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Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

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

The *Melanesian Journal of Theology* is committed to the discussion of Christian faith and practice within the context of Melanesian cultures. Article submissions of up to 8,000 words (including footnotes) should be sent to the Editor. All submissions are subjected to an anonymous peer-review process designed to ensure that published articles meet appropriate scholarly standards.

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

The journal is published semi-annually, normally in April and October. Articles may be submitted to the Editor at any time for consideration.

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EDITORIAL

There is an important lesson to be drawn from the first two articles in this second peer reviewed issue of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology*. If a credible scholarly argument is to be presented, the need for close attention to detail and even-handed treatment all of the evidence can hardly be overstated.

Kenneth Nehrbass draws on ten years of cross-cultural experience on Tanna Island in Vanuatu and thorough acquaintance with the local language to argue against the common anthropological assertion that animistic ethical reasoning is motivated only by pragmatic consideration of the social consequences of particular actions. He does not set out to show that Tannese ethics or morality correspond to or approximate classical, European, or biblical ethics or morality. Instead he uses ethical theories to "describe" the moral logic of Tannese society – with careful extension to Melanesian culture/s in general – even while comparing that logic with Christian theology. After discussing a number of Tannese moral obligations, he concludes that while moral discourse is related to discerning which moral failing brought about specific misfortunes, "actions like murder and stealing are bad … because they are bad *a priori*." A cogent discussion of how biblical theology can augment, refine, and correct Melanesian moral codes rounds out this stimulating study.

In the second contribution to this issue, Kim Papaioannou provides a much needed demonstration of how to approach a controversial theological topic. Leaving aside all polemic and the temptation to put forward one or two "proof-texts" that purport to "settle" the issue, he carefully examines a topic that has polarised evangelicals—eternal punishment in hell. In this first instalment of a two-part study, he surveys the meaning and use of the word *hades* in Greek literature, the Septuagint, and early Jewish literature, before focusing on the seven occurrences of the word in the New Testament apart from the gospels. Then, in the bulk of the study, he turns his attention to the four appearances of *hades* in the gospels. Here detailed exegesis of the primary (biblical) documents is combined with judicous analysis of the secondary literature. Even those predisposed to disagree will recognise the extraordinary importance of this subject for the spirit-filled animistic worldview.

In the third contribution by Andrew Murray the *wantok* system is considered from a perspective rarely if ever canvassed in this journal, classical Greek philosophy. Murray argues that Aristotelian political philosophy is "more sympathetic" to Melanesian culture than modern political theory because it views pre-political communities (families, villages, and clans) rather than the individual as the foundation of human society. In the face of enormous change the *wantok* system can seem anachronistic and amenable to corruption, nepotism, and other abuses. Nonetheless, it is so ingrained that Murray proposes "an extension of the deep communal relations that bind kinship groups to relations that bind the whole country." In other words, *wantok* singularity must give way to *wantok* commonality (an idea already present in the semantic range of the word). Moreover, instead of simply imposing the modern nation state on communal cultures, ethical frameworks and economic practices suited to PNG nation-building should be developed and/or borrowed when they have been seen to have worked in other parts of the Pacific.

The merits of this proposal, a form of "philosophical contextualisation" if you will, are further examined by Brandon Zimmerman in a lengthy review, at the end of this issue, of the book from which Murray's article comes.

This issue also features the second of what have been termed "summary articles." Since the master's thesis on which each summary article is based will have gone through an academic examination process, the resultant "article" has not been peer reviewed. It is a pleasure to publish for the first time the findings of a thesis in systematic theology. Sussie Stanley has done a commendable job of tackling a perennial issue amongst Christians: how can a God of love allow suffering?

Scott D. Charlesworth
Editor

MELANESIAN MORALITY AND BIBLICAL VIRTUES

Kenneth Nehrbass
Cook School of Intercultural Studies, Biola University

Abstract
Early accounts of European contact with Melanesians portrayed animistic societies as bereft of morality. More recent anthropological work has theorized that Melanesian morality is pragmatic in that moral problems are worked out on a case-by case basis. In this essay I argue that moral reasoning in a Melanesian society is much more complex and multi-faceted. I suggest that Western ethical theories (such as deontological, pragmatist, and virtue ethics) are also evident. In fact, classical, biblical, and classical European theories of ethics can help uncover, rather than obscure, morality in so-called primitive or animistic societies. In cases where societies do have robust moral reasoning, these ethical systems should be preserved, yet refined through further interaction with the fields of ethics and biblical theology. I examine six constructs of moral reasoning on the island of Tanna, Vanuatu: 1) the perceived "normal" state of moral equilibrium; 2) the conceptualizations of "the good"; 3) the categorical imperative; 4) virtue ethics and moral exemplars within the mythical corpus; 5) moral obligations within the society; and 6) the authority behind such obligations.

Keywords
Vanuatu, moral reasoning, virtue ethics, animism, Melanesian morality

INTRODUCTION

When Europeans began colonizing the so-called "primitive peoples" of sub-Saharan Africa, Australia, South America, and the Pacific, they believed they had encountered tribes that had little capacity for moral reasoning. William DeWitt Hyde, President of Bowdoin College, pontificated in his survey of ethical systems, "The conscience of an educated Christian has a worth and authority which the conscience of the benighted savage has not."[1] If the moral "good" was innate in advanced

[1] W. Hyde, *Practical Ethics* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1900), 181.

humans, somehow it had not evolved amongst "savages." On the other hand, if morality was socially constructed, these primitive societies had not yet progressed to the point of codifying morality in the way that European civilizations did.

