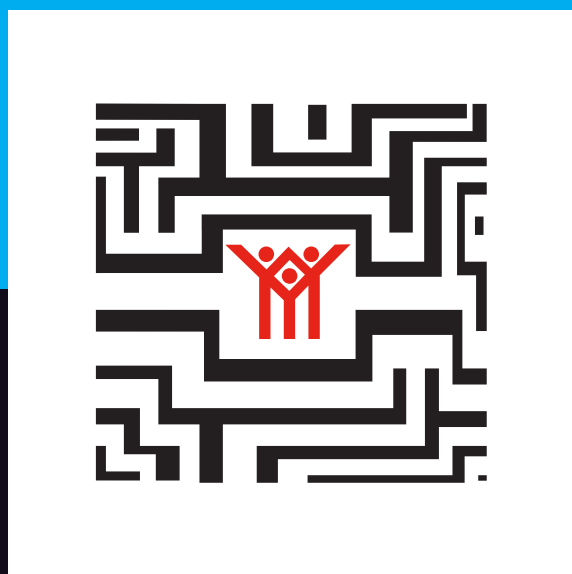


The South African Baptist Journal of Theology



Evangelicalism and Politics

Vol.33 2024

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Evangelicals And Politics

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Journal of Theology**

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Subscriptions, correspondence and contributions should be addressed to:

The Editor
SABJT
 P.O. Box 38473
 Gatesville 7766
 South Africa

Tel. No.: 021 637 9020/1 [International +27 21 637 9020]
 Fax. No.: 021 633 2626 [International +27 21 633 2626]
 Email: journal@ctbs.org.za | godfrey@ctbs.org.za

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EDITORIAL NOTE

With so many elections taking place worldwide in 2024, we must ask what the role of religion in politics is. This can be overly broad with varying theological strokes. However, when it comes to individual Christian believers' responsibilities, we must ask what is the civic responsibility of Christians in politics. We note that there are many biblical references to the role of leaders, politics, and even political leaders and how these have shaped the landscape for the spread of the gospel but also concerning the actions of the Christian in responding to both good and bad political leaders (Daniel 3; Romans 13; Titus 3:1-2).

The traditional evangelical response to politics was often a separation between church and state where the one sphere had no power over the other. Yet, in recent years there has been a drastic shift with faith and religion playing a dominant role and coercive power in politics as was seen in the USA presidential process with the role of the republicans. The role and influence of religion in politics is also clear in many African countries with often militant approaches resulting in corruption, violence, and loss of life.

A Google scholar search on the topic of evangelicals and politics produces more than 9000 scholarly articles for 2023 alone. The 2024 edition of the SABJT, therefore, has its focus on the evangelical persuasion and practice between "Evangelicalism and Politics – Friend or Foe?". The various scholarly articles of the 2024 SABJT volume showcase how the authors engage and grapple with the relationship between one's faith and politics within the evangelical movement. Various submissions have approached the subject from biblical interpretations, practical theological reflection, and missiological endeavours. The articles cover a range of areas within these theological reflections and makes meaningful contributions to a very desperate area within society.

On behalf of the editorial board, I want to record my appreciation for the following peer reviewers. Your scholarly insight and recommendation on articles reviewed enable South African Baptist of Theology to meet the minimum standards of best international practices as an accredited theological journal.

Prof Wessel Bentley, Prof Godfrey Harold, Prof Christoph Stenschke, Dr Kennedy Mulenga, Dr Linzay Rinquest, Dr Mphumezi Hombana, Dr Walter Maqoma, Prof Martin Pohlmann, Prof Gift Baloyi, Dr Rowanne Marie, Dr Didier Kasongo wa Kumutombo, Prof Gavin Hendricks, Dr Isaac Boaheng and Dr Caswell Ntseno.

In the service of our Lord,

Prof Garth Aziz

Editor-in-Chief

Email: azizg@unisa.ac.za

How Four Key Christological New Testament Passages Can Keep Us From Heresy

Professor M. Pohlmann, Extraordinary Professor of the Department of Theology Northwest University. Potchestroom and Master's degree supervisor; Baptist Theological College, Randburg, with Dr Axel Kazadi Nshindanyi Kayembe of Bible Life Ministries in Lydenburg, Mpumalanga.

Abstract

This article explores the Christocentric biblical outlook found in John 1:1,14, 18; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 2:5-18, and Colossians 1:15-20. The aim of this article is to prepare Christian Evangelicals in Mpumalanga Province to be able to silence the heretics who raise questions related to Christ's deity; particularly in the areas of apologetics and evangelism. Some analysis and critique of some questionable views found in Black Theology, the Prosperity Gospel, African Initiated Churches like the AmaNazaretha Shembe Baptist Church, and the Zion Christian Church were predominantly echoed during the first four century AD ecumenical councils. This was indifferent forms like Ebionism, Docetism, Arianism, Apollinarianism and Modalism.

Preachers of these contemporary Christological errors tout a religion of self-deification coupled in some instances with syncretistic elements of mysticism and/or ancestral worship. Jesus Christ is often presented as 'less than' who He actually is. It is important to know that Jesus Christ is not a created being; He is eternal God in that He is the creator (Col 1:15-17), He is the Head of the Church (Col 1:18) and Christ is the beloved Son of God. Christ being fully man and fully God, Him, the Father, and the Holy Spirit are God and equal. Indeed, Jesus Christ is the sole reason for the existence of the Church.

1. Introduction

The Apostles taught about Christ which contained ideas that some of their immediate followers often found difficult to understand. While the writings of the early post-apostolic age (ca. 90-180) follow the language and teaching of the New Testament closely, they emphasized one God and Lord of all, and at the same time they believed and taught the deity of Jesus Christ. Now, as history went on from the first four centuries AD, Kolenda proposes that there was spiritual hunger coupled with later writers that drew from dominant ideas of Greek philosophy in which the supreme and perfect God is remote from the material world and unmoved by its cares, desires, or emotions (1974:30-33,39, 55). The early church Christians began to have struggles with theological issues related to the nature of Christ. It is in line with the above that Evans (1998:36) notes that: "The early Christological battles were fought with non-Christians, while later heresies were intra-Christian in origin" and contributed to the understanding

SECTION A

and the development of some important doctrines. These included the humanity and deity of Christ, the Trinity and their impact on the salvation. It is therefore helpful to examine these deviant interpretations of 'Christ's deity' exemplified in some Mpumalanga Churches using four main Christological scriptures from the New Testament.

The Christological controversies in the first four centuries offered occasions for deeper reflection (Emery 2011:59) and compelled the church to clarify, ground, defend, apply, and appropriately express her beliefs to her contemporary surroundings. As it happened with Satan misleading Jesus (Mt 4:7-10, Gn 3:4-5), it is worth mention that the ancient controversies are still at hand. Hence, the heresies of the first four centuries related to the 'deity of Christ' among the then Ebionites, Docetists, Arians, Apolinarianists, and Modalists are still felt among the contemporary preachers of the likes of Prosperity preachers, African Initiated Churches like the AmaNazareth Shembe Baptist Church, Zion Christian Church and those that practice the Black Theology. There is an assault on 'Christ's deity' by blending into this doctrine syncretistic beliefs, practices and self-deification. It is particularly important to examine John 1:1,14-18; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 2:5-18, and Colossians 1:15-20 in which early Christian writers articulated the distinctive Christian view of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

This project has been intentionally narrowed in its focus. The reason for this focus is ultimately for the benefit of Christian Evangelicals in the hope to call the Evangelical church of Mpumalanga to be prepared to assist the heretics with regards to Christ's deity and persuasively bear witness to the faith. Hence Evangelical Churches need to know the different methods some church leaders are using to oppress and alienate their followers from biblical Christological truth.

2. The Deity of Christ and Apologetics

Christ's claim to be equal with God underlies His teaching right from the start. In content and scope, His teaching embraced much that was new about the nature of God. For example, not only the Disciples but also the Jews soon recognized that He was affirming His equality with God (Jn 5:18). The Disciples could not long have missed the implication of the change in the very frame of His message from that of the Old Testament prophets, whose familiar introduction, 'Thus saith the Lord' was now replaced by 'But I say unto you' (Mt 5).

Jesus' words and His actions had to be an apologetic for His claim. People saw Him as a man; He had to prove to them that He was also deity, God in the flesh (Jn 1:14). The vestige of Judaism among the first four century Christians have been revived from time to time, either deliberately or in ignorance, often peddled from self-elevation and syncretistic point of view. Christ's nature can be said to

be at the centre of misinterpretation and necessitate apologetic functions.

Firstly, the misinterpretation of Christ's deity is seen in the form of the denial of the deity of Jesus as it was argued by Ebionism during the first century AD. It was said that He was predestined to be the Messiah, but in a very natural and human way, with no superhuman or natural gifts. Arguing in favour of his humanity, the virgin birth (Mt 1:16, 18-25; Lk 1:26-28; 3:23), the fact that He was born from a human mother, His identity Himself of His solidarity with human race as 'Son of Man' (Mt 8:20; 24:27). Many Ebionites held that Jesus, although he was a great prophet—indeed, the promised Messiah—was not fully or eternally divine.

Based on the above, how could Jesus be sinless without being separated from the sinful nature shared by the rest of the children of Adam? In order to answer this question, the apologist would do well by looking at the reason for Jesus' coming. He came to the earth to silence Satan's misrepresentations and accusation and to fulfil the role of fallen man's substitute and this determined the way He came, or else He would not have fulfilled its purpose and triumph over evil (1 Jn 3:8b). He became our substitute, the pioneer man, mankind's model and achieved this through (Rm 8:3; Jn 1:14). As mankind's model who was tempted just as we were and was like us in every way possible (Heb 2:16-18; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 4:4, 5; Heb 2:18; 4:15, 16; Heb 5:2 (Waggoner 1890:26-27).

Like the Ebionites who believed that Jesus Christ was just a human being who was empowered by God and that He is not God, the followers of Shembe, the founder of the AmaNazareth Shembe Baptist Church believe he too was called by God and is God. The apologist would do well by understanding the "God humbled Himself to make Himself man" as Scriptures present it. The failure to understand the doctrine of incarnation has led the Shembeites to pray in the 'name of Shembe' than to pray 'in the Name of Jesus'.

Another model is the Prosperity Gospel Churches such as the Enlightenment Christian Gathering (ECG) of Prophet Bushiri and the Black Theology Churches believe that their leaders are directly called by the supreme God and are carriers of special messages such as prosperity that extends beyond atonement (Hunt 1998:273-274) like wealth, healing or freedom, in the sense that it holds a weird interpretation of Scripture and align it with some contemporary non-Christian belief systems (Hummel 1991:28). The later result in self-deification; Christ becoming God like themselves.

To prove that 'Jesus is God', apologists can employ on one hand the communication of truth and discerning error requiring the use of reason. Since our faith is a reasonable faith, reason was part of the apologetics of Jesus. Jesus used the laws of logic to reveal truth, demolish arguments, and point out error. For example, in Matthew 12:22-28. Here the Pharisees accuse Jesus of casting

out demons by the power of the Devil. Through the use of reason; Jesus showed their accusation to be false. This positions one to see Jesus's divinity the way the New Testament presents it, that is, in close relation to the Father.

Surely many of the Christological titles confirm that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Mk 1:1), the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29, 36), the image of God (Col 1:15), the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24), and the glory of God (Heb 1:3), to name a few (Hutardo 2010:53). The Nicene Creed communicates the same with its X from X formulae; "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God" (Grudem 1994:1169). Verily, Jesus is described as God (Jn 1:1, 18; 20:28; Rm 9:5, Tt 2:13; Heb 1:8-9), yet as Hutardo shows, in all these passages God and Jesus are "uniquely linked". The apologist, when rightly equipped with the notion of the eternal equality of the Father and Son in nature and substance, should therefore be able to emphatically present the divinity of Jesus the way Scripture does.

Secondly, the misinterpretation of Christ's deity also in the form of Docetism in which Christ appeared to be human. Christ only appeared to have a material body and to suffer and die, since, at his essence, the Saviour is a divine, impassible spirit (Kinlaw 2005:74-76). As for Wilhite, the word Docetism is from the *Koinē* Greek: *δοκεῖν/δόκησις* (*dokein*) which means to seem and relates to all the human form of Jesus, was mere semblance without any true reality. So, in a fuller sense, Christ only appeared to have a material body and to suffer and die, since, at his essence, the Saviour is a divine, impassible spirit (Wilhite 2015:61-85).

The difficulty would be what minimum standard of humanity must a Christology fail to meet for it? Jesus went out of His way to prove His bodily resurrection in the Gospel of Luke to the Disciples who thought at first, they were seeing a ghost. He said: "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I Myself" (Lk 24:39). The apologist will do well should he realize that there still an interest of Docetism in the modern world remains of great interest.

Thirdly, the misinterpretation of Christ's deity also in the form of Arianism. This is a fourth century Christological error that denied the uncreated nature of Christ and the co-equality in the Trinity. Kelly notes that:

Arianism held that the Father alone was the eternal and true God, because He alone, in the full sense of the word, was ungenerated while the Son 'the Logos', who had become flesh in Christ, was generated, He could not be God, He had to be a creature who had been made before other creatures and made as the others were made through the will of God (1960:231-262).

The members of Arianism believe that Jesus is a finite created being with some

divine attributes, but He is not eternal and not divine in and of Himself. Arianism was opposed at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. That is what explains the intermediary role of Jesus and the same justifies the idea of considering Jesus as a finite ancestor through whom African Initiated Churches do worship through their ancestors. Mbiti (1975:62-63), in Africa, many Christians are comfortable with the idea that Jesus Christ is a kind of mediator (intermediary) or a kind of divine active force. In traditional African religion, human beings who lived upright lives or national leaders are admitted into the rank of the divinities and spirits at death. These stand as intermediaries or intercessors for their relatives and posterity or community to the Supreme Being (Mbiti 1975:62-63).

Fourthly, in the form of Apollinarianism (denied the human mind of Christ). Apollinarianism is refuted by many passages of Scripture that teach that Jesus was truly a human being. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1:14). In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form (Col 2:9). The Apostle John warned the early church of heresies such as Apollinarianism as mentioned in 2 John 1:7: "Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world". These deceivers, said John, were spreading the doctrine of the antichrist (1 Jn 4:1-3, 7). This article suggests that Apollinarianism, like Docetism, which also denied the true humanity of Christ, must be rejected because it is an unbiblical view of Jesus' nature.

Fifthly, in the form of Modalism. 'Modalism' opposed God's tri-unity (Triune God) or distinction in the Trinity. As the 4th century Christological error, Modalists believed that there are no distinctions between the 'persons of the Godhead'—the one God manifests Himself at different times and for different purposes in three different "modes" or "aspects." Modalism was opposed by Pope Damasus. While Arianism tries to maintain the oneness of God by placing Son and Spirit outside the Divine being and reducing these to the level of creatures, Modalism tries to arrive at the same end by robbing the three persons of the Godhead of their independence. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three persons but three ways, or modes, in which God has manifested God's self or related to the world (Cels. 8.14). This all to say that while the Son and Spirit are subordinate to the Father in time, rank, and power, the three persons share one "substance".

The Bible presents God as one God (Dt 6:4), but then speaks of three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19). How these two truths harmonize is inconceivable to the human mind. Because, God exists in three co-eternal, co-equal Persons. Jesus prayed to His Father (Lk 22:42), and now sits on the right hand of the Father in heaven (Heb 1:3). Now, the Father and the Son sent the Spirit into the world (Jn 14:26; 15:26). Based on the above, Modalism and the more specific Modalistic Monarchianism is theologically dangerous in

that it attacks the very nature of God.

The apologist will do well by advocating that any teaching that does not acknowledge God as three distinct Persons is unbiblical. Jesus Christ is not a lesser God or another way of God's manifestation.

3. Christ's Deity and Evangelism

John's prologue is a familiar text in Christological debates and perhaps the most influential Christological text in the New Testament (Hengel 2008:289). Although sometimes disputed, John's prologue offers us a "theological framework" against which 'Jesus' historical self-disclosure must be understood" (Ridderbos 1997:14). Or, as Köstenberger (2013:36) puts it, "The prologue provides us the glasses through which to see Jesus. As such, the prologue proves essential to understanding the true essence of Jesus' person and work" (cf. Hengel 2008:268). For example, in the prologue, the word of God was already there in the beginning, possessing the divine nature of God (cf. Jn 1:1). This word is none other than the Son who, at historical point, took on our humanity (cf. Jn 1:14). The result of the Son's incarnation is at least twofold in the prologue. For one, by becoming incarnate, "we have seen his glory, glory as the of the only Son from the Father" (Jn 1:14). For another, by his incarnation the Son, "has made the invisible God known" (Jn 1:18). 1:4-5, 9-11). So, by believing in the Son, they not only come to have life, but they become children of God (cf. Jn 1:12).

John's Gospel begins with a magnificent declaration of the Deity of the Son of God. It has profound implications for our theology of the Trinity, and meaningfully focuses our attention on the splendour of the incarnation. Here is the introductive clause: "Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος, (In the beginning was the Word)". The beginning of the verse with the preposition "ἐν" meaning "in," is an interesting construction due to its implication. This is sensible because the Divine Λόγος existence cannot be confined within specified time settings.

The verb form "was" (ἦν) is in the imperfect tense, which typically "indicates an uncompleted and/or a repetitive action in the past" (Howes 2013:15). More importantly, as White (1998:198) indicates, "the verb doesn't point to a specific point of origin or beginning in the past".. Prior to the beginning then, the Word was already experiencing "continuous timeless existence" (Bernard 1962:2), that is to say, the Word was pre-existent (cf. Keener 2012:369). Moreover, if we consider 1:1a with 1:3, we cannot but note that the Word is not only eternal but uncreated.

If "creation is always God's work" (White 1998:58), then 1:3 reveals that this λόγος takes on a divine prerogative of creation. The substantive use of πάντα in 1:3 implies a universal category of created things, a category the Word stands outside of as its uncreated creator – "and the Word was God"(cf. Jn 1:3). That is,

both God and the Word would be the same person (cf. Wallace 1996:268).

After stating the common belief that "No one has ever seen God" (1:18a) (cf. Carson 1991:134), John makes the uncommon claim that "the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known" (Jn 1:18b-d). The divine nature of the Son is explained in a non-modalistic manner when the Son is said to be "at the Father's side" (ὦν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς) (cf. Voorwinde 2002:31). There is a present participle ὦν makes clear that this is "a continuing union" between Father and Son (cf. Morris 1989:114), paralleling the eternal relationship first revealed in 1:1a and 1:1b.

This is clarified in correlating three other Christological texts. First, Philippians 2:6-11 that tells us Jesus Christ pre-existed as God and was not adopted by God. Paul begins verse 6 via a discussion of the Son's "existence," though it is better contextually to view Paul's words as "pre-existence." The apostle uses the word ὑπάρχων to speak about the "eternality" of the Divine Son who was 'existing' in the 'form of God'. The participle is again 'timeless' in that it does not point to any moment when Jesus 'started' to exist. Christ has always been in the form of God. It is worth noting that the use of "timeless" terms in reference to Christ's "being" is not unique to the letter to the Philippians and is not limited to Pauline authorship. In the Fourth Gospel, the Apostle John also uses ἦν, the imperfect form of the verb εἶμι to denote Jesus' timeless existence.

How can the Son, who eternally existed in the 'form' of God, who held equality with God be exalted higher than His position of the second person of the Trinity?" The answer to this question is found in Paul's previous discussion on Christ's Divine μορφή (morphe), humility, emptying, incarnation and humiliation. Jesus is raised back to His previous and rightful position of glory and exhalation that He held pre-incarnation (cf. Mt 28:18, Jn 17:5, Acts 2:34-35). Because of His divine nature, verse 10, which adds context to the issue at hand, proclaims; "so that at the name of Jesus," seemingly indicating that it is the name of "Jesus" that is "given" in 2:9b. Moreover, Jesus is not given "a name" according to verse 9. Rather, He is given "τὸ ὄνομα" ("to onoma") or "the name," which seems to correspond with the Divine name of YHWH. Verse 10, a subordinate clause of verse 9, notes Jesus' vindication with a citation from Isaiah 45:23 and includes three sub-points. The verse reads; "so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (NASB).

Secondly, Colossians 2:9 ascertains that Jesus Christ is not a created being; He is eternal God in that He is the creator (Col 1:15-17). Certain Gnostic teachers claimed that God made the world through a series of emanations from Himself and that Christ was one of these emanations. But Paul asserts that Christ is not an emanation from God, but God himself (1992:9), "He is the image of the invisible God" (v15). The word "image" implies representation and manifestation. This

denotes that Jesus is the very stamp of God. The apostle Paul shows in this verse that the supremacy of Jesus is first shown in relationship with God the Father, the begotten Son of God who reveals His Father, God (Jn 1:18). In His essence, God is invisible; but it was Jesus Christ who has revealed the Father to men. According to Millard Erickson, “Trinitarians insist that the ‘firstborn’ refers to preeminent one over all creation...” (2013:635).

It is important to deal with the root meaning of “firstborn” in order to get plain interpretation of the verse. If Jesus Christ was a created being, the Greek word would not be πρωτότοκος (prototokos-firstborn), but rather protoktisis (Biblehub.com). The apostle Paul mentions some characteristics of Jesus Christ in the passage proving the status or supremacy of Christ. These are: the image of the invisible God (v.15a), the firstborn of all creation (v.15b), creator of the universe (vv.16-17), the head of the Church (v.18a), the beginning, firstborn from the dead (v.18b), he is the fullness of God (v.19), and he is reconciler (v.20). These all characteristics prove that Christ is the supreme sovereign of the universe or in other word it assures that Jesus Christ is not a created being, but eternal God.

Colossians 1:16 defines the creative activity of Jesus Christ: All things were created “by Him”, “through Him”, and “for Him” (αὐτῷ). Jesus is presented here as Creator of all but not as created being. According to Paul’s clear witness, Christ is not only the one through whom all things came to be, but also the one by whom they continue to exist. “All things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible” may indicate the entire universe, both material and immaterial (Col 1:16). He defends against the heresy of the Colossians by affirming the Lordship of Christ over creation. Jesus is not as the teaching of Jehovah Witnesses, Arianism, Ebionites and others say He is, but He is as what the Scripture says.

Thirdly, of interest is Hebrews 2:5-18 that clarifies the human nature of Christ. Hebrews 2 emphatically declares his humanity. The writer draws attention to Christ’s solidarity with humanity by participating in human nature and dying. Gray (2003:338) states that the author of Hebrews emphasises “the sibling relationship between Jesus and the readers”. This is most explicit in Hebrews 2:10-18. A helpful outline this passage is: a) Superiority of the man Jesus over angels (Heb 2:5-9), b) Jesus Christ, saviour of man (Heb 2:10-13) and c) Being made like his brothers and sisters (Heb 2:14-18).

