, as tools in the hands of Western imperialists or terrorists and vilify them to maintain the honour of the group, in Sri Lanka's case, the ethnic group. Sri Lankans have to look to history to see if we have local models of

[26] Gershen Kaufman, *Shame: The Power of Caring* (Cambridge, MA: Shenkman, 1990) 85-87.

[27] The President of Sri Lanka appointed a new Prime Minister which was not allowed under the constitution. This resulted in two Prime Ministers holding office for several weeks until the Supreme Court ruled on the matter.

[28] Kurt Riezler, "Comment on the Social Psychology of Shame," *The American Journal of Sociology* 48, no. 4 (1943), (457-465) 459.

reconciliation that defy this pattern. If our models of conflict resolution are found to consistently show this pattern of violent revenge, we need to unlearn this conflict resolution style.

III. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR RECONCILIATION

(i) A shared acknowledgement of the past as first step to healing

John Paul Lederach says it is one thing to know, it is "a very different social phenomenon to acknowledge. Acknowledgement through hearing one another's stories validates experiences and feelings. . ."[29] In Sri Lanka, the Office on Missing Persons was set up in 2017. It aims to give families awaiting news of loved ones who have disappeared as long as thirty years ago, some closure. Their slogan on their first anniversary was 'Pain never disappears, let's fulfil our responsibility to find the truth.'[30] But truth is hard to come by because acknowledgment of the realities of past injustices, atrocities, and falsehood requires an acknowledgment of guilt. All confessions of guilt carry with them an element of self-humiliation which runs counter to our pride and threatens our self- esteem. To protect ourselves we deny, we excuse, we blame others, we rationalize, we minimize.[31] In shame-oriented cultures, confession is seen as self-shaming. If a person is pressured to admit a fault, it is tantamount to shaming them, leaving them no avenue to save face.

Journalist and politician Michael Ignatieff warns that if remembering and accepting truth is so difficult for us as complex individuals, how much more for a nation made up

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[29] John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC; United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 26.

[30] http://www.sundaytimes.lk/190113/news/with-prolonged-grief-the-families-of-the-missing-cry-out-for-help-329986.html, accessed 31 May 2019.

[31] Geiko Muller-Farenholtz, *The Art of Forgiveness* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 25.

of numerous individuals; a community fissured by religion, ethnicity, class, education and so on. A nation does not have a single monolithic psyche which can be healed. It does however have "a public life and public discourse."[32] Examining the effects of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Brazil, Ignatieff bemoans the fact that no one was held accountable or brought to justice. "All that a truth commission can achieve is to reduce the number of lies that circulate unchallenged."[33] It can change the parameters of public memory and discourse but it cannot change institutions or bring about widespread repentance. So, even if truth and reconciliation commissions are flawed and do not deliver the justice and forgiveness they purport to, they do something. They "narrowed the range of impermissible lies that one can tell in public" says Ignatieff. He goes on to say

> It is true . . . that you cannot create a culture of freedom unless you eliminate a specific range of impermissible lies. I put it this way - a range of impermissible lies - because all societies, and all human beings lie to themselves all the time. Citizens of liberal democracies are fooling themselves if they think we live in truth. None of us can support very much truth for very long. But there are a few lies that do such harm that they can poison a society just as there are a few lies in private life that can destroy a life.[34]

Telling the truth is necessary for both social restoration as well as individual healing. Truth is medicine, says Walter

[32] Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honour: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (London: Vintage, 1998), 169.

[33] Ignatieff, *Warrior's,* 173.

[34] Michael Ignatieff, "Something Happened", https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2001/oct/13/weekend7.weekend3, accessed 20 Dec 2018.

Wink. Without it a society remains infected with past ills.[35] Truth on its own cannot bring about healing or transformation of society. Other structures, like an independent and corruption free judiciary, law and order and freedom of speech must support it. However, truth can often be a critical first step.

One of the difficulties of remembering the events of the past thirty years is that there are different claims to truth. What one community sees one way is quite different to the way another community sees it. Everyone is constrained by their human situation- their limited knowledge, their prejudices, their pain. Is the solution to say there is no truth to be found? "Claims to possess the uncontestable truth aren't always wrong but they are always dangerous- especially dangerous when a person's claim to possess the truth matters more to her than the truth itself."[36] Although difficult to ascertain, truth is a part of justice and an essential prerequisite to reconciliation. Seekers of truth will always employ "double vision" – give others the benefit of the doubt, imaginatively seek to inhabit the other's world and see other perspectives. What is dangerous is to give up the quest for truth and accept all, incompatible stories suggesting none is truer than the other.[37]

But it seems that in Sri Lanka we have failed to find a safe space in which the quest for truth can proceed without threat or intimidation and with empathy and openness. The Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission set up by the government in 2010 failed to provide a safe environment for witnesses to "reduce the number of lies that circulate." And on the whole, the Church failed to provide that space either, for different reasons.

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[35] Walter Wink, *When the Powers Fall: Reconciliation in the Healing of the Nations* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 53.

[36] Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Cambridge, UK/Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 57.

[37] Volf, *End,* 57.

(ii) A common grieving for solidarity

For communities to be reconciled, individuals have to be reconciled. Public acts of atonement and solidarity can create a public climate in which private acts of repentance and apology become possible. Such public acts were performed by Chilean President Patricio Alwyn who apologized on television for the crimes of repression, and by Willy Brandt, Chancellor of Germany when he knelt at a death camp in his country.[38] In contrast where leaders of nation refuse to admit any wrongdoing, they cultivate a community of perpetual victims who then feel justified in harbouring their grievances. Leaders like Alwyn and Brandt "give their societies permission to say the unsayable, to think the unthinkable, to rise to gestures of reconciliation that people individually cannot imagine."[39] Can such gestures be made by leaders in Sri Lanka?

If there is no truth and no apology, then the moral response will be revenge. If there is truth and apology, then corporate mourning of the dead on both sides can replace the desire for vengeance. "Reconciliation has no chance against vengeance unless it respects the emotions that sustain vengeance, unless it can replace the respect entailed in vengeance with rituals in which communities once at war learn to mourn their dead together."[40]

In May 2014, on the 5th Anniversary of the end of the war, it was reported that Tamils were prevented from publicly remembering their dead, while their Sinhalese counterparts could mourn the death of their loved ones, who were primarily military and thus hailed as the nation's heroes.[41] "Our country is once again leaving space to the

[38] Ignatieff, *Warrior's*, 187.

[39] Ignatieff, *Warrior's,* 188.

[40] Ignatieff, *Warrior's,* 190.

[41] In 2011, the Government built a military headquarters on the site of a Tamil Tiger grave yard in which over 2,000 fighters had been buried. The BBC news website states "It (the Sri Lankan Government) says its policy is to wipe out any trace of the Tigers and ensure that their violence is forgotten. It has however built several memorials to fallen

people in the north to develop their own structures to deal with their sorrows and issues, which will contribute to a separate state of mind," the National Peace Council, a local activist group, said in a statement. "There is no peace when there is victory and defeat side by side on the same issue."[42] There is clearly no common grieving.

It is a fallacy to think that once a generation has passed on or been killed, their progeny will forget. Even if the next generation had no first-hand knowledge of the sufferings of their ancestors, yet that suffering is a part of their heritage. "They are part and parcel of that bitter bondage, because they are victims of their parents' victimization. Consequently they need to be set free too. They also wait for acts of total disclosure to break the chains of mistrust, cynicism and revenge that lock generations together."[43]

(iii) A common narrative for Sri Lankan identity

It is thought that communal violence would decrease if we embraced a shared Sri Lankan identity. Identity is forged in many ways, one of which is embracing a national narrative.

In the rise of nation-states in Europe beginning in the late eighteenth century, new "national narratives" were constructed, to replace the individual narratives of different ethnic and political groups now being integrated into one nation. These narratives were in turn made visible in monuments, artefacts and practices deliberately designed to bind together groups that had nothing in common previously.[44] What narratives hold the people of this land together? What monuments or practices cement the

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government soldiers." https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12668613

[42]https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2014/05/18/sri_lanka_prevents_tamil_memorials_on_5th_anniversary_of_war_victory.html

[43] Muller-Farenholtz, *Art,* 30.

[44] Robert Schreiter, "Sharing Memories of the Past: The Healing of Memories and Interreligious Encounter," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 35, no. 2 (April 2008), 112.

different groups together? If there are no such positive identities forged, the alternative is likely to be that the two main ethnic groups forge different identities, one based on victory and the other on defeat and trauma. Both are equally strong identities but they are "negative identities" – identities based on seeing another group as the enemy.[45]

German born theologian Muller-Farenholtz states that only a fraction of the national history will be taught in formal education. 'Many other "teachers of history" contribute to our collective self-awareness, in much more subliminal ways. Some of these are part of our symbolic narrative – the national anthem, the flag, national holidays, songs, speeches. Memories are enshrined in mythic accounts, in festivals, dances, poems and plays.'[46] How does the national flag or the singing of the national anthem unite Sri Lankans? What use is made of the Buddhist flag when it is flown in public places? What national holidays embrace the whole of the population? Whose dead are remembered in memorials?

Muller-Farenholtz suggests that representative groups from different communities in a conflict walk through each other's histories. This might include visiting sites or attending events that are still causing pain to one community. The objective is to listen patiently to how the 'other' feels and experiences their history.[47]

In recent years some organizations in Sri Lanka have done this. Groups of young people have been taken to visit young people from another ethnic group in their own home setting. Goodwill missions and youth camps have brought churches from the South to visit their counterparts in the north. In one such case, people of each community were asked to write a history of the conflict as they perceived it. It was noteworthy that the group from the Sinhala community

[45] The very fact that the different ethnic groups in this country are so similar paradoxically makes the enmity greater. Ignatieff calls it the "narcissism of minor differences." *Warrior's*, 188ff.

[46] Muller-Fahrenholz, *Art,* 44.

[47] Muller-Farenholtz, *Art,* 65.

failed to remember the destruction of the Jaffna library, a great cultural and historical loss to the Tamil community, while the Tamil participants omitted to mention the bombing of the *Dalada Maligawa* (temple of the Buddha's tooth relic), one of the most sacred Buddhist sites, by the Tamil Tigers.

Another exercise that has been carried out by a German-Polish school book commission is to go through the textbooks of each country to remove images and interpretations in textbooks that fostered stereotypes of certain communities.[48] How is history taught in schools today? Are all communities represented fairly? Experience has shown that it is the generation that comes after the generation that has lived through the trauma that can most easily be healed.[49] But this will not happen if what is perpetuated is myth rather than history.[50] Truth cannot dispel the power of the myth. "Myth is so much sustained by the inner world–by paranoia, desire and longing–that it is dissolved not when facts from the outer world contradict it but only when the inner need for it ebbs away."[51] In Sri Lanka we have had our fair share of myths which cast various communities in the role of villain. The question is if Sri Lanka can face the future without the need for prevailing myths.

Ethnic identities are sometimes absolutized, treated as if they were a skin, fixed and unchanging. Not so, says Ignatieff. They are a mask: pliable and elastic and constantly re-paintable.[52] Muller-Farenholtz draws on the work of psychologist and Peace writer Vamik Volkan who describes the complex identity formation of a community as a canopy.

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[48] Muller-Fahrenholz, *Art,* 66.

[49] Schreiter, 'Sharing', 113.

[50] In 1992, Hill country Serbs circulated the false story that Muslims had crucified Serb children and thrown their bodies in the river. Based on this they ordered their troops to eliminate all Muslims in the area. Whatever the evidence to the contrary, Serbs continued to believe this myth.

[51] Ignatieff, *Warrior's,* 176.

[52] Ignatieff, *Warrior's,* 56.

That canopy can become a rigid and impenetrable fortress. Engaging in activities like those described above on the other hand, keeps the canopy flexible, stretching it wide enough to provide shelter for both sides.[53]

The Easter Sunday bombings on 21 April 2019 saw the nation plunged into a new terror. But it also saw the emergence of civil society groups calling for the nation to rally together focusing on our commonalities. Voices were raised to draw diverse groups of people together to care for the survivors and to resist violence. Perhaps this time, we will do better in our search for a truly unified identity.

The Church is the only religious community in Sri Lanka which includes people from all ethnic groups. It therefore needs to lead the way in demonstrating how a community can find a shared identity in something other than ethnicity. In the New Testament, the church community was a person's fictive kinship group, becoming the group that bestowed honour.[54] Thus the early church was that unthinkable combination of Jew and Gentile, slave and free, urged to find their unity in Christ rather than in cultural identity markers.

IV. CONCLUSION

Truth Commissions did the greatest good in countries which had a Christian heritage in which values like truth, justice and forgiveness were commonly accepted.[55] In an honour-shame culture, truth telling which calls for acknowledgment of wrong doing, especially on the part of leaders does not come naturally. Revenge, not forgiveness is the common response to conflict. Calls for acknowledgment and confession are perceived as dangerous and treacherous and

[53] Muller-Farenholz, *Art*, 65.

[54] See David A deSilva *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity*, (Chicago, IL: IVP Academic, 2000).

[55] It is interesting that the Commission appointed to report on the way forward after the almost thirty year long war, was named the Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission rather than a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

give rise to defensiveness or counter-attack. And yet where there is no acknowledgment of past evils there is no room for healing. As time goes by, truth will become harder to identify and harder to share.

Perhaps reconciliation is too important to be left to our top-level leaders. Middle –level and grass-root level peacebuilding efforts have been fragmented and under-utilized. Examples of middle-range leaders would be heads of NGO's, schools and churches. Such people would have the advantage of being close to both top-level leaders as well as the grass-roots. Lederach says

> A middle-out approach builds on the idea that middle-range leaders (who are often the heads of, or closely connected to, extensive networks that cut across the lines of conflict) can be cultivated to play an instrumental role in working through the conflicts.[56]

He includes among the middle-range activities, efforts directed at changing perceptions, training in conflict resolution and the formation of networks and teams which can play an active role in peacemaking. [57]

It is ordinary people at the grass roots and middle levels of leadership who can best listen to one another, make space for one another and allow truth to be a medicine that heals. We are beginning to see the emergence of civil society groups, comprising youth, women, and professionals calling for change, for unity and reconciliation. We have yet to see the power of these groups to unite the nation. Perhaps it is such people who can make room for another's identity within the canopy of their own ethnic identity.

The Church that worships a God who is the truth, in whom there is no deceit or darkness should lead the way. We sometimes forget with all the talk of peace and reconciliation that these terms mean different things to different cultures

[56] Lederach, *Building,* 51.
[57] Lederach, *Building,* 51.

because not all cultures agree on the ingredients that go into forging a lasting peace. Reconciliation and peace as Christian concepts are best illustrated on the cross – costly, sacrificial and lasting. It is a reconciliation which includes justice as well as mercy, where the repentant find forgiveness and restored relationships. As Psalm 85:10 says, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

'THE CROSS, THE SELF AND THE OTHER': MIROSLAV VOLF'S THEOLOGY OF EMBRACE AND THE IMMIGRATION DEBATE IN THE UK[1]

NINA KURLBERG

Abstract: *This paper uses Miroslav Volf's* Exclusion and Embrace (1996) *to explore how the church should relate to the 'other' in the context of migration in the UK. First, the challenge facing the church is set in its wider context, focusing on public perception. Several themes emerge, including the public's concerns over issues related to identity and justice, and the media's negative portrayal of immigration, which dehumanises so-called 'immigrants' and focuses on the loss that the UK incurs on their account. Secondly, Volf's theology of embrace is explored, emphasising that on account of the cross, the 'will to embrace' is a non-negotiable for Christ's disciples. It is only when embrace becomes our way of life that we can be at peace, both with others, but also within ourselves. Applying Judith Butler's insights in* Frames of War (2009) *to Volf's theology of embrace, reveals how the frames through which we encounter others can prevent us from recognising their humanity – a prerequisite of the will to embrace. Thirdly, it is argued that the church should focus on challenging the dominant 'frames' through which the media portrays those seeking to migrate to the UK, that eclipse their humanity..*

Keywords: *Miroslav Volf, theology of embrace, immigration, reconciliation, exclusion, identity, justice.*

I. INTRODUCTION

'An immigration crisis on Britain's doorstep'
The Independent, February 2014[2]

[1] This paper is an abbreviated version of the author's MA dissertation, submitted to CTS in 2015.

[2] http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/f/f6/The_

> 'Fury over Britain's 2m illegal migrants: Border crisis getting worse say experts'
> *Daily Express, August 2014*[3]
>
> 'Migrants "ready to die for your British benefits": Mayor of Calais warns MPs of growing crisis.'
> *Metro, October 2014*[4]
>
> 'Immigration system in chaos: IT failures cost £1bn as 50,000 asylum seekers go missing'
> *The Guardian, October 2014*[5]
>
> '1m migrants to flood Britain: EU referendum will be too late to stop them says Farage'
> *Daily Express, October 2014*[6]
>
> 'Fury as Home Office loses 174,000 illegal immigrants'
> *Daily Star, December 2014*[7]

Recent years have seen a heightened emphasis on migration in the British public debate. Sensationalist headlines problematizing the issue abound. Frequent allusions to 'floods', 'invasion' and 'government loss of control'[8] relay the message that migration is a threat against which Britain's borders must be protected, and one receives the strong

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Independent_front_page.jpg, accessed March 10, 2015.

[3] https://inforrm.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/front-daily-express.jpg, accessed March 10, 2015.

[4] http://pbs.twimg.com/media/B1EQb7XIcAAQ7tj.png, accessed March 10, 2015.

[5] http://pbs.twimg.com/media/B1ESk6nIQAA05zC.jpg, accessed March 10, 2015.

[6] http://pbs.twimg.com/media/B0LfEigIUAAHFNu.jpg, accessed March 10, 2015.

[7] "Fury as Home Office loses 174,000 illegal immigrants," *Daily Star*, http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/415888/Theresa-May-Anger-Home-Office-loses-174-000-illegal-immigrants, accessed March 10, 2015.

[8] Terry Threadgold, *The Media and Migration in the United Kingdom, 1999 to 2009* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2009), 1.

impression that the UK is facing a 'crisis' that it is powerless to prevent. This sentiment is further reflected in legislation brought in over the past few decades heavily restricting the number and type of migrants allowed entry into the UK. Research evidences widespread hostility towards migration amongst the general public, yet this is largely rooted in misperception regarding its scale and form.

This paper seeks to examine the implications that the cross holds for the church seeking to relate to the 'other' in this environment. The initial section (II) sets the British church in its wider context, focusing particularly on public perception towards migration. In light of the key themes emerging in this section, I go on to explore Miroslav Volf's *Exclusion and Embrace* (III). This is then complemented with insights from Judith Butler's *Frames of War*. Finally, Volf and Butler's thought is brought to bear on the specific issues raised through the paper as I close with a discussion of practical implications for the church in the UK (IV).

The main argument I put forward is that on account of the cross, the will to embrace the other is central to the church's mission and a non-negotiable for Christ's disciples. It is only when embrace becomes our way of life that we can be at peace, both with others, but also within ourselves. Yet, the 'frames' through which we encounter others can restrict the existence of this will. Thus, the church must focus on challenging the dominant and often dehumanising frames that media use in their portrayal of those migrating to the UK, that prevent us from recognising them in their humanity.

II. MIGRATION IN THE UK

1. Public perception

Since World War II, migration to the UK has taken various forms, often closely linked with the UK's foreign policy. During the war, for example, Britain recruited colonial workers to fill labour gaps, of which some worked in

industry and others were enlisted in the forces.[9] Given the UK's history of using migration to its advantage, current public perception on the issue is troubling. Susanna Snyder provides a sound summary, highlighting the predominance of negativity and fear:

> People tend to have strong feelings about immigration, often negative, and see migrants as a threat to national identity, culture, jobs, resources and security. Migrants are also bringing about significant changes in religious landscapes through the diverse beliefs and practices they carry with them, and some see this as a danger to the traditions and values they have grown up with. Many want immigration – in-migration to their country – to stop.[10]

Awareness of public perception is important, since it gives insight into the context surrounding the church and is also represented within it. Further, it is closely related to media content, and both play an important role in policy-making. As Duffy and Frere-Smith note, 'there is likely to be a reinforcing interaction between the public, politicians and the media, with cause and effect running in all directions.'[11] Therefore, if the church is to engage in public policy, it must understand public perception.

Duffy and Frere-Smith's comprehensive report on 'public attitudes to immigration' clearly evidences concern

[9] Zig Layton-Henry, "The New Commonwealth Migrants 1945-62," *History Today* Vol. 35, Issue 12 (December 1985), http://www.historytoday.com/zig-henry/new-commonwealth-migrants-1945-62 accessed March 10, 2015.

[10] Susanna Snyder, *Asylum-seeking, Migration and Church* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), Location 238, Kindle.

[11] Bobby Duffy and Tom Frere-Smith, "Perceptions and Reality: Public Attitudes to Immigration," *Ipsos MORI*, January 2014, 97. See also: Threadgold, *Media*, 1: 'a small but growing body of evidence shows that political and policy discourses concerning immigration actually fuel the media discourse, which in turn drives policy.'

amongst the general population in the UK.[12] For example, they cite research carried out by Ipsos MORI, who since the 1970s have been asking the public to identify the issues they perceive to be of most concern for Britain, showing that immigration features consistently.[13] Responses to other questions also illustrate the public's concern; for example, when asked whether there are too many immigrants 'the average level of agreement across the surveys asked in 2006-13 was around 69%.'[14] It is interesting to note that surveys carried out by 'Transatlantic Trends' showed lower levels of agreement – 55% in 2013 – perhaps because the question used the phrase 'people not born in the UK' instead of 'immigrants'.[15] A common reason frequently given for concern regarding immigration was overcrowding in the UK,[16] and another, that 'immigrants place a burden on public services and the benefit system.'[17]

In response to questions asking whether 'immigration is a problem for the country or locally,' a 2013 YouGov poll found that 68% agreed it was a problem.[18] A survey conducted by 'Transatlantic Trends' in 2013 asked instead 'whether immigration is a "problem" or "opportunity" for Britain,' and the result was that 64% felt it was a problem – a similarly high percentage.[19] Also noteworthy was the variation in response based on whether respondents were asked about the UK in general (roughly 70% thought immigration was a problem) or their locality (fewer than 20% thought it was a problem).[20] Further, Duffy and Frere-Smith found that '[t]hose most in favour of reducing immigration a lot are White Britons living in

[12] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 115.
[13] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 8.
[14] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 12.
[15] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 13.
[16] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 13.
[17] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 55.
[18] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 14.
[19] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 15.
[20] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 15.