The image of the "savage," along with his savage ethics, was reified in colonial days by sensational reports of cannibalism, incessant warfare, and sexual violence. Such reports caught the imagination of missionaries in the 19th and early 20th centuries, who surmised that the noetic effects of sin were so devastating to humankind's moral compass that the "natives" were essentially blank slates, devoid of moral reasoning, waiting for Christianity to write a moral code on their hearts. For example, James Dennis' essay on the "social evils of the non-Christian world" maintained there was no training of children in India, Burma, or Africa. "There is no family training. Children run wild and grow up with untamed and grossly tainted natures."[2] Europeans likened primitive peoples to children lacking emotional control. Jahoda's thorough study of "images of savages" during colonialism contains numerous reports, including a missionary who decried "theft, lying, murder, atrocities, the most revolting forms of corruption do not seem to astonish anyone."[3] Another missionary report said, "Our Blacks have not yet arrived at a degree of personality to be able to follow a coherent line of conduct … [O]ne has to supervise them a great deal."[4] Another reported that the natives "engage in orgies every day,"[5] and one missionary described the natives' "purely negative morality."[6] The natives were "from the standpoint of morality, veritable children incapable of self-control, of mastering their passions and their greed."[7]

Today most readers would see such appraisals for what they are: ethnocentric and racist. Colonizers and missionaries did not recognize ethical systems because they did not bother to learn the local languages which are used to encode and transmit moral reasoning. If primitive societies lacked a Western-looking judicial or legislative system,

[2] J. Dennis, *Social Evils of the Non-Christian World* (New York: Revell, 1889), 64.
[3] G. Jahoda, *Images of Savages: Ancient Roots of Modern Prejudice in Western Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 146.
[4] Jahoda, 147.
[5] Jahoda, 146.
[6] Jahoda, 146.
[7] Jahoda, 147.

Westerners assumed there must be no way to regulate social behavior. And since most of these societies were pre-literate, Westerners assumed there must be no body of accumulated rational thought on philosophy or ethics.

However, the notion that pre-contact societies lacked moral reasoning contradicts the observations of cross-cultural workers who have actually lived for a prolonged period of time in sub-Saharan Africa, the Pacific, the Americas, and Australia. The past hundred years of ethnography has uncovered ethical systems in every corner of the world, and has often discovered surprising overlap with Western codes of conduct. Anthropologists have recorded intricate taboos related to respect for elders, sexuality, land use, and hospitality. Now we know that even if a society's ethical system is neither written nor articulated systematically, a robust corpus of moral reasoning is transmitted through other societal structures such as myth, ritual, gossip, and speeches from the "big men."

Early Europeans failed to see the ethical reasoning of "primitive peoples" because their own categories for moral reasoning had become so in-grown and specialized that they were non-coterminous with animistic societies. But the ethical worlds of Europeans and pre-contact peoples are not so incongruous that a dialogue is impossible. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that Western ethical theories (such as deontological, pragmatist, and virtue ethics) are also evident in a particular animistic society in Melanesia. In fact, classical, biblical, and modern European theories of ethics can help discover, rather than cloud, how moral reasoning is done in so-called primitive or animistic societies. In cases where societies do have robust moral reasoning, these ethical systems should be maintained, yet strengthened and honed through further interaction with the fields of ethics and biblical theology.

In the past sixty years, anthropologists and missiologists have focused especially on how dyads like honour/shame and sacred/profane delineate moral judgments in animistic societies. Much less attention has been paid to other ethical constructs like: 1) the "normal" state of moral equilibrium in animistic reasoning; 2) animistic conceptualizations of "the good"; 3) retribution as a categorical imperative in animistic moral reasoning; 4) virtue ethics in animistic societies; 5) moral obligations in animistic societies; and 6) the authority behind such obligations, or an epistemology of moral obligations in animistic societies. I will work through each of

these constructs to understand the ethical system in one particular animistic society in the South Pacific.

SCOPE

This paper will focus on moral reasoning in Melanesia, and especially on Tanna Island, where I lived and did fieldwork from 2002 to 2012.[8] Some moral concepts that I will explore seem to be generalizable to other animistic societies, such as the dyads of honour and shame, right and wrong, or the link between taboos and misfortune. Other ideals like "payback" are specifically emblematic of Melanesia, but are also found in some other cultures.

Tanna's version of animistic reasoning (called "custom") has been largely unaffected by Western thought or global trends. While it would be tempting to argue that if classical ethical theories are indeed found in a "primitive" society, they are therefore universal to human experience, such a project is impossible to validate and goes beyond the methodology of ethnography. So I am not inclined to take it on, even though others have attempted such a universalizing project, including Wilhelm Schmidt in his massive culture-history.[9] Nor is my goal to legitimize a particular ethical theory or to demonstrate approximation (let alone connection) between Tannese and classical or European ethics – let alone between Tanna's morality and that of Scripture. Instead, I aim to use ethical theories to give a "thick description"[10] of a particular society in Melanesia, and to consider how Christian theology intersects with the moral logic of this animistic system.

THEORY OF MELANESIAN MORALITY

Anthropologists have typically argued that Melanesians are pragmatists who solve moral dilemmas by looking at a particular social context. "The

[8] As members of Wycliffe Bible Translators, my wife Mendy and I translated the New Testament with a team of ni-Vanuatu church leaders on the island of Tanna (Vanuatu) from 2002 to 2012.

[9] W. Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories* (London: Methuen & Co., 1931).

[10] C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30.

moral judgment does not operate from the fixed perspective of universal obligation for the moral assessment of behaviour varies in different social contexts."[17] In this view, breaking an agricultural taboo, sleeping with one's sister, or murdering someone is wrong, not intrinsically or universally, but insofar as any of these infractions entails *social* consequences. Breaking garden taboos, for instance, can result in sickness, mudslides, drought, and so on. While Melanesians do consider social consequences to evaluate the morality of an action, it is highly reductive to argue that pragmatism is the basis of their moral system. As I will show below, moral reasoning – in Tanna anyway – is much more complex and multi-faceted.

THE NORMAL AND ABNORMAL HUMAN CONDITION IN ANIMISM

A systematic study of moral reasoning in any society may as well begin with its theological anthropology. A central preoccupation for Christian theologians who focus on anthropology (the nature of humankind) is to describe the "normal" state of human beings. If we bear God's image, do we innately know "the good"? Is possessing a moral compass in fact what it means to bear God's image? If so, do we sin because we are sinful, or are we sinful because we sin? Since Augustine, orthodox Christianity has maintained that "humanity is universally affected by sin as a consequence of the Fall … Sin makes it impossible for the sinner to think clearly."[19] We are in a *state* of depravity.