With reference to these verses 2:14-15, O’Brien argues that God’s children share the same humanity as the Son (flesh and blood), then there was a necessity for the Son of God “to assume the same human nature” so that he might become victorious over death and the devil (O’Brien 2010:113). The only way this could be made possible is through the “incarnation” (God made flesh) and death of the Son in behalf of the people. The purpose for Christ’s death is so that the children would be “glorified” (2:10), “sanctified” (2:11), “liberated” (2:15), and finally

“purified from sins” (2:17) (O’Brien 2010:113). Jesus understands the brethren because he was tempted as we are (2:18). In this verse 18, God’s children are given assurance of how Christ is a “merciful and compassionate” high priest. The passage states that Jesus himself ‘had suffered’ (πάσχω -perfect active indicative), ‘having been tempted’ (πειράζω -aorist passive participle, temporal participle). Not only does the Son care, but He can also help us when we are tempted.

By exploring the ‘deity of Christ’ and evangelism, we can observe some ways ‘His nature’ can be resourceful for the Christian evangelist, particularly in communicating his identity and the best way of worshipping God.

4. Role (Teaching Model) of Evangelical Christians in View of Contemporary Christological Errors

Jesus’ call to ‘disciple all nations’ (Mt 28:19) has been interpreted and applied differently over the history of Christianity. However, any approach to and practice of discipleship must be firmly rooted in principles derived from Scripture. Wilkins suggests that: “Though the discipleship literature revealed the following three essential dimensions that should be emphasized in every effective approach to helping believers become committed followers of Christ: the rational, relational, and missional dimensions” (Wilkins 1988:159), the challenge has remained in the areas of progressive revelations that several liberal Christian thinkers have taken advantage of.

In the case of Mpumalanga Province, there is a worldview that nothing happens without spiritual cause because whatever happens on earth is related to whatever happens in the spiritual invisible world (Nel 2019:1–10). Nel’s opinion is spiced with the prosperity gospel, the Old and Neo-Pentecostal/charismatic, New Prophetic movements. This means a belief in a Supreme Being (God), divinities, spirits, ancestors and the practice of magic and medicine. Kruger et al. (2009:36) name three categories in the spirit world of ATR: “Ancestral spirits, Nature spirits, and deities.”

5. Conclusion

The biblical understanding of the ‘deity of Christ’ will allow the Evangelical Christians to not only live out its Trinitarian faith (cf. Mt 28:19), but it will help them to consistently confess Jesus as the Christ and the Son of the living God (Mt 16:16). For the Evangelical Christians to do this, the appreciation of the ‘deity of Christ’ needs to deepen people’s understanding of who Christ is through the four Christological passages: John 1:1-14, Philippians 2:5-11, Hebrews 2:5-13 and Colossians 1:15-20., to bring into accuracy to that which is shared within its context

As for the Evangelicals, ‘Christ’s Nature’ and mainly ‘His Deity’ is the most

distinctively Christian doctrine of all. Because, it unlocks all other doctrinal doors of Christianity. If Christ is divine, then the incarnation of God, is the most important event in history and the existential impact of this fact is that he can transform whoever believe Him; the first-born over all creation. The concept first-born referring to Christ's supremacy (His pre-eminence), finally, Christ being divine, He pre-existed and He has the right to our entire lives, including our inner life and our thoughts and no man living or dead can afford to do that.

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Author's Declaration

The author declares that there is no financial gain or personal relationship(s) that inappropriately influenced him/her in the writing of this article.

Email: martin@btc.co.za

Pick Up Your Cross and Teach: A Practical Theological Exploration of the Integration of 'Cruciformity' on the Roles of Teachers in South Africa

IA Nell, Department of Practical Theology, Stellenbosch University.

T Muller, Department of Practical Theology, Stellenbosch University

Abstract

Literature indicates that the South African education sector is under pressure, with teachers leaving the profession. It is evident that teachers are demotivated, anxious, and lack job satisfaction. One aspect linked to improved job satisfaction is spirituality. Spirituality has been shown to impact the way people see the world and how they find meaning, purpose, and direction as they live out their spirituality through their narrative as their calling from God.

With this in mind, this article employs an exploratory approach within the field of practical theology to contribute to the perspective of Christian teachers' roles in South African public schools. The aim is to provide new perspectives for Christian teachers that could potentially improve job satisfaction as they live out their spirituality as their life narrative.

The article first explores Dr. Michael J. Gorman's four seminal works on the topic of 'Cruciformity.' Gorman examines Paul's narrative spirituality, which is cross-shaped according to Paul's Master Story in Philippians 2 within the missio Dei towards theosis. This section ends with an extraction of the four main characteristics of the cruciform life. Gorman's work was chosen for its unique focus on how Paul understands his narrative spirituality and how this can be linked to how teachers experience their spirituality in their unique narratives at their schools.

Second, education policies regarding the roles of educators in South African public schools are explored. Six main roles, which encompass all the guidelines on the roles of educators in various policies, have been identified.

Finally, the four characteristics of cruciform living are integrated into the six roles of educators, offering a unique perspective on how teachers can understand their roles through a cruciform lens. The hope is that these insights will inspire Christian teachers to adopt a cruciform lens, embracing their 'cross' as they teach to the glory of God.

1. Introduction

The education sector in South Africa has been critiqued several times as teachers display low morale and high job dissatisfaction (Mc Ilrath et al. 2021:897). Poor

learner performance and an underperforming education system has seen the South African public focus in on education in South Africa (Botha and Hugo, 2021:65). With pressure mounting from the public, district officials have set out data that almost 250 teachers leave the education sector per month in South Africa, indicating a deep loss of passion for teaching (Bantwini, 2019:721-722). Thaba-Nkadimene (2020:8) explains that low morale among teachers can be attributed to inadequate infrastructure, insufficient educational resources, and poor working conditions. Mboweni and Taole (2022:34-35) explains even further that lack of parental involvement in the lives of learners, increasing violence in schools and insufficient developmental programs all are factors which play a role in the low attrition rates of South African teachers.

The statistics do not look good as researchers have used current data to predict what the future of the South African education landscape would look like. Böhmer and Gustafsson (2023:33) produced predictions on the future to the year 2034 per province. What they show is that a significant number of teachers will be retiring in the years to come, but more alarming is that the number of teachers leaving education before the age of retirement will increase to the point that those leaving are far more than those retiring. All these factors and more are confirmed by a recent literature review study using a scoping review method which ended with 17 literature sources on low job satisfaction factors amongst teachers in South Africa. The study found the following factors which led to the low job satisfaction of South African teachers: Inadequate leadership, lack of support and training from the department of education side, high workload, large class sizes as well as inadequate resources to handle all of the students in one class, poor academic performance as well as substance abuse while parent involvement has diminished, insufficient school infrastructure and resources including technological resources and funding, safety concerns for both students and teachers as well as a lack of recognition (Fourie & de Klerk, 2024:8-11). This reality is equally relevant for Christian teachers working in public schools. As workloads and pressures on teachers have increased over time, pastoral care entered the education sector in the 1950s and has since grown into an established support system (Carroll, 2010:146-147). Baloyi (2016:3-5) found that these teachers face the same challenges as others, with the added pressure of living out their faith in the workplace. The church plays an influential role in South African schools, often through School Governing Body (SGB) members and local Christian teachers. Pastoral care and counselling are essential for supporting both teacher well-being and student needs, while collaboration between churches, schools, and communities can enhance educational outcomes (Baloyi, 2016:5-6).

It is clear that South African public-school teachers are dealing with various challenges that contribute to low job satisfaction, and Christian teachers are no exception. Calls for churches to provide guidance, mentorship, and pastoral care have been highlighted as crucial. Baloyi (2022:8) states that practical theologians

and pastors cannot be silent or absent with regards to the dire state of teaching in South Africa. The study recommended that theologians go the extra mile to reach and pastor teachers as they take hands with all stake holders in South African education sector. This study seeks to answer the call and contribute to this conversation by introducing cruciform narrative spirituality as a resource for teachers, principals, pastors and spiritual guides. This framework can support Christian teachers in public schools to better understand their calling, find meaning, and glorify God in their work as Christian teachers.

2. Key Terms and Definitions

Before advancing to the next sections of this argument, it is important to define key theological terms for readers less familiar with theological studies. All of these terms are explained in greater detail in the works of Gorman, which I will delve into in a later section. My hope is that teachers, whether they have theological training or not, will feel at ease reading the rest of the article hence the brief disruption in the argument. Although “spirituality” is explored in detail later, *narrative spirituality*—the central focus of this article—refers to a spirituality that embodies the story of Christ, following His life story in one’s own life. Michael Gorman coined the term *cruciformity* to describe this narrative spirituality that aligns itself with Christ’s story, a concept that will be further elaborated upon.

The *telos* of living a cruciform narrative spirituality is a journey from *kenosis* to *theosis* as part of the *missio Dei*. *Kenosis*, derived from Philippians 2, is the theological term for Christ’s act of self-emptying to become human. It involves relinquishing power and embracing vulnerability. This self-emptying, however, is not an end in itself; rather, it is a means to becoming *theotic*. *Theotic* living, another theological term, represents a way of life that aligns with the mindset of God, wherein one’s relinquishment of power and acceptance of vulnerability allows life and “resurrection” to emerge within the community—in this context, the classroom. This narrative spirituality cannot be lived in isolation. To become *theotic*, one must take part in the mission God is working out in the world (called the *missio Dei*). This means that being inclusive to others, calling them into the life and work of God is what constitutes a fully *theotic* life.

It is also important to take note that this article does not propose a theology of work, but rather a narrative spirituality true to the cross. Scholarly works on a theology of work, and a theology of work within education have been written.¹ This was not the goal of this article, rather it is a way of life, a way of thinking about teaching. This article aims at shifting paradigms in the way teachers view themselves in the world as Christians in public schools, navigating this difficult terrain.

A person who lives a cruciform narrative spirituality as a Christian teacher in a

public school becomes progressively more Christ-like, more aligned with the image of God, fulfilling humanity’s call to reflect God’s likeness. This ultimate transformation is what could be called *theosis*.

3. Job Satisfaction

From the above sections it is evident that South Africa needs to find a way to boost the job satisfaction of teachers. It would be wise to gain a better understanding of the term ‘job satisfaction’ at this point. A leading scholar on the topic of job satisfaction is Edwin Locke (1969:316) who defined job satisfaction as follows: Job satisfaction is a “pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” and that “job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants from one’s job and what one perceives it as offering or entailing.” After Lock, job satisfaction was also defined by Glisson and Durrick (1988:75) as “the positive outcome arising from the interplay of job task characteristics, role clarity, and the skills of the worker, combined with the organizational attributes” while a more recent definition is stated by Rao and Karumuri (2019:192) as “all the feelings that an individual has about his/her job. It is an affective reaction to a job that results from the person’s comparison of actual outcomes this with those that are desired, anticipated, or deserved.” The outcomes one perceives in a job lead to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Job satisfaction has many factors which impact the way outcomes are perceived. Researchers discovered that teachers who find purpose and meaning in their work (Klussman, Nichols & Langner, 2021:97-98), maintain a healthy work spirituality (Suárez, 2015:10), and those who can fulfill their calling (Madero, 2020:179-181) experience greater job satisfaction and higher morale. Interestingly, these three factors are all interconnected through spirituality. This concurs with other researchers pointing out that religiosity and participation in religious devotions such as prayer and mass increase overall job satisfaction at work, even if the participation is outside of work (Wnuk, 2018:289-291, Bednarczuk, 2019:269-270). At work, managers and leaders who promote spiritual values and make an effort to form the organization around these values will have workers with higher job satisfaction (Van der Walt & de Klerk, 2014:8-9, Dik, Daniels & Alayan, 2024:285-291). It seems that spirituality plays an important role in the way people live out their lives at work. The following statement made by Lianto (2023:279) points out that the way people live out their spirituality at work can play a vital role in how they perceive their work:

People do not abandon their spirit element when they set off from home to work. This is what makes the spirituality aspect undeniable in the world of work. Only when a man works by including the heart (spirit), the meaning of work is discovered. Through the work done with the heart, man can reveal his whole and fullness. A workplace is a place of holistic fulfillment

of human beings.

With these perspectives, it becomes clear that spirituality can play a significant role in enhancing job satisfaction. Christian teachers do not set aside their spirituality or religious orientation when entering the school environment, making this article especially relevant. The cruciform narrative spirituality I propose is not focused on evangelization—an approach that could present challenges in public schools—but rather on a way of life. It is not about telling people about the narrative of Christ, but rather living the narrative of Christ. This approach offers Christian teachers' tools to find meaning and purpose in their work as they navigate their daily responsibilities in public school settings.

4. Spirituality

According to Buck (2006:289-290) spirituality can be defined as “that most human of experiences that seeks to transcend self and find meaning and purpose through connection with others, nature, and/or a Supreme Being, which may or may not involve religious structures or traditions.” Kourie (2010:26) investigates a plethora of definitions of spirituality and summarizes the term as follows: “spirituality in general refers to the values to which we subscribe which give meaning and orientation to our lives. Spirituality entails the ongoing harmonious integration of the whole human person.” From these definitions one sees that spirituality encompasses the whole human and provides meaning, purpose and direction in life. This means that teachers who have a Christian spirituality do not leave their spirituality by the door as they enter a school, rather, spirituality shapes and dictate how teachers go about their day. This makes spirituality a viable option to explore when guiding teachers to find meaning and purpose in their work.

With the above in mind, the central research question that we want to explore can be stated as follows: What can we learn from the work of Michael Gorman and his concept of cruciformity that can be integrated into the workplace spirituality of teachers?

The work of Michael Gorman on Cruciformity focuses on the narrative spirituality of Paul ². By investigating the cruciformity concept as lived narrative spirituality, teachers can use this as a model to develop their own lived narrative spirituality. Christian teachers in public schools cannot evangelize or attempt to persuade students of specific Christian doctrines on their own initiative. However, they can embody their Christian spirituality as the guiding narrative of their lives—this is where cruciformity, as a form of narrative spirituality, holds significant strength. This explorative work goes hand in hand with the way Jürgen Moltmann viewed his theological writings, as contributions, not set in stone, but explorative, in dialogue, with the hope of stimulating thoughts and inspiring deeper thinking in the way Christian teachers view their spirituality and their work (Bauckham,

2006:4) The purpose of the article is to focus on the following three aspects:

1. First we will start to elucidate the concept of 'cruciformity' by conducting a analysis of Michael Gorman's four seminal works to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the topic.
2. Then we will examine the contemporary expectations of South African teachers through a detailed review of current education policies.
3. In a third round we will try to synthesize the concept of cruciformity with the professional expectations of teachers by offering cruciform practical theological perspectives on educational practices.

5. “Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross” (2001) ³

Gorman uses Paul's undisputed letters to uncover the core of Paul's theology and ethics: conformity to the crucified Christ. This is a lived theology mediated by a relationship with the God of Israel, revealed in Jesus Christ. This relationship and ethics are extended to Paul's communities (Gorman, 2021:2-12).

Paul was radically changed when he experienced God in Christ (1 Cor 1:21) (Gorman, 2021:9-10). Paul urged followers of Christ to transform their lives into images of the life of Christ as seen in faith, hope and love which culminates in the self-sacrifice on the cross (Gorman, 2021:13). Paul had an unformulated Triune understanding where Christ as the image of God, reveals God's glory, and the Spirit transforming believers into Christ's image (Gorman, 2021: 46-52).

Gorman sees the centrality of the cross in the way Paul intertwines both the suffering and death of Christ in his own lived narrative (Gorman, 2021:29-30). Through an exegetical analysis Gorman identifies narrative patterns such as obedience, love, grace, sacrifice, altruism, self-giving, voluntary abasement, incarnation, paradoxical power, interchange, apocalyptic victory, reconciliation, and resurrection (Gorman, 2021:71-76). Gorman also identifies Philippians 2:6-11 as 'Paul's Master Story,' a pattern which he sees in all of Paul's letters (Gorman, 2007:150). Gorman then summarizes a final set of 'cruciform patterns' which he sees throughout Paul's letters and the 'Master Story' which are: faithful obedience, voluntary self-giving love, life-giving suffering, and transformative power in weakness (Gorman, 2021:79-80). For Paul, this cruciform way of life must be a living narrative shaping ethics for him (Gorman 2022:15-16) and his communities (Gorman, 2021:80). We will now discuss the 4 crucial cruciform patterns.

6. Cruciform Faith(fullness)

Cruciform faith is fundamental to living a cruciform life (Pickett, 2016:6). Gorman understands the life of Jesus as a model for believers. This is due to Jesus' faithfulness to His Father. (Gorman, 2021:94-95, 111). This way of life

is paradoxically both liberation and enslavement coexisting in a life of obedient humility, liberation from evil with the end culmination of glory (Gorman, 2021:121). This faith is the initiation into the community of Christ as one manifest authentic Christian quality in all circumstances (Picket, 2016:7).

7. Cruciform Love

“Cruciform love” mirrors Christ’s self-sacrifice and other centeredness demonstrated on the cross (Picket, 2016:8), serving both as an act of faith and love that rectifies relational disorder vertically with God and horizontally among creation. This love epitomizes self-giving and other-regarding love, vividly portrayed on the cross and exemplified by Christ, the quintessential human act according to Paul (Gorman, 2021:162). Gorman defines cruciform love as faith in action, seeking others’ good, welcoming diversity, being hospitable, and generous, especially to the marginalized, continuing the cross’s story (Gorman, 2021:240). Justification by faith and sanctification through cruciform love are inseparably connected, as Christian love involves dedicating oneself to others, becoming truly in the image of the God who is love (Bromiley, 1980:230-232).

8. Cruciform Power

Gorman defines “power” as the ability to exert significant control or influence, whether positively or negatively, over individuals and history (Gorman, 2021:247). Christ’s divine power manifests through perceived weakness, contrasting human expectations (Gorman, 2021: 253). This power, seen in Christ’s crucifixion, reveals God’s strength most profoundly in weakness. Gorman draws from Seeley, noting how Philippians 2:6-11 subverts traditional notions of power and honor by attributing these to Jesus instead of power-hungry emperors. This hymn underscores Christ’s kenosis, where power is epitomized in weakness and self-sacrificial love (Gorman, 2021:254-256). Practically, Christians in leadership exemplify cruciform power through humility and Christ-informed interactions, guiding others with love and vulnerability (Picket, 2016:12).⁴

9. Cruciform Hope

Cruciform hope moves beyond merely longing or hoping for a future resurrection. It encompasses a critical view to all utopian ideologies while hoping in a total renewal of the creation when Christ gloriously returns (Gorman 2021:301). Until this happens, cruciform hope is the belief that those who share in Christ’s suffering will also share in His resurrection and glory, a divine work initiated by God that ensures that those who co-suffer with Christ will ultimately be raised from the dead and enter into glory with Christ and creation (Gorman, 2021:279-300). Practically, those embodying cruciform hope maintain courageous joy regardless of circumstance as Christians share in others’ suffering and/or persecution, showing compassion and mercy (Picket, 2016:14).

I will now explore ‘Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and

Theosis in Paul’s Narrative Soteriology,’ published in 2009. My analysis will specifically concentrate on sections where Gorman’s ideas on cruciformity have evolved or become more profound.

10. Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul’s Narrative Soteriology (2009)

The book “Inhabiting the Cruciform God” expands on Gorman’s “Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross,” exploring the idea that God reveals Himself in the crucified Christ. Gorman’s thesis is that Paul’s soteriology is theosis, offering a fresh perspective (Gorman, 2009:1-2).

Gorman investigates Paul’s soteriological understanding of what it means to be justified over against and critiquing ‘cheap justification’. For Paul, transformative participation in faith(fullness) is true justification. This way of life goes beyond mere ethical considerations but stretches into praxis. This praxis is our co-crucifixion towards co-resurrection with Christ which integrates integrating faith, love, power (justice), and hope (Stephens, 2020:331; Gorman, 2009:63-77). Justification satisfies covenant requirements by addressing both vertical (God-oriented) and horizontal (human-oriented) dimensions, leading to reconciliation and transformation through faith and love (Gorman, 2009:48-62).

For Paul then, the telos of cruciformity is the path towards theosis, which signifies restoring humans to God’s lost likeness from Genesis 1 (Hooper, 2017:4). Gorman defines theosis as “transformative participation in the kenotic, cruciform character of God through the Spirit-enabled conformity to the incarnate, crucified, and resurrected/glorified Christ” (Gorman, 2009:7). It’s crucial to clarify that theosis does not mean humanity becomes divine but rather regains the original image broken by the fall (Hooper, 2017:4), maintaining the creature-creator distinction (Gorman, 2011:17). Theosis combines kenosis (emptying oneself) and plerosis (becoming full), reflecting that humans are most like God when they act kenotically (Gorman, 2009:48).

11. Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation and Mission (2015)

In “Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission,” Gorman argues that Paul wanted early Christian communities to conform to the life of Christ, not just believe it. This concept of cruciformity is central to Gorman’s trilogy on Paul’s teachings (Gorman, 2015:2). The book argues that theosis and mission are intertwined and addresses critiques of previous works by emphasizing participation in Christ’s life and mission, which was previously only touched on (Gorman, 2015:3-5).

Gorman explores Paul’s perspective on participation in God’s mission (*missio Dei*), emphasizing its transformative impact. The *missio Dei* is defined as God’s active role in reconciling the world, inviting human participation (Thiane, 2021:3)⁵. Paul’s vision of holistic salvation transforms believers’ lives, both

internally and externally, through active participation in Christ's life, empowered by the Holy Spirit (Gorman, 2015:23-26). This participation encompasses salvation, liberation, peace, and justification, evident in terms like co-witness, co-heirs, co-suffer, and co-glorified (Gorman, 2015:33). Paul's communities embodied cruciform lives, challenging cultural norms and facing persecution, thereby setting the stage for evangelism (Gorman, 2015:36-41). Gorman bridges the gap between evangelism and justice, presenting cruciformity as a lifestyle affecting people both theologically and ethically (Gorman, 2013:83). This participatory approach entails individual believers expressing their cruciform lives uniquely in different contexts, emphasizing contextualization (Gorman, 2015:41).

Ultimately, a deeply contextualized church, like Jesus incarnate in Phil 2:6-11, authentically embodies God's mission, presenting a compelling, culturally relevant gospel interpretation (Gorman, 2015:151). The next section will explore the new elements of Cruciform Peace and Cruciform Justice as effects of joining the *missio Dei*.

12. Cruciform Peace

Gorman introduces peace as a new element in cruciform living, viewing it as the fullness of life promised by God, encompassing health, wholeness, and harmony with God, others, and creation (Gorman, 2015:143-148). The church is meant to embody this divine peace as they participate in the *missio Dei* (Gorman, 2015:150-154).

For Paul, peace is a moral and missional imperative, requiring the church to be a haven of peace in a violent world, both internally and externally, to credibly witness God's reconciliation through Christ (Gorman, 2015:159-167). Christians are called to transform the world through forgiveness and harmony, becoming peacemakers who reflect God's peace (Gorman, 2015:192-195; 206-207).

13. Cruciform Justice

Gorman intertwines justice with spirituality and mission, viewing justice as a spiritual dimension rooted in communion with God and integral to cruciform living (Gorman, 2015:212-221). Gorman critiques translation biases that separate 'justice' from 'justification,' emphasizing that for Paul, justification is a transformative process leading to cruciform justice (Gorman, 2015:222-224). The church must embody this justice, offering a place where people can leave unjust ways and experience God's love and peace (Gorman, 2015:225).