"asylum dispersal areas,"'[21] and thus public opinion is seemingly affected by local circumstances. Research by D'Onofrio and Munk found that the concerns of those in dispersal areas relate to 'further strain on already overstretched services, a neglect of their needs over those of asylum seekers, and erosion of their cultural identity.'[22] Reduction is consequently an important issue, since an overwhelming majority of the population appears to favour a reduction in immigration levels, and consistently by 'a lot' rather than 'a little'.[23]

However, people also 'hugely overestimate' the extent of immigration:

> [T]he mean estimate of the proportion that the foreign-born population make up of the UK is 31% and the median 26%, compared with the official estimate of around 13% (which increases to 14% if the central estimate of illegal migrants resident in the UK is taken into account).[24]

Surprisingly, when respondents were told official figures and asked why they thought the figure was higher, the most common responses were that 'people come here illegally and so aren't counted' and were also related to their anecdotal observations.[25] 'Illegal immigration', then, is an important topic, since public perception regarding its prevalence and impact seem to be having a significant influence on people's feelings towards immigration.[26] In reality, so-called 'illegal immigrants' account for around 7% of all immigrants; however, a Transatlantic Trends Survey from 2011 found

[21] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 21.

[22] Lisa D'Onofrio and Karen Munk, "Understanding the Stranger," *ICAR*, International Policy Institute, King's College London, February 2004, 5.

[23] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 15.

[24] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 22.

[25] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 24.

[26] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 82.

that 'a third of the public (34%) think "most" immigrants are here illegally.'[27]

Perhaps most interesting are the results of a survey carried out by Ipsos MORI in 2011, in which respondents were asked 'what types of groups they had in mind when thinking of immigrants.' Students were the least-mentioned group (29%), which is surprising since they were the most common type in 2011, yet the group that were the least common in that period – those seeking refugee status – were the most mentioned (62%).[28] As Duffy and Frere-Smith note, one of the limitations of these surveys is that 'they attempt to sum up views under a single simple label of "immigration",' and moreover, it is probable that 'most people have at best a shaky and at worst a very wrong image of immigration in mind when answering them.'[29]

Finally, it is worth noting Lord Ashcroft's findings in 2013 from a poll of over 20,000 people through which he sought to explore public opinion on immigration. He discovered that

> six in ten thought immigration had produced more disadvantages than advantages for the country as a whole, with around a quarter thinking they were about even; only 17% thought the pros outweighed the cons. The biggest concerns were the idea of migrants claiming benefits or using public services without having contributed in return, and added pressure on schools and hospitals.[30]

He also found that those with strong opinions on certain issues were often ignorant of the relevant details. For example, many 'believed or assumed that the desire to claim benefits was, for a high proportion of migrants, the main

[27] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 82.
[28] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 76.
[29] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 76.
[30] Lord Ashcroft, "Small Island: Public Opinion and the Politics of Immigration," *Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC*, September 2013, 5.

reason for coming to Britain… There was a widespread impression that it was easier for immigrants to claim benefits than it was for others,'[31] yet those making these statements often openly acknowledged that they were not aware of the rules, figures or details regarding benefits. Further, they had no idea 'whether [migrants] paid more in taxes overall than they cost in benefits and public services.'[32] Nevertheless, an overwhelming majority – over 75% – believed that reducing immigration would be beneficial for the economy 'by reducing pressure on public services, cutting the benefits bill, and making it easier for British people to find jobs.'[33]

2. Why is public perception such?

Arguably, one of the major influencers of public perception is the media. Today, with the widespread accessibility of the Internet, online newspaper content, for example, is easier than ever to access. Through their research, Duffy and Frere-Smith observed that 'newspaper readership is much more likely to be significantly related to concern about immigration' than any other of the top five issues.[34] They also note that it 'seems highly likely that the media does have some sort of effect on public attitudes.'[35] The scope of this paper will not allow me to go into depth regarding precisely how the media influences public perception, yet I agree with Snyder that it is most likely 'through "attitude formation by repeated patterns of representation."'[36]

Terry Threadgold summarises the contribution that media make to public perception on immigration, arguing that they: firstly, 'cover only a very narrow range of migration stories, primarily focusing on asylum seekers, refugees, illegal immigrants, and migrant workers;' secondly,

[31] Ashcroft, "Small Island," 17.
[32] Ashcroft, "Small Island," 7.
[33] Ashcroft, "Small Island," 21.
[34] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 95.
[35] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 97.
[36] Snyder, *Asylum-seeking*, Location 2776.

use 'templates' to 'frame' migration stories that 'generally conflate all migration with asylum, make the migrant the victim and the object and show migration as a problem;' thirdly, 'focus on numbers and statistics (particularly on figures that imply a burden on scarce public resources), on political debates on immigration and on language that evokes the theme of "invasion";' and lastly, 'collocate'[37] stories related to immigration 'with reports of "foreign threats"… implying a connection between the two.'[38] To give an example, Threadgold shows how 'in the coverage of the July 7 transit bombings, asylum migration became collocated with terrorism in complex ways.'[39] In her conclusion, she states that the national media have put forward a 'very negative' impression of immigration 'through the regularity with which they reproduce the dominant asylum narrative and discourse about loss of control and dangerous invasion.'[40] Notable here also is the Migration Observatory's finding that from 2010-12 the word 'immigration' was most commonly – across all newspaper markets – collocated with the descriptor 'illegal'.[41]

3. Church practice and migration

In spite of the prevalence of hostility towards migration in the UK, it might be reasonable to expect Christians to be more welcoming, not least because Christ commanded his disciples to love their neighbours. Nevertheless, one cannot take it for granted that Christians will hold a positive stance

[37] Threadgold uses the term 'collocate' when 'words, phrases, or narratives will co-occur more often than by chance precisely because they are seen to belong to the same field or subject matter, share meanings, or belong together' [Threadgold, *Media and Migration*, 11.]

[38] Threadgold, *The Media and Migration*, 1.

[39] Threadgold, *The Media and Migration*, 12.

[40] Threadgold, *The Media and Migration*, 22.

[41] William Allen and Scott Blinder, "Migration in the News: Portrayals of Immigrants, Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees in National British Newspapers, 2010-2012," *Migration Observatory* report, COMPAS, University of Oxford, August 2013, 3.

towards migration. Those working to curb it include prominent Christians such as Lord Carey, those involved in the work of Migration Watch – 'an independent think tank that calls for greater limits on immigration' – such as Baroness Cox and Sir Andrew Green, and Christian members of the British National Party.[42]

However, many churches and Christians in the UK are actively working to be a force for good in this area, and the following account is not exhaustive, but rather seeks to provide examples of the type of work being carried out. Snyder writes with a particular focus on asylum seekers rooted in her own experience. She categorises the work of the church as 'settling' and 'unsettling' work; that is, 'activities aimed at "settling" those who have arrived… and efforts aimed at "unsettling" the established population's attitudes and government policies.'[43] Examples of settling activities include drop-ins and the provision of needs such as food, clothing and English lessons. Many Christians also 'accompany asylum seekers to court hearings and MP surgeries, visit people held in removal centres and offer day-to-day practical advice and emotional support.'[44] Some organisations and networks offer support to those engaged with asylum seekers. Controversially, some churches offer sanctuary to those at risk of being detained or deported. Also

[42] Snyder, *Asylum-seeking*, Location 1175-1186. For more information regarding the controversy surrounding MigrationWatch, see for example Anoosh Chakelian, "Peerage and prejudice: why a MigrationWatch representative in the Lords is Bad News," *New Statesman*, October 21, 2014, http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/10/peerage-and-prejudice-why-migrationwatch-representative-lords-bad-news, accessed February 26, 2015.

[43] Susanna Snyder, "Un/settling Angels: Faith-Based Organizations and Asylum-Seeking in the UK," *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 24, no.3 (2011): 565.

[44] Susanna Snyder, "The Dangers of 'Doing Our Duty': Reflections on Churches Engaging with People Seeking Asylum in the UK," *Theology* vol. 110, no. 857 (September 2007): 352.

notable is the City of Sanctuary movement,[45] which seeks to build a culture that welcomes those seeking sanctuary that will enable 'all residents to contribute positively and fully to the life of the local communities.'[46]

Examples of unsettling activities include work directed towards challenging the attitudes and policies of society in general. Snyder notes the work of EmbraceNI, for example, whose strategy has been one of 'telling the stories of new arrivals and encouraging more churches to support migrants.' She highlights the work of church leaders such as the Archbishop of York's public condemnation in 2008 of comments made by the immigration minister 'suggesting that asylum seekers, lawyers and supporters were "playing the system".'[47] Another example is the support of church leaders in 2005 for 'Church Action on Poverty's 'Living Ghosts' campaign against policy-induced destitution among asylum seekers.'[48]

Through her research, Snyder found that churches have been a source of genuine friendship for asylum seekers and refugees.[49] Nevertheless, she notes several dangers inherent in humanitarian work of this nature, such as 'paternalism', which can arise when Christians' engagement arises from a sense of duty.[50] Churches must therefore be aware of their motivations for engagement.[51]

4. Theologies of migration

The church's practical engagement is underpinned by theological reflection, which has primarily focused on hospitality, and the biblical call to love the 'stranger' as

[45] www.cityofsanctuary.org, accessed January 15, 2015.

[46] Inderjit Bhogal, "Hospitality and Sanctuary for all," *Leeds Church Institute*, January 2015, 27.

[47] Snyder, *Un/settling*, 572-73.

[48] Snyder, *Duty*, 352.

[49] Snyder, *Asylum-seeking*, Location 1823.

[50] Snyder, *Un/settling*, 575.

[51] Snyder, *Asylum-seeking*, Location 1866; 1891. See also Snyder, *Un/settling*, 575.

oneself, along with the notion that we encounter God as we do so.[52] Snyder notes the equality inherent in the belief that all have been created in the image of God.[53] Elsewhere, she highlights the 'sense of duty' that Christians today feel towards asylum seekers. She calls instead for a 'mutual hospitality' and suggests that the church should develop 'complex compassion,' through seeking to understand and address the fears at the root of the hostility towards immigration, and also extending hospitality towards those whose hostility may be rooted in material poverty.[54]

Another voice in this debate is Luke Bretherton, who privileges concern for refugees over other immigrants due to their particular vulnerability as stateless and thus without legal rights.[55] Nevertheless, Bretherton believes that responsibility for refugees is global, and therefore argues that there is a place for restricting entry into a state if its internal stability is at risk.[56] As such, a tension in liberal democratic societies is that of 'how to reconcile a duty of care to refugees with the ongoing duty of care to existing members.'[57] This is exacerbated by liberal democracies' glorification of 'individual and collective self-fulfilment,' which are incompatible with 'just' and 'generous' attitudes towards others.[58] Alternatively, Bretherton argues, from a Christian cosmopolitan perspective it is possible for society to thrive whilst also showing hospitality towards the other

[52] Biblical passages referenced include: Leviticus 19:34; Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 10:25-37 and 24:13-35; Hebrew 13:2. See also: Bhogal, *Sanctuary*, 7.

[53] Snyder, *Un/settling*, 574.

[54] Snyder, *Duty*, 351-7.

[55] Luke Bretherton, "The Duty of Care to Refugees, Christian Cosmopolitanism, and the Hallowing of Bare Life," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19.1 (2006): 53-4.

[56] Bretherton, "The Duty of Care," 49-50. It is important to note that whilst I understand Bretherton's position, the danger inherent in such a view is the element of subjectivity that it holds, which might enable justification of exclusionary politics.

[57] Bretherton, "The Duty of Care," 61.

[58] Bretherton, "The Duty of Care," 49.

since its goal is not self-fulfilment, but rather 'the communion of all humans together with God.'[59]

In view of the dehumanisation of refugees within contemporary society,[60] Bretherton believes the church should offer resistance through its 'hallowing of bare life.'[61] He writes: 'we encounter refugees as those whose human face in locked away in the iron mask of stereotype and stigma and who are without political rights. They are, to use Georgio Agamben's phrase, reduced to "bare life".'[62] Hallowing involves 'recognising' refugees in their uniqueness and valuing them as persons with 'their own complex agency and motivations.'[63] Lastly, both host and guest must be mutually transformed.[64]

Thus, much of the church's practical work intentionally focuses on asylum seekers and refugees due to their particular vulnerability and lack of protection of their human rights. I use a broader categorisation in this paper since there is often a lack of distinction between the different categories of immigration, with asylum seeker or refugee frequently seen as synonymous with 'immigrant'. The primary theological motivations behind the church's involvement have been those related to hospitality – seen as a duty by some and a mutual endeavour by others – with the addition that systemic engagement is also necessary, as is recognition of the personhood of the other.

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[59] Bretherton, "The Duty of Care," 46.

[60] Bretherton, "The Duty of Care," 50. 'Dehumanisation' can be defined as the process whereby the other is viewed as 'less than human and thus not deserving of moral consideration.' [Michelle Maiese, "Dehumanization," *Beyond Intractability,* July 2003, http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/dehumanization, accessed March 13, 2015.]

[61] Bretherton, "The Duty of Care," 55.

[62] Bretherton, "The Duty of Care," 52.

[63] Bretherton, "The Duty of Care," 56.

[64] Bretherton, "The Duty of Care," 59.

III. THE WILL TO EMBRACE

In light of the prevailing hostility towards so-called 'immigrants' in the UK, addressing the question of how the church should relate to the other in this context should arguably involve a focus on 'reconciliation' alongside 'hospitality' and 'personhood', discussed above. That is, how can those of differing cultural backgrounds and perspectives, whose encounters are surrounded by fear and misperception, live peaceably alongside one another? In *Exclusion and Embrace*, Miroslav Volf endeavours to analyse the implications of 'divine self-donation' for human relationships in situations of conflict. His focus is on the nature of 'self' required for people to live peaceably alongside each other, bearing in mind their 'situatedness'. He approaches this from the vantage point of the cross.[65]

Although Volf has been influenced by liberation theology, he believes that viewing situations of conflict through its frame is problematic, since often all involved see themselves as victims, '[s]o the main categories of liberation theology, oppression and liberation, serve to justify the struggle rather than lead to peace.'[66] Thus instead of liberation, Volf believes that 'embrace' must be central to the Christian faith.[67] Whilst 'embrace' might not be the most suitable word within all cultural contexts, Volf uses the metaphor, modelled on God's trinitarian 'self-giving and other-receiving love,'[68] to signify a way of living peaceably in conflictual situations. He believes that: '[p]eople with conflicting interests, clashing perspectives, and differing cultures *can* avoid sliding into the cycle of escalating violence

[65] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 21-5. Emphasis as original unless otherwise stated.

[66] Kevin D. Miller, "The clumsy embrace," *Christianity Today* 42, 12 (Oct 1998): 66.

[67] Miller, "The clumsy embrace," 66.

[68] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 127.

and instead maintain bonds, even make their life together flourish.'[69]

1. Exclusion

Volf's concern in *Exclusion and Embrace*, as noted above, is with human relationships surrounded by hostility. Before exploring his theology of embrace and the potential it holds for the church in today's fractious times, it is important to first briefly outline how he understands 'exclusion', and connected to this, 'differentiation'.

Identity emerged as one of the main issues of concern among the general public in relation to migration, and it is important for Volf as well. He argues that 'differentiation' – that is, the 'complex process of "taking in" *and* "keeping out."'[70] – plays a crucial role in the formation of the self's identity. Put differently, our identity is formed in relation to others, where we become aware of both our similarities, and the ways in which we are distinct. The process of differentiation leads to the emergence of boundaries between self and other, yet these boundaries should not be solid:

> The boundaries that mark our identities are both barriers and bridges… Identity is a result of the distinction from the other *and* the internalization of the relationship to the other; it arises out of the complex history of "differentiation" in which both the self and the other take part by negotiating their identities in interaction with one another.[71]

Therefore, Volf envisages the ideal relationship between self and other as being one of interdependence, where both are separated by 'porous and shifting' boundaries and continuously adjusting their identities through dynamic

[69] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 99-100.
[70] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 66.
[71] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 66.

relationship.[72] Exclusion occurs when this relationship, formed through differentiation, is reconstructed in such a way that the self, in a quest to establish its own identity, is violent towards the other through 'elimination', 'assimilation', 'domination' or 'abandonment'.[73] In other words, exclusion occurs when the boundaries between self and other either cease to exist, or become impenetrable.

Indifference towards the other, according to Volf, falls under the categories of both 'abandonment' and 'elimination' since through it the self excludes the other by 'keeping them out.' In some cases, it also enables exclusion to take place at a systemic level.[74] Volf writes: '[f]or exclusion to happen, it suffices for the self simply to strive to guard the integrity of its territory, while granting others – especially the distant others – the full right to do whatever they please with the rest of the universe.'[75]

Of particular relevance for our present discussion is Volf's thought concerning 'exclusionary language and cognition.'[76] These play an important role in preparing the way for 'exclusionary practices': '[b]efore excluding others from our social world we drive them out, as it were, from our symbolic world.'[77] Volf names this 'symbolic exclusion' and speaks of the way in which we dehumanise the other so that we can 'discriminate', 'dominate', 'drive out' or 'destroy' them. He refuses to allow this to be put down to ignorance, arguing that it relies on a conscious distortion of the other. We make a conscious decision not to 'know' reality, but rather what we believe it would be in our best interests to know.[78]

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[72] Miroslav Volf, "'The Trinity is Our Social Program': The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement," *Modern Theology* 14:3 (July 1998): 410.

[73] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 67, 75.

[74] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 77.

[75] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 91.

[76] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 75.

[77] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 75.

[78] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 76.

2. Embrace

What is evident from this exploration of exclusion is that the line between differentiation and exclusion is fragile. In reality, the relationship between self and other that Volf describes is an ideal rather than the norm. Thus, exclusion appears to be inevitable, and in putting forward Volf's theology of embrace, the key question is how the self can move from a position of exclusion to one of embrace.

Volf states that the presupposition underlying his theology of embrace is that in the midst of enmity, 'God's reception of hostile humanity into divine communion is a model for how human beings should relate to the other.'[79] The basic sentiment that the metaphor of embrace aims to capture, is '*the will to give ourselves to others and "welcome" them, to readjust our identities to make space for them*.'[80] This will, according to Volf,

> *is prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity*. The *will to embrace* precedes any 'truth' about others and any construction of their 'justice'. This will is absolutely indiscriminate and strictly immutable; it transcends the moral mapping of the social world into 'good' and 'evil'.[81]

The assumption underlying Volf's thinking on embrace is that we live with the hope of final reconciliation, yet with the recognition that this is solely within God's control and not something that we ourselves can bring about. A 'responsible' theology must therefore enable 'nonfinal' reconciliation; that is, it should address the question of how we can live peaceably with one another here and now.[82]

Volf mentions that the will to embrace 'precedes any "truth" about others and any construction of their "justice",'

[79] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 100.
[80] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 29.
[81] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 29.
[82] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 109-10.

and this touches on another issue of concern to the general public in relation to migration. For Volf, justice must ultimately be 'one and universal, valid for all times and all places,' otherwise it cannot be justice.[83] However, selves are situated – they are 'inescapably particular'[84] – and therefore God's universal justice differs from each self's own, particular conception of his justice, which will ultimately be unjust.[85] As Volf explains, any judgment made by the self will be '"incomplete," "premature," "impure," and therefore "unfair".'[86] Yet justice must be particular, for '*the justice which equalizes and abstracts is an unjust justice*.'[87]

How then are we to conceive of justice in the absence of the rule of God's justice? Volf's response is a concept – 'double vision' – whose essence is that

> we enlarge our thinking by letting the voices and perspectives of others, especially those with whom we may be in conflict, resonate within ourselves, by allowing them to help us see them, as well as ourselves, from *their* perspective, and if needed, readjust our perspectives as we take into account their perspectives. Nothing can guarantee in advance that the perspectives will ultimately merge and agreement be reached. We may find that we must reject the perspective of the other. Yet we should seek to see things from their perspective in the hope that competing justices may become converging justices and eventually issue in agreement.[88]

[83] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 197.
[84] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 201.
[85] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 199.
[86] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 203.
[87] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 222.
[88] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 213.

Thus, agreement on justice is a process that does not guarantee that consensus will be reached. For Volf, then, 'the will to embrace' is paramount.[89]

Notably, Volf acknowledges that there has been a shift in his thinking on justice since *Exclusion and Embrace*. In a recent interview he explains that the conceptual distinction between justice as 'that which is owed strictly to someone' and justice as 'right relationship' 'was operating in a subterranean way' in his book,[90] and therefore the latter form of justice is what is evidenced, with the foremost almost being 'subsumed into love.'[91] As Charry writes, it 'is not that Volf does not take evil seriously. He insists that justice be served and that repentance precede reconciliation.'[92] Yet, it is evident that Volf sets this in the context of embrace, for he believes that if justice is 'true', it should always lead to embrace.[93]

I agree with Volf that although there is such a concept as universal justice, we cannot assume that we have a hold on this justice since our perspective is particular, and that in the absence of 'final reconciliation' we must enlarge our thinking and work towards embrace by making space for the perspective of the other within ourselves so that we can see 'our judgments about justice and our struggle against injustice' through their eyes.[94] Nevertheless, to what extent is it possible to see through another's eyes? Further, where does 'double vision' leave us as far as the practical

[89] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 215.

[90] Bethan S. Willis, "Enlarging Justice: Miroslav Volf's theology of embrace and the problem of justice in post-conflict Bosnia and Croatia" (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2013), 253.