Further, since Christian theology usually extends the consequence of the Fall to all of creation, theological anthropology must also describe the "normal state" of the rest of creation, from animals to weather patterns to microbes. Is creation functioning properly when floods and droughts come? Is sickness normal or abnormal? Interestingly, Christians typically arrive at a sort of middle ground on these questions. It is not "ideal" for humans to sin; that is, they are not functioning in a truly human way (in God's image) when they sin; but it is nonetheless "normal" since the Fall for all humans to sin. Except for some proponents of Wesleyan perfectionism, theologians

[17] K.E. Read, "Morality and the Concept of the Person among the Gahuku-Gama," *Oceania* 25 (1955): 262 (233-282).

[19] A. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An introduction* (5th ed.; Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 352.

would not expect a human to be sinless, let alone for humans to live in a sinless society. Likewise, creation is not functioning as *intended* when nature brings droughts and floods; but it is functioning as *expected* ever since the Fall. Just as we do not expect humans to live in sinless societies, we do not expect them to be free from sickness, aging, or suffering.

This view, which I would call "suffering as equilibrium" – at least the equilibrium that has existed from creation until the *parousia* – has impacted Judeo-Christian moral reasoning for three millennia; but it is absent in many animistic societies. Anthropologists and missiologists have discovered that people in animistic societies often conceive of the normal human condition as free from suffering, disharmony, sickness, or even natural disasters.[20] Misfortune is never part of "nature's course" or simply an "accident." Under normal circumstances, gardens flourish, rain falls when it should, the dry season only comes when necessary, and families live in harmony. These situations fall under the simple rubric of "goodness" in the Tannese lexicon. "Goodness" entails all flourishing, from health, to respect, to abundance of crops, to peace in the village.

Misfortune, then, is a disruption to the equilibrium. It is the result of either a moral failing or deliberate sorcery. When disaster does befall a group, the leaders undergo moral examination (through séances, tribal councils, drug induced visions, etc.) to determine who is at fault. If no moral failing can be discovered, the group turns to their only other explanation: someone – either within the society, an outsider, or a demon – has bewitched them to bring about the suffering. This is drastically different from the Western Christian's view, who is not at all surprised to see suffering on a regular basis without any apparent cause. In animism, every misfortune or misdeed arrives like a surprise, and the cause must be determined on a case-by-case basis in order to find a remedy.

1. The Steady State is "the Good"

Because of restrictions in Tanna's lexicon, the word which is glossed in English as "good" must incorporate dozens of moral and aesthetic judgments, such as beautiful, obedient, polite, tasty, functioning properly,

[20] See L. Levy-Bruhl, *Primitive Mentality* (New York: MacMillian, 1910), 39-42; and S. Tackacks and E. Cline, eds., "Animism" in *The Ancient World* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 7-8.

restored to original condition, healthy, useful, clean, helpful, and kind-hearted, plus all of the synonyms for each of these lexemes (attractive, loyal, generous, delicious, productive, renewed, etc.). Consider the following examples of the lexeme "*huva*" in the Southwest Tanna language:

- His actions are *huva* (kind, respectful).
- Her face is *huva* (attractive, desirable).
- They live *huva* (happily, peacefully).
- The axe is *huva* again (restored, useful).

This ethical system, inadvertently, nearly approximates Aristotelian ideas of "the good" as "functioning properly." For meat to be "good," it must not be rotten and it must be tasty. For a man's wife to be "good," she must be hospitable and a good cook. For the weather to be "good," it must rain but not rain too much. I ultimately decided that the best gloss for *huva* is "desirable," since the term is an aesthetic judgment by which the speaker is simply showing approval.

Likewise, in the Tannese language, the antonym for "good," *hah* (bad), is the way the speaker shows disapproval, because something is useless, old, disobedient, impolite, etc. The closest term for "sin" is *tavhaga hah*, or undesirable behavior. *Nahasien* (badness) also means disaster, punishment, sickness, or death. When a speaker says, "There was a 'badness' in Kitow village," s/he may mean someone has died, a hurricane has struck, or two teenage males came to blows over a young lady. So badness refers both to undesirable behaviours or their consequences since, in the Tannese point of view, sin and the consequences of sin are inextricably linked. If bad behaviour necessarily brings about suffering, why not refer to both by the same term?

Along with defining "the good," ethicists must answer how we can attain "the good." I have explained that in the Tannese mindset, "the good" is the normal state of affairs, and the breaking of taboos disrupts the equilibrium causing "the good" to disappear for a while. It is not that "the good" must be achieved as much as "the bad" must be warded off by obeying the taboos and remaining in harmony with others. For example, harbouring greed or resentment can disrupt the steady-state and bring about

disaster.[24] Strathern and Stewart discovered this to be the case in the highland societies of Papua New Guinea where, they argue, "morality and cosmology, in the broad sense, were inextricably linked."[25] Verena Keck's study of sickness and healing among the Yupno gives similar data from the lowlands of Papua New Guinea.[26] Likewise, Valero Valeri compiled an extensive list of sicknesses and disaster which are tied to the breaking of taboos or moral failures for the Huaulu people of the Moluccas. There skin diseases result from breaking meat taboos, tuberculosis symptoms are related to sexual taboos, vomiting blood and blindness result from breaking taboos related to women's menstrual cycles, women may lose their hair or fertility for breaking taboos related to male customary rituals, and so on.[27] Further investigation would probably reveal that the Moluccan logic is more flexible and does not employ a one-to-one predictable link between moral cause and physical effect. But the data certainly show a strong connection between moral failures and physical consequences.

On Tanna, the good life is not something to *attain*, but to *maintain*. If one obeys the traditions of "custom," life will be good. Therefore, Tannese specifically refer to their animistic practices or "customs" as the "road for goodness." Roads are a dominant metaphor in Melanesia, as they connect social groups to "cargo," brides, knowledge, or anything essential for life. Garden magic rituals such as the annual yam and taro "thanksgiving" are examples of "custom roads" that ensure goodness. Arranging marriage with cross-cousins is another "road" for goodness, as is the chiefly leadership system. In this system, goodness and badness are external entities that arrive and disappear, rather than internal qualities waiting to be discovered or perfected.