Cruciform justice, as Paul understood it, reshapes individuals and communities to absorb injustice rather than inflict it, focusing on embodying a new way of being 'just' rather than fighting every social ill (Gorman, 2015:237; 255-256). Love for God and neighbor fuses spirituality and justice, with the church embodying divine justice and engaging in a cosmic mission of justice and peace,

albeit partially in a fallen world (Gorman, 2015:257-258).

14. Scholarly Critiques

Before moving on to Gorman's last book, it is important to understand the scholarly critiques he has received over the years on cruciformity since the 2019 book is an answer to the concerns raised. The next paragraph will provide a short overview of the critiques, and then the last book will be discussed:

Tan (2017:174, 178-179) critiques Gorman for insufficiently addressing the resurrection, using a 2007 article that predates Gorman's 2009 book focusing more on resurrection. Finlan (2008:68-80) argues that Paul emphasizes conformity to Jesus's resurrection over crucifixion, citing Philippians 3:10-11. Boakye (2016:58) contends that Gorman's focus on cruciformity risks diminishing the importance of the resurrection, advocating for a continuous, daily experience of resurrection. While agreeing that overemphasis on kenosis can create imbalance, White (2022:172-194) suggests a co-inherent understanding where cruciformity and resurrection mutually qualify each other. However, White's critique only references Gorman's first book, not acknowledging the evolution of his concept. In the next section, I will explore Gorman's fourth book, where he addresses these critiques by re-examining Paul's understanding of cruciformity and resurrection.

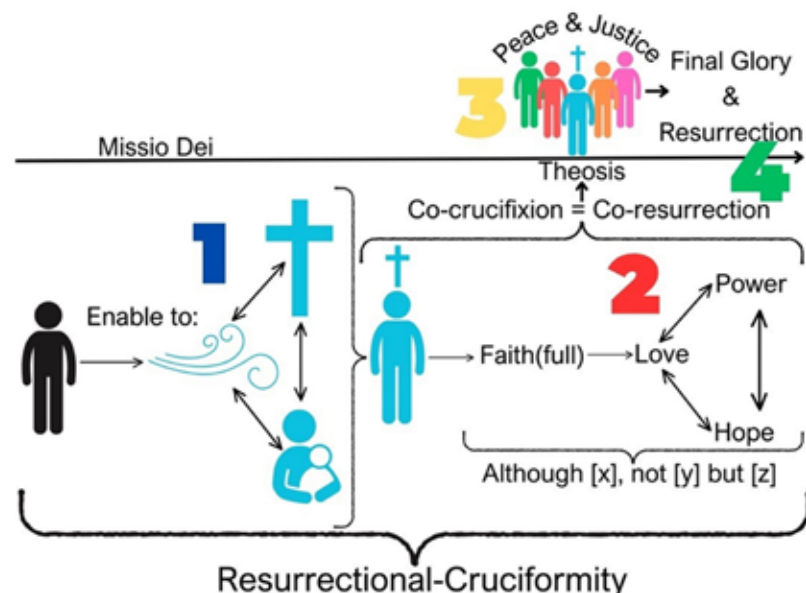
15. Participating in Christ – Exploration in Paul's Theology and Spirituality' (2019)

In answering these critiques, Gorman provides his rebuttal in 'Participating in Christ – Exploration in Paul's Theology and Spirituality' (2019), explaining his (and Paul's) view on the relationship between crucifixion and resurrection, aiming to understand the interplay between cruciformity and resurrection (Gorman, 2019:77-79). Examining 2 Cor 3-5, particularly 4:7-12, he argues that Paul's experience is better characterized by "participation" and "conformity" to Christ rather than "imitation" (Gorman, 2019:88-92). Gorman proposes "resurrection-suffused" to describe the coexistence of cruciformity and resurrection, highlighting the paradoxical participation in both Good Friday and Easter (Gorman, 2019:92-94). Newbegin supports this, stating the church bears the dying and rising of Jesus (Newbegin, 1995:52). Gorman suggests "resurrectional-cruciformity" to capture the dual embodiment of suffering and glory in the Christian journey, emphasizing that cruciform living is central in the fallen world (Gorman, 2019:93-95). Gupta echoes this by advocating a cruciform hope for future vindication (Gupta, 2022:328). Gorman concludes that present participation in Christ is "resurrection-empowered and resurrection-suffused but cross-shaped," urging critics to recognize that full resurrection glory awaits in the future (Gorman, 2017:74-75).

16. Summary and Model of Cruciformity

After analysing the 4 works by Gorman on cruciformity and Paul's narrative

spirituality, we will now set out the main points in the following model which will be used to synthesize the concept of cruciformity with the professional expectations of teachers by offering cruciform perspectives on educational practices.



1. Participation in the works of the Triune God is the first part of cruciformity. It is the participation of the whole person which undergoes a transformation.
2. This is a kenotic way of living as one faithfully live out cruciform love, hope and power as one becomes 'co-crucified' in Christ. The aim of this is a theotic living, with Christ being the image of God. The more we become like Christ, the more we become the image of God.
3. The theotic life calls us to participate in the mission of God, which is a life bringing peace and justice to all who cross our path.
4. Lastly, this brings final glory and resurrection to all. This is God's heart and mission.

The next section will give a brief overview of policy providing teachers' roles in schools. These roles will then be synthesized with the above four points to provide a perspective of a cruciform Christian teacher in South Africa.

17. Roles of Educators in South Africa

Teachers recognize that they have specific roles and responsibilities outlined in various policies and documents. However, as noted earlier, Christian teachers do not set aside their convictions and beliefs when entering the school environment. Rather than adopting a dualistic approach, where either spirituality or professional responsibilities must be left behind, this article proposes a synthesis of spirituality

with the expectations of teacher roles and responsibilities as defined by policy. The following section will first outline the roles established in these policies and documents, then integrate them with cruciform narrative spirituality, offering Christian teachers a way to live out their spirituality within the established framework by reinterpreting these roles through a cruciform perspective.

Focusing on the role of teachers, various policies outline the specific duties educators must fulfill to be deemed competent in diverse and inclusive classrooms. These policies include the 'National Department of Education Duties and Responsibilities of Educators,' 'SACE (South African Council of Educators) Code of Conduct,' 'Education Labour Relations Council Manual for Developmental Appraisal,' the 'Committee for Teacher Education Policy (COTEP),' and the 'Norms and Standards for Teacher Educators.' Together, these documents create a consistent regulatory and developmental framework for educators, emphasizing democratic and human rights principles enshrined in the Constitution, while being adaptable to different contexts (Harley, Barasa, Bertram, Mattson and Pillay, 2000: 294).

Harley et al. identified six key roles for educators that are consistently emphasized across these policies (Harley et al., 2000: 294). These roles are:

- A. Mediator of Learning
- B. Pastoral Role
- C. Administrator
- D. Designer of Learning Programs
- E. Lifelong Learner
- F. Community Developer and Citizen

However, Harley et al. also pointed out that while the policies clearly describe the ideal teacher, they often overlook the real-life teacher and the cultural and material constraints of classroom realities. This gap highlights the challenges in achieving the ideal teacher role (Harley *et al.*, 2000: 302). Morrow echoes this view, adding that these teacher roles assume students come from stable families with access to emotional support and health monitoring. In this ideal situation, teaching becomes the primary focus. However, given the challenges in South Africa such as urbanization, single-parent households, orphaned and vulnerable children, adult illiteracy, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, and rising violence, schools must often prioritize caregiving responsibilities over teaching (Morrow, 2007: 16-17).

The above (A to F) roles of teachers will now be synthesized with the four cruciformity points to explore how Christian teachers living a cruciform lifestyle can fulfill the roles of good teachers in South Africa.

18. The Cruciform Teacher

In the following section the roles of teachers from (A to F) will be synthesized with the four cruciformity points. This exploration will provide Christian teachers with new perspectives on how to view their roles theologically. This can potentially boost and motivate teachers as they perform these roles through a new cruciform lens.

19. Cruciform Participation and Teachers as Mediators of Learning, Administrators, Program and Learning Designers and Lifelong Learners

As mediators of learning, teachers are expected to have sound knowledge of content and be well-prepared for lessons (Harley *et al.*, 2000:292). Administration of day-to-day tasks is also an integral part of a teacher's role, essential for performing at their best.

A cruciform teacher must recognize their call to the classroom. The classroom, where the teacher mediates learning, is the area where God is at work. A cruciform teacher enters this space with the mindset that the Triune God is already active in the classroom. Therefore, it is imperative that lessons meet high standards and that the teacher has adequate knowledge to deliver the required content, whether it involves administrative tasks or lesson planning. Teaching is more than just imparting knowledge; it is participating in the life and works of the Triune God as cruciform teachers answer the call to the classroom with faithfulness.

This calling can also motivate teachers to pursue lifelong learning. As participants called to the classroom by God, teachers must strive to be at their best. Being a lifelong learner benefits both the learners and the teacher. Moreover, knowing that you are continually improving your knowledge to answer this call is a form of doxology.

20. The Kenotic teacher and the Pastoral role

Being involved in extracurricular activities such as sports, culture, and art, and looking after learners' well-being, is the pastoral role teachers take up (Harley *et al.*, 2000:292). Cruciform teachers, faithfully participating in the works of God, will live lives that showcase kenotic love, hope, and the use of power.

Teachers displaying cruciform love will put the needs of their learners above their own needs within healthy boundaries. Examples of this include teachers who stay in during breaks to listen to learners who need to talk or give up their free time to help a learner understand a concept. Cruciform use of power goes hand in hand with cruciform love, as cruciform teachers redefine power. This is where the "Master story" of Paul plays a crucial role. Even though teachers have a certain amount of authority over learners, cruciform teachers use this authority not to dominate learners, but to incarnate themselves into the worlds of their learners. These teachers use their power to uplift or resurrect the learners in their class or on their sports teams. Cruciform teachers will be vigilant about

how they utilize power and to what effect. For cruciform teachers, power will be used to bring resurrection to the broken in their classrooms. This culminates in cruciform hope. Cruciform teachers can hope in prayer. They can pray for their learners as they empty themselves of concerns about their learners. They can offer their learners to the living God in prayer. This hope can motivate teachers in their classrooms to engage with learners while embracing the kenotic lifestyle.

21. Cruciform Teachers Living a Missional Theotic Life Towards the Final Glorification of All

Not all teachers see the need to participate in community development (Harley *et al.*, 2000:293). Cruciform teachers, however, are already part of a community, the classroom community. They are also participants in the *missio Dei*, as the lives of each child and the day-to-day work of the school are all part of the arena where God is working towards His Kingdom. Teaching is by nature missional. Teachers are called and sent to a classroom community. Cruciform teachers, who are co-crucified with Christ, will bring cruciform justice and peace to this community in which they find themselves—the classroom community. Cruciform justice regarding race, class, gender, and ethnicity in the classroom will create an environment that is never divided or exclusionary. Cruciform peace, concerning the conduct of learners with learners and teachers with learners, will create a space of safety where both teachers and learners can feel cared for and loved.

The telos for a cruciform teacher participating in the mission of the Triune God, who lives the kenotic life of love, power, and hope, bringing peace and justice to their classroom community, is the classroom becoming a foretaste of the Kingdom of God. The cruciform teacher will never be able to manifest the Kingdom, this is the work of God alone, yet the cruciform teacher's classroom will be a foretaste of it. Learners will experience peace and justice while receiving well-thought-out lessons as teachers empty themselves in their work. Learners who need extra attention or pastoral care will be cared for by teachers who give up their time to listen and make the necessary arrangements if learners need to see other professionals.

If all teachers perceive their call to teach in a cruciform way and live this out in their daily work, the school becomes a beacon of a radically different kenotic way of life, bringing peace and justice into society. If the school itself can become a cruciform entity, it will become a haven for children. Should more than one school in a town or city become cruciform schools, the town would have many "pockets" of the Kingdom of God as a foretaste. This may sound like a dream and might not be entirely realistic, but any principal or teacher inspired by this article can strive to live a cruciform life to the glory of God. If one teacher, who sees 120 children a day, makes their classroom a foretaste of the Kingdom of God by living a cruciform life, the repercussions are immeasurable. Furthermore, if one principal, who oversees 20 teachers in a school, makes their school a foretaste

of the Kingdom of God by managing in a cruciform way, the repercussions are immeasurable. The important thing that needs to change is our perspective on education and how we live our lives as Christians in education.

22. Limitations of the Study and Potential Future Research

This article allows for many other research opportunities to further develop the contribution where its scope was limited in this article.

Since this study is a literature review, no direct empirical data was collected from teachers, which presents an opportunity for future research to incorporate firsthand data on Christian teacher spirituality and how they draw on it to navigate the South African public education sector. Researchers might also explore the impact of a Cruciformity course in Christian schools on teachers' perspectives before and after the course. Additionally, case studies on teachers who live cruciform lives and implement this in their teaching are needed. As this study contributes to the perspectives on Christian teachers' approach to their careers, linking it with motivational theories such as Herzberg's theory or Maslow's hierarchy could enhance and strengthen the Cruciform Christian teaching model. Lastly, the impact of being a Cruciform Christian teacher in public schools on administrators and policy developers could be further researched to investigate how this way of viewing teaching could influence and impact the administrators and policies.

23. Conclusion

This article worked with the central research question: What can we learn from the work of Michael Gorman and his concept of cruciformity that can be integrated into the workplace spirituality of teachers? In answering the question we explored how the concept of cruciformity can intersect with the professional roles of South African teachers, providing new perspectives for Christian educators that could potentially motivate them in their work. Through a thorough analysis of Michael Gorman's four seminal works, this study elucidated the concept of cruciformity, revealing four themes which were then synthesized with the roles of a teacher. By examining contemporary expectations of South African teachers through a broad overview of current education policies, this study identified six roles that teachers are expected to fulfill in today's educational landscape.

Finally, by synthesizing the four themes of cruciformity with the six roles of teachers, this study offered new perspectives to Christian teachers on viewing their work. This synthesis shows the potential implications for Christian teachers who integrate their faith with their teaching work. Ultimately, this article aims to inspire Christian teachers in South Africa to embrace a cruciform lifestyle, providing new perspectives of meaning as they fulfill their professional roles while exemplifying a cruciform lifestyle to the glory of the Triune God.

6. Notes

¹ Smith (2018): Explores how faith shapes pedagogical choices, highlighting culture's role in teaching and the importance of integrating faith meaningfully into content. Van Vlastuin and de Muynck (2023): Use the munus triplex concept to depict Christian teachers as prophets, priests, and kings, suggesting a holistic integration of spirituality and work in teaching. Parker (2012): Provides practical guidance for Christian teachers working in secular environments. Sawyer (2020): Frames teaching through a Trinitarian-incarnational lens, emphasizing relational and revelatory aspects, particularly in subjects like mathematics. Pirner (2019): Advocates for public theology in education to promote justice, focusing on religious education's role in fostering critical thinking and social justice. Lyon (2024): Critiques neoliberal education as a quasi-religious system, with elite schools resembling pseudo-religious institutions. Glanzer and Alleman (2019): Analyze the influence of Christian identity on teaching practices. Smit and Felch (2016): Emphasize imagination in Christian teaching, using metaphors such as pilgrimage, gardening, and buildings to conceptualize teaching as a faith-guided journey.

² Dr. Michael J. Gorman is a highly respected theologian known for his deep knowledge of New Testament Studies and Early Church History. He received his Ph.D. in New Testament Studies from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1989. In 2001 he wrote the first book 'Cruciformity' which ended in four books on this topic of Paul's narrative spirituality. These four works are:

- "Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross" (2001)
- "Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology" (2009)
- "Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission" (2015)
- "Participating in Christ: Explorations in Paul's Theology and Spirituality" (2019)

³ For this section I will make use of the 2021 edition of *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* which is a celebration of the 20 years mark of his book.

⁴ Hooper warns that while embracing cruciformity—self-sacrifice for others—one must not neglect differentiation, maintaining a balance between self-emptying and personal maturity, ensuring mental and emotional health to avoid burnout (Hooper, 2017:8-16).

⁵ Thiane (2021:1) provides a broader explanation of the theology behind the *missio Dei* when explaining that this theology is "a result of the nature of God or as an inherent mission of God in which God the Father sent God the Son and together sent God the Holy Spirit into the world. The viewpoint has since risen

to prominence in missiology as it continues to attract theological and scientific attention as the most important theological rediscovery of the 20th century. Equally, research focusing on human participation in missio Dei received substantial interest broadly within theology and missiology in particular.”

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Email: ianell@sunac.za | 24607487@sun.ac.za

Evangelical Christian responsibility within Political Elections and General Involvement in South Africa (1 Timothy 2:1-6)

Professor Martin Pohlmann, North West University Research; Baptist Theological College Adjunct Lecturer.

Abstract

There is more in common between Christians and the general population than is often given credit. The Baptist principle (Baptist Union of Southern Africa) of 'separation of Church and State' does not deny this. Rather, there is a complimentary role between the two. Everyone shares God's created earth which further makes all responsible for fulfilling the Creation ordinance. This includes the instruction to "rule over the earth" as stated in Genesis 1:26 because all are created in the 'image of God'. As generally conservative biblically based Evangelical Christians, yet informed hermeneutically, acknowledge this fact through their 'faith' and so are even more responsible when it comes to Political Elections and involvement within society. Paul's admonition to Timothy his younger colleague in 1 Timothy 2:1-6, while he was situated in the city (πολις) of Ephesus, is worthy of consideration within our South African context. It is specifically directed at Christians, but not exclusively – which is part of the research problem. Rather, Christians should exemplify political responsibility which they should be taught at Church. The further exhortation to only appoint "blameless" overseeing leaders in the Church (1 Tm 3:1) sets the pace (or example) for all appointed leaders in civil society. Overseers, deacons and the women (γυναι) in the Church context are all equally told to "likewise" be known as people of sound character. There is no rank when it comes to the way leaders conduct themselves. Good sound character and responsibility is by implication and application expected of all – and could reach to civic personnel. This article intends to first encourage Bible-believing Evangelical Christians to be responsible and respectful 'political' citizens both within and beyond the Church because the Church inevitably models life within the Kingdom of God. Depending on the political scenario afforded Christians are to participate as far as their consciences allow. Within the South African context all eligible citizens are allowed to exercise their responsibility at Municipal, Regional and National level since the dawn of our Democracy launched in 1994.

1. Introduction

For many Christians around the world and within the South African context, there is often a separation of Church and state to the extent that the two are thought by some; not to meet. While it is true that for Baptists, one of the cherished principles is a 'Separation of Church and State', this will be explored more fully in this article. From the very beginning in Genesis 1:1, we are led to believe that God created everything and everyone on planet earth. Christians are part and parcel of society in general and every State is influenced to one extent or another

by the Church. The Baptist handbook of 2022 states concerning Church and State, that, "in the providence of God, the two differ in their respective natures and functions" (2022:276). This includes engaging each other as well.

For example, Moll (2023:5-40) was born into a Baptist family on 12 March 1956 and was also immediately taken to the local Baptist Church which his family attended. Moll says: "My family and our cousins were staunch Baptists, stemming from our German origins" (Moll, 2023:6). As Moll (2023:7) tells his story in his publication, 'Conscientious objector to the Apartheid Army' (2023), he was to find out early in his Christian life that, "...segregation had become part of our lives without our even needing to reflect on it. It never occurred to me, as I was involved with the Young People's meetings, that we might never get together with young coloured or African Baptists."

As Moll (2023:9) grew up in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, he was to discover that it was not only the Church that was segregated, but also the schools of education he attended. By the time he entered high school, he became aware that: "All the pupils were white." There was a growing awareness that, "...all the places we lived when I was a boy – Whittlesea, Alice, Lady Frere, East London and Umtata – our house was in a 'white' area except for Umtata where after about 1976 black people started to move in" (Moll 2023:15).

Moll's story (2023) is very similar to many fellow Christians growing up in the same era and area as borne out for example by Steele (2023:2,3,32,35). The general attitude was to accept the status quo of the time. One of the consequences of this era in South Africa at least, was that only 'whites' were allowed to vote in the political elections. The majority of the population of South Africa at that time was not allowed to vote. The prime subject of this article is not to recount or discuss the past era – but to be aware of it and look at the issue of Evangelical Christians participating politically today within the new era. Every citizen of voting age is now allowed to vote. The question posed in this article is essentially how Evangelical Christians' view political responsibility now and what guidelines could help them along this path.

Years later, as a young adult and university graduate, Moll (2023:74) was faced with one of the biggest decisions of his life. Sparked by the need to answer to the military conscription to attend a short camp after he had already completed military training, he replied to a small military court: "I objected that Dr Allan Boesak, a highly trained theologian and author of a famous book, *Farewell to Innocence: A Socio-Ethical Study on Black Theology and Black Power* should surely have the same voting privileges as white people who had not even completed high school." In this instance an Evangelical Christian had crossed the line of his quiet private faith and upbringing to engage in the wider matter of politics and responsibility within God's wider Kingdom.

Stott (2006:43-45) warns Evangelical Christians (A term re-addressed by Stott), who have not always been engaged in wider Kingdom responsibility to be careful of despair and cynicism on the one hand; and being naïve and even simplistic on the other hand. “All individual Christians should be politically active in the sense that, as conscientious citizens, they will vote in elections, inform themselves about contemporary issues, share in public debate, and perhaps write to a newspaper, lobby their member of parliament or congress or take part in a demonstration” (Stott 2006:43). Harold (2018:22) confirms: “During the apartheid era, the Evangelical Church adopted a system either explicitly or implicitly, by adopting a ‘policy of no comment’. While there were personal members who supported political parties, there was no collective voice against the dehumanisation of the masses.” This imbalance needs continued correction. I plan to develop this article around the injunction of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesian Church for all of us today to reconsider our approach, both Christians and all those we are called to pray for within the wider community.

2 A Study of the Admonition from 1 Timothy 2:1-6

This section by expounds on a very important and pivotal passage of Scripture, 1 Timothy 2:1-6. The traditional Evangelical hermeneutic, the *historical-grammatical* will be my primary method of interpretation. However, I will engage the more ubiquitous *historical-critical* adopted in many circles more recently. I do this with the caution given by Machen (Harrisville and Sundburg 1995:194) where he objects to this liberal hermeneutic: “as a religion which is so entirely different from Christianity as to belong to a distinct category.”

The reason for choosing this passage is because it covers the five concentric circles operating in the Apostle Paul’s teaching, namely: The created world – the Kingdom of God – Jesus Christ – the Church – and the need for all people to be saved. Paul understood that he lived in God’s world (1 Cor 10:26). Within the universe, God’s world was uniquely positioned; and God was personally involved in the affairs of His Kingdom. Jesus Christ is not viewed as a ‘private’ Saviour for the Church alone – but the One, “through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind” (Jn 1:3-4 *NIV* 2011).

It was Jesus who founded the Church by His Spirit to testify to the Kingdom of God and represent the Gospel to all humankind. The Church is essentially, “the household of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). Salvation is *potentially* for everyone in the world! God “wants all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4), which may only be accomplished at various levels due to people’s unbelief and not God’s provision.