[91] Willis, *Enlarging*, 252-253. See also Constantineanu's critique on this account: *Reconciliation*, 53.

[92] Ellen T. Charry, "Review of *Exclusion and Embrace*, Miroslav Volf," *Theology Today* 56, no. 2 (1999): 248. C.f. Volf, *Exclusion*, 29: '*the embrace itself* – full reconciliation – cannot take place until the truth has been said and justice done… even if the *will* to embrace is indiscriminate, the *embrace* itself is conditional.'

[93] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 225.

[94] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 218.

outworking of justice is concerned? Here, Bethan Willis' fusion of Volf and Wolterstorff's thinking on justice provides a helpful starting point. Indeed, Volf himself acknowledges the influence that Wolterstorff has had on his changing perception of justice.[95] Wolterstorff differentiates between 'primary justice' and 'secondary justice', defining primary justice as 'a just state of affairs existing in the absence of injustice.'[96] We can affect this form of justice by 'treating the other with due respect for their worth.'[97] Secondary justice, on the other hand, is a response to injustice.[98]

Willis emphasises three features of justice that can inform our practice. The first concerns the 'mutuality' of justice, which emphasises its communality; justice 'is not primarily something enacted upon another but a state of affairs existing between two (or more) persons.' The second concerns 'provisionality' and the awareness that our practice of justice 'can only ever be an incomplete, partial reflection of triune justice and the justice of God's new creation… in which human beings will eventually participate.' Lastly, justice is a 'process', and therefore we should view our own attempts at carrying out justice 'less as "achievement" and more as efforts "in pursuit of" God's justice.'[99] Seeing justice in this way helps us to avoid the danger of ignoring 'secondary justice', whilst at the same time acknowledging our partiality. Thus, nonexclusionary judgments[100] can arguably only be made in relationship with the other, as part

[95] Willis, *Enlarging*, 253.

[96] Bethan Willis, "Justice after Conflict," *The Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics, Ethics in Brief* 20, no. 1 (Autumn 2014): 2. Cf. Volf, *Exclusion*, 216: 'There can be no justice without the will to embrace… there can be no genuine and lasting embrace without justice.'

[97] Willis, "Justice after Conflict," 2.

[98] Willis, "Justice after Conflict," 2.

[99] Willis, "Justice after Conflict," 3.

[100] Volf argues that whilst judgment has the potential to be exclusionary, it is also possible to make 'nonexclusionary' judgments – the claim that exclusion is 'evil' and differentiation 'good' would be one such example [Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 68.]

of this process of justice and with the awareness that they are provisional.

3. The drama of embrace

Volf's theology of embrace is an exploration of nonfinal reconciliation in conflictual situations. In the 'drama of embrace,' the self first opens its arms, signalling that it has made space for the other within itself and is ready to enter that of the other. Yet the self must wait for the other, since contrary to exclusion an embrace is neither forceful nor invasive. The power of waiting is that of the open arms. During the moment of embrace, along with gentle yet steady boundaries, mutuality of action is essential for the embrace to remain genuine. It is important at this stage to retain 'the-ability-not-to-understand' or alterity of the other. Put differently, the self must avoid understanding the other from its own perspective; understanding should instead be obtained through questions. The final stage is the release, which accentuates and safeguards the distinctness and identity of both, 'enriched' through their encounter. This enables their dynamic relationship to continue, which according to Volf can never be finally resolved: without the final reconciliation that only God can effect, we must aim for nonfinal reconciliation.[101] Important throughout this process is the self and other's delicate relationship that has the potential to slip into exclusion. A 'successful' embrace has four components: flexible identities; '*nonsymmetricity*' – that is, the self takes a step towards the other without waiting for, or expecting reciprocity; an unknown outcome other than the assurance that 'a genuine embrace cannot leave both or either completely unchanged;'[102] and finally, 'risk', since so much remains undeterminable when the self opens its arms

[101] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 109.
[102] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 147.

towards the other. This gesture may not result in reciprocity or embrace and may even be abused.[103]

4. Divine embrace

In *Exclusion and Embrace* Volf raises the question as to what the cross – as the ultimate expression of God's self-giving and other-receiving love – has to teach us about how the Christian self should relate to the other. As Christ's disciples, we should seek to emulate the example he set for us through his life, and this applies no less to his crucifixion than to the rest of his ministry; as Volf explains, it is this event that enables us to understand his life and ministry.[104] Christ's self-donation on the cross is an expression of the mutual self-donation characteristic of the Trinity,[105] and thus the self-giving love of Christ is rooted in the self-giving love of the triune God. The social implications that this holds for us are that 'as God does not abandon the godless to their evil but gives the divine self for them in order to receive them into divine communion through atonement, so also should we – whoever our enemies and whoever we may be.'[106]

The importance of this 'communion' with the other cannot be emphasised enough, and to strengthen his argument Volf points us towards baptism and the Eucharist – two rituals of central importance in the church's life – which respectively signify our identification with Christ's crucifixion and our remembrance of Christ's giving of himself for us and making space for us within himself, in order that we, fashioned in his likeness, may go and do likewise.[107] Yet important to note here is that

> Jesus demanded not so much that we imitate the divine dance of love's freedom and trust, but the divine labor of love's suffering and risk. The love that dances is the internal of the Trinity; the love

[103] This paragraph is a summary of Volf, *Exclusion*, 141-7.
[104] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 22, 24, 30.
[105] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 23.
[106] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 23.
[107] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 24-5, 129.

> that suffers is that same love turned toward a world suffused with enmity. The first is the perfect love of the world to come; the second is that same love engaged in the transformation of the deeply flawed world that is.[108]

Since we are not 'innocent' as Christ was, however, for us, 'following in the footsteps of the Crucified means not only creating space in ourselves for others, but in creating space for them making also space for their perspective on us and on them.'[109] This is the 'inner logic of the theology of the cross,' that Volf sees pointing towards the practice of double vision.[110]

5. Frames of War

One of the main critiques that can be levelled against Volf's theology concerns its practical outworking, which has not been developed.[111] It is here that Judith Butler's thought can be of assistance. While there are many points at which Butler and Volf would disagree – not least because of the theological perspective underpinning Volf's thought – the object of this section is not to discuss their differences, but rather to introduce aspects of Butler's thought that could bring an additional dimension to Volf's work.

In *Frames of War* Butler is speaking primarily in the context of war, asking the question as to 'why and how it becomes easier, or more difficult, to wage.'[112] Yet her thought holds much relevance for our discussion on immigration, which she sees being framed as a 'war at home.'[113] Her focus

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[108] Volf, *Trinity*, 413.

[109] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 215.

[110] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 214.

[111] See for example Corneliu Constantineanu, "Exclusion and Embrace: Reconciliation in the Works of Miroslav Volf," *KAIROS – Evangelical Journal of Theology* VII, no. 1 (2013): 52; Miller, *Embrace*, 69.

[112] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), 2.

[113] Butler, *Frames of War*, 26.

is on how 'a selective and differential framing of violence' regulates 'affective and ethical dispositions.'[114] Recognition – a concept originating in Hegel's thought – is a central theme for Butler, particularly in relation to how 'norms of recognition' that enable some lives, but not others, to be recognised as lives, operate.[115] Before I delve further into how Butler's thought can complement Volf's theology of embrace, it will be important to first examine precisely what she means by 'frames'.

For Butler, 'there is no life and no death without a relation to some frame.'[116] Frames 'exercise a delimiting function,'[117] determining the content of 'perceptible reality'.[118] Butler uses the concept in the same sense as one would use the phrase 'to be framed,' and therefore it carries with it the connotation that the frame exercises a certain degree of influence over the way in which its content is perceived.[119] Thus there is a power dynamic in operation as well, the frames through which individuals are perceived, for example, pre-judging them.[120]

Nevertheless, the concept also contains within it the notion that the form of the frame itself and the positioning of its boundaries can be challenged, since there is always something that lies outside of the frame, which 'made the very sense of the inside possible, recognizable.'[121] Further, a frame is reliant on its 'reproducibility' for survival, and as it is reproduced, it is divorced from its context.[122] This separation means that the frame is continually delimiting new contexts and consequently, its content and message no longer correspond, causing the frame to '[break] apart every

[114] Butler, *Frames of War*, 1.
[115] Butler, *Frames of War*, 6, 7.
[116] Butler, *Frames of War*, 7.
[117] Butler, *Frames of War*, 74.
[118] Butler, *Frames of War*, 64.
[119] Butler, *Frames of War*, 8.
[120] Butler, *Frames of War*, 11.
[121] Butler, *Frames of War*, 9.
[122] Butler, *Frames of War*, 10.

time it seeks to give definitive organization to its content.'[123] This enables doubt to be cast over its 'taken-for-granted reality' with the result that 'other possibilities for apprehension emerge.'[124] It is worth noting that 'apprehension', for Butler, is not as strong a term as 'recognition' since it can indicate that a life has been noticed as living without necessarily being 'recognized' as a life.[125]

Butler's thought on 'frames' is closely related to her view of ontology. She writes: '[t]he "frames" that work to differentiate the lives we can apprehend from those we cannot… generate specific ontologies of the subject.'[126] Thus Butler holds that ontology must be seen as 'social' since it cannot be free from social and political dimensions:

> The "being" of the body… is one that is always given over to others, to norms, to social and political organizations that have developed historically in order to maximize precariousness for some and minimize precariousness for others. It is not possible first to define the ontology of the body and then to refer to the social significations the body assumes. Rather, to be a body is to be exposed to social crafting and form, and that is what makes the ontology of the body a social ontology.[127]

In relation to Butler's belief that ontology is necessarily social, while Butler and Volf conceive of the subject in differing ways,[128] Volf can be critiqued – as Constantineanu

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[123] Butler, *Frames of War*, 10.
[124] Butler, *Frames of War*, 12.
[125] Butler, *Frames of War*, 7-8.
[126] Butler, *Frames of War*, 3.
[127] Butler, *Frames of War*, 2-3.
[128] For Butler, a person 'is constructed by the relations in which s/he finds him/herself' [Joseph Sverker, "Personhood and identity as understood in the thoughts of Judith Butler and Steven Pinker," PhD diss., Uppsala Universitet, forthcoming, 32]. This 'relationality' that forms the person is also 'an ongoing normative dimension of [its] social and political [life]' [Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning*

does – on the basis that although acknowledging that selves are 'situated', he does not account for the way in which 'social arrangements are internalized in social agents.'[129] Volf's approach – that is, his stripping back of the self in order to examine what is required of it if peace in the midst of conflict is to be achieved – is of immense value. Yet, relationships rarely achieve such a state since they do not exist in a vacuum, and it is for this reason that I believe Butler's concept of frames has something to bring to Volf's theology. Volf holds that the will to embrace 'is prior to any judgment about others,' yet according to Butler this is not possible. For Butler, the frames through which we apprehend others are 'politically saturated… operations of power,' whose aim is to 'delimit the sphere of appearance.'[130] Thus, they cause the other to be pre-judged.

That the will to embrace '*is prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity*,'[131] however, is a crucial point. Nevertheless, Butler brings the discussion further by highlighting the frames that serve to prevent us from doing so. For Butler, the true test as to whether or not we have recognised the other as human is whether or not they are 'grievable'.[132] To fail to recognise the other as human is an exclusionary judgment, yet it is one that we make continually, whether we are aware of it or not, since our ways of 'apprehending' others are governed by norms and frames. For example, what causes one to feel indifference towards the recent news that 300 hundred migrants from Libya died attempting to reach Europe?[133]

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*and Violence (*London: Verso, 2004), 27]: in other words, the "I" is 'constituted' by 'external norms' [Sverker, *Personhood*, 33] and thus persons are interdependent.

[129] Constantineanu, *Reconciliation*, 52.

[130] Butler, *Frames of War*, 1.

[131] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 29.

[132] Butler, *Frames of War*, 15.

[133] Nicole Winfield, "Hundreds of Migrant Deaths Reported During Open-Sea Crossing From Libya to Europe," *The World Post*, February 11, 2015.

What led one to mourn the loss of Gazans killed during the 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict yet feel indifference towards those Israeli soldiers killed, or vice versa? Of course, the contrast in our 'affective dispositions' may not be quite as stark as this; as Butler notes, 'there are deaths that are partially eclipsed and partially marked.'[134] Yet Butler's point is an insightful one: she speaks of 'the regulation of affect,' highlighting that 'our moral responses – responses that first take form as affect – are tacitly regulated by certain kinds of interpretive frameworks.'[135] Interesting to note here is that it is often when we are in cross-cultural contexts that we become aware of how culture-specific our moral responses are; perhaps this is an extreme example of what Butler is referring to when she speaks of the frame's reproduction in a different context leading to its undoing.

IV. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Migration to the UK is historically connected to the country's foreign policy; for example, it was actively pursued during and after World War II to compensate for labour shortages. In contemporary society, however, there is general concern regarding immigration and widespread desire for its reduction. Main concerns relate to the sense that 'immigrants' are benefiting from the UK's resources without contributing in taxes and are therefore a burden on the economy. It is also due to fears over cultural change and the number of 'illegal' immigrants in the country. Yet, there is a mismatch between public perception and reality as far as the scale and nature of immigration, and its cost, are concerned. This is due in large part to way the media frames immigration: rarely distinguishing between its different forms, emphasising it as a 'problem', using language that

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http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/11/migrant-deaths_n_6659340.html accessed February 21, 2015.

[134] Butler, *Frames of War*, 75.

[135] Butler, *Frames of War*, 41.

generates negative impressions and connecting stories on immigration with those related to 'foreign threats'.

The church has primarily focused on working to support asylum seekers and refugees due to their particular vulnerability and lack of state protection. The theologies underpinning this engagement have emphasised hospitality and personhood. Volf's theology of embrace adds to this by highlighting that the relationship between self and other can and should be characterised by reconciliation. This is modelled on the example of self-giving and other-receiving love that Christ set for his disciples on the cross. Since, unlike Christ, the church is not perfect, reconciliation involves a mutual, but provisional process of perspective sharing, through which the 'porous and shifting' boundaries between self and other enable their identities to be shaped through interaction with one another. Yet, in an imperfect world in which the self is constantly confronted with evil, it is ultimately reliant upon the power of the Spirit to enable it to move from a position of exclusion to one of embrace. What is required of the self is to actively cultivate the will to embrace the other.

Several factors hinder the existence of such a desire within the self, including fear of the way embrace will affect one's identity and unwillingness to let go of the desire for justice as the self envisions it. Butler's thought contributes to Volf's by emphasising how the humanity of the other can be distorted by the frames through which they are perceived, and this also obstructs the will to embrace. Yet, on account of the cross, there is no alternative for Christ's disciples. Therefore, what practical implications does the cross hold for the church seeking to relate to the other in this context?

1. Identity

It is important to acknowledge that people's concerns about identity are justified. As we have seen, a genuine embrace will affect the self's identity in an undeterminable way and there is therefore an element of risk involved in embrace. In a cross-cultural context such as that of immigration, concern

can be even greater due to the magnitude of what is unknown within the other. In the UK, this concern is exacerbated by misperception. Yet, as Volf shows, the other – towards whom we are reluctant to open our arms – is already impacting our identity, whether we are aware of it or not. There is no genuinely Christian alternative other than to imitate Christ's self-giving and other-receiving love in our stance towards others indiscriminately. As a church, we must therefore have the will to embrace the other when they are embodied as both the person seeking sanctuary in the UK and the member of the established population that is afraid of their presence. Although embrace itself is conditional since it cannot be forced and requires mutuality of action, the will to embrace cannot be conditional.

2. Justice

Concerns about justice are also valid. The UK's historical and current foreign policy gives those seeking asylum ample reason to appeal to justice.[136] In relation to the established population, concerns that emerged in section 2 regarding justice were related to public perception of competition with 'immigrants' over benefits, school places, jobs and wages. This perception may not be founded on accurate information, yet questions such as whether the UK should provide for 'its own' before others – whether arising from the policy arena, public perception or the media – do form part of the political backdrop to questions of justice.

According to Volf, our response should be to seek to view situations from the perspective of the other. It is in this

[136] For example, Snyder highlights the way in which our 'economic needs' can have ramifications for asylum seekers: they are prohibited from working in the UK and therefore end up working illegally in low-level jobs for extremely low wages, yet, their work is in demand, which provides an incentive to maintain policies that prevent them from working legally: '[t]his in turn keeps them in poverty and prevents them from contributing to the official economy, which then ironically becomes one of the sticks used to beat them' [Snyder, *Duty*, 358.]

way that we can work towards reaching agreement on justice. Whilst we cannot fully view a situation from the perspective of the other, we can, as Volf suggests, allow their voices to 'resonate within ourselves.'[137] This mutual sharing of perspectives is essential if we are to be in right relationship with the other; that is, pursuing God's justice together. As Volf writes: '[f]or us, sinful and limited human beings, following in the footsteps of the Crucified means not only creating space in ourselves for others, but in creating space for them making also space for their perspective on us and on them.'[138]

3. Recognising humanity

Why do we fail to recognise the humanity of the other? Here, we can refer back to Threadgold's comments about how the media contributes to public perception through: the limited range of stories they focus on; their use of a 'template' to frame stories in which migration is synonymous with asylum and is depicted as a problem, and migrants are victims and objects; placing emphasis on statistics that portray migration as a 'burden' on the British economy and on 'language that evokes the theme of "invasion";' and finally, 'collocating' stories with those of 'foreign threats'. These frames are replicated in public discourse and therefore we too are affected by the rhetoric that surrounds us. This of course ties in with Butler's thinking on frames and the ways they can conceal humanity.

Yet Christ's giving of himself on the cross and the open arms of Volf's drama of embrace imply that the 'will to embrace' has an active element to it. Therefore, we must actively seek to uncover the frames through which others are presented to us so that we see them as human. Instead of seeing the *Daily Mail* reader who is anti-immigration, for example, we should choose to see the father, the brother, the person behind the frame. Instead of seeing the 'immigrant',

[137] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 213.
[138] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 215.

we should choose to see the mother who has fled persecution, the wife, the doctor: we should listen to their voices. A few years ago, *The Guardian* newspaper initiated a campaign calling for immigrants to share their perspectives, acknowledging that '[t]he voices of immigrants themselves… are very rarely heard' and therefore they want to 'find out what it's like for immigrants living in the UK.'[139] Yet, perhaps this is not enough. In Threadgold's view, "positive" stories may be told, yet without challenging the 'media's dominant frame,' it is in fact 'impossible to predict what a "positive" asylum story might be given entrenched public opinions… the migrant remains the victim and the object in both "negative" and "positive" coverage and the focus on migration as a problem is not shifted in any way.'[140] She therefore implies that what is required is a change in media practice.

Butler's response to the issue of framing is that what must be addressed is the question of how 'the very terms of recognizability' can be altered in order to include more people within the frame – that is, how to ensure that the frame produces 'more radically democratic results.'[141] Butler notes that the creation of new frames 'as part of the general project of alternative media' is important, yet we cannot simply introduce new frames since inherent in frames is their undoing.[142] Instead, what is needed is to '[work] with received renditions of reality to show how they can and do break with themselves.'[143] In light of this, then, it is essential that we take an active role in challenging the 'media's dominant frame' and shedding light on the ways in which it

[139] "UK immigrant voices: share your perspectives," *The Guardian*, February 9, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/feb/09/uk-immigrant-voices-share-your-perspectives, accessed February 9, 2015.

[140] Threadgold, *Media*, 24.

[141] Butler, *Frames of War*, 6.

[142] Butler, *Frames of War*, 12.

[143] Butler, *Frames of War*, 12.

'breaks with itself' in the different contexts in which it is put forward.

4. Practical implications for the church

Turning to the practical implications for the church in the UK, our ultimate objective must be nothing short of embrace. It is only through dynamic relationship with others, characterised by mutuality of perspective sharing, that we can hope to move towards justice. Yet, as Chris Brown writes in his summary of Volf's thought: '[t]he only viable route to the universal is via the particular.'[144] According to urban planning theorist Sandercock, 'flourishing multicultural communities can only be built by working through people's fears and anxieties.'[145] Thus, the church must address the fears and anxieties underlying the hostility evidenced among the general population and particularly among those most impacted by change in their communities, such as those within dispersal areas or areas characterised by multiculturalism.[146] The church cannot afford to trivialise these concerns, or push an agenda of inclusion at the expense of engaging with them, since their roots are deep.

Snyder's call for 'complex compassion', noted above, relates to this also.[147] She emphasises the uncertainty of the current climate in the UK and notes that in such a climate, the tendency to 'jealously' and 'aggressively' safeguard one's domain from those that 'symbolize all that threatens [it]' is only natural.[148] Her point is that: '[a]t present, churches rarely succeed in engaging with the urban underclass or

[144] Chris Brown, "Review of *Exclusion and Embrace*, Miroslav Volf," *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 29 (December 2000): 921.

[145] Snyder, *Duty*, 358.

[146] There is often a lack of distinction between minority groups and 'immigrants' and therefore, some minority groups have reported facing antagonism as they are perceived to be 'immigrants' [Threadgold, *Media*, 22. Cf. D'Onofrio and Munk, *Understanding*, 29.]

[147] Snyder, *Duty*, 357.

[148] Snyder, *Duty*, 356-7. Cf. Butler, *Frames*, 42.

offering them the front-line, daily hospitality which they are required to show asylum seekers.'[149] Thus, another practical response that arises from this is the extension of the church's hospitality, not just towards the needs of those seeking refuge within the UK, but also towards those in need within the UK in general. The church's will to embrace must be indiscriminate. Further, we need to provide fora in which relationships can be built across cultures as well as information disseminated. This might not succeed in changing ingrained attitudes, yet there is at the same time a general agreement that such initiatives are important.[150]

Thus far I have touched on 'unsettling' work, but in addition, it is vital that the 'settling' work that the church is engaged with continues. Nevertheless, some changes need to be made to the way in which we work. Snyder's points regarding motivations, agency and mutuality are important and perhaps not often discussed. Therefore, the church needs to provide a forum where open discussion can take place, questioning our motivations for engaging with the other in this context, how we can safeguard against exclusion in our engagement with them, and how we can more accurately model embrace. Practically, embrace can be incredibly difficult due to language barriers, for example, yet we must be prepared to give these relationships the time that they require. At the same time, however, although it is true that all will be changed through genuine embrace, we should avoid romanticising mutuality, since there are needs that must be met.[151]

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[149] Snyder, *Duty*, 357. Cf. *Perceptions*: '[t]hose most in favour of reducing immigration a lot are White Britons living in "asylum dispersal areas". These are areas with high worklessness and high social housing levels where the threat of competition for resources from asylum seekers who are heavily welfare dependent is likely to be keenly felt' [21-2].