As I will argue below, this view of goodness as homeostasis diverges slightly from classic eudaimonism, and differs significantly from scriptural moral reasoning. Eudaimonistic ethics place intrinsic value on "goodness"

[24] K. Nehrbass, "Dealing with Disaster," *Missiology* 39 (2011): 459-71.

[25] A. Strathern and P.J. Stewart, "Morality and Cosmology: What Do Exemplars Exemplify?" in *The Anthropology of Morality in Melanesia and Beyond* (ed. J. Barker; Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), xiii-xxi, esp. xiii.

[26] V. Keck, *Discord and Bodily Disorders: Healing among the Yupno of Papua New Guinea* (Medical Anthropology Series; Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2005).

[27] V. Valeri, *The Forest of Taboos: Morality, Hunting and Identity among the Huaulu of the Moluccas* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 139-40.

as a road for wellbeing, but classical philosophy does not teach that humans exist in a natural state of moral goodness, or that intermittent external forces cause them to have moral failings. Scripture paints a picture of humans as morally lost (Eccl 7:20, Rom 3:10-23), and states that "only God is good" (Mark 10:18). In some senses, from a biblical standpoint, we should be more surprised when people are altruistic and sacrificial, rather than when people have moral failures.

2. Retribution: The Categorical Imperative

If creation enjoys a steady state of harmony, purity, and "goodness," anything which disrupts the homeostasis must be mitigated. When my daughter was about four years old, she inadvertently wandered onto the men's sacred kava drinking ground. A father about my age hurried over and lightly whipped her back with a kava root. He was stern enough to make an impression, but not so heavy-handed that he would cause my family to lose face. I asked why the punishment was necessary? "Because if we didn't whip her, the retribution would come back. Maybe she would be sick as an adult, or a disaster would happen, or her child would get sick." Un-atoned infractions can lay dormant, but will eventually be requited. A well-known garden magician held a large festival to explain the logic of retribution to the younger generation: "The taboos are for goodness. They are for promoting life. If you don't observe the taboos, it will come back to get you. You'll get sick. If you go to church, they don't know how to bring goodness, and they don't know about the taboos. I dare them to break the taboos!" Note that the church leadership has had to work out its own response to the observance of taboos. Some take Romans 14:14 (ESV) "nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean" to mean that taboos are inefficacious, and Christians are under no obligation to follow them. Yet others believe that taboos are indeed efficacious to those who "think they are unclean" as Paul put it. Therefore, some Christians observe the taboos because they believe the *kastom* logic of these taboos; others obey them out of respect or a desire to not cause conflict, and others flout the restrictions wholesale. (The Tannese church is still working out its own version of the Jerusalem council in Acts 15:1-35).

The logic of retribution is most visible in the Melanesian practice of exchange.[28] A certain village gave around 10,000 taros, 60 mats, and 25 pigs to the neighbouring village. About twenty years later, the receiving village repaid the gift, adding some extra things. But the "extra" must now be repaid by the reciprocating village in the future.

Humans – like animals, mats, and bad deeds – must be reciprocated. When a man takes a wife from a clan, the man's clan must reciprocate with a sister who will return in marriage to the bride's clan—or else the newlywed couple will send a daughter by marriage or adoption to the bride's clan.[29]

Reciprocity, then, is a sort of Kantian categorical imperative,[30] albeit one that looks more like the *lex talionis* (Ex 21:24): yam for yam, taro for taro, bride for bride, infraction for infraction. Knauft described this ideal, yet unattainable homeostasis as "reciprocal equivalence" for the Tangu in Papua New Guinea. The Tangu term *mgnwotngwotiki* refers to a "state of neutral equality … achieved between erstwhile competitive exchange partners."[31] However, multiple influences and factors such as moral failures, Europeans, Christianity, and sorcerers disrupt this steady state.

Is kindness a virtue within an ethical system that makes reciprocity paramount? If Nako gives ten chickens to his father-in-law, it may seem like a kind-hearted gift. And when the father-in-law gives Nako's family ten chickens down the line, it appears like another act of kindness to an outsider. But Mauss showed that there are no free gifts in Melanesia.[32] Free gifts, in fact, disrupt the equilibrium; they break the categorical imperative, since they go against the logic of retribution. The Golden Rule (Matt 7:12),

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[28] See G. Trompf, *Payback: The Logic of Retribution in Melanesian Religions* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

[29] K. Nehrbass, "Expatriate Adoption in Vanuatu in Light of 'Relative' Adoption in Tanna and Rah," unpublished paper, Symposium on Adoption in the Pacific at the Association for Social Anthropology, Oceania, held in Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2015.

[30] I. Kant, *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785; repr. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[31] B. Knauft, "Moral Exchange and Exchanging Morals: Alternative Paths of Cultural Change in Papua New Guinea," in *The Anthropology of Morality in Melanesia and Beyond* (ed. J. Barker; Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 67.

[32] M. Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (1950; repr. New York: Routledge, 1990), 8-11.

or even the "silver rule" of Confucius, is not in accord with Melanesian custom in which all deeds, good or bad, will be paid back equitably. This is a significant divergence from the morality of the New Testament, which focuses on active blessing rather than the maintenance of a steady state or retribution. "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing" (1 Pet 3:9, NIV; cf. Rom 12:17-21, citing Deut 32:35).

3. Virtues

We might also conclude that in Melanesia people are seen as inherently in a steady state of virtuosity, whereas vices act as external influences to temporarily remove the virtue. So sin is an external force, not an innate characteristic. On Tanna, a man is not angry intrinsically; rather, anger bites him. Likewise, men are not lustful; rather women and money "pull the eye." All sorts of other sins come upon a person against their will, just like the common cold does. Sorcerers and demons also cause people to sin. For example, when a middle-aged widower contracted a sexually transmitted disease, I intimated to several islanders that the man must have been sleeping around. I was met by several protests, "No, he dreamed of a woman, but only had sex with her in his dreams." Actually, the demon Nokwa, rather than the individual's thought life, is responsible for immoral dreams on Tanna. This moral reasoning diverges significantly from the pragmatism that anthropologists have reductively suggested is the basis for Melanesian morality. An ethical system that places blame for moral failings and natural disasters on the spirit world is not pragmatic, but religious. The introduction of the spirit world in moral reasoning leads to sacrifices of chickens, libations of kava, and incantations, all to ward off spirits that would cause moral failings. Since morality is so tied to religious thought in Tanna, biblical views of human nature, moral obligations, and demonic temptations must serve as a corrective. I will return to this at the end of the article.