Fee (2013:429) comments: “This second christological passage in 1 Timothy

2:1-2 is intended to offer theological support for the recurring emphasis on *πάντας ἀνθρώπους* (all people), in a passage that encourages prayers of all kinds be made for all people.” Without respect of religion, race or creed – every human being carries the image of God and is deserving of respect and recognition. What is interesting in this passage is that Paul calls on the Church ‘*first of all*’ to pray for *everyone*. This could have been limited to prayer; at this stage of political rights afforded Christians. Within an open democracy that is now enjoyed in many parts of today’s world; this injunction to pray could also include voting, peaceful protest or the like.

By way of personal testimony, Paul demonstrated a respect for the political arena as well as an appreciation for some of its benefits afforded him. On the one hand he submitted to the authority of Rome and the Jewish rulers (Sanhedrin). He was tried in several courts and submitted to the punishment sentenced on him even though he believed he was innocent. On the other hand, he cherished his Roman citizenship and used it to his advantage: “The commander went to Paul and asked, ‘Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?’ ‘Yes, I am,’ he answered. Then the commander said, ‘I had to pay a lot of money for my citizenship.’ ‘But I was born a citizen,’ Paul replied” (Ac 23:27-28). These experiences could have been in the back of his mind as he wrote to the Ephesian context.

“I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for all people.” (Verse 1). This verse links primarily to verse 4, in that God “wants all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.” A ‘petition’ is generally a specific request concerning a specific situation or person. A ‘prayer’ is a general engagement of communication with God agreeing with similar things found in Scripture. ‘Intercessions’ seem to have a greater focus on engaging spiritual forces and principalities. ‘Thanksgiving’ needs to be given wherever it is fitting and for every person that comes to mind. An example of this is Ephesians 1:15-16, “For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and your love for all God’s people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.” Here is one case where ‘prayers’ and ‘thanksgiving’ are also linked.

There almost seems to be a pause in Paul’s thinking as he anticipates the questions from Timothy and the congregation at Ephesus after their reading of this injunction. Could Paul include political leaders in this injunction? Rome had brutal leaders within its ranks periodically which sometimes included the emperor. Yet in verse 2(a), Paul clearly states: “For kings and all those in authority.” It is interesting how Paul uses the word *βασίλεων* which literally means a ‘king,’ but is probably used by him to refer to the person in the highest office – including the emperor. 1 Timothy 6:15 gives biblical perspective as the same word is used: “God, the blessed only Ruler, King of kings and Lord of lords.” He then broadens the injunction to include “all those being in eminence.”

These would be various ranking authorities who had power to hinder the advance of the Gospel and forbid Christian's even meeting in homes. Richards (2004:834) suggests that: "Paul urges prayer for all in authority, that the government might permit free expression of Christian faith."

Verse 2(b) is very important for understanding the purpose and plan of good governance: "That we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." An article in the Africa study Bible rightly says: "We must offer intercessory prayer for our leaders. We should pray that they have wisdom, do justice, have compassion for the poor, and act with honesty and integrity" (Hoehner et al, 2016:1782). Romans 13:3 follows this sentiment of 1 Timothy 2:2, "For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer." The problem is when political rulers and civic rulers are corrupt and don't act properly. Paul himself suffered under this. He hints at this in 1 Corinthians 6:1, "If any of you has dispute with another, do you dare take it before the ungodly for judgement instead of before the Lord's people."

Moll (2023: xlii) discovered this very thing in his own life as an Evangelical Baptist being forced to engage militarily with his own people of different race groupings barred from the vote. He says: "We are reminded of Thielicke's concept of 'derived authority'. The state derives its authority from God, but if it practises wickedness it ceases to derive that authority. We must juxtaposition our understanding of Romans 13 with Revelation 13." This stand cost him his employment as a young actuary, a prison sentence and continued sentencing to solitary confinement *within* the prison context!

Perkins (2003:1434) adds an important insight from the socio-political time of writing: "The terms 'godliness' and 'dignity' express a Greco-Roman ideal of virtuous citizenship." This was the *first step* expected of everyone living in an orderly society. "The Christian shift occurs with 2:3b-4. Godliness is not just the cultural ideal of an upright member of the community. It is not to be had without conversation to a particular god as one's savior/benefactor. The expression 'knowledge of the truth'; serves as a synonym for conversion to Christianity (*cf.* Heb. 10:26)" (Perkins 2003:1434).

Paul's injunction to the Ephesian Church is based on the understanding of 1 Timothy 6:15. Though rulers, governors and military regulations may breach the acceptable code of conduct – God is "King of kings," and the prayers of Christians are sacred to Him. For example, the early Church was threatened by their authorities to not preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and they rightly prayed: "'Sovereign Lord', they said, 'you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them'" (Ac 4:24). They continued to preach and faced the

consequences of imprisonment.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." God is committed to the global population. "The only reasonable reading of this word here is generic; in that, it is referring to *all people* in general and not to the male gender specifically. Yet many translations use the word 'men' for translation purposes" (Pohlmann, 2016:38). More than that, *anthrōpos* is being used of every *human being* – not just Christians in the Church. Even though it is understood that only Christians were the readers of this letter from Paul to Timothy.

The flow is seamless in the passage of Scripture ending with a factual theological statement in verses 5-6: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has been witnessed to at the proper time" (See also Gl 4:4). This is the essence of the revelation given to Paul at his conversion concerning the global nature of the Gospel including the Gentiles (See Eph 3:7-12).

3 Assessing One's Political Context

Everyone needs to assess the political context they happen to be living in. In South Africa it is important to understand the 'before 1994' and the 'post 1994' context. In May 2024; it is also important to understand what a 'Ruling Party Government' looks like as opposed to a new future 'Government of National Unity' (GNU). Looking wider, Stott (2006:38-43) suggests that there are three models of politics to choose from.

The first is Authoritarianism: "Authoritarian governments impose their vision of the world on the people. They do not have checks and balances of a constitution, bill of rights or free and fair elections. Authoritarian governments are obsessed with control and have a pessimistic view of human nature" (2006:38). This can be expressed in a common model; for example, fascist, communist or an expression of dictatorship – depending on where in the world you live.

The second is Anarchism: "In this philosophy there is such optimism about the individual that law, government and indeed all authority are seen not only as superfluous but as a threat to human freedom" (Stott 2006:39). The overly optimistic view of human nature ignores the Fall of humankind taught in the Bible and countries who adopt this approach are often ironically plagued by violence and dangerous protest.

The third option is Democracy. This is difficult to define because there are so many variations of it. Stott (2006:40) gives a simple and rather inadequate statement of what Democracy is, rather than giving a definition: "It is the political expression of persuasion by argument." He goes on to say that: "Democracy, being realistic about human beings being both created and fallen, involves

citizens in the framing of their own laws” (Stott 2006:40). Indeed, it is a rather fragile approach; and also open to abuse; especially if leaders emerge within it who do not have the interests of the citizens as their primary focus of attention. The newly drafted Constitution of the Republic of South Africa was approved by the Constitutional Court on the 4th December 1996 and came into effect on the 4th February 1997. This changed the landscape of every person in the Republic of South Africa as it brought an end to the former laws of Apartheid

3.1 Our Country’s Constitution

The plan next section of the article will narrow the focus and research intent of seeing this new Constitution from the perspective of the Church as it represents the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. No Constitution, no country and no set of governing authorities are perfect. However, in this case South Africa has been given the best chance granted to any country in the world. It depends on the *ανθρωποι* (The people Paul asks us to pray for). Cain (2005:39) gives one perspective: “God has put limited responsibility on civil government. Its prime purpose is to protect its citizens. This is why the symbol of the state is the sword (Rom 13:4). It is to protect them from crime by maintaining a police force and an independent judiciary. It is to protect them from external aggression by maintaining a volunteer army.”

3.1.1 Human Rights as a Biblical Principle

The newly drafted Constitution of the Republic of South Africa is shaped essentially by the biblical principle of the *Imago Dei* stated originally in Genesis 1:27, “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” This single verse sets the stage for human rights in South Africa, thus eclipsing anything the former Apartheid system had held dear in terms of understanding the human being.

Thielicke (1979:171) links this foundational Creation fact to the Christological reality aligning with much of what Paul does in 1 Timothy 2:1-6. “This chapter of the *imago Dei* as an *alienum*, something alien, is supremely brought out by the fact that a proprium, as a true ontic possession, an attribute in the strict sense, it is ascribed solely and exclusively to Jesus Christ.” The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the primary witness to this human reality. This calls even more on Evangelical Christians to take up their responsibility, all the more seriously on the foundation of the biblical teaching regarding the *imago Dei* within all human beings.

While the *imago Dei* gives impetus to ‘human rights’ enshrined in a democratic constitution – there is another reality that casts a dark unsettling shadow over this encouraging truth. Many people within democracies have, “...exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles” (Rm 1:22) The consequences of this are listed in varying degrees of degradation from Romans chapter 1 verses 24 to

32. This reality of degradation in human behaviour is carefully documented over the years in every newspaper.

3.1.2 Freedom of Speech

The human being created in God’s image, scarred or marred as it may be at times has the ability to *speak out* - which nothing else in Creation can do. Thielicke (1979:511) addresses both the problem and potential of words spoken by human beings. “The problem of the ‘the church and the mass society’ arises out of the fact that in the word’s filed a force of two completely different worlds collide.”

Freedom of speech within democratic societies assumes a certain humane trust and credibility assigned to the speaker. However, many political speeches given by eminent people and leaders proves that this is not always the case. The worst protagonist of the abuse of the *freedom of speech* in modern history was Adolf Hitler. There are contemporary examples that have and are following in that model and amazingly to most rational responsible listeners, they achieve similar disastrous results! Harold (2018:28) describes well what Hitler did with ‘words’: “In the place of justice and righteousness, normal society brandished violence and oppression – and called it justice.”

3.1.3 Access to the Ballot Box

One of the signs of a democratic society is the free access that registered voters have to the ballot box. As much as possible, people should not be coerced, threatened or bribed. Every individual who stands in a ballot box should have the right to act according to their conscience and knowledge in the moment of action. Thielicke (2009:298) may be helpful when he says: “My view of conscience is determined by my understanding of what is the normative factor determining human existence, e.g. practical reason, utility, or the sociological or biological structure. Conscience is always incorporated within the framework of a particular anthropology.” The anthropology of this article is stated in the previous section.

3.2 Freedom of Movement and Movement and Infrastructure.

After all, Stott (2006:42) gives a sober comment on affairs: “Christians should be careful not to ‘baptize’ any political ideology (whether of the right, the centre or the left) as if it contained a monopoly of the truth and goodness. At best a political ideology and its programme are only an approximation to the will and purpose of God”. Those parties labelling themselves as Christian need also to be aware of this.

It is for this very reason that 1 Timothy 2:1-6 calls the Church to pray for all leaders. It also states that prayer could enhance the better options if leaders and everyone else were ‘saved’. Hoehner *et al* (2016:1782) suggest that this could contribute to leaders realising that: “The authority they have is given to them by God and is just a shadow of his power.”

On the practical side, countries need to allow people the freedom of movement and the infrastructure required for people to express their political will. We don't live in perfect societies and countries. But hindering people and facilitating people are two different things.

4. The Character of Leadership Candidates as a Key Factor. (Exodus 18:20-23; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9)

While it is important for some people who claim to be Bible-believing Evangelicals to broaden their responsibility beyond their Church to a Kingdom perspective, as well as people appreciating a fitting model of political engagement and giving opportunity to all qualifying citizens – a further key factor is the character of those who stand for office. We will now commence by looking at this from Exodus 18:20-23 (National appointments), Titus 1:6-9 (Missional appointments), and finally 1 Timothy 3:1-7 (Congregational appointments).

The Exodus 18 chapter sets the Old Testament backdrop to 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The issue at stake is the *leadership of a group*. In Exodus 18 Moses was faced by his father-in-law Jethro and challenged about his autocratic leadership style of a migrant nation. Jethro recommended that this be revised. In 1 Timothy 3:1, the 'oversight' of the church community is also addressed. 'Επισκοπος' is not a Christian word and not listed under the spiritual gifts in the New Testament; not even the leadership gifts of Ephesians 4:12. It is a 'secular' word used of anyone assuming the role of the oversight of a household (Like Philemon – see letter of Philemon), or a community, or a city, or a country or a church! Hence, I there is connection with 1 Timothy 2:1-6 in one sense to 1 Timothy 3:1-7; in that it could also apply to 'overseers' in politics as well. Cain (2005:72) observes rightly that, "Unfortunately, there are many leaders in civil government who are attempting to govern their nation but are unable to effectively control their own lives."

Perkins (2003:1435) helps with this: "Translation of the terms *episkopos* (bishop, overseer), *diakonos*, (deacon, minister, or servant), and *presbuteros* (elder, old man) is difficult both because they have both official and non-official meanings, and because the relationship between the two groups so designated and their communal functions are unclear." This article emphasises that people appointed to oversight and service to any community should preferably be people of sound character, dignity and ability in what they are appointed to do.

Cain (2004:35-39) makes the point that there are essentially five levels of government ordained by God and each level interplays with the others. The first level is the government of God, or the "Kingdom of God" often spoken of in Scripture. The second level is self or individual government. We are made rational and responsible people by very nature (See Romans 2). The third level is family order and management. 1 Timothy 3:5 makes an astute observation: "If

anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church." Its interesting that "care of God's church" here is the same word as that of the Good Samaritan 'caring' for the injured man in the story, while the word for 'managing' a family or a household is more of a business word. The fourth level is Church government linked to the fifth level of governing the State and/or the community.

4.1 A Turning Point of Leadership Appointments in Exodus 18:20-23

The Old Testament gives many examples for the New Testament to learn. 1 Corinthians 10:11 reaches a point after the chapter has outlined some of the history of Israel: "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come." Exodus 18 is one of those milestone passages of Scripture teaching us about leadership under God within a nation. In this case it was Moses the pioneer leader of a migrant nation. Pioneer leaders mostly exemplify strong 'central' governments and benevolent leadership traits: "When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, 'What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?'" (Ex 18:14). Something had to change as Moses shifted from the pioneer leader of a migrant nation to being a leader manager of a more settled nation, and delegating responsibilities to suitable judges (as they were called).

Moses acted on Jethro's experienced advice: "Listen now to me and I will give you some advice and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. ...But select capable men from all the people – men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain – and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens" (Ex 18:19-21). Armed with the 'constitution of the day' (verse 20), these leaders were to be people of *sound character* and *functioning ability* suited to their capacity.

Speaking from an African perspective, Kunhiyop (2008:164) confirms the wisdom of Jethro's advice which was duly implemented by Moses. "Corruption is a feature of African social, political and even religious life, with dire consequences." Throughout Scripture, sound character in keeping with the *imago Dei* is of utmost importance. "Corruption can be defined as making someone morally corrupt or becoming morally corrupt oneself" (Kunhiyop 2008:165). He agrees with Exodus 18:19 by singling out one character flaw which often results in the practice of bribery and extortion. It is important that, "The Church needs to be modelled by its leaders and needs to be 'salt' and 'light'. Jesus Christ has come to shine into the live of people so that they shine within their communities" (Pohlmann, 2021:69).

4.2 Leadership Within Christian Community Sets the Example (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

The ‘overseer’ of 1 Timothy 3:1 is a *secular* community term that is *adopted* by Paul in a ministry missional context to address the issue of leadership: “Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.” Against the backdrop in the Ephesian church, where Ephesians 1 outlines the unwarranted aspirations by some who wanted leadership for the sake of their own agenda, Fee (1993:79) cautions: “Thus Paul is not commending people who have a great desire to become leaders; rather, he is saying that the position of **overseer** is such a significant matter, **a noble task**, that it should indeed be the kind of task to which a person might aspire.”

Because of the nobility and importance of the task, “The overseer must therefore be above reproach” (Verse 2). Fee (1993:80) says: “The term **above reproach**, however, which is repeated regarding the widows in 5:7 and of Timothy himself in 6:14 (in an eschatological context), has to do with irreproachable observable conduct.” This sets the tone for all the qualities listed below in verses 2-7. The list below is also set against a sociological context within the Ephesian community, just as the list in Titus 1 is set against a context that is sensitive to the sociological realities of the island community of Crete. For example, Paul found it necessary to circumcise Timothy for his ministry context at Ephesus and surrounds (Ac 16:3); but chose not to do the same to Titus (Gl 2:3) for his different context.

The qualities listed in verse 2-3 are all typical personal behaviours needed by a leader to counter the negative ones in the city of Ephesus (e.g. Faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, teachable see Phillips, LSV, ISV, not given to drunkenness, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money). They all lead up to verse 7: “He must have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.” Fee (1993:83) points out that the, “... list has to do with observable behavior of a kind that will be a witness to outsiders.” This Ephesian Church context, as recorded in Timothy 2 had the opportunity to set the tone for all *political* or *community* leaders.

Verses 4-5 then presents *the family* as the testing ground of character and leadership. Starting with marriage; if the leader is a married person, he/she should be married to one person at any one time (Verse 2a). Then if the leader has a family, “He should manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect.” These are simply good micro tests to ensure that the best and proven candidates are elevated to any and every “noble task” affecting the lives of constituencies and countries.

4.3. Leadership Within the Missional Context (Titus 1:6-9)

The missional context and content of Titus 1:6-9 are both the same and decidedly

different to that of the Ephesus context. Firstly, Crete seems to have had very different sociological problems than Ephesus (See e.g. Tt 1:10-13). Secondly there is no mention of ‘deacons’ in Titus 1. Thirdly, Titus 1:5 and 6 uses the word *πρεσβυτερος* (age and status) to refer to the *overseers* (function) that are to be appointed. It is likely that a traditional and more rural environment like Crete would do better to appoint older people already respected in the community for the very purpose stated in 1 Timothy 3:7 of “having a good reputation with outsiders.” Fourthly, there is no mention of the *γυνή* mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:10 (See e.g. Lk 8:2), probably because the Crete church was still a missional context and undeveloped as stated in Titus 1:5, “The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished ...”

What is interesting and probably unique to the requirement of Crete elders was probably the need for a counterbalance to local corrupt sociological problems. For example, the elder/leader at Crete should not be “overbearing”, nor “quick-tempered”, needs to “love what is good”, needs to be “upright and holy”, and needs to be “disciplined”. In terms of *political* leadership, it would also be wise that those appointed would be strong enough within their constituencies to counter some of the acknowledged problems. These would differ from country to country.

5 Conclusion

A way forward.

In many ways, South Africa has been viewed in the world community as an exemplary country in terms of its way *forward* after 1994. The first step was to have fully democratic elections for all eligible voting people on 27th April 1994. This officially buried the former Apartheid era and launched a new South Africa for its citizens. This resulted in a government of national unity (GNU) led by the president, Nelson Mandela and even included the former State President, F.W. de Klerk as one of two vice presidents and a few cabinet positions from leaders of the former South Africa. The main reason for this was the big-heartedness of Nelson Mandela with his focus on the *future well-being of the whole country*. In all of these cases sound character derived directly or indirectly from the Church played a part in this (1 Timothy 3).

This was followed by drafting a new Constitution by a long process of consultation and negotiation by a wide array of representatives. It is still regarded globally as one of the most fair and liberal constitutions. Within it, the *imago Dei* of every human being in the country is implicitly honoured. The one thing no one expected was how some people elected to office over time would use and abuse positions of leadership trust. The Zondo Commission of Enquiry (21 August 2018-22 June 2022) has documented this fall from grace and its perpetrators. The Church is urged to pray about this and engage the process ever more meaningfully.

This leads to the challenge introduced by Paul to the Ephesian congregation (1 Timothy 2:1-6) which is the educating of the church, especially the Evangelical church which professes a deep commitment to the Bible, in its reading of Scripture and understanding of the Kingdom of God. One example in South Africa's more recent history is the national consultation held, known as, *The Rustenburg Conference* (November 1990). Christian leaders, most of whom could be described as Bible-believing Evangelicals from a very wide set of perspectives participated. About 230 Christian Church leaders from about 80 denominations and 40 organizations met, to talk, listen, pray and plan the future with a clearer vision of their *biblical mandate*.

Finally, addressing the importance of *praying* as instructed to pray in 1 Timothy 2:1-2. Does prayer work? I end by returning to the testimony of Moll (2023:131-133). He was eventually sentenced to prison in Voortrekkerhoogte Detention Barracks in Pretoria with the added repeated sentencing to solitary confinement. This news eventually filtered through to many concerned people all over the world, especially in Cape Town. Protests were organised, letters of appeal drafted, and eventually prayer and fasting periods were organised. This eventually led to Peter Moll being given the 'benefit of the doubt' and he was notified on 8th August 1980 that his 'category' had been changed to 'political conscientious objector'. Finally, he (Moll, 2023:193) gratefully says: "I was released on 2 December 1980 amid thorough reporting by the press." Prayer does also work in our days in terms of the appeal of 1 Timothy 2:1-6.

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Author's Declaration

The author declares that there is no financial gain or personal relationship(s) that inappropriately influenced him/her in the writing of this article.

Email: martin@btc.co.za

Jesus, the Fox, and Politics

By Prof. Dr. J. M. (Johan) Ras, Department of Criminal Justice, University of Zululand; Z. P. (Ziphelele) Mhlongo-Ras, Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority Training Instructor; Mr. C. V.B. (Charles) Sehlogo, Director: Protective Services Department, University of Zululand; Ms. Z. N. (Zipho) Snyman, Department of Criminal Justice, University of Zululand; Ms. N. (Nombulelo) Mhlongo, Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority Security Officer; Dr. P.E. (Pius) Isidiho, former doctoral student in Criminology in the Department of Criminal Justice, University of Zululand; Ms B (Banikele) Mashiyane, post-graduate student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal; N (Ntando) Mpungose, Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority Security Officer

Abstract

This article was about Jesus, the Fox (King Herod Antipas) and politics. Jesus had addressed King Herod in Luke 13 verses 31 to 34 and told the Pharisees that Herod was a fox when they told Him that Herod wanted to kill Him. A text-immanent and narrative-critical reading was done of the New Testament with special reference to Luke 13 verses 31 to 34 to see if Jesus was involved in any form of politics, political activism or militancy, and if so, if He had commanded His disciples to do the same. The study reveals that Jesus was Emmanuel, sent by God to proclaim God's kingdom and to save the world from their sins. He was not involved in earthly political activities, and He did not directly command His disciples to do so. The remark that Jesus had made about King Herod was a political side remark because the king was responsible for the decapitation of John the Baptist.

1. Introduction

This article is about Jesus, the Fox, and politics. In Luke 13 verses 31 to 34 we find a short travel narrative where some of the Pharisees came to Jesus, while He was enroute to Jerusalem, telling Him that King Herod (Antipas) wants to kill Him and that He must leave the place (Hoehner Vol 3:126-145; Van Zyl 1979:140, 147-148). Jesus then said: "Go and tell that fox (*"jackal"* in the South African context – OAB 1957:90, uses the word *"jakkals"*; Ras 2024) I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal. In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day – for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem" (NIV 1981:95; Lk 13:32-33).