[150] D'Onofrio and Munk, *Understanding*, 6; Snyder, *Asylum-seeking*, Location 2806, 2822.

[151] Christine D. Pohl, "Responding to Strangers: Insights from the Christian Tradition," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19, no. 1 (2006): 82.

Further, the church needs to ensure that it is not dehumanising or symbolically excluding the other through its use of language, such as homogenising terms that exacerbate the problem of 'framing' and make it easier to exclude others. We might therefore need to alter the terminology we use, for example. One suggestion has been to change 'asylum' to 'sanctuary'.[152] However, whilst language is important, it is equally important to acknowledge that this alone is insufficient. The church must also challenge the media's main frames, showing how these do not correspond with reality in the various contexts in which they are used. Perhaps the church can harness the power of social media to do this. We must remember that those categorised as 'immigrants' are 'ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances.'[153]

Finally, in view of the misrepresentation of those migrating to the UK, the church must enable people's own voices to be heard. Several recent campaigns have already been noted, yet is there a way of portraying the contribution that those who have immigrated to the UK have made without problematizing immigration in the process?

5. The cost of exclusion

Media tend to highlight the loss incurred through our admittance of 'immigrants' into the UK, and the potential benefit of closing our borders, even though '[t]he available evidence suggests that immigrants are probably, on balance, net fiscal contributors to the UK.'[154] Since the focus of the public debate has largely been on 'cost', then, it is important to ask whether exclusion carries a cost also. I noted above that it is only through embrace that we can be at peace: with others, but also within ourselves. When we genuinely have

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Volf writes that 'a genuine embrace cannot leave both or either completely unchanged' [147] yet I argue that neither can remain unchanged due to their lack of 'innocence'.

[152] Snyder, *Asylum-seeking*, Location 2837.

[153] Snyder, *Asylum-seeking*, Location 1883.

[154] Duffy and Frere-Smith, *Perceptions*, 55.

the will to embrace the other, the Spirit enables us to imitate Christ's indiscriminate self-giving and other-receiving love, and in this way, we find ourselves 'in the company of the Crucified.'[155] Therefore, this is the greatest loss to the church in excluding the other: that of being in fellowship with Christ.

[155] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 27.

A FATAL AMBIGUITY: THE DEATH OF JESUS IN THE QUR'AN

SIMON FULLER

Abstract: *A vital part of communication is how ambiguity is used and resolved. This is true both in hermeneutics and in inter-faith dialogue. Christian-Muslim interaction is a field rife with misunderstanding, in part due to multiple ambiguities in key words and texts. This paper compares 80 or more Muslim translations of the Qur'an (as being representative of the beliefs held by diverse individuals and groups within the Muslim community), and categorizes them by the manner in which they disambiguate one of the Qur'an's main Christological texts (4:157-159). The study reveals that although the versions exhibit dazzling variety in details, yet in the disambiguation of the essential premise (of whether Christ died on the cross or not) they are remarkably united in overruling the evidence of the immediate textual context and conforming to the wider context of the worldview or consensus of the believing community. The study incorporates insights from the fields of linguistics, hermeneutics, Islamic studies and mission.*

Key Words: *ambiguity, context, Qur'anic interpretation, Islamic Christology, Qur'an 4:157-159.*

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The nature of ambiguity

Ambiguity resulting from choice of vocabulary or grammar is a phenomenon belonging to the linguistic field of semantics. However, the *interpretation* of ambiguous utterances belongs to the field of pragmatics – taking into account non-linguistic factors such as relevance and context. Generally, the receptor (i.e. the reader or hearer) deals with ambiguity by looking for the maximally relevant interpretation. Relevance in turn is defined in relation to the immediate context of the text in question, or the

conversation or topic. It may also be defined in relation to the wider context of the larger discourse or relationship or series of events or social expectations. Ultimately it may even be in relation to the listener's own existing prejudices or worldview.

Ambiguity may be intentional or accidental. Calculated ambiguity is of course one of the staples of jokes and comedy (where it is referred to as *double-entendre*). This makes humour one of the most difficult genres to translate, or for a non-native speaker of a language to appreciate. Purposeful ambiguity of another sort may be also one of the particular features of religious texts, especially prophecy, where an utterance can often be interpreted in multiple ways. Ambiguity in significant texts may have serious consequences, which is why legal documents take special care to avoid it. Ambiguity in a religious context can hinder comprehension and communication between members of different faith traditions or persuasions within each tradition.

2. Ambiguity in inter-faith communication

The relationship between Christians and Muslims is a case in point. Our two communities seemingly have much in common. Examples of such commonalities would include belief in one God, in Scriptures, in prophetic revelation, in a coming Day of Judgement, in Jesus Christ, in Adam, Abraham, Moses and other scriptural personages, in prayer, in fasting, in the importance of works of charity, and so forth. Surprisingly, however, very little real communication takes place. The relationship bristles with ambiguities. Some obvious examples may be cited.

(a) Allāh

The word "*Allāh"* is used for God in both the Arabic Bible and the Qur'an. Muslims believe that they worship the same

God as the Jews and the Christians,[1] but many Christians would disagree. Thus the one basic word *Allāh* becomes ambiguous. We have to clarify whether we are talking about *Allāh* as described in the Qur'an or about *Allāh* as described in the Bible.

(b) Al-Masīḥ, ʿĪsā

Then there are the names *Al-Masīḥ and ʿĪsā*. *Masīḥ* is the Arabic pronunciation of the Syriac *Msheekha* or Hebrew *Mashiach*, which means Messiah or Christ. The use of the name *ʿĪsā* for Jesus is less straightforward as the two names do not appear to be cognate,[2] and this name does not appear in the Arabic Bible, which consistently uses *Yasūʿ*. There are also significant dissimilarities between the Qur'anic and (even more so) hadithic[3] accounts of *ʿĪsā*/Jesus on the one hand and the Gospel accounts on the other. Nevertheless, Muslims believe that *ʿĪsā al-Masīḥ* is the same historical person who is at the centre of the faith of Christians. Again, we have to clarify whether we are talking about *ʿĪsā* /Jesus as described in the Qur'an and Hadith or in the Bible.

(c) Rūḥullah

The term *Rūḥullah* literally means 'Spirit of God'. But when the Qur'an, in its account of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, says, "Then We sent to her Our spirit that appeared to her as a perfect man" (*Sūrah Maryam* 19:17),[4] the "spirit" referred to is the archangel *Jibrīl* or Gabriel, not the Holy

[1] This is specifically stated in the Qur'an. See *Al-ʿAnkabūt* (The Spider) 29:46.

[2] The *ʿayn*-initial consonantal structure of the name *ʿĪsā* makes it disconcertingly much closer to the Hebrew *ʿĒsāw* (Esau) than to *Yeshuaʿ* (Jesus).

[3] Hadith (Arabic *ḥadīth*) refers to the vast body of sayings attributed to the Prophet, and quite distinct from the Qur'an.

[4] Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the Qur'an are taken from M. M. Khatib, trans., *The Bounteous Koran: A Translation of Meaning and Commentary. Authorized by Al-Azhar 1984* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1986), 397.

Spirit of the Bible. In Islamic tradition, *Rūḥullah* (Spirit of God) is also a title for Jesus Christ[5].

In the interests of contextualized communication, some Christians try to substitute Arabic or Qur'anic terms for traditional biblical terms. Unless this is done with a clear awareness of the ambiguities involved, good communication may not be the result. These are just a few examples out of a vast number of such ambiguities.

II. CONTEXT AND MEANING IN INTER-FAITH HERMENEUTICS

We have already mentioned the importance of *context* in interpreting ambiguous texts. The message of the Bible generally progresses in a noticeable order, whether of historical events, or of the development of a story or argument. For this reason, it is generally not difficult to identify a context for a given biblical text. The arrangement of texts in Qur'an is different. The Qur'an was compiled after the death of the Prophet of Islam, through whose mouth the words had been originally spoken. While there is a belief that individual verses were assigned to their respective chapter (known as a *sūrah*) by the Prophet himself, the order of the 114 *sūrahs* has no recognizable pattern apart from being arranged approximately by length, from the longest *sūrahs* to the shortest. (One could just imagine what would happen to the biblical message if a similar arrangement were adopted for the chapters of the NT). Therefore, in understanding the meaning of Qur'anic texts, especially the ambiguous ones, context gives us less help than in the case of the Bible. On the other hand, there are some contextual clues from outside the Qur'an, in that many of its *sūrahs* are associated with a particular context of revelation, that is, they are said to have originated in the context of some related incidents in the Prophet's life story.

[5] This title is not used for Jesus in the Qur'an; however, its traditional use evidently derives from the phrase *rūḥum-minh*, literally "a spirit from Him (God)" used of Christ in *An-Nisā* 4:171.

For example, the nineteenth *sūrah* entitled *Maryam* (Mary), which gives the first of two Qur'anic accounts of the birth of Christ, is associated with an episode from the fifth year of the Prophet's mission, when he sent a group of his converts to the Christian kingdom of Aksum (modern Ethiopia and Eritrea) to seek refuge from the intense persecution they were subjected to in Mecca.[6] Given this context, we would expect the words to intend to mean what an Ethiopian Christian audience would be expected to understand from them. Therefore, when the Muslim refugees recited the reported statement of the infant Jesus, "Peace be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I will be raised alive" (19:33), in the absence of any indication to the contrary, the Ethiopian Christians, who were being invited to evaluate whether the Muslim refugees were worthy of the protection sought, would undoubtedly have assumed that this verse refers to the orthodox Christian belief in the virgin birth, the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The chapter does in fact affirm the virgin birth of Christ, but, regarding its significance, draws the nativity account to an abrupt conclusion in the very next verses: "That is Jesus, son of Mary, the word of truth about which you are wavering. It is not for God to beget a son. Glory be to Him. If He decrees a matter, he only says to it, 'Be', and it is" (19:34-35). In other words, even the virgin birth does not mean what the Christian ruler of Ethiopia, or we, would have expected. As for the cross and the resurrection, the apparently natural and contextual reading of this chapter is overruled by other factors which we will consider as the main focus of this article.

The second Qur'anic account of the birth of Christ (3:45 ff.) is found in the *sūrah* entitled *Āl-e ʿImrān*, or 'the Family of Imran', where Imran refers to the father of Maryam (Mary) and therefore the grandfather of Christ. The name is apparently derived from the biblical Amram, the

[6] Alfred Guillaume, trans., *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 152.

father of a different Maryam (Miriam), the sister of Aaron and Moses; another example of ambiguity. The associated event from the Prophet's biography in this case is the visit to the Prophet's base at Medina by a delegation of Christian leaders from the South Arabian city of Najran. This event is said to have occurred in the tenth year after the Prophet migrated from Mecca to Medina (the decisive event in AD 622 known as the *hijra* that marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar), towards the end of his life. Apparently, the two sides had what today we would describe as full and frank discussions. They failed to reach an agreement and the conclusion of their 'dialogue' is recorded in the Qur'anic verses 3:59-61:

> Truly, the likeness of Jesus with God is as that of Adam. He created him of dust, then He said to him, 'Be', and he was. The truth is from your Lord; so be not of the doubters. But whoever remonstrates with you about him after the knowledge that has come to you, say, 'Come, let us call our sons and your sons, and our women, and your women, and ourselves and yourselves, then let us solemnly supplicate and invoke the malediction of God upon the mendacious.'

In other words, since we cannot agree, you and we will bring our families and stand here and we will call down the curse of God on whichever side is wrong – rather along the lines of the outcome of Korah's rebellion in Numbers 16. Thus, any reading which seeks to attach a "Christian" meaning to the Christologically-related words of this chapter (3:35-64) must reckon with the fact that the context is one of debate and polemic which ended in radical disagreement with the Christians. My purpose in mentioning this is certainly not to incite controversy or ill-feeling, but rather to caution against the simplistic approach of some well-meaning Christians who believe that quoting selected Qur'anic verses, often out of context, and ascribing Christian meanings to them, is an effective and honest evangelistic method. It is not.

III. MULTIDIMENSIONAL AMBIGUITY IN THE CRUCIAL TEXT *AN-NISĀ* 4:157

The most critical passage in the Qur'an in relation to Christian-Muslim engagement is to be found in the *sūrah* entitled *An-Nisā* (Women), verses 157-159. Regarding the subject matter, I believe it is totally uncontroversial to say that the cross and the resurrection of Christ are the central and non-negotiable elements of the Christian message of salvation and the major themes of the preaching of the Apostles and of the NT as a whole.[7] But it is these three verses which have shaped the understanding of millions, even billions, of Muslim people regarding this message. The three verses simply drip with ambiguity, and unfortunately there is not much context even to help us, since, unlike the other passages discussed so far, these verses do not have any strong traditional association with any particular event in the Prophet's biography. (There is a limited textual context, in that verse 157-159 appear to be a parenthetical statement within a "paragraph" which runs from 155-161; we shall return to the significance of this in Part IV below).

What follows is based on my comparative study of the relevant verses as rendered by at least eighty different English translations of the Qur'an. In other words, it is a comparison of the Qur'an's testimony about the cross and resurrection of Christ, as interpreted by eighty versions. All eighty of the translations I have referred to were done by translators who consider(ed) themselves to be Muslims and therefore were translating what they themselves believed to be Holy Scripture. In other words, I have deliberately excluded from this study all the many other translations done by Christians, Jews and academic Orientalists, on the

[7] Of the 27 books of the New Testament, seventeen refer to the physical death of Christ explicitly, and three others (1 Timothy, Titus and 1 John) implicitly. Only the seven small books of 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John and Jude do not specifically mention it.

grounds that they might well seek to interpret the text according to the context of their own belief or unbelief.

Purists will argue that it is only the Arabic text which matters in understanding the message of Islam, just as Muslim believers will affirm that only the Arabic original is to be considered the Word of God, and that translations are at best human attempts to convey something of the meaning. However, the study of the translations is valid and important from a different perspective. They are a mirror of how Muslim believers understand the Qur'an. Our interest is in contemporary Muslims as human beings rather than in Islam as an abstraction or entity in itself. It is important to listen to and engage with what they believe their texts to mean as much as what those texts may have intended to mean fourteen centuries ago.

1. The text

The verses concerned are as follows, first in a transliteration of the original Arabic text, and then in the translation of M. M. Khatib,[8] including his explanatory footnotes, and of M. A. S. Abdel Haleem[9] for comparison. I have included in each case verse 156 as it gives a little of the anti-Jewish polemic which is the immediate context, and also highlighted in boldface an important phrase (discussed further below) in both the Arabic text and the translations.

156 *wa bi-kufrihim wa qawlihim 'alaa Maryama buhtaanan 'aẓiimaa:*

157 *wa qawlihim innaa qatalnal-Masiiħa 'Iisaabna – Maryama Rasuulallaah; - wa maa qataluuhu wa maa ṣalabuuhu* ***wa laakin shubbiha lahum****; wa innalla ðiinakh-talafuu fiihi lafii shakkim-minh: maa lahum-bihii min 'ilmin illat-tibaa 'aẓẓanni wa maa qataluuhu yaqiinaa:-*

158 *bar-rafaa-'a-hullaahu ilayhi wa kaanallaahu 'aziizan ħakiimaa;-*

[8] M. M. Khatib, *The Bounteous Koran*, 130.

[9] M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, trans., *The Qur'an: A New Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 65.

159 *wa im-min 'ahlil-kitaabi illaa la-yu'-minanna bihii qabla mawtih; wa yawmal-qiyaamati yakuunu 'alayhim shahiidaa;-*

Translation of M. M. Khatib:

156 and for their unbelief, and their saying against Mary a great calumny,

157 and for their saying, 'We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God,'[10] yet they slew him not, nor crucified him, **but it only appeared so to them**.[11] Those who disagree concerning him are in doubt about it, or they have no knowledge of him, but the following of surmise; they did not slay him for a certainty.

158 But God exalted him to His presence, for God is Mighty, Wise.

159 There is none of the people of the Book but will believe in him before his death, and on the Day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them.[12]

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[10] "This is to confirm that Jesus was but Mary's son, not God's, and that he was the Messenger of God." (M. M. Khatib's footnote).

[11] "This part of the verse is a matter of controversy. The majority of commentators state that a criminal was made by God to appear to people as Jesus, but a few have said that Jesus was made to appear as one actually crucified when in fact he was not killed because God protected him, which accounts for his subsequent reappearance." (M. M. Khatib's footnote).

[12] "This verse is one of the most controversial because of its various interpretations. A group of commentators presumed that the explicit meaning is that all people of the Book would believe in Jesus before their death. However, another group of commentators assumed that the implicit meaning is that the people of the Book will continue to believe that Jesus died on the cross, and they support their presumption by '… he will be a witness against them'. Nevertheless, the phrase 'his death' may mean the death of the person who will believe in Jesus as a true Messenger of God, and not His son. Accordingly, the general meaning may run as follows: 'None of the people of the Book will die before he believes in Jesus as the Messenger of God even at the moment

Translation of M. A. S. Abdel Haleem:

> 156 and because they disbelieved and uttered a terrible slander against Mary,
> 157 and said, 'We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of God.' (They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, **though it was made to appear like that to them**; those that disagreed about him are full of doubt, with no knowledge to follow, only supposition: they certainly did not kill him –
> 158 God raised him up to Himself. God is almighty and wise.
> 159 There is not one of the People of the Book who will not believe in [Jesus] before his death, and on the Day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them.)

A comparison of numerous translations shows that the manner in which the critical ambiguous phrase *wa laakin shubbiha lahum* (4:157) has been translated varies widely and inevitably reflects the personal and sectarian convictions of the various translators.

Interpretations range from the simple and suitably vague rendering "but it appeared so unto them" of Pickthall (1930)[13] to the elaborate "but to them, he (the crucified) had been given the look (of Prophet Jesus)" of Qaribullah and Darwish (2001),[14] or the contrived "but he was made to

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of death.' A third group of commentators has said that the term 'before his death' may mean before the death of Jesus himself, as God has lifted him to His presence. According to this viewpoint, Jesus will be sent down to the earth before the end of life on it to call people to hold fast to and judge by the Ordinance of the Sealing Message, which was sent down upon the Prophet Mohammed." (M.M. Khatib's footnote).

[13] Marmaduke Pickthall, trans., *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran,* 113-4.

[14] Hassan Qaribullah and Ahmed Darwish, trans., *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (Cairo: Umm Durman University, 2001); http://www.quranm.multicom.ba/translations/Qaribullah.htm, accessed on 07.09.2007.

appear to them like one crucified to death" of Zafrullah Khan (1971).[15]

The syntactic ambiguity here is apparent by the way in which the subject of this "crucial"[16] phrase is identified variously:

(i) *The subject is impersonal* – expressed either (a) as a pronoun "it", as in "but it appeared so unto them" (Pickthall),[17] or (b) as an abstract noun, such as "the event," "the truth," or "the matter," as in "but the matter was made dubious to them" of Mawdudi/Zafar Ansari (1988-2001).[18]

(ii) *The subject is the noun* shubbiha – a likeness, resemblance, illusion or whatever, as in "but his likeness was caused to appear to them" (Fode Drame, 2014).[19]

(iii) *The subject is personal* – "he," that is Jesus, as in all the Ahmadi and Qadiani versions: "but he was made to appear to them like one crucified to death," such as in Zafrullah Khan (1971).[20]

(iv) *The subject is a personal third party* – "he," that is an unnamed other, as in Qaribullah and Darwish (2001) quoted above, or "but [another] was made to resemble him to them" of Saheeh International (1995). Despite the strained interpretation of the text, this is the basis of the most common belief on the subject amongst 'orthodox' Muslims today, as expressed by the free paraphrase "They, in fact, murdered someone else by mistake" of Sheikh Muhammad Sarwar (1981).

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[15] Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, trans., *The Qur'an: The Eternal Revelation Vouchsafed to Muhammad The Seal of the Prophets* (London and Dublin: Curzon Press, 1971), 96.

[16] From Latin "crux," meaning the cross.

[17] Marmaduke Pickthall, trans., *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, 113-4.

[18] S. Abul A'la Mawdudi, trans., Zafar Ansari, ed., trans. [from Urdu], *Towards Understanding the Qur'an* (translation of *Tafhim al-Qur'an),* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1988-2001), 202.

[19] Fode Drame, trans., Anwar-ul-Quran: *The Holy Quran, with English Translation* (Vancouver: Tasleem Publications, 2014), 96.

[20] Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, trans., *The Qur'an*, 96.

A lexical ambiguity also exists in the word *shubbiha,* which could mean 'appearance,' 'likeness,' or 'resemblance,' or on the other hand 'obscure,' or 'doubtful.' While most translators clearly opt for one meaning or the other, a few try to have their cake and eat it also, thus "but they thought they did *because the matter was made dubious for them*" (Mohammad Farooq-i-Azam Malik, 1997).[21]

Apart from the syntactic and lexical ambiguities, a third category of ambiguity is created by the repeated negatives in verse 157: *wa maa qataluuhu wa maa ṣalabuuhu … wa maa qataluuhu yaqiinaa.* (They did not kill him, they did not crucify him … they did not kill him for certain). I will return to this important aspect in Part IV.

2. Translations categorized by their treatment of the critical ambiguous phrase "*shubbiha lahum*"

Conceptually, the various interpretations of the critical phrase *shubbiha lahum* could then be categorized as follows. I have in each case mentioned the short form of the translator's name(s) together with the publication date for two reasons. Firstly, to be able to see the development of the translations chronologically. Secondly, for greater ease of identification, since for some readers the rather large number of somewhat similar sounding names alone may lead to confusion.