4. Moral Exemplars

Societies typically exegete virtues from moral exemplars who show up in legend or holy scriptures. Interestingly, the rich mythological corpus on

Tanna does not contain many demigods who show bravery, humility, honesty, wisdom, etc. There are ogres and, in one case, brave twin boys defeat the ogre Semsem. And the Polynesian imported cultural hero Maui (or Matiktiki) is cunning, but not particularly virtuous. Instead of finding virtuous heroes, we find the virtues implied through certain myths. Consider a short myth I heard several times:

> A mother and father went gardening. The mother left a basket with her daughter and said, "Don't touch the basket. Your father and I are leaving for a while." Alas, the child opened the basket and was bitten by a bat! She sang a song "O, dear mother, I've been bit! One bit me. One bit me!" And the mother knew she'd opened the basket.

Here, the virtue of obedience is implied, and the harmful consequence of disobedience is explicit. Another myth teaches the virtue of obedience subtly.

> A grandmother brought her child to the ocean to swim. The grandmother said, "I will leave shortly and come back." The grandmother then went a short distance and shed her skin. She came back to the granddaughter and said, "Let's go back to the village." But the granddaughter said, "You're not my grandmother. My grandmother is old and wrinkly." "Have it your way," the grandmother told her. So the grandmother left her on the shore and went back to the village.

The girl was not as wise as her grandmother and did not obey her, which resulted in the severe consequence of being left indefinitely on the shore without adult assistance.

The corpus contains myths that subtly teach other virtues like hospitality and respect, but room does not permit me to include more. I will simply propose that based on the mythical corpus, virtues are transmitted through the *consequences* of moral failings, rather than through characters who serve as moral exemplars. Most significantly, Tannese tell a myth of two brothers who disobeyed their mother's taboo regarding a certain river. The one brother, "Stormy," swam in the river, which caused a global catastrophic flood.

Just as Western ethicists have not reached a consensus on a list of virtues, we cannot definitively lay out a defined set of virtues in Melanesia. Instead, we can look at the lexicon, data from social settings, and the

mythological corpus to analyze the virtues which emerge. To demonstrate the flexibility of discourse on virtues in Tanna, we can see whether Aristotle's twelve virtues[34] are evident in Tanna. Below, I have given the Aristotelian value and, when applicable, an equivalent way to speak about this virtue in the Tannese language.

- Courage = *notghoyen*, "courage"
- Temperance = "ruling the self"
- Liberality = "helping others"
- Magnificence = "a big man who is generous to others"
- Magnanimity = "he finds the roads to help others"
- Proper ambition = *not applicable*
- Patience = "he has long thinking"
- Truthfulness = "telling the truth"
- Wittiness = "he is a person of speaking"
- Friendliness = "good toward others"
- Modesty = "his thinking is low"
- Righteous indignation = *not applicable*

Tanna's languages are flexible enough to describe almost all of these virtues, but the idioms are often vague. For instance, a person may be described as *yermama kape nerkunian* ("person of ability/knowledge") or *kafan nerkunian rehua pek* ("his knowledge/ability is very large"). But the knowledge/ability is unspecified. Or a "man of speaking" can mean wittiness, but can also mean "inspiring" or "persuasive." More significantly, the Tannese language has ways to articulate ideas like intelligence, curiosity, and honesty; but these are not the common markers of a virtuous or flourishing person. Leaders are good because they are generous and humble; wives are good when they are respectful and hospitable. These are the "focal virtues" in Tanna, which I will discuss below.

5. Honour and Shame

The growing body of missiological literature on honour and shame has reified these theoretical dyads, implying that they are basic moral

[34] Aristotle, *The Ethics of Aristotle: The Nichomachaen Ethics* (rev. ed.; trans. J.K. Thomson; New York: Viking, 1955), 104.

evaluations which apply not only to Japan, where anthropologist Ruth Benedict developed the ideas of "shame and guilt cultures,"[35] but also to the Mediterranean,[36] to East Asia at large,[37] and to the Philippines.[38] However, early on in the development of honour and shame literature, Herzfeld demonstrated that it is foolish to apply these theoretical categories uniformly across cultures.[39] "Honor" has its connotations for the British, whereas the Italian cognate *honore* takes on quite different nuances throughout Italy, and conceptualizations of the Greek *timi* vary throughout Greece. In the Mediterranean, honour and shame is particularly tied to wealth, sexual purity, and must be regularly either won or lost. In contrast, the Tannese sense of honour and shame is not as agonistic. Honour is maintained in a sort of steady state until it is lost through disrespect.

And while "honour" can connote sexual purity or wealth, it is primarily linked to respecting leaders and gender roles. When I began componential analysis for the lexicon on Tanna Island,[40] I quickly became confused as I tried to fit the indigenous terms *nesiaiyen* and *naouresian* neatly into the English categories of "honour" and "shame" respectively. *Nesiaiyen* can be used in the following ways.

- Leaving someone alone; e.g., not bothering males who are intoxicated on kava, or children refraining from talking loudly, or refraining from uttering a request that might offend someone.

[35] R. Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1946).

[36] J. Peristiany, *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (Oxford University Press, 1966).

[37] See T. Tennent, "Anthropology: Human Identity in Shame-based Cultures of the Far East," in *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 77-104; J. Wu, *Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation through Honor and Shame* (EMS Dissertation Series; Pasadena: William Carey Library Press, 2013); Young Gweon You, "Shame and Guilt Mechanism in East Asian Culture," *Journal of Pastoral Care* 51 (1997): 57-64.

[38] B. Bowe, "Reading the Bible Through Filipino Eyes," *Missiology* 26 (1998): 345-60.