Looking at the New Testament authors' portrayal of Jesus will assist us to better understand if and how Jesus was involved in politics during His time on earth (Ras 2024). A careful reading of the different New Testament canonical books, following a text-immanent (Ras 2010:115) and narrative-critical (Ras 1996)

approach assist us to better comprehend if He indeed got involved in the political issues of His days, or if He had just made some sideline political remarks.

Brief attention is also paid to the message of Jesus to His disciples to see if He had instructed them to get involved in political activities or not. A brief eclectic overview is first given about Jesus as we find Him in the New Testament (cf. Guthrie 1970), and then remarks will be made about Jesus, the Fox (King Herod Antipas) and politics as we find it in Luke 13 verse 31 to 34 (cf. Tiede 1988:256-257; Craddock 1990:17-174; Marshall 1992:151; Bratcher 1982:240; Hendricksen 1984:708-709; Lenski 1946:757; Ellis 1991:190; Darr 1998; Beechy 2016:82-86; Van der Sprenkel 1964:256).

2. Jesus

Scholars normally distinguish between the historical Jesus and the Jesus of faith. The historical Jesus refers to the flesh-and-blood Jesus, someone who really had existed in history and had walked upon this earth just like any other historical person. The Jesus of faith refers to the "reconstructed" Jesus that we find in the Bible (Ras 2024; Guthrie 1980 Vol 3:497-583).

A reconstructed Jesus refers to the attempt of the Bible authors to reconstruct or "build a Jesus" out of the existing evidence that they had about Him. When we read the Bible in a systematic manner (Ras 2022:70-71) we discover these "reconstructions" or "profiles" (Ras, Ras & Zondi 2017:111-113) created about Jesus. We find mental pictures or glimpses about Him in the Bible. We believe that these "selected-interpreted-descriptions" about Jesus are descriptions of the real historical Jesus (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024).

"To see Jesus", we must look at the Bible, into the Bible, and "through the Bible", to see Him on the horizon, always getting closer and closer to us as we move closer to Him, or must we rather say, He gets closer to us (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Sehlogo, 2024; Mhlongo 2024). In line with a text-immanent and narrative-critical approach (Ras 1996) we read the different New Testament books as stories (Van Aarde 1994) where each individual book tells as something about Jesus.

3. Data Sources About Jesus

There are clear references to Jesus in the New Testament, especially in the first four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (Ras 2024). These four Gospels are the main data and written sources that we have about Him. However, what we find there are "interpreted reconstructions", even "postulations" (Ras, Ras & Zondi 2017:113) of the opinions of those that have written these stories.

These stories, what we can called, "constructed-told stories", were originally gathered qualitative data that the first eye-and-ear witnesses had compiled about

Jesus in the light of what they had seen and heard from, or about Him, somewhere in their past (Lk 1:1-4 & Ac 1:1-2; 15:3). Just like the Biblical authors, we believe that it was the Holy Spirit that had guided these authors to bring these stories and texts into existence (2 Pt 1:19-21; Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Geisler 1982).

The New Testament sources were originally in oral and were later put in written form (Mt 24:1-3, 15; Jn 21:25). The original sources had centred on the speeches (“words”) and deeds (“acts”) of Jesus and these collections were later expanded to also include stories and other material about all His activities (Mt 4:23-25; 7:28; 11:1-2; Combrink 1980:31-61; Du Plessis 1980:156-101; Ras 1996:12-13).

4. Language Sources

The mother tongue of Jesus was Aramaic (Ras 2024). This was a north-western Semitic language consisting of Aramaic and the Canaanite language. The last-mentioned included Ugaritic, Phoenician and Hebrew (Johns 1978:1-2). The mother tongue of Jesus further falls under West-Aramaic, more specifically Galilean Aramaic (Ras 2024; Mk 5:41). Jesus could also read and speak Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament Scriptures (Lk 4:16-20; Jn 5:2) as well as Greek (Jn 12:20) and Latin (Jn 19:20) (Ras 2024).

We believe the original oral sources of Jesus’ sayings and deeds were in Aramaic and were later translated into Greek, more specifically into the dialect that is today known as *Koinē* Greek as we find it in the present New Testament papyri, uncials and minuscule hand-written manuscripts (NA 1995; Ras 2024). The textual information about Jesus that we have today in the canonical text of the Bible, were put together by Greek New Testament text-critical scholars. The most up-to-date eclectic Greek New Testament was compiled by Kurt and Barbara Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini and Bruce M. Metzger, and was printed by the *Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft* in Stuttgart, Germany (Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* Ed. XXVII 1995:45*, Ras 2024).

The approach of modern-day scholars is basically an eclectic one and they normally based their compiled text on the existing papyrus, uncial and minuscule hand-written manuscripts that are available today (Metzger 1981; Petzer 1990; Ras 1998b:810-831). Previous Greek New Testament texts, like the “red text” of the United Bible Societies, second edition (1966) and the earlier versions of Eberhard Nestle’s “blue text” of the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, originally published in 1898, were used by Bible translators to translate the New Testament into English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, seSotho sa Borwa, and other indigenous or foreign languages (Ras 2024).

This means in practice that ordinary people’s perceptions about Jesus today, is mainly based upon what they have read in their vernacular about Him, in what they call, “the Bible”, or “their Bible”, or “The Holy Bible” (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-

Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Mhlongo 2024; Isidiho 2024; Mashiyane 2024). To be even more specific, when someone reads his Bible today in his mother tongue, he / she reads an “already carefully-selected-elected reconstructed-interpreted Bible”, that we, in faith believe, is “representing” reliable copies of the non-existent original *autographa*, inter alia containing the *verba ipsissima Jesu* (the real words of the historical Jesus) (Ras 2024; Geisler 1982).

5. How Do We Know Who Is Jesus?

We will never know who Jesus was, except, if we accept in faith, the statements that were made by the different authors of the New Testament, particularly Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. However, their statements were based on what they had received from others through oral traditions that were handed over to them (Lk 1:1-4; Jn 21:25; 1 Cor 15:3), or had experienced, through their encounters with those who were the apostles or the first eye and ear witnesses about Jesus (Mt 17:1-9; Lk 6:13). The Gospel author John also said that the Holy Spirit, who reveals the truth about God, will lead them (the disciples) in all truth, and will tell them about things to come, and that He (the Spirit) will take what Jesus had said and tell it to them (Jn 16:13-15; GNB 1980:139).

Although believers have the writings and the Holy Spirit to assist, we also do not know for certain who the four Gospel authors were. All what we know is that the headings of the present Greek writings start with the words *KATA MATHTHAION*, *KATA MARKON*, *KATA LUKAN*, and *KATA IŌANNĒN*, “According to Matthew, According to Mark, According to Luke”, and “According to John” (NA 1995:1, 88, 150 & 247; Ras 2024).

To see if Jesus was directly involved in politics or not, or if He had made some political remarks only, it is vital to see how the authors of the New Testament, especially the Gospel authors had portrayed Him (Ras 2024). Was Jesus involved in one or other political or religious party with political objectives? Was He a political activist or politically militant? Did Jesus, for example, told His disciples to take up arms against the rulers during His days upon this earth? Did He expect from His followers to revolt against the authorities and to set people free for one or other political cause? (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Isidiho 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mhlongo 2024). If so, then it can also be expected from all His followers, and the readers, and all those who identify with Him (Ras 2024).

6. The Jesus of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew starts with the words, *Biblos geneseōs Jesou Christou huiou David huiou Abraam*. “The Book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abram” (Mt 1:1). Jesus had a birth record. He was regarded as the son of David, the famous King of Judah and the son of Abram. According to Matthew Jesus was coming from a royal household and was also in the bloodline of the first patriarch Abram who was called by God to go to the promised land

(Gn 12 & 15; Ras 2024). He was royalty (Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mashiyane 2024). Jesus is depicted in this gospel as the child of Joseph and Mary (Mt 1:18). He was not biologically and genetically connected to Joseph, because, according to Matthew, his mother Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Mt 1:20; Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Mashiyane 2024; Mhlongo 2024). The Greek phrase *prin hē sunelthein autous eurēthē en gastri exousa ek pneumatos hagiou*, “before they came / go together, she was found to be pregnant out of [the] Holy Spirit (Mt 1:18; Ras 2024), is clear.

From a linguistic perspective, the aorist indicative passive verb, *eurēthē*, “she was found to be”, clearly indicates that Jesus’ birth is the result of the Holy Spirit’s divine intervention, and not because of Joseph’s sexual involvement with Mary. The passive form of the verb further indicates the passiveness of Mary in this regard. Jesus’s birth was indeed a virgin birth (Ras 2024; Mashiyane 2024).

Matthew emphasises that Jesus had come from the royal bloodline and that He is the promised Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One. The Greek word *Christos* is a translation of the Hebrew word “*Mashiach*” which means “anointed one” (Abbott-Smith 1977:484). An angel also had appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to call the baby *Jēsous*, that is, “Jesus”, because He will save his people from their sins (Mt. 1:20-23). He will also be called *Emmanouēl*, which means, “God with us” (Mt 1:23; Van Aarde 1994; Ras 1996:47; Ras 2024). According to Matthew, God had become a human being through Jesus Christ. Jesus was God in human form.

Jesus was a Jew who was born about 6 BC in Betlehem in Judeah (Mt 2:1) in the days of king Herod the Great (37 BC to 4 BC) (Ras 2024; Hoehner 1980 Vol 3:126-145). He was born in Betlehem, the “house of bread” (Hebrew: “*Bet* (house) & *lehem* (bread)”). The “Bread of Life” (according to John, not Matthew) was born in the house of bread (*cf.* Jn 6:35). The people of the geographical area Judeah were centuries earlier called Jews; that is why Jesus was also called a Jew (Mt 27:37).

According to Matthew, King Herod (the Great) had sent soldiers to kill all baby boys in the Betlehem region who were two years old and younger, when he had heard that the “King of the Jews” was born. Matthew depicts Jesus as Someone who was born in a house (Mt 2:11) and who has received gifts from the *magoi* (OAB 1957:6 - “*wyse manne*”; GNB 1980:4 - “some men who studied the stars...”; Abbott-Smith 1977:274 - a Magian, someone who conforms to the Persian [modern day “Iran” - Ras 2024] religion) (Mt 2:1-11).

His parents fled with Him to Egypt in North Africa and stayed there until the death of King Herod (4 BC) (Mt 2:13-18) (Hoehner 1980: Vol 3:126-145). Jesus and His parents became almost overnight refugees, and they were refugees in

this North African country until their return to their homeland. After the death of Herod, they had returned to Judeah, but then settled in the city of Nazareth in Galilee (Mt 2:22-23). That is why Jesus was called a *Nazōraios*, a “Nazarene” (Mt 2:23; Ras 2024).

Mathew did not say anything about Jesus’ upbringing during early childhood, but after His baptism by John the Baptist, when He started with His ministry, one can see He had revealed special insights into the sacred scriptures. He was a preacher (Mt 4:17), a teacher (Mt 4:23) and a healer (Mt 4:24). The message of Matthew about Jesus, addressed to his first readers, probably in Antioch, Syria (Carter 1996:25-25; Ras 1998a:450-451), was simple: Jesus is God Emmanuel (Van Aarde 1994:xiii) who came and called upon people to repent (Mt 4:17) and to become His followers (Mt 4:19) or disciples (Mt 28:19-20; Ras 1998b:810-831).

According to Matthew Jesus went into the temple of God in Jerusalem and drove out all those who were buying and selling there, and He also had overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the stools of those selling pigeons (Mt 21:12-13). He did that because He told them that the temple must be a house of prayer and not a hideout for thieves. Matthew uses the Greek words *spēlaion lēstōn* (Afrikaans: “*rowerspelonk*” - OAB 1957:29; English: “a den of robbers” - NIV 1981:28; GNB 1980:31 - “a hideout for thieves”). Abbott-Smith (1977:413 & 269) correctly translates it with “a robber’s cave”. According to Matthew He had acted alone when He did this and did not call upon His disciples to assist Him or to overthrow the temple authorities in a violent manner (Ras 2024).

According to Matthew, the believing disciples must do God’s will, be abundant in righteousness (Combrink 1980:104), and like Jesus, live a life of full obedience to God His Father. The essence of all this is to love God and the neighbour (Mt 22:37-40; Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mhlongo 2024). Just like Jesus was “God with us”, so His followers, the first disciples, and us, must be like God in this world. The disciples must carry Jesus’ cross, Emmanuel’s cross, in this world (Mt 10:32-39; Mhlongo 2024; Mashiyane 2024).

The disciples were not instructed to take up swords, sticks and to carry shields to be used against the temple authorities, the religious rulers in His days (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024). In fact, when Jesus was arrested by the temple authorities, the one disciple of Jesus, acting like a personal bodyguard, had drawn his sword and had chopped off the ear of the servant of the high priest, but Jesus immediately had commanded him to put his sword back (Mt 26:50-53). In Matthew’s Gospel there was no intention from Jesus’s side to lead a physical rebellion or to organise an uprising against the temple authorities (Ras, 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mhlongo 2024; Isidiho 2024).

7. The Jesus of Mark

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is the Son of God (Mk 1:1). Someone with no birth record. Someone who was baptised by John the Baptist, who was driven by the Spirit, and who was served by angels (Mk 1:9-13). He had proclaimed the kingdom of God and had called upon people to repent. He was a fisher of men (Mk 1:14-20). He was learning with authority and had performed miracles also on the Sabbath because He was different (Mk 1:21-22). He had cast out demons, had healed people, and He was a man of prayer (Mk 1:21-35). He was sent to preach (Mk 1:38). He had identified with the social outcasts and with the marginalized (Mk 1: 40) because He wanted to do that. He said that he had come to call sinners to repentance (Mk 2:17), not righteous people.

He said that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath and that human beings are more important than the sabbath (Mk 2:27-28). He had chosen his twelve disciples and He loved parables. He is pictured as someone who control even nature (Mk 4:35-41) because He had calm down a storm. He could raise people from the death (Mk 5:21-43), could multiply the bread and fish (Mk 6:3-44), and had walked upon the waters of the sea (Mk 6:45-56). He did not stick to old traditions of people regarding outside cleansing, but instead, had focused on the inner cleansing of the heart or soul (Mk 7:1-23). To become His disciple, one must take up the cross, and followed Him (Mk 8:34-38).

His message was direct and at times confrontational (Ras 2024). He was perceived to be radical for the people of His time (Mk 9:38-50). He loved children (Mk 10:13) and told people to forsake everything to follow Him (Mk 10:17-31). Mark mentioned that Jesus had driven people out of God's temple because He had regarded the temple not as a business place but as a place of prayer (Mk 11:15-17). He did not try to overthrow the temple or burnt down the temple through an act of arson (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Isidiho 2024), but He only had chased out those who were trying to make money inside His Father's house by selling sacrificial animals or doing foreign money exchange (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

He also had demanded respect for the Roman Caesar and for God (Mk 12:17). He did not try to convince His followers to rally against Caesar (Tiberius - cf. Lk 3:1) or to try and overthrow the imperialist and colonial Roman Empire, based in Rome (Italy), but with a strong presence in Galilee, Samaria and Judeah. He had told His disciples that there will come difficult times when many of them will be killed because of Him (Mk 13:5-13). He also had called upon them to guard and pray (Mk 13:33-37). However, this "guarding" was spiritual, not physical (Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mhlongo 2024; Snyman 2024).

He was captured with swords and sticks and religiously charged that He had blasphemed God because He had acknowledged that He is the Christ, the Son

of God (Mk 14:60-65). He was crucified because He was falsely regarded as the King of the Jews (Mk 15:12-24) but He never had tried to set up an earthly kingdom with Himself as Head (Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024).

There were many women who had followed him (Mk 15:40-41: Mpungose 2024). Mark said that He had been buried but according to Mark a young man in the grave had said that Jesus stood up. Although Mark has an abrupt textual ending at chapter 16 verse 8, there are other text-critical readings that added verse 9 to 20 (Ras 2024). In this passage Jesus had appeared to different people. He told them to go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel. He then was taken to heaven where He sit on the righthand side of God (Mk 16:9-20).

For Mark, the disciples must be like Jesus, the Son of God, and they must do what He told them to do. Discipleship is not an instantaneous thing, but it is a process of becoming. "Becoming" a disciple, a follower, a *mathētēs* (learner), and "staying" one, is what it means to follow Jesus. *Becoming and being* a disciple and at the same time *becoming and being* more like the Son of God, is the essence of Mark's teaching about Jesus.

He did not instruct His followers to gather arms, slings and swords to prepare for a physical take-over of the temple in Jerusalem, the Roman authorities, or to storm the Roman Senate in Rome (Italy). Jesus's proclamation of His (God's) kingdom was a spiritual one (Mk 1:14-15), not an earthly one, where He had rallied His followers to overthrow the despised Roman imperialists and Roman colonial power. He also did not lead a physical revolt against the paying of the taxes, but instead, told His followers to pay their taxes to Caesar (Mk 12:13-17; Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Snyman 2024; Isidiho 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

8. The Jesus of Luke

According to Luke Jesus was born in the city of David (Betlehem) and there was no lodging place for His parents. The herdsmen found Jesus with Joseph and Mary in a manger (Lk 2:16). He was circumcised when he was eight days old (Lk 2:21) and was given the name Jesus, "Saviour". He was brought before God in the temple of Jerusalem and two doves were offered as a sacrifice, to cleanse Mary, His mother. This indicates that they were poor at that time because they could not afford the customary lamb (Lv 12:8 & Lk 2:24; Ras 2024).

He grew up in the Spirit and was full of wisdom. When he was 12 years old, He was found between the teachers of scriptures in Jerusalem. He had deep insights into the things of God, His Father. He was an obedient child in Nazareth. Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist and the Holy Spirit came upon Him in the form of a dove (Lk 2-3). He stayed without food for 40 days and was led by the Holy Spirit. He made the scriptures applicable to His listeners. He had contextualised

it. He casts out demons, heals the sick, multiplies the fish. He had come to forgive sins of people and to call sinners to repentance (Lk 5:24, 32)

He has added new meaning to existing traditions and had emphasized that love and compassion are more important than traditions itself (Lk 5:33-6:11; Ras 2024; Snyman 2024). His teachings were filled with a life filled with love (Lk 6; Mhlongo 2024). He rose the death (Lk 7:11-17), forgave sins (Lk 7:48), preached and proclaimed the kingdom of God (Lk 8: 1-2), and healed people. He did miracles (Lk 9:10-17). He taught that people must show compassion (Lk 10:25-37; Mhlongo 2024; Snyman 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mpungose 2024; Mashiyane 2024).

He had warned against earthly possessions and riches (Lk 12:15), and emphasised richness in God (Lk 12:21). He said His message carries a radical division where people will be divided because of Him (Lk 12: 49-53). He made a truthful remark about King Herod (Lk 13:32) but He never had rallied His followers against him (Ras 2024). He had compassion and had shown His emotions (Lk 19:41). He was perceived to be radical by the temple authorities because He had challenged and had overturned temple traditions and practices that He saw as wrong, like running businesses in the temple like selling and buying (Lk 19:45-46; Ras 2024).

Luke also narrated that Jesus had said that people must give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's (Lk 20:25). He did not attack Caesar or talked bad about Him (Ras 2024). He said that difficult times were laying ahead (Lk 21). He instituted the new covenant as symbolised by the bread and wine (Lk 22:15-20). He was crucified because of His doctrines that have upset the Jewish religious authorities (Lk 23:5-33). He believed in paradise, and He had handed himself over to His Father (Lk 23:46). He was buried but stood up (Lk 23:53-24:3) and appeared to some and explained the Scriptures to them (Lk 24:27). His resurrected body was a normal human body, and He ate food to prove it to them (Lk 24:42-43). He left His disciples and went up to heaven (Lk 24:51).

For Luke a disciple is someone who knows Jesus comprehensively (intimately) (Lk 1:1-14) and do what He commanded them to do (Lk 6:46-47). The essence of everything that He said is this: love God and your neighbour as you love yourself (Lk 10:25-37). In Lukan theology Jesus' love is universal and specifically includes the marginalized and those that were despised by society (Lk 14:13-14). Jesus' love is always inclusive (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024), the disciples' love must be the same (Snyman 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

In this earthly world the disciples must expect and will experience difficult times during the end times before the Second Coming of Christ (Lk 21:5-37), but the first disciples were instructed to constantly watch and pray so that they can be

considered worthy to escape all these mentioned things and to stand in front of the Son of Man at the time of the Second Coming of Christ (Lk 21:34-36).

There was no call-up made by Jesus to take up arms against the Romans or the Jewish temple authorities or against religious groups like the Pharisees or Herodians in the Gospel of Luke (Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024). Jesus' kingdom was spiritual, not physical. God's kingdom is already present through Jesus, but it will also become physically present in all its fullness at the Second Coming of Jesus (the Son of Man / the Son of God) (Ras 1996; 2024; Snyman 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

9. The Jesus of John

The Jesus of John is the Logos. The eternal Word who was from all beginning with God and who was God (Jn 1:1). Jesus is pictured as God the Creator who had become a human being, the One who had become *sarx*, "flesh" (Jn 1:14). He is described as the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29). He did miracles and changed water into wine (Jn 2).

John specifically had mentioned that Jesus was passionate about His Father's temple (God's temple) and that He had made a whip and had chased the people out who were selling there (Jn 2:13-17). He appears to be radical and militant to the religious authorities because of His religious zeal for God (Jn 2:14-17), but it was because of His belief that the temple must be a place of prayer and not a trading store (Ras 2024). Like Matthew, Mark and Luke, John did not portray Him as an earthly political agent, a political or religious activist, or one or other freedom fighter or terrorist (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Snyman 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

Jesus' solution to change was "regeneration". One needs to be "born again" - a change that can only be wrought through water and Spirit (Jn 3:5; Ras 1987). Although He was seen as the eternal Logos (Jn 1:1-2), from a Godly perspective, He was also depicted from a human perspective, as a man who got tired (Jn 4:6). He spoke to a Samaritan woman (Jn 4:7); something that was prohibited because of the past socio-cultural and historical-political issues of Israel's past (Kelso 1980:244-247). He went against this (His) perceived "ungodly custom" of His days and simply spoke to her, but He did not rally His followers against the Jewish religious-cultural authorities who had maintained and tried to enforce it (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024). He had mixed with social outcasts and those that were marginalized. His spiritual and religious convictions had made Him different (Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

His God's consciousness had directed His life so that obedience to the will of God was everything. He had healed on the Sabbath – something that was not allowed (Jn 5). It is clear that His religious conduct had challenged the

religious-cultural *status quo* of His time. He had performed miracles most of the time; from changing water into wine (Jn 2), feeding five thousand men with five loaves of bread and two fish (Jn 6:8-10), and walked upon the waters of the sea (Jn 6:16-21). He had brought Lazarus back to life (Jn 11:38-44). He was perceived to be seen as a direct threat to the Jewish authorities (Jn 11:45-48) but His commandment was love (Jn 13:34). Jesus' ministry was not characterized by a *legio* of militant, radical, anti-temple, anti-government, anti-colonial, anti-Roman slogans or manifestos (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Isidiho 2024; Mpungose 2024; Mashiyane 2024).