Category A:

1. The simplest and most non-committal interpretation: It appeared so to them, e.g.:

"But it so appeared to them" (H. G. Sarwar, 1929)[22]

[21] Muhammad Farooq-i-Azam Malik, trans., *English Translation of the Meaning of Al-Qur'an, The Guidance for Mankind* (Houston: The Institute of Islamic Knowledge, 1997), 209.

[22] Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar, trans., *Translation of the Holy Qur-ân from the original Arabic text with critical essays, life of Muhammad, complete summary of contents* (Singapore/Woking, Surrey: The Author/S. M. S. Faruque, The Mosque, Woking, 1929 [n.d.]), 58.

"but it appeared so unto them" (M. M. Pickthall, 1930)[23]
"it only seemed so to them" (S. V. Mir Ahmed Ali, 1964)[24]
"but it was an illusion for them" (Abul Kalam Azad, 1967)[25]
"but it appeared to them so (like Isa)" (M H Shakir, 1968)[26]
"It was an illusion for them" (S. Abdul Latif, 1969)[27]
"they only think they did" (Amir-Ali, 1974)[28]
"but it only seemed to them [as if it had been] so" (Asad, 1980)[29]
"though it so appeared to them" (Ahmed Ali, 1984)[30]
"but it appeared like that to them" (Fatmi, 1984)[31]

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[23] Marmaduke Pickthall, trans., *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran: An Explanatory Translation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), 113-4; also, Marmaduke Pickthall, revised by Sahib Mustaqim Bleher, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an. New Modern English Edition* (Birmingham: Islamic Dawah Centre International, 2004), 65; and also, International Committee for the Support of the Final Prophet (ICSFP), *The Quran Translated: Message for Humanity* (Washington, DC: ICSFP, 2005), 126, which is another revision of Pickthall's version.

[24] Syed V. Mir Ahmed Ali, trans., *The Holy Qur'an* (Karachi: Muhammad Khaleel Shirazi, 1964); Yasin T. Al-Jibouri, ed., *The Koran Translation* (Elmhurst, New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc., 2004), 71.

[25] Maulana Abul Kalam Azad; by Syed Abdul Latif (trans.), *The Tarjuman Al-Qur'an.* Vol. 2 (1967), 270.

[26] M. H. Shakir (Mahomedali Habib), trans. *[The Holy Qur'an]* (Karachi: Habib Bank, n.d. c.1968); *The Holy Qur'an* (Elmhurst, New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc., 1982), 63.

[27] Syed Abdul Lateef, trans. [from the Urdu of from Urdu of Maulana Fateh Muhammad Khan Jalandhari], *Al-Qur'an Rendered into English* (Hyderabad: The Academy of Islamic Studies, 1969), 73.

[28] Hashim Amir-Ali, trans., *The Message of the Qur'an: Presented in Perspective* (Rutland, Vermont & Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1974), 482.

[29] Muhammad Asad, trans., *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus Limited, 1980); Complete Edition, (Bristol: The Book Foundation, 2003), 153-4.

[30] Ahmed Ali, trans., *Al-Qur'an: A Contemporary Translation* (Karachi: Akrash Publishing, 1984), 193.

"even though it seemed so to them" (Irving, 1985)[32]
"but it only appeared so to them" (Khatib, 1986)[33]
"What they took for reality was merely something which appeared to them as such" (Parvez, 1990)[34]
"but they thought they did" (Himmat, 1993)[35]
"but it appeared so unto them" (al-Hayek,1996)[36]
"but it [only] appeared so to them" (Durkee, 2000)[37]
"and they were only under impression (that they did it)" (Gohari, 2002)[38]
"but it appeared to them as if they had" (Progressive Muslims, 2003)[39]
"Their wishful thinking" (Moeinian, 2005)[40]

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[31] Hanif Akhtar Fatmi, trans., *Holy Qur'an. Urdu Translation by Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Brailavi and Rendered into Modern English by Dr Hanif Akhtar Fatmi Qadri Naushahi* (Bradford: Islamic World Mission, 1984), 98.

[32] T. B. Irving, trans., *The Noble Qur'an: The First American Version* (Brattleboro, Vermont, Amana Books, 1985), 103.

[33] M. M. Khatib, trans., *The Bounteous Koran: A Translation of Meaning and Commentary. Authorized by Al-Azhar 1984* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1986), 130-131.

[34] Ghulam Ahmed Parwez, trans., *Exposition of the Holy Qur'an: An English rendering ... of Urdu Presentation Mafhoom-ul-Qur'an, Vol. 1* (Lahore: Tolu-e-Islam Trust (Regd.), 1990), 153.

[35] Abu-Shabanah Abdel Khalek Himmat, trans., *Al Montakhab (The Select) in The Interpretation of the Holy Quran, Arabic-English* (Cairo: Ministry of Al Awkaf, Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, 1993), 143.

[36] Sheikh 'Izziddin Al-Hayek, trans., *An Approximate, Plain and Straightforward Translation of the Meanings of the Honourable Qur'ān in the English Language* (Damascus: Dar al Fikr, 1996), 144.

[37] Abdullah Nooruddeen Durkee and Hajjah Noura Durkee, trans., *The Tajwīdī Qur'ān* (Green Mountain, Virginia: Noor Hierographers, 2000); corrected edition (Charlottesville, Virginia: An-Noor Educational Foundation, 2003), 162-163.

[38] Mohammad Javad Gohari, *The Quran* (Oxford: Oxford Logos Society, 2002), 71.

[39] ProgressiveMuslims.org, trans., *The Message: A Literal Translation of the Final Revealed Scripture* (New York: iUniverse.com, 2003), 58.

[40] Bijan Moeinian, trans., *An Easy to Understand Translation of Qur'an* (Raleigh, North Carolina: Lulu.com, 2005), 79.

"but it seemed to them that they had done so" (Lings, 2007)[41]
"but it appeared to them as if they had" (Yuksel et al., 2007)[42]
"but it appeared to them as if they had" (Monotheist Group, 2008)[43]
"they thought they did" (Jasser, 2008)[44]
"Rather, it only appeared to them as such" (Khaleel, 2008)[45]
"but it appeared to them so" (Busool, 2010)[46]
"but it appeared to them as if they did" (Itani, 2012)[47]
"but it appeared to them as if they did" (Alkharraz, 2013)[48]
"but it appeared so unto them" (S. H. Nasr, 2015)[49]

2. Variation based on the alternative meaning of *shubbiha*: It was obscure to them (sometimes both meanings are included for good measure). E.g.:

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[41] Martin Lings (Abubakr Sirajudeen), trans., *The Holy Qur'an: Translations of Selected Verses* (Cambridge: The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought & The Islamic Texts Society, 2007), 28.

[42] Edip Yuksel, Layth Saleh Al-Shaiban and Martha Schulte-Nafeh, trans., *Qur'an: A Reformist Translation* (USA: Brainbow Press, 2007), n.p.

[43] The Monotheist Group, trans., *The Qur'an: A Monotheist Translation* (USA: Brainbow Press, 2008), 62.

[44] Mohamed K. Jasser, trans., *The Holy Koran: An Interpretive Translation from Classical Arabic into Contemporary English* (Phoenix, Arizona: Acacia Publishing, Inc., 2008), 65.

[45] Kaasem Khaleel, with Judy Kay Gray, trans., *The Magnificent Message: A Modern Translation of the Qur'aan* (Vernon Hills, IL: Knowledge House Publishers, 2008), 190.

[46] Assad Nimer Busool, trans., *The Wise Qur'an: These are the verses of the Wise Book* (Bloomington, Indiana: Xlibris Corporation, 2010), 118.

[47] Talal A. Itani, trans., *The Quran: "This Quran could not have been produced by anyone other than God"* (Dallas & Beirut: ClearQuran, 2012), 42.

[48] Saad Mohammad Alkharraz, trans., *The Holy Quran: English translation for Muslims first book* (Lexington, KY: CreateSpace, 2013), 67.

[49] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, editor-in-chief, *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: HarperOne, HarperCollins Publishers, 2015), 262.

"and but (it) resembled/was vague/was doubtful to them" (Ahmed and Samira Ahmed, 1995)[50]
"but they thought they did *because the matter was made dubious for them*" (M. Farooq-i-Azam Malik, 1997)[51]
"but it was obscured for them (or it appeared so to them)" (Aziz, 2000)[52]
"only there was, / some likeness them to baffle!" (Nikayin, 2000)[53]
"but (the truth) became dubious to them" (A. A. Sheikh, 2001)[54]
"But it appeared so to them and the matter remained dubious to them" (Shabbir Ahmed, 2003)[55]
"but they were deluded by resemblance" (Taqi Usmani, 2006)[56]
"but the matter became dubious / To them" (Saffarzadeh, 2007)[57]

[50] Mohamed Ahmed and Samira Ahmed, trans., *The Koran: Complete Dictionary & Literal Translation* (Vancouver, c. 1995); http://www.studyquran.co.uk/MSAhmed_Koran_translation.htm, accessed 07.09.2007.

[51] Muhammad Farooq-i-Azam Malik, trans., *English Translation of the Meaning of Al-Qur'an, The Guidance for Mankind* (Houston: The Institute of Islamic Knowledge, 1997), 209.

[52] Hamid S. Aziz, trans., *The Meaning of the Holy Quran, with Explanatory Notes* (c.2000); http://quran.wwpa.com/page/Quran-translation-from-Hamid-S-Aziz, accessed 07.09.2007.

[53] Fazlollah Nikayin, trans., *The Quran: The First Poetic Translation* (Skokie, Illinois: The Ultimate Book, Inc., 2000), 150.

[54] Anis Ahmad Sheikh, trans., (from Urdu of Pir Muhammad Karam Shah), *Jamal-ul-Qur'an (The Beauteous Qur'an)* (Lahore: Zia-ul-Qur'an Publications, 2001), 146.

[55] Shabbir Ahmed, trans., *The Qur'an As It Explains Itself* (Lauderhill, FL: Galazy Publications, 2003); 6th Edition (2014) at http://muslimsforallah.com/the-quran-as-it-explains-itself/, accessed 07.01.2015.

[56] M. Taqi Usmani, trans., *The Meanings of the Noble Qur'an* (Karachi: Maktaba Ma'ariful Quran, 2006; New Delhi: Farid Book Depot (P) Ltd., 2007), 185.

Category B:

1. Causative interpretation: It was *made to* appear so to them. E.g.:

> "But so it was made / To appear to them" (Yusuf Ali, 1937)[58]
> "– they were led to believe that they did" (Rashad Khalifa, 1981)[59]
> "but a look-alike was created for them" (Faridul Haque, 1988)[60]
> "Only a likeness of that was shown to them" (Presidency of Islamic Researches, c.1990)[61]
> "but it was only made to appear to them so" (Zidan, 1991)[62]
> "but it was made to appear so to them" (Pathan, 1993)[63]
> "but a resemblance of him was presented to them" (Ghali, 1996)[64]
> "although it was made to appear to them as such" (Behbudi and Turner, 1997)[65]

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[57] Tahereh Saffarzadeh, trans., *The Holy Qur'an: Translation with Commentary* (Tehran: Alhoda, 2007), 174.

[58] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, trans., *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1937); Also, Abdullah Yusuf Ali. *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*. New Revised Edition (Brentwood, Maryland: Amana Corporation, 1989), 236.

[59] Rashad Khalifa, trans., *Quran: The Final Testament, Authorized English Version* (Tucson, AZ: Islamic Productions,1981), 67.

[60] Shah Faridul Haque, trans. (from Urdu of Ahmed Raza Khan), *The Holy Qur'an: An English Translation of Kanzul Iman* (Karachi: Dar ul 'Ulum Amjadia, 1988; reprinted Delhi: Taj Company, 1988), 153.

[61] Presidency of Islamic Researches, Ifta, Call and Guidance, trans., *The Holy Qur'an: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary* (Saudi Arabia: King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, 1411 AH (c.1990)), 267.

[62] Dr. Ahmad Zidan and Mrs. Dina Zidan, trans., *Translation of the Glorious Qur'an* (Guildford & King's Lynn: Biddles Ltd, 1991), 72.

[63] M. A. K. Pathan, trans., *The Meaning of the Quran* (Pune: Crescent Publications, 1993), 58.

[64] Muhammad Mahmud Ghali, trans., *Towards Understanding the Ever-Glorious Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1996; 3rd edition Cairo: Dar An-Nashr for Universities, 2003), 103.

"but it was made to appear so unto them" (Fakhry, 1997)[66]
"but so it was made to appear to them" (S. Vickar Ahamed, 1999)[67]
"but it was made to seem so to them" (Bewley, 1999)[68]
"– they were made to think that they did" (Rashad Khalifa, 2001)[69]
"though it was made to appear like that to them" (Abdel Haleem, 2004)[70]
"but so it was made to appear to them" (Qara'i, 2005)[71]
"Rather, it was made to appear to them as so." (Zaki Hammad, 2007)[72]
"but so it was made to appear to them" (Khalidi, 2008)[73]
"but it was made to appear to them that they did" (Emerick, 2010)[74]

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[65] Muhammad Baqir Behbudi and Colin Turner. trans., *The Quran: A New Interpretation* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1997), 57.

[66] Majid Fakhry, trans., *The Qur'an: A Modern English Version* (Reading: Garnet Publishing Ltd., 1997), 65.

[67] Syed Vickar Ahamed, trans. (Kuala Lumpur: Amana Publications, 1999; Elmhurst, NY: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, 2003), 78.

[68] Abdalhaqq and Aisha Bewley, trans., *The Noble Qur'an: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English* (Norwich: Bookwork, 1999), 90.

[69] Rashad Khalifa, trans., *Quran: The Final Testament, Authorized English Version,* Revised Edition III (Fremont, California: Universal Unity, 2001), 61.

[70] M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, trans., *The Qur'an: A New Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 65.

[71] 'Ali Quli Qara'i, trans., *The Qur'an, With a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation* (London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies Press (ICAS), 2004), 2nd edition (London: ICAS, 2005), 139.

[72] Ahmad Zaki Hammad, trans., *The Gracious Qur'an: A Modern Phrased Interpretation in English* (Lisle, IL: Lucent Interpretations, LLC, 2007), 166.

[73] Tarif Khalidi, trans., *The Qur'an: A New Translation* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 80.

[74] Yahya [John] Emerick, trans., *The Holy Qur'an in Today's English* (Flushing, NY: Amirah Publishing, 2010), 135.

> "but it was only made to appear as such" (W. D. Mohammed et al., 2012)[75]
> "but his likeness was caused to appear to them" (Fode Drame, 2014)[76]
> "but so it was made to appear to them" (Nazeem Ismail, 2014)[77]
> "though it was made to appear as if it had been so" (Kaskas, 2015)[78]

The question now arises, who *made it* to appear so, to which the answer is presumably God. In that case, theological issues arise such as to why God would create such an illusion.

2. Variation with the second meaning of *shubbiha*: It was made to be obscure to them. E.g.:

> "but it was made dubious to them" (Daryabadi, 1957)[79].
> "but the matter was made dubious for them" (Mawdudi/Muradpuri, 1976)[80]
> "but the matter was made dubious to them (Mawdudi/Ansari, 1988-2001)[81]
> "but they thought they did because the matter was made dubious for them" (Malik, 1997)[82]

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[75] Warith Deen Mohammed, trans., *Qur'an: Includes Translations by Imam W. D. Mohammed et al.* (Lexington, KY: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2012), n.p.

[76] Fode Drame, trans., Anwar-ul-Quran: *The Holy Quran, with English Translation* (Vancouver: Tasleem Publications, 2014), 96.

[77] Nazeem Ismail, trans., *Meaning of the Holy Qur'an in English* (Colombo: Hathee Book Depot, 2014), 207.

[78] Safi Kaskas, trans., *The Qur'an: A Contemporary Understanding* (USA: Bridges of Reconciliation, 2015), 53.

[79] 'Abdul Majid Daryabadi, trans., *The Glorious Qur'an* (Lahore and Karachi: Taj Company, 1957).

[80] S. Abul A'la Mawdudi, trans., Muhammad Akbar Muradpuri and 'Abdul 'Aziz Kamal, trans. [from Urdu], *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Brief Notes* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1976), 151.

[81] S. Abul A'la Mawdudi, trans., Zafar Ansari, ed., trans. [from Urdu], *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*. (Translation of *Tafhim al-Qur'an)* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1988-2001), 202.

> "but the matter was made dubious to them" (Ünal, 2007)[83]
> "But the matter was made dubious to them" (Kidwai, 2013)[84]

Category C:

1. Personal subject – Jesus: He (Jesus) appeared so to them.

> (None of the translators whose versions we have examined have used this option).

2. Causative: He (Jesus) was made to appear so to them. This interpretation is usually associated with the Ahmadi Muslims (pejoratively referred to by their opponents as "Qadiyanis"). E.g.:

> "but [he] was made to appear to them like one crucified" (Allahdin, 1915)[85]
> "but he was made to appear to them as such" (Muhammad Ali, 1917, 1951)[86]
> "but he was made to appear to them like one crucified" (Sher Ali, 1955, 1969 and 1997)[87]

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[82] Mohammad Farooq-i-Azam Malik, trans., *English Translation of the Meaning of Al-Qur'an, The Guidance for Mankind* (Houston, TX: The Institute of Islamic Knowledge, 1997).

[83] Ali Ünal, trans., *The Qur'an: With Annotated Interpretation in Modern English* (2007), 223.

[84] Abdur Raheem Kidwai, trans., *What is in the Quran? Message of the Quran in Simple English* (New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited, 2013), 56.

[85] Abdullah Allahdin, trans., *Extracts from the Holy Quran* … 12th Edition (Secunderabad: Abdullah Allahdin, 1953), 234.

[86] Maulana Muhammad Ali, trans., *The Holy Qur'an. Arabic Text, English Translation and Commentary* (Woking: Islamic Review Office,1917); Revised Edition (Lahore: Ahmadiyya Anjuman-i-Ishaat-i-Islam, 1951). Also, Maulana Muhammad Ali, trans. and Zahid Aziz, ed., English Translation of *the Holy Quran, with Explanatory Notes* (Wembley: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore Publications, U.K., 2010), 133-4.

[87] Sher Ali, trans., *The Holy Qur'an* (Rabwah, West Pakistan: The Oriental and Religious Publishing Corporation, Ltd., 1955), 96; Also, Sher Ali, trans., and Malik Ghulam Farid (abridged commentary), *The Holy Qur'ān: Arabic Text with English Translation & Short Commentary*

> "but he was made to appear to them like one crucified to death" (Zafrullah Khan, 1971)[88]
> "but he was made to them to resemble (one crucified to death)" (Omar and Omar, 1997)[89]
> "but he was made to resemble to them" (Zohurul Hoque 2000)[90]

A further question then arises, how could Jesus appear (*shubbiha*) to them to be crucified without contradicting the statement at the end of the same verse, *wa maa qataluuhu yaqiinaa*, "definitely they did not kill him"? The answer provided by the Ahmadi interpreters and widely disseminated by the high-profile debater Ahmed Deedat (1918-2005)[91] is that Jesus could only have been said to be really crucified if he actually died on the cross, and therefore if he was nailed to the cross but was taken down from it still alive, then it could be said that he "appeared" to be crucified or "resembled" a crucified person. In case this sounds far-fetched, Maulana Muhammad Ali (1917) defends it against the "orthodox" belief on grammatical grounds:

> The story that someone else was made to resemble Jesus is not borne out by the words of the Qur'an, which could only mean, if an object were mentioned, that Jesus was made to resemble

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(Rabwah: The Oriental and Religious Publishing Corporation, Ltd., 1969; Tilford Surrey: Islam International Publications Ltd., 2002), 224-227. And again, Sher Ali, trans., and Mirza Tahir Ahmad, ed., *The Holy Qur'an: Arabic Text and English Translation* (Tilford, Surrey: Islam International Publications Ltd., 1997).

[88] Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, trans., *The Qur'an: The Eternal Revelation Vouchsafed to Muhammad The Seal of the Prophets* (London and Dublin: Curzon Press, 1971), 96.

[89] Amatul Rahman Omar and 'Abdul Mannan Omar, trans., *The Holy Qur'an ... as explained by 'Allamah Nooruddin* (Hockessin, DE: Noor Foundation International Inc., 1997), 105.

[90] Zohurul Hoque, trans., *The Translation and Commentary on the Holy Qur-an* (Centerville, OH: Holy Qur-an Publishing Project, 2000), 169.

[91] Ahmed Deedat, *Crucifixion or Cruci-Fiction?* (Durban: The Islamic Propagation Centre International, 1984).

someone, not that someone was made to resemble Jesus.[92]

Category D:

1. Personal subject – He (someone else): Somebody appeared so to them. E.g.:

> "It was another who was killed in his place" (Mohammad Ahmad, 1979)[93]
> "but they mistook the crucified one for him" (Zayid, 1980)[94]
> "They, in fact, murdered someone else by mistake" (Sarwar, 1981)[95]
> "but they mistook the crucified one for him" (Mohyidin, 2003)[96]
> "but it was the like of him in semblance" (Hamid and Hamed, 2011)[97]

2. Causative: Somebody was made to appear so to them. Despite this being on the face of it a counter-intuitively elaborate interpretation of the words *shubbiha lahum*, it is in fact the scenario accepted by the majority of Muslim believers today. A few translations incorporate this explanation into the text. E.g.:

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[92] Ali, trans., and Aziz, ed., *English Translation of the Holy Quran*, 134.

[93] (Mufassir) Mohammad Ahmad, trans., *The Koran: The First Tafsir in English* (London/Abu Dhabi: Emere Limited/Spectrum Studios, 1979), 105.

[94] Mahmud Y. Zayid, trans., *The Qur'an: An English Translation of the Meaning of the Qur'an. Checked and Revised by Mahmud Y. Zayid, Assisted by a Committee of Muslim Scholars* (Beirut: Dar Al-Choura, 1980), 71.