[39] M. Herzfeld, "Honour and Shame: Problems in the Comparative Analysis of Moral Systems," *Man* 15 (1980): 339-351.

[40] K. Nehrbass, *A Comprehensive Comparison of Lexemes in the Major Languages of Tanna, Vanuatu* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 2012).

- Understanding the danger – respecting fire or respecting the taboo on crops, lest a disaster befall the taboo-breaker. Old English "fear" usefully connoted both respect and a healthy dose of fear.
- Giving honour, status, or respect.

From the above, it seems the idea of *nesiaiyen* is closely associated with Brown and Levinson's concept of "negative face," or the desire to refrain from inconveniencing others.[41] In fact, a common way that *nesiaiyen* is used is the exclamation, *Nesiaiyen rekak!* which means "Respect/honour has disappeared!" Note that a person is not intrinsically disrespectful; rather, respect is a thing in and of itself which comes and goes.

The Tannese language does not have the Chinese equivalent of *ren* ("face"), but "face" in the sense of "reputation" is something that can certainly be downgraded or even lost. The loss of face, status, or respect ultimately results in mechanistic forces that retributively restore the *status quo*. For instance, when a woman "disrespected" her husband by having an affair, she later miscarried. Her husband was clearly angry at her affair, but the ultimate consequence was not simply his anger over how she dishonoured him, but the loss of flourishing or "the good."

The Tannese language also has an antonym for *nesiaiyen*: *nauresian*, which covers the following:

- causing embarrassment for oneself;
- feeling embarrassment for others; and
- causing others to be ashamed or embarrassed.

Here again, a person is not intrinsically shameful, but shame comes on a person or group temporarily. What caught the imagination of many Americans when Benedict formed the categories of shame cultures and guilt cultures was the erroneous interpretation that Japanese do not feel guilt when they sin, but feel ashamed if they are caught, because they would fear social consequences.[42] Had readers seriously read Benedict's work, they would have understood that she was not studying the conscience at all, but was describing the obligations that organize Japanese social life. Japanese

[41] P. Brown and S.C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 95-100.
[42] Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum*, 223-27.

do in fact feel guilt as people from any shame culture do; but shame cultures tend to understand their moral obligations in terms of what will bring honour to the social network.

An experience on Tanna can demonstrate the forces of guilt and shame in Melanesian moral reasoning. A village discovered that a middle-aged man, Doug, had locked his second wife out of the hut in order to sleep with her daughter. The classificatory brothers of the scorned wife pleaded her case, and Doug's classificatory brothers pleaded his. Doug and his wife Naga were both silenced from the proceedings because "custom" did not have a mechanism for him to confess publicly or apologize with words. Doug's classificatory brothers paid Naga's family with a large pig and kava roots. Naga's family also brought a gift of kava to the peace offering. The payment of a pig was considered *narpenien*, which English speakers may be tempted to gloss as "punishment" because of the context. But the word actually means "reciprocation." From an etic perspective, we may say that an amount of honour, equalling $200, had been robbed of Naga's family, and the pig of equal value restored it. But why should Naga's family also bring kava if she had done nothing wrong? The incident and public discussion caused Doug's family to lose face as well, and the goal was to restore the homeostasis for all parties involved – to bring harmony to the relationship rather than to atone for a particular sin.

With such an emphasis on honour, did Doug's moral reasoning cause him to feel personally guilty about his sin? He told me that his "pillow spoke to him" about his "bad behavior." That is, his guilty conscience kept him awake at night. However, we must recognize that what kept Doug awake at night, and what he might frame as "bad behaviour," encompasses in a wider sense the disharmony he brought to his tight knit society. His obligation is not to refrain from sin before God, but at all times to act in such a way that he does not bring badness (whether disaster or disharmony) on the community. This idea is extended into the Tannese Christian experience, where even sins that entail a spiritual component, such as breaking the Sabbath, are not problematic in that they offend God, but because they result in misfortune that can harm the community.[43] If Tannese Christians are to adopt a more biblical view of sin, they must

[43] K. Nehrbass, "Dealing with Disaster: Critical Contextualization of Misfortune," *Missiology* 39 (2011): 459-71.

begin with the understanding that sin is harmful because it breaks our relationship with God. The resulting communal disharmony (or other punishments and disasters) are also potential consequences of sin, but the primary issue is that God has commanded us to be holy, as he is (Lev 20:26), and because he cannot dwell in the presence of sin (Isa 59:2; Hab 1:13). That is why compensation cannot atone for rape, as in the case of Doug above. Genuine repentance and forgiveness must sought from God. 2 Corinthians 7:8-10 discusses the ultimate futility of "worldly grief" over sin (because it does not lead to repentance) versus godly grief of sin which does change our behavior. Such "worldly grief" involves making sacrifices to mitigate the consequences of sin; but true repentance is the fruit of being born again. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Cor 5:17 NIV).

5. Moral Obligations

There are numerous other moral obligations that arise out of social relationships in the animistic village life, and I will start by focussing below on two: generosity and humility.

(a) Greed and Generosity

N*awhaiyen* ("sharing") is a moral obligation, and gluttony or failure to share (called *naptegien ken nar*) are major moral failings. The obligation to share also includes sharing in hard work. While the moral failure of laziness (*narpahyen)* is not typically linked to disaster, it will invoke social sanctions such as gossip. What legitimizes a leader in Melanesia is his ability to find wealth and then distribute it. In fact, when the community was saying farewell to us after ten years of mission work in Tanna, the virtue people mentioned most in their speeches was our generosity in school fees, transportation, etc. While our mission work may have been appreciated, it was generosity that legitimated us.

(b) Pride and Humility

Most animistic societies are highly collectivist. Pride, the desire to stand out or to accumulate more status or wealth than others, also upsets the homeostasis. Melanesian languages use phrases like "big head" and "high thinking" to refer to pride. On the flip side, "low thinking" refers to

humility. When a member of parliament used his annual allocation to distribute axes and shovels to his constituents at Christmas time, he was seen as virtuous; and this moral reasoning extended even to the national level, as members of parliament are expected to use their allocations in this way (rather than for themselves, which would be considered corruption). He also gave a speech about the hard work of the community and never referred to his own generosity, skill, or position. The high will be made low, so it is better to present oneself as low to begin with. (Note the similarity to Jesus' instruction on humility in Luke 14:9-11).