He was telling His disciples about His Father's place and that He would send them the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:15-26). He was crucified because the Jewish leaders said that He had made Himself the Son of God (Jn 19:7). The Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem had regarded Him as the King of the Jews, a political opponent of the Roman Caesar (Jn 19:12-13), and because Pilate was scared that the Jewish leaders, who had believed that, would tell the Roman Caesar that he (Pontus Pilate) is not the Caesar's friend, he (Pilate) had allowed Jesus to be crucified (Jn 19:12). One can say that Jesus was crucified because of the wrong accusation that He was committing high treason against the Caesar, originally known as *perduellio*, and later known as *laesae maiestatis* (Snyman 2008:31; Duvenhage 1960:160; Ras 2010:117), while it was indeed not the case.

To be a disciple in Johannine theology is to be like the Logos. To be like God, to do the things that the Logos told His disciples to do. It is the Holy Spirit that will remind the disciples of the Logos; what He had said and what He had taught (Jn 15:26-27; 16:7-14). The Spirit of Truth (the *Paraklētos* – Jn 15:26) will lead the disciples and will glorify Jesus. John's Jesus also said that followers of Him will have tribulation in this world (Jn 16:32), but Jesus said that the disciples will have peace in Him. He had encouraged them to be in good spirit because He had conquered the world (Jn 16:32).

Jesus' disciples know and believe that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God, and that they, through their faith (believing in Him) will have (eternal) life (Jn 20:30-31; Ras 2010:118). The Jesus as portrayed in the Gospel of John was not a political activist, a religious terrorist, or a militant commander. He was the Lamb of God, who had come to take away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29; Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024; Mashiyane 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024).

10. Jesus in the Book of the Acts (The Acts of Luke)

Jesus is depicted as the One who had elected the apostles, had given them commands through the Holy Spirit and told them to wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Ac 1:1-5). He was the One through which God had performed miracles and wonders, and He was raised from the death (Ac 2:22-24). It is in His Name that miracles happen (Ac 3:6). He is the Child Jesus

through which God bless those who repent (Ac 3:26).

It is through faith in Jesus' name and through the confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God that those who seek God become His children (Ac 8:37). He is seen as the exalted Jesus who had confronted Saul, who then became Paul (Acts 9: 3-5), and who had sent him (Paul) to the gentiles (Ac 26:17). The militant and aggressive Saul, driven by his Jewish zeal, after he had met Jesus on the road to Damascus, had radically changed, and had become a follower of Jesus, proclaiming that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ (Ac 9:20,22). Jesus never had instructed him to form any form of political pressure group to effect one or other earthly change in government. He was called to proclaim the kingdom of God (Ac 20:25; Ras 2024; Mpungose 2024).

Luke says that Jesus is the One from Nazareth that was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and power and who had travelled through the land to do good and to heal those under the power of the devil because God was with Him (Ac 10:38). He was crucified and resurrected and who bestow the Holy Spirit upon those who believe (Ac 10:44-48). It is through Jesus that the heathen had received forgiveness of their sins. That was the central message of the apostle Peter (Ac 10:37-43) and Paul (Ac 13:38).

According to Luke, the author of Acts, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and executing Jesus' commands. He had emphasised that the church (believers) (Ac 8:1) is not free from persecution when executing Jesus' missionary command, but that they are constantly on the move. The message of salvation is for all people, not only for Jews, but also for the non-Jews, the gentiles. From Luke's perspective God uses anyone to spread the message of salvation. The disciples must expect persecution when busy with evangelism and missionary work and they must be willing to stand up for their faith in Jesus Christ - just like Stephanos, the first martyr (Ac 6:8-7:60), and Peter (Ac 12:1-17), and Paul (Ac 16: 16-34; 21:30-23:11; 23: 12-35; 25:1-12; 28:16, 30-31).

11. The Jesus of Paul

In the *Corpus Paulinum*, from Romans to Philemon we read the following about Jesus. According to Paul, Jesus was God's Son that had revealed Himself to him on the road to Damascus (Ac 9; Gl 1:15-16). This revelation has altered Paul's life and made him a follower of Jesus. The righteousness of God (Bavinck 1980:439-468) consists of faith in Jesus Christ (Rm 1:16-17; 3:21-26). It is the grace of God, no good deeds, that saves man, and this salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ (Ridderbos 1978:183-188). All people, Jews and heathens, can be saved through faith in Jesus Christ (Rm 10:11-12). The gospel or good news of God is simple: He had sent Jesus Christ His Son and whoever believes in Him (Jesus) will be saved (Rm 1:16-17; 10:4-17; Ras 2024).

Jesus is the Resurrected Jesus, the One who physically was resurrected and stood up out of the death, and at the end of time, all those who had died in Christ will be made alive again and stand up, each in its own order. Jesus is the One who will also hand over the kingdom of God to His Father (1 Cor 15:14-16, 22-26). It is through Jesus Christ that God the Father will resurrect all believers at the end of time, and it is during this resurrection that they will receive their eternal physical bodies (1 Cor 15:50-58).

Believers were elected in Jesus (Eph 1:4-5) and all things under heaven and earth one day will be united in Christ (Eph 1:10). The believers were saved through grace, through faith, not out of their own good works or deeds (Eph 2:8-10). It is Jesus, who is the Christ, who, through faith, stays in the hearts of the believers (Eph 3:17-19). Believers are called to become strong in Jesus, the Lord (*Kurios*) and to put on the whole armour of God to stay standing against all the methods of the devil (Eph 6:10-13; Ras 2013:39-49). There can be no doubt that for Paul there was / is a spiritual warfare going on in this world and that believers are engaged with that and not with physical warfare (*cf.* Ras 2002:1-17).

The apostle Paul further said that he had the internal compassion of Jesus Christ (Phlp 1:8), that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Saviour, and that the believers can do all things through Jesus (Phlp 3:20; 4:13). Everything we do we must do as if for the Lord, that is for Jesus (Col 3:23). Paul said he wish that the Lord will make the believers rich and abundant in love for one another so that their hearts can be strengthened to be strong in holiness before the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Th 3:12-13).

The Jesus of Paul will come down from heaven to earth at His second coming, with the sound of the trumpet, and those who had died in Christ will stand up first, and then those who are still alive at the time of His coming, to meet the Lord, that is Jesus, in the air. Believers must encourage one another with this message (1 Th 4:13-18).

According to Paul, it is through Jesus that we get salvation – there is no other way (1 Th 5:9). When Jesus comes again, He will destroy the antichrist (2 Th 2:1-8). He is also the (only) Mediator (Greek: *Mesitēs*) between God and man (1 Tm 2:5). This Jesus was also the “ransom” for all people to set us free (1 Tm 2:6). Paul said that the words of Jesus were sound, and he (Paul) also said that material things were not important in life (1 Tm 6: 7-8).

Paul saw himself as a slave (Greek: *doulos*) of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ (Tt 1:1) – an apostle, through the will of God (2 Tm 1:1), and through the command of God (1 Tm 1:1). God, Jesus is our Saviour (Tt 1:3-4; 2:13; 3:4-6). Paul said to Titus that God, through Jesus, had saved them (“us”) through the bath of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit that He abundantly

bestowed upon them through Jesus Christ, our Saviour, so that they, justified through His grace, can become heirs according to the hope of the eternal life (Tt 3:4-7).

Paul also said that he is a prisoner of Christ Jesus (Phlp 1:1) in his letter to Philemon. The statement that Paul had made in the Corpus Paulinum about Jesus had made it clear to us that Paul was someone who was heavenly-minded (Col 3:1-4), Jesus-minded (Phlp 1:1; Gl 1:11-12), God-minded (Eph 1:3-2:10), someone who was willing to suffer like a soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Tm 2:3-4) or as a prisoner of Jesus (Phlp 1:1; Eph 6:20). Paul’s teachings were emphasizing what God did in Jesus Christ for the believers (church) and that they (believers) were called to do what is right and good in expectation that Jesus will come again (1 Cor 11:1, 15:1-4). Simply put, Christ’s disciples must be imitators of God, “walking” (Greek: *peripateō* – walking around) in love (Eph 5:1).

At no stage did Paul call up the believers to become radical political activists, terrorists, or militants fighting for an earthly kingdom. He was referring to the coming kingdom of God as a coming Christocracy (Afrikaans: “*Christokrasie*”), that will followed-up at a later stage by a Theocracy (Afrikaans: “*Teokrasie*”) when Christ will hand everything over to God His Father (1 Cor 15:22-28). There will be a physical future kingdom for all God’s believers after the Second Coming of Christ (1 Cor 15:22-28, 50-58; Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024), but it is not something that believers can bring into existence through earthly political efforts and means (Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mashiyane 2024; Mpungose 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

12. Jesus in the Book of Hebrews

The author of Hebrews said that God (the Father) had spoken in the last days through His Son, that He (the Father) had appointed as Heir of everything, and through whom (the Son) He had made the world (Hb 1:1-12). The Son is Jesus (Hb 2:9) who is described as the Apostle and eternal High Priest (Hb 3:1) that went into the tabernacle first (Greek: *prodromos* – Afrikaans: “*Voorloper*”) (Hb 6:20) to make atonement for our sins (Hb 7:25-28; 9:24-28; 10:19-20).

Jesus is also seen as the Leader and Finisher of the faith (Afrikaans: “*Voleinder van die geloof*”) (Hb 12:2), the Mediator of the New Testament / covenant (Greek: *diathēkēs neas*), and the Great Shepherd of the sheep (Greek: *ton poimena tōn probatōn ton megan* - Hb 13:20). What this means in praxis is that the believers must see Jesus as their example, their Leader, and that they must follow Him, willing to even carrying His reproach (Hb 13:12-13), because He had suffered for us to set us free. As a result of this, the believers, despite all forms of persecutions, even death (Hb 11:32-12:4), must now be willing to endure in faith and do God’s will and that which is well-pleasing in His sight (Hb 13:21; Ras 2024).

Despite all the physical and emotional suffering of the believers, through the ages (Hb 11:32-40), the believers in the Book of Hebrews were not called to actively get involved in political activities to effect any structural change like changing authorities, governments, regimes, or imperialist or colonial rulers (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024; Snyman 2024).

13. Jesus in the Epistle of James

Jesus is portrayed as Someone who makes no distinction between people who are rich or poor (Jm 2:1-5; Mashiyane 2024; Mhlongo 2024). The believers are told to do the same and must be impartial and never treat the rich as more important than the poor (Jm 2:9). The believers, addressed as “my brothers” (Greek: *adelphoi mou* – Jm 1:2), are instructed to show their good deeds (“works”) (Greek: *erga*), as a visible sign of their “faith” (Greek: *pistis*) (Jm 1:17; Ras 2024).

The believers in the diaspora (Jm 1:1,2, 6) must show their *pistis* (faith) by doing *erga* (work) that will please God. Believers must visit orphans and widows, remain unpolluted by the world (Jm 1:27), be impartial (Jm 2:9), control their tongue (Jm 3:6-12), practise wisdom from above (things like peace, friendliness, compassion – Jm 3:17), acknowledge the Lord in their daily activities, by saying, “If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that” (Jm 4:15), and be patient with the rich (employers) that withheld the wages of the poor believers (Jm 5:1-7) until the Second Coming of the Lord (Jm 5:7; Ras 2024).

Jesus is seen by James as a Judge who will judge the rich (Jm 5:1,4,5,6,7,8 & 9) for not paying the believers who had worked hard for them during harvest time. As a result, these believers had cry to God for His intervention. James said that because God (Jesus) will judge them at His second coming (Jm 5:4-9), the believing brothers must be patient (Jm 5:10-11). The brothers must also not swear, neither by heaven, neither by earth (Jm 5:12), they must call the elders of the church, and they must pray for the sick and anoint them with olive oil (Greek: *elaiō*) (Jm 5:14-16), they must confess their “sins” (Greek: *tas hamartias* – NA 1995:597) or their “faults” (Greek: *ta paraptōmata* – the Majority text reading – NA 1995:597), and must convert those who err from the truth (Jm 5:19-20; Ras 2024).

In short, the believers in James were never called to physically fight those who oppressed them in any manner whatsoever, whether political or economically. They must not incite riots against those who owe them money or who hold back their wages despite all their hard work (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024). Instead, believers are called to do what is right, to pray, and to do pastoral work (Jm 5:13-20; Snyman 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

14. Jesus in the Petrine Letters

According to Peter, God the Father, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, had

regenerated the elect (Greek: *eklektois*), so that they can obtained an inheritance in heaven through faith (1 Pt 1-5). The believers are called to be holy because they were bought through the precious blood of Christ (1 Pt 1:15-19), and they are instructed to do good because that is the will of God (1 Pt 2:15; Mashiyane 2024; Mhlongo 2024); Mhlongo-Ras 2024).

The beloved (1 Pt 2:11-17), believing servants (1 Pt 2:18-25), believing women (1 Pt 3:1-6), believing men (1 Pt 3:7), all the righteous (1 Pt 3:8-12), are called to live according to the will of God (1 Pt 4:2), and to sanctify God in their hearts (1 Pt 3:15), because through baptism they had obtained a clean conscience and must now no longer live according to the flesh (1 Pt 4:1-4). Believers must glorify God in everything through Jesus Christ (1 Pt 4:11) but they must know that they will not be free from persecution and that Christians will suffer (1 Pt 4:16).

Jesus is also described as the “Chief Shepherd” (Greek: *tou archipoimenos*) that will come and reward the elders who must look well after the flock of God (1 Pt 5:1-4). Believing Christians must resist the devil (1 Pt 5:8-9) and stand fast in in faith because afflictions are experienced by all believers around the world. Peter, an apostle of Jesus, who later was regarded as the first Pope by the Catholic Church (Mashiyane 2024), did not say that Jesus had called upon them to take up arms to overthrow the colonial oppressors or enemies of their time (Ras 2024; Mashiyane 2024; Isidiho 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mpungose 2024).

Believers are called to increase in virtues and to increase their knowledge of Jesus Christ and be aware of false prophets and teachers that may take them back to fleshly and worldly things (2 Pt 1:3-8; 2:1-22). The must also not give up on expecting the Day of the Lord (second coming) because it will come, despite what people say. Then the heavens and earth will be destroyed by fire and new heavens and a new earth will come where in righteousness will be at home (GNB 1980:301). Peter said that the church must increase in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pt 3:13,18).

The Petrine believers were part of the diaspora (1 Pt 1:1) that were geographically-speaking, part of the Roman empire (Guthrie 1970:792-795). Despite their persecution and suffering (1 Pt 4:1-6,16) the believers were explicitly told to submit themselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, or to governors, who are send by Him to punish those who do wrong (1 Pt 2:13-15; NIV 1981:294-295).

Peter, the apostle of Jesus, clearly taught that believers must obey the authorities, and not fight or revolt against them (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024). Believers were never asked, or taught, or mobilise to organize themselves into one or other political party, or mass movement, or trade union or religious-cultural movement to effect some earthy change. Instead, they were encouraged to serve God, and

to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and not to be led away by the errors of lawless people (GNB 1980:301; 2 Pet 3:17-18).

15. Jesus in the Johannine Letters

Jesus is depicted as the One who was from the beginning with the Father. He is eternal life, and He proclaims eternal life because He is the Word of Life (1 Jn 1:1-2). God is light and the blood of Jesus cleanse the believers of all sins (1 Jn 1:5-7). This letter points out that God's children know Jesus because they keep His commandments (1 Jn 2:3), and because they love one another and walk in the light of God (1 Jn 2:10; Mhlongo 2024; Mpungose 2024; Ras 2024).

Because the believers were born out of God (1 Jn 3:9), they have the anointment of the Holy Spirit that stays within them (1 Jn 2:20,27) so that they can discern the different antichrists and the coming Antichrist that are doing lawlessness and sin (1 Jn 2:18-20,27-28; 3:2-4). John said that believers are born out of God and who walk in the light and love of God, keeping His commandments – people whose heart do not condemn them (1 Jn 3:9-10,17-24; 4:1-21).

The believers are persons who can discern the spirits and identify those who deny that Jesus Christ came “in the flesh” (Greek: *en sarki*) (1 Jn 4:6). Jesus is seen as the Son of the Father (2 Jn 1:3) who had become a human being (a real flesh and blood man) because He came *en sarki* (2 Jn 1:7). Those who deny this belief is seen as antichrist. This belief is part of the “teaching of Christ” (Greek: *tē didachē tou Christou*) (2 Jn 1:9) according to the Majority text (Ras 2024).

True believers are those who will live according to the right doctrine (belief-system). Nowhere in the Johannine letters is there any call to take up arms, based on Jesus's former teachings, and interpretations about Jesus, against those who spread false doctrines or who had threatened the Christian faith through erroneous beliefs. God's children are called to love because God is love (1 Jh 4:8; Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mhlongo 2024; Mashiyane, 2024; Snyman 2024).

16. Jesus in the Epistle of Jude

Jude saw himself as a slave / servant (Greek: *doulos*) of Jesus Christ and wrote to the called saints, who, according to him, “are protected for Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:1). He had commanded the beloved (Greek: *agapētoi* – Jude 1:17) to remember the words of the apostles of Jesus Christ that in the last days there will be people that will do godless things (Jude 1:4), who cause divisions (Jude 1:19) and do not have the Holy Spirit (Jude 1:19). The believers are called to build themselves up in faith, to pray in the Holy Spirit, to keep themselves in God's love, and to wait upon Jesus Christ (Jude 20). There was no call to organize themselves around one or other political cause and to fight people with different heretic beliefs because the believers' hope is eternal life in Jesus Christ (Jude 20;

Ras 2024; Guthrie 1970:929).

17. Jesus in the Apocalypse of John

John said this is the revelation (Greek: *apokalupsis* – Rv 1:1) of Jesus Christ which God gave Him to show His servants (the seven churches or believers – Rv 1:4) what is going to happen. This revelation is a prophesy. The words, “words of the prophesy” (Greek: *tous logous tēs prophēteias*) are used (Rv 1:3; 22:9-10). In the revelation to John Jesus is described and depicted as the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Son of Man (Rv 1:11,13; 22:13), the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David (Rv 4:5), the Lamb that was slaughtered (Rv 4:6,12; Ras 2024).

Jesus is depicted as the only One who can open the book with the seven seals (Rv 5:1-5; 6:1,3,5,7,9,12). The fifth seal reveals the souls of those who were killed because of the word of God. The killing of the believers because of the word of God is a clear indication that believers are not exempt from persecution like some of the first apostles and followers of Jesus had experienced. Christians are not immune against earthly persecutions when it comes to their faith (Rv 6:9-11; Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024).

At the opening of the sixth seal a description is given about the events that will hit the earth and its inhabitants, when the One on the throne and the wrath of the Lamb becomes visible (Rv 6:12-17). A description is then given about the multitude in front of the throne of God and the Lamb (Rv 7: 9). At the opening of the seventh seal, a description is then given of the seven angels with the seven trumpets (Rv 8:1-2) and their individual punitive actions. In this part of the Apocalypse, it is said, that the faithful brothers had conquered Satan through the blood of the Lamb and through the word of their testimony (Rv 12:9-12).

What becomes clear in these descriptions is that the followers of Jesus, the believers, the faithful, are not immune against an earthly death in times of persecution (Rv 7:9-17; 14:9-13). Not only is the Lamb of God described as standing upon Mount Zion (Rv 14:1), but He is also depicted as the One who has a golden crown and who sits on the cloud with a sharp sickle in His hand to punish those upon the earth (Rv 14:14-20). It is clear in the Apocalypse that judgment belongs to God, not to the believers (Ras 2024).

The Apocalypse makes the believers aware that they will be persecuted for their faith, but that God will judge and punish those who persecuted them (the believers) at the end of times. Then seven other angels are called to go and pour out “the seven bowls of God's wrath” (Greek: *tas hepta phialas tou thumou tou Theou*) upon the earth (Rv 16:1; NIV 1981:323; NA 1995:663). After this apocalyptic description of the wrath of God, poured out on earth (Rv 16:1) through the seven angels who had carried these bowls, we get a description of

the wedding of the Lamb.

The Lamb is Jesus, the Son of God (Rv 5:5-6,8-10) and the clothes of the bride is described as the good deeds of the believers. The bride is His disciples, the believers, those who have the witness of Jesus (Rv 19:7-10). Then, in the final stages of the Apocalypse, Jesus is portrayed as the One who comes down from heaven on a white horse followed by the armies of heaven in white clothes (Rv 19:11-14; Ras 2024).

Then the beast, and the kings of the earth who had followed him, were taken captive by Jesus on the white horse (Rv 19:19-21). Satan is then bound and thrown into the abyss and kept there for a thousand years (Rv 20:1-3). After this period Satan again is released and then defeated with his assembled armies when they move against the holy city (Rv 20:7-10). This is then followed by white throne judgment (Rv 20:11-15). At the eschatological end, according to the Apocalypse of John, a new heaven and earth emerge as well as the holy city, the new Jerusalem (Rv 21:1-2). In the Apocalypse, at the Second Coming of Christ, He will come to deal with the unbelievers and those who were persecuting the believers and all those who did not follow Him (Rv 21:6-8; Ras 2024; Tenney 1980 Vol 5:98-99).

The bride of the lamb is now seen as the new Jerusalem (Rv 21:9-10), no longer the believers (Rev 19:7-8). In the last part of the Apocalypse a pure river of water is flowing out from the throne of God and the Lamb (Rv 22:1), and an invitation is given to all those who are thirsty to come and drink from the eternal waters for free. What stands out in the Book of Revelation is that God is portrayed as the One who judge and punishes, not man, because He (God the Father), through Jesus (the Lamb), controls the seven seals (Rv 6:1-17), the seven trumpets (Rv 8:1-13; 9:1-21; 11:15-19; 12:1-17; 13:1-18; 14:1-20; 15:1-8), and the seven bowls of God's wrath (Rv 16:1-21; 19:11-21; Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024).

No believer, according to the Apocalypse, is called upon to retaliate and fight any earthly authority when they are experiencing persecution. Believers are called to be patient until the Second Coming of Christ and there is no proof that they got involved in earthly politics to fight for their individual and collective political rights against the mighty Roman Empire (Blaklock 1980 Vol 5:133-141) ruled by Caesar through the Roman Senate (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024).

18. Jesus in the New Testament

A careful reading of the New Testament reveals that Jesus was not portrayed as a political or economic freedom fighter, a guerilla fighter, or a cultural or religious terrorist that wanted to overthrow the government or the temple authorities of the day (Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024; Sehlogo 2024). He did not hate the oppressed Romans or those who were appointed by the Caesar to rule over Him and the

Jewish nation (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024).

Jesus did not call upon His disciples to gather weapons like swords and slings to assassinate and take out His perceived enemies (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024). In fact, He taught just the opposite. He said they must love their enemies and do good to them (Mt 5:44; Snyman 2024; Mashiyane 2024; Mhlongo 2024). All Bible believing Christians will know that the central message of God is to love Him and one another (Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Mhlongo 2024; Isidiho 2024; Mashiyane 2024; Mpungose 2024).