[95] Sheikh Muhammad Sarwar, trans., ***The Holy Qur'an, Arabic Text and English Translation*** (New York: Imam Al Khoei Islamic Center, 1981), 67.

[96] Bashir Ahmad Mohyidin, trans., *Qur'an, The Living Truth: An Effort to Convey its Meaning* (New Delhi: Kitab Bhawan, 2003), 196-197.

[97] Ahmad Hamid and Muhammad Hamed, trans., *Meaning of the Holy Qur'an Translated into English* (Nasr City, Egypt: Dar El Shorouk, 2011), 120.

"but one was made a similitude for them" (Mirza Abu'l Fazl, 1913)[98]
"but the resemblance of 'Isa (Jesus) was put over another man (and they killed that man)" (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1977)[99]
"but for them, he (the one crucified) was made to resemble (Isa)" (Aneesuddin, 1993)[100]
"but [another] was made to resemble him to them" (Saheeh International, 1995)[101]
"But one similar type (of person) was shown to them (being killed)" (Auolakh, 1996)[102]
"but to them, he (the crucified) had been given the look (of Prophet Jesus)" (Qaribullah and Darwish (2001)[103]
"but a look-alike was created for them" (Qadri, 2003)[104]
"But (in truth,) someone was made the like (of `Isa – Jesus) in their view" (M. Tahir-ul-Qadri, 2006)[105]

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[98] Mirza Abu'l Fazl, trans., *The Qur'an: Arabic Text and English Translation: Arranged Chronologically* (Allahabad: G. A. Asghar & Co., 1913; India, Arab-Baghdad Edition, c.1915), part II, 771.

[99] Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan, trans., *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1977).

[100] Mir Aneesuddin, trans., *A Simple Translation of the Holy Quran (with notes on Topics of Science)* (Hyderabad: Islamic Academy of Sciences, 1993), 106.

[101] Saheeh International. trans., *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings* (Jeddah: Abul-Qasim Publishing House, 1995), 130.

[102] Majeed A. Auolakh, trans. (based on the Urdu of Ahmad Raza Khan), *The Holy Quraan, with Non-Sectarian Modern and Simple Translation* (Karachi: Awais Company, 1996), 138.

[103] Hassan Qaribullah and Ahmed Darwish, trans., *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (Cairo: Umm Durman University, 2001); http://www.quranm.multicom.ba/translations/Qaribullah.htm, accessed on 07.09.2007.

[104] Mohammed Aqib Qadri, trans. (from the Urdu of Ahmad Raza Khan). *An English Translation of the Holy Qu'ran, The Treasure of Faith* (Delhi: Razavi Kitab Ghar, 2003), 110.

> "but to them, he (the crucified) had been given the look (of Prophet Jesus)" (Ayub Ad-deen, 2006)[106]
> "but it was made to appear to them so (the crucified one)" (Hulusi, 2013)[107]

Several other translators who hold to this same view, recognizing that their interpretation is elaborate, resort to explanatory notes or *tafseer* (explanations) placed either next to the verse or as footnotes. For example, Ozek et al (1992) render the latter part of the verse thus:

> They slew him not, nor crucified him, but it appeared so to them; and those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof except pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain.
> (Allah saved Noah from the flood; Abraham from the fire, Muhammad from the traps of the idolaters, and Jesus from the wickedness of the Jews, who wished to crucify him. It was Judas Iscariot, who sought to betray Jesus, who was arrested instead, and crucified instead of the Prophet Jesus, upon whom be peace).[108]

Due to their length, I cite here only four examples of those who have used footnotes. These versions have already been

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[105] Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, trans., *The Glorious Qur'an: English Translation [of] Irfan-ul-Qur`an* (London: Minhaj-ul-Quran Publications, 2006), 154.

[106] Ayub Ad-Deen, *The Holy Qur'an: English Translation* (Raleigh, North Carolina: Lulu.com, 2006), n.p..

[107] Ahmed Hulusi, trans., Aliya Atalay, trans. [from Turkish], *Decoding the Quran: A Unique Sufi Interpretation* (www.ahmedhulusi.org/en/, 2013), 138.

[108] Ozek, Uzunoglu, Topuzoglu and Maksutoglu, trans., *The Holy Qur'an with English Translation,* Ninth edition (Piscitaway, NJ: Why Islam? (ICNA [Islamic Circle of North America], 2009), 102. (This translation has been plagiarized from Pickthall's; the differences in verse 156-7 are in punctuation marks only. However, two substantial explanatory notes have been introduced within the body of the text).

listed under the respective categories which apply to the wording that they have included in the body of the text.

> Daryabadi (1957) elaborates thus:
> [B]ut it was made dubious to them.
> [Footnote]: It was not Jesus who was executed but another, who was miraculously substituted for him (how and in what way is another question, and is not touched upon in the Qur'an). This true doctrine regarding Jesus is shared by an early Christian sect. The Basilidians maintained that Jesus 'changed form with Simon of Cyrene who actually suffered in his place' (*EBr*. III. p. 176). 'Irenaeus says that Basilides's account of the crucifixion was that Simon of Cyrene was crucified by mistake, and Jesus himself took the form of Simon, and stood by and laughed at them' (*ERE*. IV. p. 833).

Mawdoodi (1976) comments,

> [B]ut the matter was made dubious for them.
> [Footnote]: This verse is explicit on the point that the Prophet Jesus Christ was raised up and saved from crucifixion, and the Christians and the Jews are wrong in their view that he died on the cross. Before the Jews could crucify him, Allah raised him up to Himself, and the one whom they crucified later was not Jesus but somebody else whom they took for Jesus, son of Mary, for no apparent reason.

Khatib (1986) offers the following,

> [B]ut it only appeared so to them.
> [Footnote]: This part of the verse is a matter of controversy. The majority of commentators state that a criminal was made by God to appear to people as Jesus, but a few have said that Jesus was made to appear as one actually crucified when in fact he was not killed because God protected him, which accounts for his subsequent reappearance.

Saffarzadeh (2007) gives a brief but powerful explanation,

> [B]ut the matter became dubious/ To them.
> [Footnote]: By Allah's command the resemblance of Issa was put over another man and they killed that man.

This interpretation involves the theory of substitution. Ironically, it is the most widely held belief among Muslim people today regarding the cross. Regrettably this view comes across as an unfortunate parody of the Christian doctrine. Instead of the concept of vicarious suffering and substitutionary death by which Jesus died on behalf of others ("Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" John 15:13), it proposes that another was substituted to save the life of Jesus. By this extraordinary metamorphosis Christ becomes the beneficiary rather than the substitute. This substitution allegedly took place by a divine intervention, a divinely interjected illusion or transformation in the appearance of the other individual so as to appear like Jesus. Neither priest nor sacrifice, neither victor nor victim, Jesus is presented rather as being rescued by a *deus ex machina*. Following the plot narrated in the fraudulent "Gospel of Barnabas", many Muslims today believe that the substitute victim was none other than Judas Iscariot.

IV. NEGATION DISAMBIGUATED, BUT CONTEXT OVERRULED

1. The question of what exactly is being denied

Let us return to the aspect of ambiguity as a result of negation. A negated statement can be capable of multiple interpretations. Consider the following statement: "I didn't tell Peter". Depending on which element in the sentence is being negated, this could mean, a) *I* didn't tell Peter, somebody else must have told him; b) I didn't *tell* Peter, I only sent the message to him through a friend; c) I didn't tell *Peter*, I told John, or d) *I didn't tell Peter*, the entire sentence is

false, no such an event happened, nobody told Peter, don't ask me any questions about what did happen. In speech these meanings may be distinguished by stress, intonation, non-verbal signals as well as context. In a written text however, only context and in some cases word order are there.

Therefore do the words *wa maa qataluuhu,* "they [the Jews) didn't kill him (Jesus)" essentially mean (a) *they* (the Jews) didn't kill Jesus, somebody else did, or (b) they (the Jews) didn't *kill* Jesus, they only tried to, or (c) they (the Jews) didn't kill *Jesus*, they killed someone else, or (d) *they (the Jews) didn't kill Jesus*, full stop, no such event happened, Jesus wasn't killed? To add to the confusion, the word *yaqiinaa* ("for certain") at the end of v.157 could modify any of the interpretations (a)-(d) either by intensifying the negative, or by weakening the sentence through being itself negated. In other words, does *wa maa qataluuhu yaqiinaa* mean "they (the Jews) definitely didn't kill him (Jesus)" (meaning that this is sure); or does it mean, "they (the Jews) didn't definitely kill him (Jesus)" (meaning that it is not sure)?

2. The immediate textual context

In their context, the verses concerning Christ (157-159) are placed as a kind of parenthesis within a catalogue of sins of the Jewish people. Following Khatib's translation, we read,

> 155 Hence, for their breaking their covenant, and their disbelief in God's signs, and their slaying the Prophets without right, and *their saying, 'Our hearts are sealed'*; nay, but God sealed them for their unbelief, so they do not believe, except a few; 156 and for their unbelief, and their saying against Mary a great calumny, 157 and for *their saying, 'We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God* [...] 160 For the iniquity of the Jews, We forbade them goodly viands that were lawful to them; and for their barring many from God's path, 161 and their taking usury, when they were forbidden to do so, and their devouring people's wealth unjustly; We have

> prepared for the unbelievers among them a painful torment[109] (my italics).

When faced with a case of ambiguity, one would normally look for an interpretation that is maximally relevant to the immediate context. Applying this principle, we can see that of the several sins listed, two are statements or claims made by the Jews: firstly "their saying, 'Our hearts are sealed'" and secondly "their saying, 'We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God.'" In both cases a parenthetical explanation is given as to why their boastful statement was false. In the first case, the sealing or hardening of their hearts was in fact true, but it was not of their own doing, but God's. Thus, a reasonable argument could be made that in the second case also, the death of Christ did in fact happen, but it was not of their own doing, though it appeared so, but God's. This interpretation would correspond to type a) in our categorization above of the possible interpretations of an ambiguous negative sentence. In support of this, we could also point out that, if the original intent had been to make a bold statement such as categorically denying the centerpiece of the Christian faith, it seems strange that it should be done in a mere parenthesis, in such a cursory and ambiguous manner.

3. The astonishing verdict

And yet, somehow all the Muslim interpretations choose types b), c) and d). How could this have come about? Perhaps we could say that textual context plays a lesser role in Islamic hermeneutics than Christian, possibly because of the different way in which the text is ordered or arranged. Or perhaps the accepted hermeneutic is informed by a wider context, that of the overall worldview of the believing community, which, given the choice, would prefer to stand in contrast to the Christians.

[109] M. M. Khatib, *The Bounteous Koran*, 129-130.

In a recent historical study of the interpretation of 4:157 (*The Crucifixion and the Qur'an,* 2011), Todd Lawson[110], a Canadian academic and adherent of the Baha'i faith, proposes that although the great majority of present-day Muslims believe on the basis of this single verse that Christ was not crucified, and most Christians also agree that this is what the Qur'an means, in fact this has not always been the case. He goes as far as to argue that it was actually a Christian, St. John of Damascus (c.675-749) who first propagated this interpretation.[111] Lawson insists that the Qur'an does not say that Jesus did not die or was not crucified, it only says that the Jews did not kill him or crucify him.

> The Quran's assertion that the Jews did not crucify Jesus – *wa maa ṣalabuuhu* – is obviously different from saying that Jesus was not crucified - *wa maa ṣuliba.* The first phrase is Qur'anic; the latter is found nowhere in the Book.[112]

Lawson is of course not the first to point this out; many generations of Christians in particular would have longed for Muslim readers to accept a hermeneutic which could be harmonized with the concept that it was not really the Jews who killed Christ, but rather it was Christ himself who voluntarily "humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him …" (Phil. 2:2:8-9, ESV).

Lawson's irenic approach is admirable, and he has with great thoroughness searched out and analyzed the history of the interpretation of this key passage. It is an intricate and fascinating piece of research. But he does seem to overstate the case that there has been significant diversity of belief within the Muslim community regarding the

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[110] Todd Lawson, *The Crucifixion and the Qur'an: A Study in the History of Muslim Thought,* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2011)

[111] Lawson, *The Crucifixion and the Qur'an*, 19-21.

[112] Lawson *The Crucifixion*, 19.

possibility of Christ's physical death, since his evidence relies heavily on early Ismaili sources, whose esoteric beliefs cannot be said to be representative of mainstream Islam. While correctly pointing that it is the interpretation of the Qur'an rather than strictly the Qur'an itself that denies the crucifixion, he seems overly optimistic in his suggestion that minority hermeneutic perspectives from within (or without) the Muslim community have been able seriously to influence the vast consensus of hundreds of millions of Muslims on this point.[113]

He also goes too far in suggesting that it was a 7th century Christian theologian, who, just because his account of the belief of his Muslim neighbours happens to predate any surviving Islamic account[114], is thereby the likely culprit for having spread a wrong interpretation of the crucial Qur'anic verse.[115] It is surely highly implausible that such a strongly held and distinctive belief could have originated from an outsider's misrepresentation. After all, of the 80+ Muslim translations that we have looked at, though they come from widely differing backgrounds – Muslims by birth and by conversion, Sunni and Shi'a, Sufi, Ahmadi, conservative and modernist, orthodox and sectarian, male and female, North and South, East and West, individuals and committees – backgrounds so diverse that they would certainly not all even recognize one another as fellow Muslims, yet *all* without exception would seem to agree on one point of interpretation – namely that the death of Jesus on the cross did not happen, or is at the very least extremely doubtful. Rather than looking for a scapegoat in John of Damascus, we can see the overriding influence of the total worldview of the community in determining which resolution of the ambiguous text is adopted.

It would seem that the nascent Muslim community, reacting against the internecine Christological controversies

[113] Lawson, *The Crucifixion*, 150.
[114] Lawson, *The Crucifixion*, 7.
[115] Lawson, *The Crucifixion*, 145.

of that era,[116] rejecting sacerdotalism of any kind and refusing any compromise of the oneness (*tawḥīd*) and transcendence of God, developed a consensus of opinion that was predisposed towards rejecting anything that looked like Christian dogma.[117] By a series of ambiguities, the Qur'anic text left the door open to (but did not require) the interpretation that the death of Christ was a mere illusion. The community were inclined to choose this option, and further elaborated upon it to arrive at the complex substitution theories which are the present-day majority hermeneutic. Whether the ambiguity itself (with its eventual result) was accidental and unforeseen, or deliberate and calculated, is a sensitive issue which lies beyond the scope of this discussion. The insistence on this interpretation is so strong that it has entirely overruled the plain and simple interpretation of *sūrah* 19:33 (recited before the Christians of Aksum), in such a manner that in the majority hermeneutic, the death and resurrection of Christ clearly mentioned there have had necessarily to be transferred to the domain of eschatology, the yet-to-be fulfilled future.[118] Thus, one of the main reasons why Jesus must come again is, according to this majority hermeneutic, because he must die, be buried, and rise again at the last judgement. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1898), the founder of the Ahmadi (or "Qadiyani") movement, saw this belief in a second coming of Christ as a strategic weakness which made Muslims potentially susceptible to Christian missionary influence, and accordingly insisted that

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[116] Nestorian (Persian), Chalcedonian (Byzantine) and Monophysite (Ethiopian) branches of Christianity, who were bitterly divided by Christological differences, all had their adherents and spheres of influence among the Arabs.

[117] Cf. numerous other Qur'anic texts which, using various rhetorical devices either explicitly deny or implicitly suggest rejection of a whole raft of perceived Christian doctrines and practices, including the Trinity (4:171; 5:73), the Sonship of Christ (112:1-4; 19:88-93; 9:30), the Incarnation (19:35; 3:59), the worship of Mary (5:116) and of the saints (9:31), monasticism (57:27) and sectarian divisions (19:37).

[118] The same applies to the probable references to the death of Christ in 3:55 and 5:117, which are not made explicit in all translations.

since Christ did not die on the cross (by the 19th century this point was non-negotiable), he must have died somewhere else some years later. As part of the same hermeneutic scenario, the Ahmadi translators handle the strong negative in v.157 in a distinctive way, saying that what is denied is that Christ died, not that he was nailed to the cross.

V. THE REMAINING PORTION (4:158-9)

In the remaining portion of the Christological pericope (4:158-159), multiple ambiguities continue. Lawson's study does not deal with these two verses, and less attention generally has been paid to them by non-Muslims, probably in view of v.157 being perceived as causing greater offence or controversy, and possibly also because 158-159 are if anything even more obscure in meaning than 157.[119]

In the apparently straightforward statement "God raised him up to Himself" (*bar-rafaa-'a-hullaahu ilayhi)* in verse 158 there is a simple lexical ambiguity regarding the word "raised him up" (*rafaa-'a-hu*). Was this a physical raising? The majority view chooses or at least implies this interpretation, but of course in the sense of the bodily ascension of a living person, since resurrection from death has been ruled out by the favoured hermeneutic of the previous verse. Or does it refer rather to a spiritual raising or exaltation, as in the death of a righteous person, as understood by the Ahmadi translators and also Rashad Khalifa? Or is it to be interpreted metaphorically, referring to an elevation in reputation or honour, as argued in a strong footnote by Muhammad Asad?

In the following verse (159), there is an awkward and ambiguous negative construction "None…but will believe," "Not one…who will not believe [in Jesus]." Even simple negatives can leave room for ambiguity, as we noted above; a double negative even more so. The majority of translations

[119] From this point onwards the names of the various translations will no longer be footnoted, as they will be the same names recurring for which bibliographic details have already been given.

have left the difficult phraseology more or less as it stands, for example "There shall not be anyone…but he must certainly believe" (S. V. M. Ahmed Ali, 1964). Those who have attempted to clarify the meaning are however divided between "*Everyone*…will believe" (Kidwai, 2013)/ "*All*…should believe" (M. M. Ahmad, 1979)/ "It is an obligation for *all*…to believe" (Moeinian, 2005) on the one hand, and "*None*…believed" (Fatmi, 1984) and Pathan (1993) "*None* will believe." Fakhry (1997) on the other, with a small minority compromising with "*a few* who would have believed" (ProgressiveMuslims, 2003), "*few* who would have acknowledged him" (Yuksel et al.) or "*some people* … never believed" (M. K. Jasser, 2008).

Verse 159 has further ambiguities due to its use of pronouns whose antecedents are unclear. In the sentence, "There is not one of the People of the Book who will not believe in him before his death," there are two pronouns. The first "him" is taken to refer to Jesus, based on the context of the preceding verse, with some translators spelling this out and others leaving it as an implication. However, in the phrase "before his death" – whose death does "his" refer to? Is it the death of Jesus, or the death of the believer concerned, (one of) the People of the Book?

Many translators leave the ambiguity as it is without committing themselves either way (e.g. Pickthall, 1930). In some cases, this may be deliberate; in others the translator may have had a particular interpretation in his mind but has not made it explicit. Several translators introduce footnotes which admit the ambiguity and spell out the alternative interpretations (e.g. Yusuf Ali, 1937).

Of those whose translation makes the antecedent explicit, the larger number chooses the death of the believer. They include Abdul Latif (from Abul Kalam Azad) (1967), M. H. Shakir (1968), Zafrullah Khan (1971), M. Asad (1980), M. Sarwar (1981), G. A. Parwez (1990), A. & D. Zidan (1991), M. & S. Ahmed (1995), M. F. Malik (1997), Omar and Omar (1997), M. J. Gohari (2002), Shabbir Ahmed (2003), B. Moeinian

(2005), Ali Ünal (2007), T. Saffarzadeh (2007), and K. Khaleel (2008).

There is however a smaller but significant number who see this as a reference to the death of Christ, including Abu'l Fazl (1913), Faridul Haque (1988), M. A. K. Pathan (1993), S. V. Ahamed (1999), A. N. Durkee (2000), Progressive Muslims (2003), Yuksel et al. (2007), Monotheist Group (2008), T. Khalidi (2008) and Busool (2010). It is actually rather surprising that more have not chosen this route, since it provides a possible Qur'anic reference to the death of Christ as an eschatological event, something which is widely believed in on the basis of multiple *hadith* sayings, but lacking explicit Qur'anic evidence apart from this verse.

Even this does not exhaust the number of ambiguities within this short but critical passage. For example, also in verse 159, will Jesus be a witness against them? (as the majority of translators say), or will he be a witness on them, over them, or even for them: "he will be their witness" (Hashim Amir-Ali, 1974)? The possibilities just seem to go on and on.

When I was initially considering a title for this article, my first somewhat frivolous idea was, "A Confusion about a Confusion: Seventy-seven Different Ways of Saying What *Didn't* Happen." However, in view of the extremely grave and distressing consequences of the profound communication barriers contained in these verses, I settled on the more serious title "A Fatal Ambiguity."

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it has emerged rather clearly as the result of our study that a decisive factor in the interpretation of ambiguous texts is actually not so much the textual context but rather the consensus of the believing community. In Islamic law, this consensus is called *`ijma*, and is considered the third most important determining authority, after the Qur'an and the Sunna (model) of the Prophet. In determining Islamic law, that which cannot be determined on the basis of the Qur'an or the Sunna of the Prophet can

be decided if there is a clear community consensus. The first Khalifa (successor to the Prophet), Abu Bakr was elected thus. The decision by the Khalifas Umar and Uthman that the scattered Qur'anic verses be collected together as a book was similarly made. And now we can see that, not in a legal sense but in an unregulated but parallel manner, meanings which are unclear or ambiguous in the Scripture are determined much in the same way.

I believe that this should be enough to convince us that clear communication is important, that discernment is needed, and that listening respectfully is also important. It must be a priority for thinking Christians to engage with Islam and Muslims. But rather than seeking to infuse Qur'anic texts with Christian meanings, which may go against both the context and the consensual interpretation, as well as potentially bordering on deception, priority needs to be given to expressing the message of our own Scriptures with relevance and authenticity.