(c) Moral Reasoning

While morality in animistic societies is based on social obligations, on maintaining "the good" and warding off misfortune, moral reasoning is not exclusively consequentialist. That is, it does not look at the ends, such as "the greater good," in order to delineate morality. In fact, when it comes to ontology, Tannese are realists. Virtues like generosity and humility are "right" (*atuatuk)* in themselves. Murder and gossip (literally "speaking on the side of a person") is *ikoiko* ("crooked"), not because it would impede the greater good, but because it is simply wrong.[49] Tannese, like many animists, are vague about how we can know these objective rights and wrongs. While truths in other areas of life (religious, healing rituals, or cargo cults) can be revealed from spirits or dreams, a shaman would be swimming upstream if he claimed to have new ethical knowledge, since morality seems to have been held by group consensus since time immemorial. In fact, the most common source cited for moral authority is the ancestors. For example, breaking the breadfruit taboo is wrong because the ancestors passed these taboos along to us. Many Tannese Christians consider these taboos to be plainly in effect, and they point out that the Bible does not have anything to say against the observance of these specific taboos. In fact, the Bible seems to reinforce a number of taboos related to female menstruation, and the Torah has its own litany of cleanliness taboos related to foods and seasons. Each denomination on Tanna, though, works out its own response to both Old Testament and *kastom* taboos. One

[49] This is not to imply that Tanna is free from gossip, or that there is no social value to gossip. In fact, I observed gossip employed as a tool for transmitting value judgments to children and for creating a consensus about proper behavior.

Seventh-day Adventist leader told me that, "If the taboo is not in the Bible, I don't follow it." An urban, educated Presbyterian told me that he doesn't follow the *kastom* taboos because Jesus declared all foods clean (Mark 7:19).

Other prohibitions such as not to murder or steal are taken as brute facts. While it may be self-evident that murder and theft are wrong, Tannese moral reasoning would have a firmer foundation if it began with the obligation to obey divine commands.

Moral obligations are known through the sense of "ought." In Tanna, *amakeikei* can mean both "certainly will happen" or "ought to happen." *Tukma nakvah nauta rehua, takamakeikei mahwai* can mean either "if you have a great deal of property, you will certainly share it," or "if you have a great deal of property, you are obliged to share it." The sense of moral duty is so strong that it is a certainty. In the steady state of "goodness" all moral obligations will certainly be fulfilled. Only when the homeostasis is uncertainly disrupted will these obligations be unfulfilled.

While these obligations are objectively right or wrong, there is still a good deal of ambiguity in the lexicon. For example, Tannese may say it is wrong to steal, but the lexicon is ambiguous about this. Consider the following two examples:

1. Tom stole Roni's wife.
2. The rat stole my sweet potato from the garden.

Example (1) contains a moral judgment, but we would be hard-pressed to say that "steal" in (2) was a moral judgment. The Tannese language has the same ambiguity with truth-telling, as *remneikua* can be glossed the following ways.

1. He lied.
2. He was kidding.
3. He was mistaken.

In all the cases above, the word *remneikua* connotes that the speaker has not told the truth. but only in case (1) is it morally wrong.

(d) Moral Obligations and Land

A discussion of morality in the Pacific must include ideals about land use, since land disputes are at the nexus of public moral discourse. Stealing is

primarily about the misuse of land resources, and disasters are often traced to land disputes. For instance, Matt was adopted into a family of three brothers. When he came of age, his biological family could not reach consensus about whether he could use their land for agriculture, nor could his adoptive family. In this liminal space, Matt occasionally cultivated crops on both plots. At each disaster, the two feuding clans brought up the moral dilemma. The biological clan would argue that grandmother died or a mudslide happened because Matt was cultivating the wrong land.

(e) Summary of Animistic Moral Reasoning

Early European depictions of Melanesian morality were sorely mistaken. Far from lacking moral reasoning, I have demonstrated how a particular Melanesian society has a robust system of moral obligations. Virtues are a rich part of discourse and the consequences figure into moral choices. But it is unfairly reductionist to refer to Tannese morality as ultimately pragmatic. True, much moral discourse is related to discerning, on a case-by-case basis, which moral failing is tied to the most recent catastrophe. But my thesis here is that it is not that actions like murder and stealing are bad because they bring about misfortune; instead, they bring about misfortune because they are bad *a priori*.

CONCLUSION: COMPATIBILITY WITH BIBLICAL MORALITY

By this point it should be clear that Tannese moral reasoning is at times similar to biblical moral reasoning, and at times it diverges significantly. The deontology of Tannese morality aligns to some degree with biblical ethics. For instance, Tannese lean toward positivism, seeing certain actions like murder and theft as absolutely wrong. They may not root these notions in divine command theory, or in the intrinsic value of humans as image bearers; but Tannese are not situational ethicists either. They would argue that something intrinsic to humans teaches young to respect elders, men to not force themselves on women, and so on.

Further, Scripture does seem to vouch for Tanna's consequentialism in moral reasoning. The Bible does indicate that moral failings may result in disasters such as famine, exile, and disease (Lev 26:14-17). But churches need to find a Christian response to the village's temptation to trace every sickness and disaster to the breaking of a taboo or a moral failing. At times

when people need compassion the most (sickness and disaster), Satan uses these misfortunes to further people's grief through dissention and finger pointing.

Christian Melanesians would also find their ethics enriched with further interaction with the Bible on consequences, virtues, and the source of moral obligations. The Tannese virtues of hospitality, harmony, humility, generosity, and honour are important virtues in Scripture as well. But the Bible has additional virtues which may be implied in this particular Melanesian society but are not prominent parts of its moral discourse, including compassion, self-sacrifice, faithfulness, and patience. Therefore, Tannese Christians would do well to spend time parsing the panoply of virtues in Scripture. The indigenous moral exemplars do model particular virtues: Matiktiki is cunning; the twin boys who defeated Semsem are brave. But there are many moral exemplars in scripture who can fill in the virtues that are missing in Tannese mythology. While both *kastom* and biblical moral exemplars are discussed in worship services, church leaders should emphasize the ontological difference between mythical characters in the Tannese cosmology, and the historical characters described in scripture. Such a distinction would elevate the value of scripture over mythology in teaching virtue.