Saul, who later became Paul, was on a “search and destroy” mission with letters from the Jewish high priest to persecute anyone belonging to the Way (Ac 9:1-6), but after he had met Jesus on the Damascus Road, he started to proclaim the gospel and God's kingdom (Ac 9:18; Gl 1:12-16; Ras 2024). He did not rally people to overthrow their perceived enemies or the Roman government, even after several Roman imprisonments because of his faith in Jesus (Ac 16:19-26; 21:30-33; 24:1-27; 25:1-26:32; 28:16,30).

Paul, in imitation of Jesus, was in favour of civil obedience and openly had acknowledged that the Roman government carries the sword that God gave them (the authorities) to punish those who are disobedient (Rm 13:1-7); and this obedience, he (Paul) had based on his understanding of the sound teachings of Jesus (1 Cor 15:1-10; 1 Tm 1:10; Ras 2024).

19. Jesus and Politics

According to the New Testament there are references that have political dimensions. When King Herod the Great, had instructed that all Jewish male children under two years be killed to protect his own throne (Mt 2:13-16), in order to eliminate the King of the Jews during the time Jesus was born (Mt 2:1-12), Jesus' parents (now refugees) simply fled away from Judeah to Egypt in North Africa, and had stayed there with Him until Herod had passed away (Mt 2:19-23; Ras 2024).

Nothing is mentioned that His parents, or He (Jesus) Himself, at a later stage, got involved in any attempt or coup to fight back to return to their land of birth and to overthrow the Herodian dynasty, or the Roman Empire under Caesar Augustus, who had allowed Herod the Great to rule over Judeah. There was no desire or implementation of the Mosaic Jewish *lex taliones* laws – “an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth” (Ex 21:23-25; Mt 5:38-45; Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024).

Matthew said Jesus was paying even the compulsory temple tax in Capernaum through a miracle that He had performed (a *statēr* coin in the mouth of the fish). Matthew specifically mentions that Jesus had instructed Peter, although they,

in Jesus's explanation, are free and not supposed to pay taxes, not to offend the temple tax collectors, but to go to the lake and catch a fish, and inside the mouth of the fish there will be a *statēr* coin that will cover the compulsory temple tax of both Jesus and Peter (Ras 2024; Mt 17:24-27; Van Aarde 1994:204-228).

In this socio-cultural context that refers to the *politico-religio* affairs of Jesus' day, the Roman Empire had collected tax from inter alia the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, and the tax collectors of the temple again had to collect it from the Jewish people, including Jesus and Peter. It is striking that Jesus simply paid the taxes although He had said by implication that it was not necessary (Ras 2024).

According to Matthew, Jesus was crucified, because of wrong religious accusations and interpretations, that He could break down the temple and again rebuild it in three days (Mt 26:61), and that He had said that He is the Son of God, the Son of Man (Mt 26:63-65). This perceived blasphemy by Jesus, according to the religious leaders, had disrupted their religious belief-system, and any disorder that may emanates because of religious intolerance, again may lead to social unrest that may threatens the political order of the day. In simple terms, religious clashes may lead to political unrest (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024).

Matthew, however, did not portray Jesus at any stage as someone who intentionally and deliberately had threatened the socio-political structures of His day through any form of political or religious violent means (Ras 2024; Snyman 2024). He only is depicted as Someone who had brought new meaning to the interpretation of how people in His days were taught and accustomed to do things (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024).

Matthew had emphasized Jesus' emphasis on God's righteousness that must be in abundance (Mt 5-7; Combrink 1980:104). It was all about what God wants from them, namely, to love God and to love one's neighbour as one loves oneself (Mt 22:34-40), and nothing else (Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Mashiyane 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mpungose 2024).

According to Mark, Jesus was doing good, even though the religious Pharisees had conspired with the political-minded Herodians to kill Him (Mk 3:6; Mijnhardt 1982:359). When King Herod Antipas had killed John the Baptist (Mk 6:14-29), Jesus had said, according to Luke, when some of the Pharisees had told Him that Herod wanted to kill Him, "Go tell that fox, I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day will reach my goal" (Lk 13:31-32). The words, "Go tell that fox ..." is politically-speaking, significant (Ras 2024).

20. Jesus and the Fox

This "fox" statement is a very clear statement in the whole New Testament where Jesus, according to Luke (Ras 2024), had addressed a political leader, King Herod Antipas (Hoehner 1980 Vol 3:140), *in absentia* in public, *in hoc casu*, the ruling king of Galilee (Lk 3:1), appointed by Roman Caesar Augustus, in front of influential religious leaders. To say that King Herod Antipas is a "fox" (*NIV* says "fox" – 1979:95; Lk 13:32), certainly was a serious matter. The Greek phrase *poreuthentes eipate tē alōpeki tautē* (NA 1995:207), "Go, tell that fox ...", is a very forceful metaphorical expression (Ras 2024).

According to Luke, Jesus had instructed the Pharisees, more precisely, commanded them, to go and tell Herod. The Greek aorist imperative active verb *eipate* emphasises this (Ras 2024). The "fox" is a metaphor of King Herod (Abbott-Smith 1977:23). In the South African context a fox is regarded as sly or cunning (Ras 2024); in Afrikaans, "*skelm*", "*agterbaks*". The Zulu Bible translation for fox is "*mpungushe*" (IE 2008:98), from "impungushe", or "*ujakalase*" (Kotzé & Wela 1991:82; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mhlongo 2024; Mpungose 2024). The Zulu phrase "*Hambani nithi kuleyo mpungushe*" (IE 2008:98; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mpungose 2024), is in line with the literal Greek phrase, means: "You (plural form) must go and tell that fox"

Even the Bible in isiXhosa use the same literal Greek translation: "*Yiyani nithi kuloo mpungutye*" (IE 1983 – Lk 13:32; Snyman 2024; Ras 2024). The Sotho Bible uses the phrase: "*Eyang, le bolelle phokojwe eo*", "You must go and tell that fox" (BEH 1986 – Lk 13:32; Sehlogo 2024; Ras 2024). *Phokojwe* in Sesotho means "fox". The Sotho speakers also use the term "*ujakalase*" for "*phokojwe*" (Sehlogo 2024) and the meaning attach to it is also something of a "cunningness" (Ras 2024; Craddock 1990:173-174; Bratcher 1982:240; Hendricksen 1984:708-709; Lenski 1946:757; Ellis 1991:190).

A more detailed meaning of "sly" would be: "having a cunning and deceitful nature" (*Oxford South African Concise Dictionary* 2016:1118). This is probably what Jesus had in mind when He had answered the Pharisees after they had told Him that King Herod Antipas wanted to kill Him (*cf.* Lenski 1946:757; Hendricksen 1984:708-709). While Jesus was on a spiritual mission, King Herod Antipas had a political agenda (Ras 2024).

By making a statement like this in public, Jesus would without a doubt been branded as a political opponent and an enemy of the king, and by implication, of the state (Roman Empire). Herod had decapitated John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus (Lk 1:35-45), because John had criticized the king because he had divorced his first wife to take Herodias, his brother's wife for himself (Mk 6:17). On Herodias's request, although he did not want to do that, Herod had ordered that John the Baptist must be beheaded to please his wife (Mk 6:14-28). In comparison

to the Gospel of Mark, Luke did not pay a lot of attention to the Baptist death and did not provide reasons why it was done (Lk 9:7-9; 13:13:31-35), although Luke had incorporated a lot of Mark's narratives into his own gospel narrative (Ras 2024; Du Plessis 1980:174-176).

Jesus, according to Luke, did not say, metaphorically-speaking, that King Herod was a donkey, a pig, or a dog (Ras 2024). He had used the image or metaphor of a fox (Ras 2024; Lk 13:32). A fox is also like a vulture; in Afrikaans, “*n aasvoël*” (Ras 2024), a scavenger (Fensham 1978:66). Opportunistic (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024). In the context of Luke's discussion, it seems that Jesus was seeing Herod as a cunning “opportunistic scavenger” who cannot be trusted.

Just like a fox will search for opportunities and will betray others to achieve its goals, in a similar manner King Herod of Galilee could not be trusted because he would go behind one's back. In this case, he was dominated, not by his own beliefs, but by the desires of his wife who wanted the Baptist to be killed (Mk 6:19, 25, 27), although Mark had mentioned that Herod had liked John the Baptist (Mk 6:20). Herodias wanted the Baptist dead because he had criticized her and her husband because of their unacceptable marriage.

Jesus, however, according to Luke, had perceived King Herod as sly, without spine (Afrikaans: “*ruggraatloos*”), in other words, “as someone with a weak personality” (Ras 2024), more specifically, in the immediate Lukan textual context, as a murderer (Ras 2024). King Herod was “human-centred”, not like Jesus, who was “God-centred” (Ras 2024). While Herod's mind was focused on an earthly kingdom, Jesus was focused on God's imminent spiritual kingdom (Lk 13:24-30).

The Latin New Testament speaks of Herod as *uulpi illi*, “that fox” (NTL 1982:180-181). In Afrikaans: “*Daai / Daardie jakkals*”. The Greek demonstrative *tautē* is strengthened through the definite article *tē* (English: “the” / Afrikaans: “*die*”) in the phrase *tē alōpeki tautē*. The Greek word order is emphatic: “the fox that”, meaning, “that fox”. The Afrikaans expression: “*Daardie jakkals*” is more forceful because it specifically points in this context to King Herod.

The Greek phrase *tē alōpeki tautē* (Lk 13:32) is very expressionistic and has a definite derogatory undertone (Ras 2024). One gets the impression that at that time of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, Jesus was simply “fed-up” for King Herod and his death threats. Jesus is presented in the text as a fearless traveller, “like a modern day 007 secret agent, a man on a mission” (Ras 2024; Mhlongo 2024). God had sent Him, and no one, not even King Herod, appointed by the Roman Caesar, could deter Him from fulfilling that mission (Ras 2024).

In the Lukan travel narrative, Jesus had answered the Pharisees, telling them

that they must go and tell King Herod that He has a job to do, and that He will continue to do what He is busy doing until He reaches Jerusalem. In other words, Jesus will not be distracted by the death threats of an earthly king, because He (Jesus), is on His way to Jerusalem, on a *missio Dei*, a Godly mission, God's mission (Ras 2024).

Interesting now is that Jesus, according to Luke, in this context (Lk 13:31-33), had said that Jerusalem's house (the temple – Lk 13:35) will be abandoned (GNB 1980:98; Lk 13:34-35), but He did not say at any stage that He or His followers will destroy it. Luke had used the Greek words, *ho oikos humōn*, “your house”, which, in the immediate (Lk 13:31, 34-35) and remote (Lk 19:41-44; 21:5-6, 20) textual context refers to the temple of the Pharisees in Jerusalem.

21. Conclusion

Jesus is not portrayed in the New Testament and in Luke as Someone whose mission it was to overthrow earthly governments or the rulers of His day. He was not involved in any earthly politics or any religious party. He did not call upon His followers, for example, to fight the Roman Empire, the Jewish leaders, the temple authorities, or to threaten or kill the Pharisees or the Herodians. There were no direct calls made by Jesus or any New Testament author directly or indirectly to any believer to take up arms against any government, between the period when He was upon the earth, and His Second Coming (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Isidiho 2024).

Luke mentioned that people came to tell Jesus that the Roman appointed governor, Pontius Pilate, had killed Galileans while they were offering sacrifices to God (Lk 13:1-3). If Jesus was a political activist, a freedom fighter or terrorist, He could have seized this golden opportunity to incite people to take up arms against Roman governor Pilate and his colonial and imperialist government (with Emperor Caesar as head), but He did not (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024). Instead, He had called upon everyone to repent (Lk 13:3; Ras 2024; Mhlongo 2024; Snyman 2024), which means, in praxis, to turn to God, and make right with Him (Ras 2024).

A systematic textual reading of the Bible (Ras 2022:70-71; Ras, Ras & Zondi 2017:107-108) clearly indicates that Jesus or His followers were not involved in any form of earthly politics, political activism, or freedom fighting activities, whether political, economic, cultural or religious. He came to do God's will (Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Mhlongo 2024). He had a theological (Godly) mission, to save the world from their sins (Jn 3:16), and He was determined and obedient to death to do that (Ras 2024; Mashiyane 2024; Snyman 2024). Jesus' remark about the Fox, King Herod Antipas of Galilee, must be seen in the context of what Herod did when he had taken his brother's wife (Mk 6:16-18) and later had killed John the Baptist when his wife asked him to do so (Ras 2024; Mk 6:14-

28).

Jesus, according to Luke, did not threatened to kill Herod or to overthrow His regime, but He only had made a metaphorically political side remark, saying that the king, to use Jesus' metaphor in a stylistic repetitive manner, was an *alōpeki*, a *mpungushe*, an *ujakalase*, a *phokojwe*, a fox, and that He (Jesus) will continue with His journey to do good until He reaches Jerusalem to fulfil His mission, that is, God's mission (Ras 2024; Mpungose 2024; Mhlongo 2024; Sehlogo 2024).

The *missio Jesu* was the *Missio Dei* (cf. Ras 2019:133). The mission of Jesus was the mission of God, and because of this mission, His remark about the Fox was *sui generis*, unique (Ras 2024). Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, in obedience to His Father's will (Lk 22:42), and everything He did, in words and in deeds, was to fulfil this (His) mission (Lk 24:46) and to expand the kingdom of God (Lk 4:43). His kingdom was spiritual, and as such, He never was involved in the establishment of any earthly kingdom through political means (Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mpungose 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

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Mhlongo N 2024. Personal beliefs of Mhlongo. She is a Grade B Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority security officer, a security manager, busy with tertiary studies, and a Christian.

Mhlongo-Ras ZP 2024. Personal beliefs of Mhlongo-Ras. She is a Grade A Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority training instructor for more than 20 years, owner of a security company, has worked as professional social worker

at Life-Line Zululand, did postgraduate studies in Criminology, is a private security expert, and a Christian.

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Ras JM 2024. Personal views of Ras in the light of his past studies. He has 3 doctorates in the fields: New Testament, Criminal Justice and Psychology. He is at present lecturing at the University of Zululand for the past 34 years. He was lecturing New Testament from 1990 to 1999 in the Faculty of Theology, and from 2000 to present in the Department of Criminal Justice, in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, at the University of Zululand.

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of Criminal Justice at the University of Zululand, is finalising her doctorate in Criminology for external examination, and is a Christian.

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Authors’ Declaration

The authorS declare that there is no financial gain or personal relationship(s) that inappropriately influenced them in the writing of this article.

Email: RasJ@unizulu.ac.za

Paul's Encounters and Interactions with Representatives of Rome According to the Book of Acts

Christoph W. Stenschke, Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies, University of South Africa

Abstract

This article examines how Paul, as portrayed in the Acts of the Apostles, interacts with the various representatives of Roman power during his ministry in the ancient Mediterranean world. In encountering these representatives, Paul faces a variety of opportunities and challenges. He meets men ready to listen and respond to the Gospel, officials disregarding Roman law, but ready to apologise, people who quickly realise Paul's innocence, corrupt officials, and people who co-operate with Paul for the better of a large group of people. Paul is portrayed as an evangelist, as one who ably defends himself and knows his rights and insists on proper legal procedure, refuses to pay a bribe and willing to co-operate for the sake of all. In all this, he is not only circumspect of his fellow Christ-believers but also of the unbelieving Jews.

After a survey and analysis of these instances, this portrayal is related to the theme of this issue. In closing, there is a reflection on the hermeneutical challenges which need to be kept in mind in such an application and a discussion of its possible relevance for today.

1. Introduction

When Christians think of biblical statements on politics, the state and how to relate to it, Paul's relative comprehensive reflections in Romans 13:1–7 quickly come to mind, perhaps also other statements of Paul (Gl 4:26; Phlp 3:20; see also 1Tm 2:2).¹ In addition, there are several passages in the Book of Acts on Paul's encounters and interactions with representatives of the Roman Empire during his mission in the Eastern Mediterranean world. The final quarter of the book accounts in detail Paul's arrest by Roman authorities and his fate as a Roman prisoner during what became an exceptionally long imprisonment.² How are these accounts related to Paul's own statements in the speeches which are included in the narrative? What light does the narrative portrayal of Paul shed on his words and the other way round? While Paul was not involved in "politics" in the modern sense of the term he encountered representatives of the Roman empire and interacted with people who determined "politics" in different ways and to a different extent. While many important decisions regarding policy were taken in Rome by imperial legislation, the local representatives of Roman power had some freedom in the application of these policies. In addition, these local representatives had to choose how they would wield the power entrusted to them. Would they act like Felix who ruthlessly pursued his own interests (Ac 24:25–27) or like Cornelius who generously shared his resources with the people

(10:2) or like Felix who made an effort to resolve Paul's case (25:1–26:32)?

What can be gleaned from the portrayal of Paul in Acts for a biblical understanding, and inspired by this, for the current interaction of Christians with politics? In this article, I concentrate on the *literary portrayal* of Paul's encounters with Roman authorities in Acts and I do not discuss the historical validity of this portrayal or its contribution to the reconstruction of earliest Christian history. Our focus is to examine this portrayal³ and its implications for the current interaction of Christians with politics.

Paul's direct interactions with the representatives of Rome are one aspect of the portrayal of Paul's encounters with the authorities in Acts. For a full picture, one would also have to consider Paul's interactions with *Jewish* authorities. He is introduced into the narrative as a member of the Jewish establishment (indirectly involved in the stoning of Stephen, Ac 7:58; 8:1); later he approaches the Jewish high priest for letters to persecute the Christ-believers in Damascus (9:1–3). Acts notes many encounters, debates and conflicts of Paul with leading figures in different synagogues in the Jewish diaspora (9:23–24; 13:45–50, etc.) and also in Jerusalem. Paul is brought before the Jewish Council (23:1–11). This governing body knows of the plans to assassinate Paul (23:14–15) and later on, some of its representatives accuses Paul before the Roman governors Felix and Festus (24:1–9; 25:2–3, 7, 15, 18–19).

In these encounters, the focus of Acts clearly is on Paul, not on the Roman magistrates and their behaviour and deliberations. Their rhetorical function in the narrative is to attest to Paul's innocence and to explain his fate as a Roman prisoner. In addition, we need to remember the selective nature of Luke's account (a selection of programmatic events from a period of over thirty years) and its brevity. Many details which might help us to assess Paul's interactions with Roman authorities are simply not provided. This is so because the author might not have been informed about them, had to omit them for lack of space or did not consider them significant for his overall purpose of providing an apology for Paul and his disputed ministry among Jews and non-Jews. Thus, our conclusions (in particular, when arguing from silence) have to be based on what is provided and may not be as sure or instructive as we wish them to be for Christian reflections on the state.

In section two, we survey the accounts in Acts of Paul's encounters with the representatives of Rome and analyse them. In closing, we relate this portrayal to the theme of this issue of the *SABJT*, that is Evangelicalism and Politics – Friend or Foe?, reflect on the hermeneutical challenges which need to be kept in mind and offer some possible applications.

2. Paul's Encounters with the Representatives of Rome According to Acts

The portrayal of these encounters is quite nuanced. While Paul is summoned by Roman authorities or, in most cases, brought before them and accused by his opponents, these authorities do not actively persecute Paul or seek to arrest him. For them, this eloquent Jew who claims that some particular (and for them, rather peculiar) Jewish eschatological expectation had been fulfilled in a certain Jesus of Nazareth somewhere on the fringes of the empire and that allegedly the Jewish God had raised this Jesus from the dead, is of no political concern. The Roman responses vary from accepting Paul and his message, over affirming that they are neither responsible nor interested in dealing with Paul, expecting a bribe from him, questioning his sanity, to declaring him to be harmless in their estimate and innocent of the accusations levelled against him. There is little doubt that Luke had a particular interest in these encounters (spread out over a period of some 15–20 years) and that they make an important contribution to the overall purpose of Acts in that they contribute to the apology for Paul the missionary and Roman prisoner.⁴ Throughout Paul's career, Roman officials, insofar as they took notice of Paul and had to inquire his case, found him to be harmless and innocent.

3. The encounter with Sergius Paulus (Ac 13:6–12)

The first encounter of Paul in Acts with a Roman official occurs in Paphos.⁵ The Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus, characterised as a man of intelligence (Ac 13:7), summons Barnabas and Paul (presumably to his residence) and seeks to hear the word of the Lord (13:7). He must have heard about their ministry in Paphos or elsewhere on Cyprus. The text does not indicate whether the Jewish magician in his service, Elymas, played a role in this process. Sergius Paulus witnesses Elymas' opposition to the missionaries, his intention to turn the governor away from (accepting) the Christian faith, and their response in a short invective and punitive miracle against the magician.⁶ As the punishment sets in immediately ("Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand", 13:12), Sergius Paulus believed, "when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished *at the teaching of the Lord*" (13:12). This suggests that the missionaries must have proclaimed the Gospel to the proconsul before the magician sought to intervene.

The first representative of the Roman empire, whom Paul encounters, is portrayed entirely positive.⁷ He not only has a Jewish magician in his entourage (that is, he was not anti-Jewish) but is also interested in the message of the Jewish missionaries; he is intelligent. As he sees the power of the Gospel displayed, he is astonished and comes to faith. While other representatives of Rome will be portrayed negatively, people like Sergius Paulus are among them. Paul uses the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel when summoned to give an account and meets genuine interest and the readiness to believe: "The word of God is also for the powerful and the highly intelligent".⁸ The emphasis elsewhere in Acts on

teaching/instruction (see Stenschke 1999:335–347) and Peter's stay at the house of Cornelius for some days (Acts 10:48) suggests that the proclamation of the Gospel would have been followed by systematic instruction, perhaps including ethical principles for good governance (see Lk 22:24–30).

4. A Very Physical Encounter and Rehabilitation in Philippi (Ac 16:19–40)

In the Roman town of Philippi, Paul and Silas' non-Jewish opponents brought them before the Roman magistrates by force. The opponents do not mention the actual occasion or accusation against the missionaries ("seen that their hope of gain was gone", Ac 16:19), but present a carefully orchestrated charge which plays on the latent anti-Judaism of the Roman world: "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice" (16:21). In their accusations, they are joined by the crowds.

In the abbreviated account (the focus lies on the ensuing events), the Roman magistrates do not give the missionaries an occasion to defend themselves (the usual procedure according to Roman law), neither do they bother to ascertain the missionaries' identity and find out that both men actually are Roman citizens. The Roman "customs", allegedly so cherished, are not followed. In the enigmatic account, it is unclear whether the missionaries even had the opportunity to disclose their Roman citizenship (see Ac 22:24–29 for the difference which such disclosure can make) or whether they chose not to do so for several reasons. It might have led to a more extended stay (in prison) for the authorities to ascertain their claim (see Keener 2014:2480–2482). Did the missionaries not want to deny their Jewish identity and their message? If they refrain from doing so deliberately, it is all the more striking that they disclose this privileged legal status on the following day and insist on its implications. The missionaries are beaten severely and imprisoned (see Schellenberg 2022:123–129).