HENRY STEEL OLCOTT'S PROTESTANT CONTRIBUTION TO SRI LANKAN BUDDHISM

G P V SOMARATNA

Abstract: *The American Theosophist Col. Henry Steel Olcott arrived in Sri Lanka at a time when the Buddhist revival was ripe for transition from a monk-led movement to a lay-led movement. Olcott's anti-missionary rhetoric, Asian-oriented spirituality, and pragmatic rationalism endeared him to an upwardly-mobile entrepreneurial class of Buddhist lay leaders. In Olcott they found a trustworthy champion to boost their resistance against colonial Christianization, and blaze safe trails into western education and its socio-economic benefits. As historians have amply demonstrated, Olcott's modernity was suffused with an appreciation of his own Protestant upbringing and for missionary organizational practices. Therefore, his contribution to the Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka inevitably involved the transference of Protestant models of discourse, activism, mobilization and organization.*

Keywords: *Henry Steel Olcott, Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka, Protestant Buddhism, Theosophy.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907) is regarded as a key contributor to the nineteenth-century Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka.[1] He seems to have taken his Sri Lankan mission as a

[1] George D. Bond, *The Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka: Religious Tradition, Reinterpretation, and Response. Comparation Studies in Religion Series* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988; New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992), 48-52; Stephen Prothero, "Henry Steel Olcott and Protestant Buddhism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63, no. 2 (Summer 1995), 281.

personal crusade, enthusiastically incorporating much from his Protestant Christian upbringing to his contribution to modernizing Buddhism.[2] This is one reason why many scholars have referred to Buddhist modernism as "Protestant Buddhism."[3]

Reminiscing about Olcott's contribution, Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933) wrote in 1892, "Let the names of Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky be inscribed in the list of these great missionaries who were sent out by the Arahanta Moggallana."[4] Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala declared that Olcott was a second Asoka.[5] Like the Emperor Asoka, Olcott revived Buddhism from a dormant state. Olcott was treated as a virtual *bodhisattva* (potential Buddha) when he arrived in Sri Lanka in 1880.[6]

As he was born and raised in a Protestant Christian tradition, he was able to introduce much of Protestant Christian spirit into modernizing the Buddhist movement which had already begun in the Western and Southern

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[2] Carl T. Jackson, *Oriental Religions and American Thought: Nineteenth Century Explorations* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 163.

[3] This term was first used by anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere in 1970. It has gained popular currency in anthropological and religious studies of the nineteenth century Buddhist revival. G. Obeyesekere, "Religious symbolism and political change in Ceylon," *Modern Ceylon Studies* 1, no. 1 (1970), 46-47; Kitsiri Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society, 1750–1900: A Study of Religious Revival and Change* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 246; Anne M. Blackburn, *Locations of Buddhism: Colonialism & Modernity in Sri Lanka* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 197-201; Bond, *Buddhist Revival*, 80.

[4] *The Buddhist*, February and March, 1892.

[5] C. Jinarajadasa, *The Golden Book of the Theosophical Society: A Brief History of the Society's Growth from 1875-1925* (Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1925), 93.

[6] J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (New York: Macmillan, 1915), 275; L. A. Wickremeratne, "An American Bodhisattva and an Irish Karmayogin: Reflections on Two European Encounters with Non-Christian Religious Cultures in the Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50, no. 2 (Jan 1984): 237-254.

Provinces of Sri Lanka.[7] His association with Sri Lankan Buddhism for over thirty years while strengthening Buddhism contributed much to the weakening of Christian missionary impact in the Island.[8] The arrival of the Theosophists brought about a high tone in the religious enthusiasm of the Buddhists. Buddhist leaders were already invigorated as a result of the public debates in the preceding years between Christian missionaries and Buddhist monks.

In 1875, Olcott, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891), and several other spiritualists formed the Theosophical Society in New York City.[9] Blavatsky published *Isis Unveiled* in 1877 in which she attributed all Western knowledge and religion to ancient Eastern sources. Hindu and Buddhist teachings were central to the work of the Theosophists. Therefore, they decided to "go to India and take up residence in, what to all students of Oriental Philosophy and occult science, is a sort of 'Holy Land.'"[10] In the same year, Olcott began a series of correspondences with Hindu and Buddhist reformers throughout India and Sri Lanka.[11] The well-known Buddhist polemicist Ven. Migettuwatte (or Mohottivatte) Gunananda (1823-1890), was one of them.[12] Olcott had read the report of the debate between Buddhist monks and Christian ministers at Panadura in 1873.[13] Report of the debate was published by John Capper of the *Ceylon Times* and later published in book

[7] Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society,* 256-262.

[8] B. P. Kirthisinghe and M. P. Amarasuriya, *Colonel Olcott: His Service to Buddhism* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1981).

[9] A. R. Lewis and J. A. Peterson, *Controversial New Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 259.

[10] Henry Steel Olcott, "Theosophy and Theosophists," *Overland Monthly*, Second Series 37 (February 1901), 993.

[11] Henry Steel Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves: The Only Authentic History of the Theosophical Society, Second Series 1878-83* (London/Madras: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1900), 265-169.

[12] *Theosophist*, 1897, 34.

[13] Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, 230.

form in English.[14] The book had a wide circulation among the Orientalists in England and America.

Although Buddhists far outnumbered Protestants on the island, it was alleged that Protestants had far more privileges than the majority religions. Christian missionaries were ahead of the Buddhist revivalists in modern religious expressions and organizational capacities prior to the arrival of Olcott. They had the monopoly of English education, publication of polemical and apologetic propaganda through their printing presses.[15] The great activity in reformulating educational principles in nineteenth century England which brought about a transformation in school and classroom came with missionaries to Sri Lanka. The fee-paying public schools, which the missionaries operated, served the upper-class. These institutions that the missionaries introduced redefined standards of masculinity, putting a heavy emphasis on sports and teamwork among the Sri Lankan middle class. Around 1879 there were 372 government schools[16] and 814 schools run by Christian denominations.[17] There were only two Buddhist schools. Christian missionaries saw education through their schools as a method of evangelization. The benefits of education did not reach the Buddhist majority. The critics of the missionaries saw that while, in principle, educating children was good and worthwhile, they were being educated for subservience, and they were being educated to turn their backs on their own heritage and their own religion.[18] Education provided

[14] J. M. Peebles, *The Great Debate: Buddhism and Christianity face to face* (Colombo: K. W. Siriwardhana, 1875).

[15] Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, 203

[16] The first government schools had been founded by the Dutch and then taken over by the British, and kept under the supervision of the Colonial Chaplaincy. They were also in many ways Christian schools where the Bible was taught.

[17] Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, 193; K. M. de Silva (ed.), *Sri Lanka: A Survey* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1977), 404.

[18] Clayton G. Mackenzie, "Demythologising the Missionaries: a reassessment of the functions and relationships of Christian missionary education under colonialism," *Comparative Education* 29, no. 1 (1993), 46.

avenues for employment, entrepreneurship and professional careers which had become the keys to upward social mobility.

II. CONTRIBUTIONS TO SRI LANKAN BUDDHISM

1. The 'anti-missionary missionary'

In his correspondence with Buddhist reformers in Sri Lanka, Olcott mentioned that he had already converted to Buddhism while in America. However, he expressed his desire to travel to Asia to learn from the Buddhist monks of Sri Lanka. By 1878 he had published a tract in the *Indian Spectator*, defending Buddhism. Ven. Gunananda was regarded by Olcott as his unseen Buddhist friend before the latter's arrival in Sri Lanka. Ven. Gunananda was in fact organizing a branch of the Theosophical Society in Sri Lanka, expecting the arrival of the founders of that society. He also translated some passages dealing with miraculous deeds mentioned in Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled*.[19] Some of Olcott's tracts and writings against Christianity were also translated into Sinhala and disseminated throughout the country in anticipation of his arrival. These contributed to his popularity and enthusiastic reception upon arrival.[20] Some Buddhist leaders of the Amarapura and Siamese sects also invited Olcott and Blavatsky to visit Sri Lanka. Ven. Gunananda informed the Buddhists of the arrival of the white friends of Buddhism and made arrangements to accord them a stately reception.[21]

Olcott and Blavatsky arrived in Colombo on May 16, 1880 to a warm welcome led by Ven. Gunananda. On May 25, Olcott, Blavatsky and Damodar Mavalankar (1857-1885) visited Galle. There they formally embraced Buddhism by

[19] Henry Steel Olcott, *Buddhism in Tibet (ටිබෙට් රටේ බුද්ධාගම)* (Colombo: Kotahena Press, 1879); Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, 157; Ananda Guruge (ed.), *Return to Righteousness: A Collection of Speeches, Essays and Letters of Anagarika Dharmapala* (Colombo: Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1991), 699.

[20] Guruge (ed.), *Return to Righteousness*, 685.

[21] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves, Vol. 2*, 157.

taking *pancasila* at Vijayananda Temple in Galle.[22] "Buddhists regarded this as an act of great symbolic value" which benefitted them in their campaign against Christian missionary work.[23] Thus Olcott and Blavatsky became the first European-Americans to publicly and formally become lay Buddhists.[24] The Buddhists on the other hand believed that "Buddhism was won by the founders of the Theosophical Society."[25] Blavatsky clearly stated that "Our Buddhism was, in a word, a philosophy, not a creed."

Olcott was welcomed by the Buddhists as an ally who could guide them politically as well as culturally in their struggle against colonial Christian domination.

Theosophy was a part of the spiritualism and occultism *en vogue* in late nineteenth century Europe and America. It drew upon both older European philosophies such as Neo-Platonism and Hinduism and Buddhism. As an esoteric and syncretistic religious movement it was at odds with orthodox Christianity. Blavatsky stated that "Jesus, the Christ-God, is a myth concocted two centuries after the real Hebrew Jesus died."[26] They opposed every form of dogmatic theology. They regarded Christianity as pernicious, and

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[22] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves, Vol. 2*, 372; Tissa Kariyawasam, *Religious Activities and the Development of a New Poetical Tradition in Sinhalese 1852-1906* (Colombo: Godage, 2009), 72. Vijayananda Temple in Galle belongs to the Ramañña sect which ordained monks of all castes.

[23] P. V. J. Jayasekera, *Confrontations with Colonialism: Resistance, Revivalism and Reform Under British Rule in Sri Lanka, 1796-1920, Volume 1* (Colombo: Vijitha Yapa, 2017), 376; W. J. T. Small, *A History of the Methodist Church in Ceylon, 1814-1964* (Colombo: Wesley Press, 1971), 222.

[24] It is recorded that on a visit to a Hindu temple in Jaffa he declared himself to be a Hindu. R. F. Young and S. Jebanesan, *Bible Trembled: Hindu Christian Controversies of Nineteenth Century Ceylon,* (Vienna: Sammlung De Nobili, 1995), 116. When Blavatsky and Olcott moved to India, the Theosophical Society struck an alliance with the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reform movement.

[25] Kirthisinghe and Amarasuriya, *Colonel Olcott*, 3.

[26] Helena Patrovna Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Ancient and Modern Mysteries of Science and Theology* (NY: J. W. Bouton, 1877), 544.

aimed at counteracting missionary propaganda by educating the Western nations about the religious philosophies of the East.[27]

Olcott's writings also reflect the anti-Christian position that Blavatsky espoused. He was aware that Sri Lankan Buddhists were waging a battle against Christian missionaries and his anti-Christian stance made him popular with them. His Christianity-bashing was enthusiastically applauded by the Buddhists in Sri Lanka. In fact, Olcott's theosophy gained ground among Buddhists, Hindus and Parsees in South Asia because of their dislike of Christianity.[28] Olcott stated that he denied Christianity because it is an intolerant religion while Buddhism is tolerant. His association with Asians displayed an anti-missionary attitude, therefore attacking Christians was welcome among his Buddhist acquaintances in Sri Lanka. Gombrich and Obeyesekere call him an "a kind of anti-missionary missionary."[29]

Olcott soon became aware of the larger role that Sri Lankan Buddhists expected of him. Wherever he went, he was given an enthusiastic welcome, which Olcott noted with some irony that "The Asiatic people have certainly perfected the art of feeding the vanity of public men and their public men seem to like it."[30] *The Maha Bodhi magazine* reported "No king ever received that homage of a devoted people as these two when they landed on the shores."[31] Nevertheless, Olcott enthusiastically accepted this role as a Western champion of Buddhism against the Christian missions.

The Sri Lanka Branch of the Theosophical Society was founded by forty Buddhist leaders on June 17, 1880.

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[27] Jinarajadasa, *The Golden Book,* 26.

[28] Stephen Prothero, *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 65.

[29] Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988/ Varnasi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), 204.

[30] *Theosophist* 1, no. 10 (July 1880), 259.

[31] "Colonel Olcott and the Buddhist Revival Movement," *Maha-Bodhi* 15 (1907), 26.

Shortly after its founding the Theosophical Society became the Buddhist Theosophical Society.[32] Buddhist Theosophy did not have any of the all-embracing features of western theosophy in it. In fact, it was exclusively Buddhist.[33] "The object of the Society was the promotion of Buddhism by guarding it from attack from other religions."[34] The Buddhism that blended with Theosophy was not the traditional type. The conservative monks of the Siam fraternity were cautious in dealing with these new experiments. However, the Buddhism of Olcott's early supporters were very receptive to the social reform idealism of the Protestant missionaries. Some have even stated that "theosophy is the natural child of the marriage between Buddhism and Christianity" with a view to debunk the latter.[35]

2. Buddhist self-confidence and unity

When Olcott came to Sri Lanka for the first time in 1880 he noticed that, at the time they arrived, influential Sinhalese Buddhist families were "ashamed to acknowledge the Dharma of Buddhism…for fear of Christian opinion in authority."[36] However, within a period of ten years Olcott found remarkable change had taken place. He stated, "… we were the first white champions of their religion, speaking of its excellence and its blessed comfort from the platform in the face of the missionaries, its enemies and slanders."[37]

[32] Colombo Buddhist Theosophical Society which was formed on 17 June 1880, was incorporated by an Act of Parliament No. 25 of 1998.

[33] Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, 246.

[34] *Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Vol. VI* (Colombo: Government of Sri Lanka, 2003), 208.

[35] W. T. Stead quoted in Richard Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (London: Routledge, 2006), 62.

[36] *The Buddhist*, February 14, 1890.

[37] Guruge, *Return to Righteousness*, 365.

Buddhists expected Olcott to lead their religion on a path of modernity to meet the challenge of Christianity.[38]

With his anti-slavery background in America, Olcott did not tolerate differences across sects or castes that were prevalent among Buddhists.[39] He called for Buddhist unity against the 'Christian threat.' It was a hindrance to the struggle against Christianity. He abhorred the discriminations found in the Sinhalese caste system. He discovered that the Ramañña fraternity of monks included all castes.[40] He was sympathetic to their liberal attitude to caste of those who seek ordination.[41] Thus the Ramañña *nikaya* became more visible as Olcott preferred the members of that fraternity in contrast to other fraternities which confined themselves to their own castes.[42] Even in India, Olcott greatly supported education of Tamil *paraiyar* (Dalit) Buddhists. "My neutrality with respect to difference of caste and sect made me welcome to all, and I passed from vihara to vihara, addressing now an audience of Willalas *(sic)*, now one of the fisher caste, and on one of great Cinnamon peeler caste, each time collecting money for the Common object."[43]

3. Buddhist schools

In 1880 there were only two schools in Sri Lanka managed by the Buddhists.[44] Olcott criticized the British Government for continuing to encourage the Christian Missions to open schools in which Christianity was taught to all pupils regardless of their own religious affiliation. These schools were supported from public funds while they had not given that opportunity to the Buddhists who were the majority population of the country.

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[38] Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Buddha in Sri Lanka: Histories and Stories*, Kindle Edition, 2018.

[39] Blackburn, *Locations of Buddhism*, 107.

[40] *Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Vol. VI*, 503.

[41] Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, 166.

[42] Kariyawasam, *Religious Activities*, 20-29.

[43] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves, Vol. 2*, 371.

[44] Kirtisinghe and Amarasuriya, *Colonel Olcott*, 4.

At the same time, he wished to launch an anti-missionary counterattack by sending Buddhist missionaries to other countries.[45] For this ecumenical and anti-missionary purpose he needed preachers, teachers and organizers to convince the people of the world of the value of Buddhism.[46] He advised the Buddhists, "I point to you our great enemy, Christianity, and bid you look at their large and wealthy Bible, Tract, Sunday School, and Missionary Societies – the tremendous agencies they support to keep alive and spread their religion. We must form similar Societies, and make our most practical and honest men of business their managers."[47]

Christian missionaries used mass education through schools as a method of evangelization.[48] Protestant missionary societies campaigned successfully for state assistance for their schools. It was not available to non-Protestants at this time. A Roman Catholic missionary in Jaffna, Christopher Bonjean (1823-1892), published a series of articles in the local newspapers urging the government to equally grant aid for Roman Catholic schools.[49]

The setting up of a Department of Public Instruction in 1869 assigned the functions with regard to the central government to a department. The government took steps to address the demands of the different religions communities. Every religious denomination was allowed to have schools for their own children. The government was willing to pay grants to every religious body. Therefore non-Christian religions were able to organize themselves and to start schools. Buddhists had not been able to fully utilize this facility until the arrival of Olcott.[50]

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[45] Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 125.

[46] *Theosophist* 10 (1889), 115.

[47] Quoted in Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 125.

[48] Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, 176.

[49] J. E. Jayasuriya, *Educational Policies and Progress during British Rule in Ceylon* (Colombo: Associated Educational Publishers, 1976), 152.

[50] S. G. Perera, *A History of Ceylon: the British Period and After* (Colombo: Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd., 1955), 178-179.

The establishment of Buddhist schools was regarded as essential to sustain the Buddhist revival. Olcott and the Theosophical Society became a catalyst for Buddhist schools for the children of the laity. The education establishment prevailing in Buddhist temples was for the *sangha* and the Sinhala upper classes. Olcott's survey of the educational situation in the island showed him the value of a network of Buddhist schools to counter the influence of Christian schools.[51] Olcott threw himself wholeheartedly into the fight for the establishment of Buddhist schools. He proposed to the Buddhist Theosophical Society that they bring out a series of Buddhist readers for the use of Buddhist schools.[52] He also expressed the need of a press for the Buddhist Theosophical Society to publish those books.

Emphasizing the need for Buddhist public education, question 328 of his *Buddhist Catechism* asks, "Is Buddhism opposed to education and the study of science?" The answer given is, "Quite the contrary; in the *Sigalowadda Sutta*, a discourse preached by Buddha in the bamboo grove near Rajagriha, he specified as one of duties of a teacher that he should give his pupils instruction in science and lore." Thus, "Due to the efforts of Olcott the number rose to 205 schools and three colleges in 1907, the year he passed away."

In order to organize the resources for education and other Buddhist activities he used the Theosophical Society, which came to be known as the Buddhist Theosophical Society, as the central organization. This Society was modelled on similar Christian societies with the goal of promoting the spread of Buddhist knowledge and learning. It was not easy to create an enthusiasm among Buddhists to open schools. The grants-in-aid provided by the state were not available to non-Protestants before 1869.

The government in 1891 passed a resolution that "… no new school will be aided within a quarter mile of an existing school of the same class excepting in towns with

[51] Jayasuriya, *Educational Policies,* 225.
[52] Guruge, *Return to Righteousness*, 771.

special claims aforesaid."[53] Olcott came in May 1894 to be at a convention of the Managers of Buddhist schools. They appointed Olcott to lay before the Secretary of State for the Colonies the grievance of the Buddhists in regard to this rule. He went to England to seek a sympathetic hearing of the Secretary of State in December 1894. It is recorded that Olcott campaigned against the Christian character of government schools.[54]

Olcott stated that they provide 'a new defense' of Buddhism for those who had education in Christian missionary schools.[55] The influence of Theosophists spread with the establishment of Buddhist schools. Although these schools had a Buddhist appearance their education was influence by the liberal thought coming from the West. Education in these schools encouraged self-esteem which the Sinhala Buddhist middle class valued. There was also a tendency to inspire national and religious identity.[56]

Missionary education had a heavy component of secular teaching. There was a clear difference between the instruction provided in English medium schools in the cities and the knowledge imparted in village schools in the vernacular. The children in vernacular schools were not of the influential Anglicized middle class.[57]

Education bestowed privilege in colonial society. English education was an important source of employment to the growing middle classes. The Buddhist Theosophical Society undertook to open English medium schools for the upper class Buddhist families following the system introduced by the missionaries. Olcott had modelled this exercise after Christian examples that he was familiar with.

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[53] Sessional Paper 18, 1891.

[54] *The Buddhist*, 6 June 1890.

[55] Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements*, 233.

[56] Kumari Jayawardena, *The White Women's Other Burden: Western Women and South Asia during British Rule* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 117.

[57] Arnold Wright, *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon* (reprint, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1999), 224.

"As the Christians have their society for the diffusion of Christian knowledge, so this should be a society for the diffusion of Buddhist knowledge." The curriculum and school management followed the same pattern. Sports, societies, houses were not different from the missionary schools. The names of these schools imitated the Christian ones. They had Mahinda, Sanghamitta, Ananda, Siddhartha and so on as names of their schools. Catholic schools had the names of their saints. Anglicans and Methodists also had some Christian name assigned to their English medium schools. As a result of the enthusiasm created by Olcott among Buddhists there appeared several Buddhist educational societies seeking grants from the government.

On November 1, 1886 the Sunday school in Pettah was converted into an English day school named Pettah Buddhist English School, with Charles Webster Leadbeater (1854-1834) as the first principal. This was later named Ananda College.

Olcott travelled the countryside in a specially equipped bullock cart to remote villages to propagate his plans for Buddhist revival, especially for collecting money for the Education Fund. By the end of the year 1888 there were 142 registered grant-in-aid schools under Buddhist management. All of them were modelled on mission schools. These children were trained for administrative, professional, and mercantile positions under the colonial regime. It is primarily through these schools that modern Buddhism (that is, the Western conception of Buddhism) diffused into the society and became the basic religious ideology of the educated Buddhist bourgeoisie. These schools began to correct the great imbalance in the Ceylonese educational system during the colonial era.

Blavatsky founded a society known as *Nārisiksādāna Samitiya* (Society for Female Education) for the purpose of opening schools for girls.[58] With the help of Mrs. K. F.

[58] *The Tablet,* 15 August 1891, 26. Leadbeater wrote about Sanghamitta Girls' School in Maradana as a sister school. Speaking at the school's opening, John Bowles Daly (1844-1916) of the Ceylon

Pichette, an Australian, Blavatsky founded a girls' school at Maradana which they named Sanghamitta Bālikā Vidyālaya.[59] Unfortunately, Pichette met with a fatal accident not long afterwards.[60]

Olcott states that the "children of Buddhists should be taught their religion regularly on special days at a special hour at every temple in the island."[61] Olcott founded, again on the Christian model, Buddhist secondary schools and Sunday schools affiliated with the Buddhist Theosophical Society, thus initiating what would become a long and successful campaign for Western-style Buddhist education in Sri Lanka. In fact the first venture of Society was the establishment of Sunday schools. By the end of 1881 there were nine Sunday schools functioning in the city of Colombo.

4. Buddhist publishing

The propagandistic and polemical work mainly aimed at Christianity was a priority in Olcott's mind. Therefore, with a view to the publication of Buddhist literature, he used the two printing presses already under the management of Buddhists for this purpose. *Sarasavi Sandaresa* (founded in 1880) was a Sinhalese weekly with Weragama Punchi Banda as its first editor.[62] In 1886 the shareholders of the Colombo Theosophical Society presented their shares to make the Buddhist Press the property of the Theosophical Society.

Theosophical Society "dwelt on the benefits of female education." *Lucifer* VII, no. 40 (15 December 1890), 343. He also proposed a Sinhalese language journal for women, to be entitled *The Sanghamitta*. *Supplement to the Theosophist* (August 1890), cliv.

[59]Laurence Cox and Mihirini Sirisena, "Early Western Lay Buddhists in Colonial Asia: John Bowles Daly and the Buddhist Theosophical Society of Ceylon," *Journal of the Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions* 3 (2016), 10.

[60] *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism Vol. VI*, 209.

[61] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves Vol. 2*, 143.

[62] K. H. M. Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon, 1796-1965* (Colombo: Tisara Prakasakayo, 1968), 28.

Their English periodical, *The Buddhist,* began publication in 1888.

The publications popularized the philosophy and texts of Buddhism. They treated it as a kind of "sacred Scripture." In those early issues there was much discussion of doctrinal matters. When D. B. Jayatilaka became the editor of the journal, he used his knowledge and scholarship of Buddhism to improve the quality of the journal. This was a great achievement, considering the quality of Buddhist publications before the arrival of Olcott where trivial and personal attacks were published.[63]

5. Fundraising

In July of 1880, he established the National Education Fund as a scholarship fund to finance the expansion of the Buddhist school system. He proposed that "we should sell subscription tickets or Merit cards "to collect funds from the Buddhists."[64]

Fund raising was hardly known in Sri Lanka before the arrival of Olcott. C.W Leadbeater stated in May 1884 that he could not collect "a single penny for the 'Fund' as the use of money was scarcely known in these areas." Olcott says "my first begging lecture was at Kelanie, (sic.) on the Buddha's birthday, and resulted in the paltry sale of Rs. 60 worth tickets, and one subscription of Rs. 100 towards the fund."[65] Once the funding raising got under way there were squabbles over the control of the Fund.[66] School fundraising is the practice of raising money to support educational enrichment programmes by schools or school groups mostly known from the United States. One of the most prevalent practices in the United States is product fundraising for religious purposes. Olcott stated that "the Christians spend millions to destroy Buddhism, we must spend to defend and

[63] R.F. Young and S. Jebanesan, *Bible Trembled*, 161.
[64] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves Vol. 2*, 325.
[65] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves Vol. 2*, 326
[66] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves Vol. 2*, 307-308.

propagate it.[67] "I began with the High Priest and Megittuwatte, and arranged for some lectures that the committee had asked me to give in Colombo. Then, at a Branch meeting, I explained the system of voluntary self-taxation and adopted by many good Christians, by which sometimes ten percent, of their incomes is set aside for religious and charitable work; I had seen my father and other pious Christian gentlemen doing this as a matter of conscience."

On the Vesak day of 1881 Buddhist National Fund was inaugurated at the Kelaniya temple.[68] Besides, *The Buddhist* was an instrument through which funds could be raised for various causes and the assistance of the Buddhist public mobilized. Olcott, accompanied by an interpreter, travelled in bullock carts to remote villages where thousands crowded to listen to him. His mesmeric healings also attracted crowds. Olcott used those gatherings to raise money for the educational fund.

6. Lay leadership

Under colonial rule traditional learning lost its role and value in society and the elite took to English education. They were bound by tradition, indigenous and vernacular ideas. Olcott found that the *sangha* was limited in their involvement within a society increasingly influenced by European ideas and practices. For this too he looked to the example of Protestant ministers who were closely involved in the affairs of the laity. The Buddhist Theosophical Society provided a platform for the increasing involvement of laymen in the roles of religious leadership which was hitherto the monopoly of Buddhist monks. As a result "they had to struggle to protect their status defying the criticism levelled

[67] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves Vol. 4*, 120; On the conflict between Olcott and Ven. Gunananda, see Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, 250-2.

[68] Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon*, 28.

against them."[69] The laity educated in the Christian missionary schools were able to introduce modern concepts and methods of organization. Olcott also encouraged the laymen to take an active part in Buddhist causes and social welfare work.[70]

Theosophists considered that monks were not suitable for this kind of work. When Olcott organized new branches of the Theosophical Society in other towns also he followed the same policy of avoiding recruitment of monks to them.[71] The Buddhist Theosophical Society purposely avoided the monks even though they had taken an active part in the religious controversies in past decades. Segregating monks was purposely done in order to concentrate on social and educational affairs.[72] By the 1890s the work of the Buddhist Theosophical Society was completely manned by laity.

The Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) was created in Sri Lanka in 1898. The main founder was C. S. Dissanayake as part of a bid to provide Buddhist institutions as an alternative to the Young Men's Christian Association, otherwise known as the YMCA. Some scholars have stated that the Colombo YMBA was more important in the area of Buddhist education than the Maha Bodhi Society in disseminating Buddhist knowledge in the country.[73]

7. Buddhist flag

Henry Olcott pursued other tactics in his promotion of Buddhism in Sri Lankan society outside the educational system. He felt the need for a symbol to rally the Buddhists. Therefore he took a special interest in the invention of the

[69] Olaganwatte Chandasiri, *Nineteen Century Poetical Works and Social Institutions of Sri Lanka*, (Colombo: Vijitha Yapa, 2018) 156.

[70] Gombrich and Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed*, 232.

[71] Karayawasam, *Religious Activities*, 83.

[72] Kariyawasam, *Religious Activities*, 85.

[73] D. K. Swearer, "Lay Buddhism and the Buddhist Revival in Ceylon," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* XXXVIII, no. 3, (255–275), 267.

Buddhist flag. He suggested that a committee of Buddhist leaders in Colombo design the flag. The flag that was originally designed by the committee was modified on the suggestion of Olcott as he felt that its long streaming shape made it inconvenient for general use. The flag was modified in size and shape so that it would be in line with national flags.[74] The Buddhist flag eventually became a symbol of unity among the local Buddhists. Some critics have said that it is complete fallacy that Olcott himself designed the flag.[75] It was the work of a committee headed by Olcott. [76]

Gunananda Thera hoisted the Buddhist flag at his temple at Kotahena for the first time on a public occasion on the first Vesak holiday. Simultaneously the flag was hoisted in several other places. The Buddhists were advised to hoist the flag in many public places.

The flag consists of 'the six colours', blue, yellow, red, white, pink and a mixture of the five colours in the sixth stripe, said to be in the aura shown around the head of Buddha when he attained Enlightenment.[77] In 1889 the modified flag was introduced to Japan by Olcott who presented it to Emperor Meiji.[78] At the 1952 World

[74] The Committee consisted of two Buddhist monks, Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala and Ven Migettuwatte Gunananda and eight lay Buddhists (Don Carolis Hewavitharana, Andiris Perera Dharmagunawardhana, Charles A. de Silva, Peter De Abrew, William De Abrew, H. William Fernando, N. S. Fernando and Carolis Pujitha Gunawardena. Sumangala Thera served as chairman and Gunawardena as secretary. Olcott acted in an advisory capacity. *The Maha Bodhi* 98-99 (1892), 286.

[75] Ananda, W. P. Guruge, (ed.) Return to Righteousness: A Collection of Speeches, Essays and Letters of the Anagarika Dharmapala. Colombo: The Government Press, 1965) xlviii; .Susantha Goonatilake, "Buddhist Protestantism- The Reverse flow of Ideas from Sri Lana to the West, " *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri lanka*, New Series, VOl.45 (2000), 38

[76] Gombrich and Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed*, 204.

[77] Kirthisinghe and Amarasuriya, *Colonel Olcott*, 12.

[78] Olcott's body was covered in the Buddhist flag and the American flag. Kirthisinghe and Amarasuriya, *Colonel Olcott*, 20.

Fellowship of Buddhists, the flag of Buddhists was adopted as the International Buddhist Flag.

8. Buddhist Catechism

The publication of Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism* in 1881 equipped Buddhists with a modernist explanation of Buddhism. This was also done on Christian lines. Olcott wrote in his diary, "Finding out the shocking ignorance of the Sinhalese about Buddhism I began after vainly getting some monk to do it, the compilation of a Buddhist Catechism on the lines of the similar elementary handbooks so effectively used among Christian sects."[79] A catechism was to them a totally novel idea. He realized that there was no Buddhist aid for laymen to understand the philosophy and difficult doctrines of Buddhism. Finding no book which gave the teachings in simple terms, he compiled *The Buddhist Catechism* in Sinhalese and English versions in 1881. The book underwent many editions. It was endorsed by the High Priest Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala.[80] The French and English translations of the text were oriented to a Western intellectualist view of Buddhism.[81] In 1893 the Sri Lanka government permitted the use of Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism* in village schools.[82]

Olcott used the words of the missionary lexicon such as 'idolater', 'pagan', and so forth, which was further developed by his disciple Dharmapala, to castigate the Christians. This Catechism prepared by Olcott echoes nineteenth century Protestant polemics against Roman Catholics. Its catechetical form clearly shows the author's training in polemics, as we can find a moralist attitude and anti-ritual tendency. Once the book was published in Sinhalese, Olcott wrote, "This we may say, was substantially

[79] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves, Vol. 2*, 325.

[80] Kirthisinghe and Amarasuriya 1981:12.

[81] Gananath Obeyeskere, "Colonel Olcott's reforms of the 19th Century and their Cultural Significance," Ralph Peiris Memorial Lecture, 1992.

[82] Jayasuriya, *Educational Policies,* 318.

the beginning of our campaign for Buddhism against its foes, missionary and other, and the advantage has never been lost."[83]

9. Buddhist Defense Committee and Vesak as a public holiday

There was an outbreak of violence on Easter Sunday 1883 at Kotahena, a suburb of Colombo, when Roman Catholics attacked a Buddhist procession going past St. Lucia's Cathedral. This and similar attacks on Catholic processions in the other cities on the same day were orchestrated as challenges to Roman Catholicism by Gunananda Thera.[84] Critics have stated that Olcott's contribution to the Buddhist revival was the cause behind the riot.[85] Catholic opinion was that "His anti-Christian feelings accentuated the acrimony between the two groups."[86] The Riots Commission appointed by the Governor eventually dropped all charges due to a lack of "reliable evidence." When the Buddhists realized that the Catholics would not be brought to trial, a group of Buddhists urged Olcott to come from Adyar to Colombo to advise them. He arrived on 27 January 1884 and organized the Buddhist Defense Committee, which elected him an honorary member and charged him to travel to London as its representative, "to ask for such redress and enter into such engagements as may appear to him judicious." In order to assist the Buddhists, Olcott arrived in London in May of 1884.

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[83] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves, Vol. 2*, 327.

[84] Tissa Kariyawasam and Pranith Abhayasudara (eds.) *Gunananda Samaru Kalapaya* (Maharagama: Tarangi Printers, 1990), 163-176; Nira Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age*: *A History* (New York: Oxford Press, 2014), 122.

[85] V. Perniola, *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka: The British Period, Vol. VII, 1883-1886* (Dehiwela: Tisara Prakasakayo, 2003), 119; W. J. T. Small, *History of the Methodist Church in Ceylon* (Colombo: Wesley Press, 1976).

[86] Bede Barcatta, *A History of the Southern Vicariate of Colombo Sri Lanka* (Kandy: Montefarno Publications, 1994), 662.

The Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, had already sent a telegraph to Lord Derby, the Colonial Secretary, that "There can be no question that Colonel Olcott really possesses considerable influence among the Buddhist Community; that he, to a great extent, enjoys their confidence; and that he may fairly claim to be a representative authorized by them on his present mission."[87] He requested of the British Government that the Catholics who had instigated the riot be brought to trial; that Buddhists be guaranteed the right to exercise their religion freely; that Vesak be declared a public holiday; that all restrictions against the use of tom-toms and other musical instruments in religious processions be removed; that Buddhist registrars be appointed; and that the question of Buddhist temporalities be resolved. Only two of these requests were speedily granted. The restrictions regarding the use of musical instruments in religious processions were lifted, and Vesak became an official holiday.

Olcott, again worked to develop carols for Vesak modeled on Christmas carols, as well as promoting the custom of sending Vesak cards. It was Olcott who put forward the idea of asking the British government to make Vesak a public holiday. In the letter to the Secretary of State for Colonies, the Earl of Derby, he stated:

> That the birthday of Buddha … be proclaimed full holiday for Buddhist employees of government, as the sacred days of Mussulmans, Hindus, and Parsis are officially recognized holidays in India for employees of those several faiths. The Buddhists, who are always most loyal subjects, are compelled to either work on this, their most holy day of the year, or lose the day's pay.[88]

This was granted in 1885 so that the Buddhists were able to celebrate Vesak holiday on a grand scale. The newly

[87] Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 208.
[88] Sri Lanka National Archives, (Lot 4/163).

prepared Buddhist flag was first hoisted in public on Vesak day, 28 May 1885 at the Dipaduttamarama, Kotahena, by Gunananda Thera. This was the first Vesak public holiday under British rule. The proclamation of the day as a government holiday had a remarkable effect upon the feelings of the people.[89]

Various elements of the first Vesak celebration came at the initiative of Olcott. According to Kariyawasam, "At the beginning, the proclamation of Vesak as a public holiday in 1884, it seems, did not stir the talents of the new poets of the period."[90] It was the Theosophists who launched an active propagandist programme to make it a grand occasion to celebrate. Olcott encouraged Buddhists to celebrate it with songs modelled on Christian carols. The carol party of the Buddhist Theosophical Society began in 1885 by visiting the temples in the neighbourhood of Colombo. The choristers were in white robes and travelled with a team of bullock carts, visiting numerous temples brightly illuminated. The songs and the tunes followed the pattern of Christian carols. Therefore the editor of *The Buddhist* stated in 1889 that "It is well known that we are no advocates for the indiscriminate adoption of Western customs, our readers may give us full credence when we say that in our opinion modern European music is infinitely better suited to the requirements of Wesak (Sic.) carol than the tuneless, timeless Hindustani arts of which we hear so much in this country."[91] Sumangala Thera who was impressed by the Vesak celebrations sent a telegraph to Olcott congratulating him on the success.[92]

The custom of sending Vesak cards also came with it.[93] They were prepared on similar lines to Christmas cards. Revd. Thomas Moscrop of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in Sri Lanka from 1883 to 1900 wrote: "During Buddhist festivals, transparencies have been carried

[89] *Buddhist* (1889), 22.
[90] Kariyawasam, *Religious Activities,* 340.
[91] *Buddhist* (1889), 22.
[92] Kariyawasam, *Religious Activities,* 111.
[93] Gananath and Gombrich, *Buddhism Transformed*, 205.

through the streets bearing the words:'Glory to Buddha in the highest, 'on earth peace,' 'goodwill toward men,"[94] The Buddhists had carol processions, tolling of bells, evergreens on the Vesak day in 1886.[95] This way they Christianized the Vesak festival. They also erected pandals which the Catholics did doing the time of Jacome Gonsalves. They imported colourful lanterns from China and Japan.

10. Worldwide network

The young Don David Hewavitharana (later Anagarika Dharmapala) met Blavatsky and Olcott in 1880 during their first tour in Sri Lanka, when he was fourteen years old. He helped Colonel Olcott in his preaching tours, particularly by acting as his translator. Olcott took Dharmapala to Japan in February 1889 and later Olcott sponsored Dharmapala to go to the First World Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893. This was a chance for Dharmapala to present Buddhist teaching, unmediated, to the Western world. Olcott's advice to Dharmapala in the foundation of the Maha Bodhi Society helped to organize Buddhism in India, besides several other countries. This Society was founded in Colombo in 1891 and its headquarters were moved to Calcutta the following year. One of its primary aims was the restoration of the Maha Bodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya to Buddhist control while propagating Buddhism.

In one of his visits to Japan in 1890, Olcott was able to bring together Mahayana Buddhists from China, Tibet, Japan and Vietnam with those from Myanmar, Thailand, and Sri Lanka belonging to the Southern Theravada tradition. In 1891 both parties agreed on fourteen items added to Fundamental Buddhist Beliefs by their authoritative committees. Olcott personally took an interest in it by adding an appendix to his Buddhist Catechism.[96] Olcott's desire to reach the international stage and unite Buddhist schools also was a counteroffensive against Christian

[94] *Ceylon Friend*, 16 October (1889), 23
[95] *Pravada* 1, no. 5 (May 1992), 10.
[96] Kirthisinghe and Amarasuriya, *Colonel Olcott,* 13.

missions. A significant consequence of the revival of Buddhism under Olcott has been the path paved for scholarly contributions made by European monks such as Nyanatiloka Thera (A. W. F. Gueth, 1878-1957), Nyanaponika Thera (Siegmund Feniger, 1901-1994), and Nyanamoli Thera (Osbert J. S. Moore, 1905-1960) who later translated Buddhist texts to Western languages.

III. CHRISTIAN CRITICS

Reginald Copleston, the Anglican bishop of Colombo, was disturbed by the revival of Buddhism, and in a letter to the headquarters of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel he wrote,

> At present it is receiving an impetus…from the prestige given to it by the interest taken in Pali scholarship and Buddhist literature in Europe. The Secretary of an obscure Society – which, however, for all the Sinhalese know, may be a distinguished one – has been writing, it appears, to several Buddhist priests here, hailing them as brothers in the march of intellect, and congratulating one or two of them on the part they took so nobly against Christianity in a certain ill-judged but insignificant public controversy, which took place years ago in a village called Panadura.[97]

Olcott continued to mention the opposition he faced from the missionaries as well as local Christians. The appearance of Olcott stimulated a Buddhist movement which the missionaries did not expect. Because of this, many missionaries went out of their way to vilify everything that Olcott did in India and Sri Lanka.[98] Olcott wrote, "In truth,

[97] Charles Frederick Pascoe, *Classified Digest of the Records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts 1701-1892* (London: SPG, 1894), 664.

[98] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves, Vol. 2*, 310-311; Jackson, *Oriental Religions*, 162.

these Protestant Missionaries are a pestilent lot. With the Catholics we have never had a hard word."[99] However, Catholic feelings against Olcott came to the surface after the Kotahena Riot in 1883. At the Commission of Enquiry appointed by the Government to seek the cause of the riot, Bishop Pagnani of Colombo stated that "They [i.e the Buddhists] always used to stop their tom-toms in front of a church, but for the last few years they have ceased to paying this respect."[100] He pointed out that this was "Since the time of Olcott."

Archbishop Bonjean, writing on September 21, 1888 to D. Jacobini, stated,

> I am quite busy with the evangelization of our province of the South. The beginning was more difficult on account of the fanaticism of Buddhists stirred up during the last years by the Theosophists. They have formed a league among themselves to prevent the establishment of the Christian religion in these regions of South where so far they have been absolute masters.[101]

Rev. L. Piccinelli, writing on 25 April 1892 to the Propaganda Fide, stated,

> We reached Panadura, a small picturesque town situated on the bank of a beautiful river. Unfortunately here also moral goodness does not match the natural beauty. Panadura is one of the centres where Buddhism is aggressive. Colonel Olcott and other white Buddhists have often held here meetings and fanned the flame of fanaticism.[102]

The *Catholic Messenger* was critical of Olcott's work, stating that it increased hostility of Buddhists towards Catholics.[103]

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[99] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves, Vol. 2*, 175.
[100] Sri Lanka National Archives, Lot 33/991.
[101] Perniola, *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka*, 144.
[102] Perniola, *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka*, 315.
[103] *Ceylon Catholic Messenger*, 10 August 1883.

On one occasion in Kandy the popular enthusiasm shown in a large gathering at one of Olcott's lectures seriously disturbed the missionaries. Thereafter Olcott challenged the missionaries to an open debate.[104]

IV. CONCLUSION

The arrival of theosophists marked the beginning of a new era in the Buddhist reaction to Christian missionary activities.[105] Despite claims that Olcott initiated the Sinhalese Buddhist Revival, his connection with the movement was, as he himself recognized, neither as initiator (which honour should doubtless go to Ven. Gunananda) nor the one who brought it the climax (Anagarika Dharmapala), but as organiser, communicator and networker. It was Olcott who agitated for Buddhist civil rights, and who gave the revival its organizational shape by founding voluntary associations, publishing and distributing tracts, and, perhaps most important, establishing schools. It was he who articulated most eloquently the "Protestant Buddhism" synthesis. The most Protestant of all early "Protestant Buddhists," Olcott was a culture broker with one foot planted in traditional Sinhalese Buddhism and the other in liberal American Protestantism. By creatively combining these two sources, along with other influences such as theosophy, academic Orientalism, and metropolitan gentility, he helped to craft a new form of Buddhism that thrives today not only in Sri Lanka but also in the United States.

[104] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves, Vol. 2*, 177.

[105] Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, 213.

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