After the earthquake at midnight which liberates all prisoners (Ac 16:26), the missionaries stay behind as do all other prisoners (probably deeply impressed by the miracle). Whether the missionaries' example or admonishment led to this behaviour of the others is not indicated. The missionaries also save the jailor's life under dramatic circumstances (by preventing his suicide) and proclaim the gospel to him and his household. He is told that he cannot *do* anything to be saved (from the wrath of the missionaries' God, now surely upon him; 16:30), but is called to *believe* in the Lord Jesus (16:31). The jailor comes to faith and immediately hosts his prisoners and provides hospitality: "... and washed their wounds; ... then he brought them up into his house and set food before them" (16:33–34). Against legal stipulations, the jailor fraternizes with his prisoners. Here we find a representative of Roman power whose conversion (the second conversion, see 13:12) leads to immediate ethical consequences and to a new allegiance with his new Jewish brothers in Christ.

The next day, the magistrates of Philippi send their officers with the order to release the prisoners. This is reported to Paul, and he is told to come out and to go in peace (Ac 16:36). Paul speaks to the *lictors* and points out the mistakes which were made in the legal process the previous day and proposes a way forward for solving the problem: “They have beaten us publicly (and thus humiliated and insulted the missionaries), without proper condemnation, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out” (16:37). The magistrates failed to follow the proper legal procedure: there was an illegal public punishment (see also 22:24–25), no official verdict, the missionaries’ privileged legal status as Roman citizens was not established and respected by the magistrates, the missionaries were imprisoned without a proper trial and are now to be dismissed secretly. Paul, here portrayed for the first time as a champion of Roman law and “customs”, suggests that as an act of public rehabilitation, the magistrates come themselves and lead the missionaries out of prison (16:37). How this act would benefit the missionaries is not clear (apparently, they can leave at their convenience, 16:40; possibly also on their return to Philippi some day). The act will probably also be beneficial for the local Christ-believers. It becomes clear that the missionaries who are disturbing the city and advocating customs that are not lawful for Romans to accept or practice are not Jews (16:20–21). Rather, they are respectable Roman citizens who insist on the strict observance of Roman law. They and what they proclaim is thus fully acceptable; those who follow them have a space in Roman Philippi.

Once the magistrates hear of their mistakes, they get afraid, in particular, “when they heard that the missionaries were Roman citizens” (Ac 16:38). The magistrates come, apologise, lead the missionaries out of prison (as demanded) and ask them to leave. After a brief visit to Lydia and the other Christ-followers, the missionaries depart from Philippi (16:40).

In this detailed interaction with Roman representatives, Paul is portrayed as knowing proper legal procedure and his rights as a Roman citizen. He points to mistakes in the legal procedure and demands that the laws be observed. However, Paul is also not one to escalate the conflict. The rehabilitation measures which he proposes are moderate. He neither publicly intervenes against the magistrates or accuse them before higher powers for their failure, nor does he threaten to do so. The missionaries leave Philippi as they have been ordered. There is no public show-down or punitive miracle or the like. It seems that with his response to the initial arrest and in dealing with the injustice later on, Paul also has the concerns and well-being of the local Christ-believers in mind who stay behind.

5. Lack of Roman Interference in Corinth (Ac 18:12–18)

Acts 18:12–18 tells how some Jews try to accuse Paul. Paul’s opponents, who could not prevail against him otherwise (see the previous conflict Ac 18:6–10),

probably use the fact that Gallio had just arrived and was not yet familiar with the situation in Corinth (see Yoder 2014:258–277). The opponents bring Paul (presumably by force) before the Roman proconsul of Achaia and accuse Paul of persuading people to worship God contrary to the law (18:13). We need not treat this passage in detail as it does not focus on Paul’s response/interaction, he does not get a chance to respond. As he is about to make his defence, Gallio dismisses the case (18:14–15) and drives the accusers away from the tribunal (probably by force). When some in the crowd seize Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in public, Gallio does not intervene. He is portrayed as realising that this charge is irrelevant to Roman legal concerns and is not interested in inner-Jewish religious debates about adherence to Jewish tradition. Paul is portrayed as ready to defend himself before the proconsul when brought to him by his opponents. After the incident, Paul “stayed many days longer” (18:18).

6. Keeping a Low Profile in Ephesus (Ac 19:30–31)

During the riot caused by the silversmith guild of Ephesus, Paul is ready to address the enraged crowds which have gathered at the theatre. In this way Paul probably also wants to assist his Macedonian co-workers Gaius and Aristarchus, who had been dragged along to the theatre. However, he is prevented from doing so by his followers (Ac 19:30); also, the Asiarchs, members of the local elite, who were friends of Paul, “sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theatre” (19:31). It is interesting to note that during his long ministry in Ephesus, Paul also got to know these men and befriended them. His missionary focus also included people from the local elites.⁹ Although no doubt courageous, Paul accepts this interference with his intentions and stays clear of the theatre. The following incident with Alexander, a representative of the local Jewish community (19:33–34), indicates that this was the right choice. Here it is the advice of others (Christ-believers and others) which prevents an escalation of the situation by Paul.

The Ephesian town clerk is not portrayed as a representative of Roman power (local power under Roman power). Like Paul had done on a previous occasion (Ac 16:37–38), the clerk acquits the missionaries of the alleged charges (19:17) and insists on proper legal procedure (19:38–40). Demetrius’ speech led to a commotion and an illegal meeting; the clerk insists that proper legal procedure be followed and shames the silversmiths for not abiding by the rules (19:36–39).

7. The Roman Interventions in Jerusalem (Ac 21:31–23:38)

By using false charges some Jews from Asia Minor stir up the crowds against Paul in Jerusalem. When this leads to great confusion and violence against Paul (“They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple”, Ac 21:31), the Romans intervene and arrest Paul. By doing this, they probably saved his life (21:32–36). Paul politely addresses the Roman tribune (21:38) and clarifies a misunderstanding as to his identity (see Kyrychenko 2014:151). He is not the

insurrectionist from Egypt (as thought by the tribune; indicating what kind of people the Romans really are “interested” in), but discloses his real identity as a respectable person (21:39).¹⁰ Paul asks for the opportunity to address the crowds gathered on the temple premises. This is granted to him (21:40).

At the end of his speech (or when Paul was interrupted), the people react strongly and Paul is brought into the Roman barracks. There the Romans want to flog Paul, that is, torture him, in order “to find out why they were shouting against him like this” (Ac 22:24). As they were about to start, Paul discloses his Roman citizenship, the fact that he had not been condemned and points to the implications (22:25; in contrast to 16:22–23). This leads to a short discussion about Roman citizenship and Paul is spared: “Those who were about to examine him withdrew from him immediately, and the tribune was also afraid, for he realised that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him” (22:29). Once disclosed, Paul’s rights are respected.

The next day Paul is brought by the tribune before the Jewish Council, as “desiring to know the real reason why he was being accused by the Jews” (Ac 22:30). The tribune is not said to interrogate Paul himself regarding the tumult in the temple. At the end of this hearing, the Romans intervene once more and rescue Paul (23:10). When Paul later hears through his nephew of a conspiracy by some radical Jews to kill him (23:12–15), he sends this nephew to the Roman tribune and informs him about the plans of the conspirators. Paul passes on important information to the Roman officer who acts accordingly: because of this imminent danger (which the Romans take seriously¹¹), Paul is escorted to Caesarea by night and rescued in this way.

7. The Trials and Hearings of Paul in Caesarea (Ac 24:1–26:32)

In the trial before Roman governor Antonius Felix, Paul defends himself (see Yoder 2014:277–303). His speech does not contain an elaborate introduction in order to gain benevolence (in contrast to those who accuse him, Ac 24:2–3). Paul answers to the charges levelled against him by the high priest and some of the elders (24:5–9). In a to the point and a matter-of-fact manner, he insists that he only came to Jerusalem twelve days ago, a period far too short to stir up a riot. He came with a religious purpose, that is, to worship (God in the temple). Paul did not dispute with anyone and did not stir up a crowd (24:12). The charges brought against him (24:5–6), cannot be proven by his accusers (24:14). Paul insists on proper legal procedure and points out when this is not followed, for instance, when no evidence is presented to substantiate the accusations. Rather than profaning the temple, he is a devout Jew, “worshipping the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets” (23:15). The disputed matter is the resurrection (23:15), which is not a Roman concern (see 18:14–15).

In closing, Paul reports what had happened: after several years away from Jerusalem, he came back to bring alms to his people and present offerings in the temple (Ac 24:17). He was properly purified on the temple premises, without any crowd or tumult. There some Jews from Asia saw Paul (their charge and reasoning from 21:27–29 is not repeated) and accused him of profaning the temple premises. Paul points out that these are the witnesses to his alleged wrongdoing. Therefore, they should be present to accuse him and to be questioned by the governor. The accusers cannot produce witnesses to Paul’s “crime”. Paul also briefly refers to the embarrassing situation before the Council in Jerusalem (23:1–10). There the opponents could not agree on any wrongdoing of his (in contrast to the fabricated charges which they level against him now) other than his belief in the resurrection of the dead (which some Jews share and which is of no concern to the Romans anyway). This religious content is the real disputed matter.

Paul is kept in custody and is portrayed as a faithful witness. He proclaims to Felix faith in Jesus, the Christ, including righteousness, self-control and the coming judgement (Ac 24:24–25). The governor’s initial interest in the Gospel wanes in view of this content and he hopes that Paul would offer him a bribe (24:26; see Stenschke 2021:225–241). With this purpose, Felix often sends for Paul and converses with him. While Paul seems to have had some financial resources at his disposal, he does not pay the bribe but stays in prison in Caesarea. Paul does not perform a punitive miracle; he is not liberated by an angel or an earthquake.

In contrast to Felix, Festus is portrayed positively. He insists that the place of trial is Caesarea, the seat of Roman power in Judea (Ac 25:1–5). This is where Paul is to be accused and tried. In the trial, the Jewish opponents again accuse Paul severely (“bringing against him many and serious charges that they could not prove”, 25:7). In response, Paul declares that “neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offence” (25:8, surely a summary of a longer speech). When Festus, “wishing to do the Jews a favour”, offers to transfer the trial to Jerusalem (Paul would probably not have arrived alive there but be killed in an ambush during the transport), Paul eventually and, as a last resort, appeals to the imperial court in Rome (25:10–11; see the astute analysis in Yoder 2014:303–332). This appeal is accepted by the governor.

Later on, Festus uses the visit of King Herod Agrippa II and Bernice to get more information regarding this case and to report to the imperial court, “for it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him” (Ac 25:27). In his speech before Festus, the king and the local elite (25:23), Paul gives an extended apology for his life and ministry and interacts with his audience, seeking to convince them to believe: “... I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am – except for

these chains”. The audience concludes that Paul has done nothing to deserve death or imprisonment and “could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar” (26:31–32; there is no effort to talk the matter over with Paul). However, Paul only made this appeal as he had to fear for his life, should the trial be transferred to Jerusalem, as offered by Festus.

Again, we see a Paul who is aware of his legal privileges as a Roman citizen and knows how to use these rights wisely. He is not quarrelsome or a trouble-shooter. He only appeals to the imperial court in Rome when it becomes clear that he cannot rely on Festus’ administration of justice (Ac 25:9). Before his judges, he uses all available opportunities for the proclamation of the Gospel.

8. The Roman Prisoner on the Way to Rome and in Rome (Ac 27:1–28:16)

During the sea voyage to Rome, Paul befriends Julius, the centurion in charge of bringing Paul and other prisoners from Caesarea to Rome (see Kyrychenko 2014:152–153). Julius treats Paul kindly and allows him to visit friends in Sidon during a stop-over; he considers him to be harmless (Ac 27:3). Paul returns to the ship. Later Julius pays more attention to the pilot and the owner of the ship than to Paul, an experienced sea-traveller and prophet (27:12). Paul is not in a huff because of this, but takes the initiative later on during the raging storm to encourage all the people on board. When he realises that the sailors are trying to escape from the ship and thus render a planned and controlled running ashore impossible, Paul informs Julius of their intentions. Julius then prevents the sailors from leaving (27:30–32). Later the soldiers plan to kill the prisoners to prevent their escape (27:42). Julius, wishing to save Paul’s life, “kept them from carrying out their plan” (27:43). In this way not only Paul, but also the other prisoners are spared. On the island of Malta, Paul heals the father of Publius, the chief man of the island (28:8). No details are given of their interaction. Other people on the island come to be cured and, as they leave, honour the travelling group greatly.

On the way from Puteoli to Rome, Paul and his companions are allowed to visit fellow believers for seven days (Ac 28:14). Other than the fact that Paul is guarded by a Roman soldier (28:16), no details are provided for Paul’s interactions with Roman representatives during his stay in the city.¹²

In this last encounter with the representatives of Rome, Paul is treated well and co-operates with Julius in saving all the people on board. Paul does what he, and only he, can do, and Julius does his part. Also on Malta, Paul helps through miraculous healing and in this way contributes to the well-being of the exceptionally friendly islanders and a bearable stay for all the shipwrecked passengers.

8. Summary and Reflection

Summary. While the Paul of Acts is moving in and impacting on public space, he surely is no politician in the modern sense of the word¹³ or involved in the politics

and policy-making of his day, he is portrayed as interacting in different places with different representatives of Rome and in different ways. The portrayal of these encounters is nuanced, spanning from missionary encounters over various trial scenes to close co-operation on an ill-fated sea-journey and the healing of family members of those in charge. The Lukan Paul fares well in the direct, orderly interactions with Roman officials when he gets the opportunity to state his case properly, apply his familiarity with proper legal procedure and use his rhetorical skills. The picture changes when crowds are involved in these encounters who have an impact on the officials, as is the case in Philippi, Ephesus and Jerusalem. Acts is sceptical with regard to non-Christ-believing crowds (see the survey in Ascough 1996: 69–81). While Paul’s direct Jewish and non-Jewish opponents can pose a real danger and the crowds fickle and threatening, the Roman officials portrayed in Acts are by and large following proper legal procedure, assess Paul’s case in a sober-minded manner and recognise his innocence of the false charges levelled against him.

In the “legal” encounters with the representatives of Rome, Paul provides precise, matter-of-fact answers to the questions posed to him and charges brought against him. He insists that Roman law and proper legal procedure be followed (including respecting the particular rights of Roman citizens or the need for witnesses to be present at the trial) and points out when this is not the case (for instance, when there are no witnesses). Paul is aware of his own civil rights and knows when and how to refer to them and insists that they be followed. Paul does not flatter the officials (see, in contrast, Ac 24:2–4), he speaks to them respectfully and honours their office and jurisdiction. Paul refuses to meet the expectations of a bribe by the corrupt Governor Felix.

It is also noteworthy that even in these encounters, Paul is circumspect of his opponents. Paul does not counter accuse or discredit his non-Jewish (e.g., by disclosing the real motivation of the Philippian slave-owners) and Jewish opponents before the authorities.¹⁴ Paul does not attack his Jewish adversaries before Roman authorities and endanger them in this way. In this manner, Paul contributes to a de-escalation of the situation (see Mayer 2013:18–19). There is only one punitive miracle (Acts 13:10–11).

In addition, Paul uses these opportunities to proclaim the Gospel, which is so closely intertwined with his person and ministry. Before Felix, Paul boldly addresses the governor’s ethical shortcomings as part of the proclamation of faith in Christ Jesus. Although not explicitly noted, in all of this, Paul experiences the assistance of the Holy Spirit, promised by Jesus to his followers in distressing circumstances (Lk 12:11–12).

How does this portrayal by a one-time travel-companion (Ac 16:10–17; 20:5–21:18; 27:1–28:16) and ardent admirer of Paul relate to Paul’s own statements

in Romans 13:1–7? The Paul of Acts encounters the authorities he meets in accordance with his demand to “respect to whom respect is owed, honour to whom honour is owed” (Rm 13:7). He willingly accepts Roman authority and a verdict, even a death sentence, if it is justified (Ac 25:11): “If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them”. This declaration is similar to his statement in Romans 13:2–5 in which Paul affirms the need and propriety of the authorities’ jurisdiction and the believers’ need to submit to them.

Reflection. What are we to make of this portrayal today? Obviously, as a Roman citizen, the Paul of Acts did have legal privileges which most people of his day and age did not have and which many people do not have today. Paul lived under a regime which had a, by and large, functioning legal system, at least, for those who had the privileged status of Roman citizens. Paul encountered people who respected his rights and sought, at least in some measure, to ensure that he received justice. Others did not. Due to his education and experiences, Paul knew the legal system and procedure and knew how to behave and speak when confronted with the representatives of Rome; he was given a voice and could argue his case and could do so persuasively. He was eloquent and able to defend himself. Any “application” needs to consider these factors.

Therefore, relating this portrayal to the theme of “Evangelicalism and Politics: Friend or Foe?” is not an easy task. The passages from Acts which we have examined do not directly address the question. Paul was, although surely sympathetic to some of its principles, not an “evangelical Christian” in modern terms. The “politics” he knew (the Roman empire, see Strait 2019) was far removed from the context of a democracy and the particular form of democracy which South Africa achieved in a long struggle. While Paul was friendly with some representatives of power (Ac 19:31), others treated him badly, more intent on pursuing their own interests or currying favour with his opponents than administering justice to him.

Therefore, while there is no simple formula to “just do as Paul did”, the portrait of Paul’s encounters and interactions with the representatives of Rome in Acts can still inspire Christians in different circumstances. In a thorough discussion of applying this portrait, our exegetical observations on the Paul of Acts would have to be brought into the conversation with the portrayal of such encounters and interactions in the first half of the Book of Acts (including its conflicts and well-known statements such as in Acts 5:28 “We must obey God rather than men”), other voices in the New Testament, the Old Testament and the rich heritage of Christian ethics, including applications of biblical texts in previous ages and in contexts other than our own.

Acts presents Paul as a model for Christians and others in knowing their own rights, referring to them, defending them and using them wisely, as well as, one must add, knowing the rights of others and respecting and defending them. Kisau’s (2006:1330) application with regard to Acts 16:37–39 in the Kenyan context also applies to the entire picture which we examined: “Christian workers should not allow their constitutional rights to be violated without complaint because they are Christians. Although our citizenship is in heaven, we are still living in this world and we do have rights. We must endeavour to know what these rights are and to help others respect them” (see also Kisau’s astute reflection on Ac 27:9–12 on p. 1344).

Paul’s behaviour in these encounters also encourages Christians to

- insist on proper legal procedures for themselves and others;
- insist on the facts and presenting them readily and fairly (without polemic or counterattacks);
- make wise use of such encounters for the furtherance of the Gospel;
- avoid aggravating situations or escalating conflicts;
- behave politely and respectfully towards others, including state representatives;
- disregard and reject unethical expectations (Ac 24:26);
- avoid abusing the trust of others (Ac 27:3);
- show concern and offering expertise and practical help, even under difficult circumstances;
- keep the well-being of others in mind, as well as their own (Paul showed concern for the entire group of passengers on board the ship); and
- take the initiative for the better, whenever possible.

In displaying such behaviour, Christians can expect to receive a certain amount of respect and recognition from the representatives of the state and from society at large. Christians living and serving in societies with (by and large) properly functioning legal systems can emulate the exemplary behaviour of Paul; in other contexts, further reflection, consultation and guidance by the community of faith are mandatory.

When state authorities adhere to the laws/legal procedures and do responsibly what they are supposed to (as in some instances in Acts and as Paul instructs in Rm 13), they can indeed be friends and of great benefit to Christians, as were some of the Roman officials and the Ephesian Asiarchs, who sought to save Paul. However, if they fail in their office, pursue their own interests/agendas

(“wishing to do the Jews a favour”, Ac 24:27; 25:8, enhancing their own status rather than serving justice properly) or are corrupt, as Felix was, they become the foe of Christians and can cause harm (Paul’s long imprisonment in Caesarea and eventually the need to appeal to the imperial court in Rome for attaining justice with all the consequences this had, including an ill-fated sea voyage, a shipwreck and at least two more years in confinement).

Before addressing and actively and critically engaging society at large, Christians seek to maintain a clear conscience before God and people, perform deeds in keeping with their repentance and live accountably before God in view of the resurrection and the coming judgement, as Paul claimed for himself in Acts 24. Such a spirituality and personal integrity makes Christians models of ethical conduct in their own contexts and gives credibility and force to their witness to Christ and their ethical instruction. Their witness to the Gospel of Christ Jesus includes ethical instruction to all people – including, where possible – those in power regarding ethical conduct in office (Ac 24:25: “righteousness [in administering justice], self-control [regarding the manner in which an office and the power and privileges associated with it are to be used] and the coming judgement”, where all people, including politicians and their subjects, will be held accountable by the God who is incorruptible and shows no partiality). All of this requires exemplary Christian leaders, patience, careful preparation, courage, strategic thinking and the willingness to engage society, despite all the challenges this might involve.

9. Notes

1. For a recent survey see Lopez and Penner (2022:580–597), see also Kim (2008), Staples (2023:242–250) and Reasoner (2023:825–831).
2. For a survey see Yoder (2014) who focuses on the characterisation of governors, rather than on Paul’s reaction with them (see his survey of research on Luke’s political views and intentions, pp. 5–41). See also Kyrychenko (2014), whose treatment of the Roman centurions in Acts is all too brief.
3. Meyer (2013:15) rightly points to the “perennial issue of the bias of the surviving sources, and the historical forces that led to the transmission of some and the suppression or dwindling into obscurity of others”. For surveys of the issues and debate, see Keener (2012:90–220).
4. For discussions of the purpose of Acts, see Keener (2012:148–165).
5. See Yoder (2014:247–257); for detailed treatment of this and the following passages see the commentaries of Holladay (2016), Keener (2013, 2014, 2015), Pervo (2009) and Schnabel (2012), see also Stenschke (1999).
6. According to Kenyan scholar Kisau (2006:1323), the designation “son of the

devil” in Ac 13:10, “leaves no doubt that the real opposition to the gospel comes from the devil”. We cannot pursue this aspect further.

7. Representatives of Rome do not play a role in Acts before this encounter. Pilate’s involvement in the death of Jesus is mentioned briefly in Ac 3:13; 4:27 and 13:28.
8. Kisau (2006:1324). Probably the change in name from Saul to Paul at this point in Acts is related to the change of audience. Paul is called by his Roman name from then on. There is no indication that Paul adopted the name from Sergius Paulus.
9. Kisau (2006:1334) notes: “That some of this group are referred to as friends of Paul speaks volumes about his status in the city”.
10. See the survey in Stenschke (2020:391–406); see also Rapske (1994, 2023:866–871).
11. Kisau (2006:1340) notes: “God’s protection of Paul was apparent ... in the willingness of the Roman commander to believe him”.
12. Kisau (2006:1347) suggests that “Julius may have given a good report of Paul to his superiors, and thus he was given the freedom to live in his own accommodation, with only one soldier as his guard”.
13. The political implications of Paul’s proclamation of the reign of God (Ac 28:31) cannot be discussed here.
14. Some of Paul’s behaviour might be related to his Roman citizenship. As such, he can rely on Roman support, see Stenschke (2024:72–87).
15. For general guidance on the application of Scripture see Marshall (2004); for Acts, in particular see Stenschke (2013) and, from a biblical theology perspective, Köstenberger and Goswell (2023:506–512).

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Author's Declaration

The author declares that there is no financial gain or personal relationship(s) that inappropriately influenced him/her in the writing of this article.

Email: CStenschke@t-online.de