The area that could be most expanded is the source of our moral obligations and how we can know these obligations. This is significant because Melanesian moral codes have numerous taboos which are outside of what we may consider "universal." Who commanded the taboo on eating Tahitian chestnuts in December or yams in March? And more significantly, who commanded us to marry our cross-cousins? Tannese would do well to distinguish between obligations that are socially-constructed, on the one hand, and moral obligations which are divinely commanded, on the other. But distinguishing between these two requires serious biblical study. The scripture is much more than a collection of passages to read publicly on Sunday morning. Indeed, it can be of tremendous value in deepening the understanding of moral obligations.

Probably the most significant disconnect between Melanesian and biblical moral reasoning is the high emphasis in Melanesia on reciprocity, since an over-emphasis on reciprocity takes forgiveness and mercy out of view. Out of one hundred sermons I observed on Tanna from 2007 to

2009[50], obedience and hospitality both surfaced as major themes, but grace and forgiveness were rarely mentioned. Tanna's theologians must discern ways in which Christ is the fulfilment of the system of reciprocity, and the ways in which Melanesian reciprocity is unbiblical. Additionally, with a tremendous emphasis on social obligations, especially reciprocation, Melanesians should be careful not to manipulate these obligations for selfish gain at the expense of others.

Melanesian theologians would benefit from further discussion on customary moral reasoning in light of scriptural virtues and commands. The rich ethical system in Melanesia pre-contact is an indication that God is not far from any one of us.[51] But God, as a source of moral authority was often absent in pre-Christian Melanesian moral discourse. Therefore, church leaders throughout Melanesia must be well-trained, and must engage in serious study of scripture. Additional Bible study materials and theological works aimed at Melanesian audiences must be developed in Melanesian languages of wider communication.

[50] K. Nehrbass, *Christianity and Animism in Melanesia: Four approaches to Gospel and Culture* (Pasadena: William Carey Library Press, 2012), 171.
[51] See Acts 17:27.

MOTIFS OF DEATH AND HELL IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS: PART 1—AN EXAMINATION OF HADES

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Abstract
Death and the afterlife are issues that interest every person living today. They were also issues that interested Bible writers. There is a plethora of relevant texts. This study focuses on one word, Hades, and explores its meaning, beginning with a background study of Old Testament material and extra-biblical sources, and then focuses on New Testament texts, especially in the Gospels. While most commentators habitually consider Hades to be a place where immaterial, immortal souls go at death or after a judgment – because of the influence of the Greek pagan/secular background of Hades – in biblical usage *hades* is detached from this Greek background and is mostly a translation of the Hebrew *sheol*. This study argues that the biblical *sheol/hades* is another name for the tomb, the place where all people go in bodily form, there to await the resurrection. This motif, first developed in the Old Testament, is replicated repeatedly and without fail in the New Testament texts that refer to Hades.

Keywords
Hades, death, hell, afterlife, the grave

INTRODUCTION

The question of what happens when a person dies and, perhaps more importantly, what will happen to the wicked on the Day of Judgment and then for eternity, are questions that have elicited countless discussions and generated a massive bibliography. This two-part study will approach the topic by examining two of the most pertinent terms, Hades and Gehenna.

It was assumed for a long time that the two terms are nearly synonymous,[1] due in part to the translation in the KJV of both as "hell,"[2]

[1] E.g., R.E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 295: "[Hades] comes in this case to much the same thing [as hell]".

and partly because of the mistaken tendency to conflate post-mortem expectations with eschatological punishment. Today, however, it is recognised that the two denote different things: Hades relates to temporal death and Gehenna to the final fate of the wicked.[3]

This first part will examine Hades. It will begin with a discussion of background material, first by looking briefly at Greek literature, and then by discussing at more length the use of *hades* in the Old Testament (OT), early Jewish writings, and the New Testament (NT) outside of the gospels. Then we will concentrate on the gospels, first discussing two parallel texts (Matt 11:20-24, Luke 10:13-15), then Matthew 16:17-19, and finally Luke 16:19-31.

Most ancient pagan religions believed in continued existence after death.[4] I will endeavour to demonstrate in this short study, what I have argued in more detail elsewhere,[5] that the biblical worldview is decidedly different and that in biblical anthropology, death is the complete cessation of life, and not its continuation in another form of existence.

HADES: OUTSIDE THE GOSPELS

1. Greek Literature and LXX

Hades (ᾅδης) is a Greek term that comes for the verb ὁράω, "to see" (infinitive, ἰδεῖν).[6] With the negating prefix α it literally means, "the place

[2] Cf. Matt 16:18, Mark 9:43, and Luke 16:23 in the KJV. Cf. D.A. Jacoby, "Doctrinal, Biblical, and Psychological Obstacles," *A Consuming Passion* (ed. C.M. Date and R. Highfield, (Eugene: Pickwick, 2015), 296-306.

[3] C.G. Marshall, "Divine and Human Punishment in the New Testament," *Rethinking Hell: Readings in Evangelical Conditionalism* (ed. C.M. Date, G.G. Stump, J.W. Anderson; Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014), 207-227.

[4] E.g., G. Shushan, *Conceptions of the Afterlife in Early Civilizations*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

[5] K. Papaioannou, *The Geography of Hell in the Teaching of Jesus: Gehenna, Hades, the Abyss, the Outer Darkness Where there is Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth*, (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013). This article draws extensively in summary form from this work. Cf. K. Papaioannou, "Death, Eternal Life, and Judgment in the Gospel and the Epistles of John," in Date and Highfield, *A Consuming Passion*, 172-89.

[6] See H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, rev. H.S. Jones with assistance from R. McKenzie (eds.), *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, with rev. suppl. 1996), s.v. (henceforth, LSJ).

that is not seen." The name indicates that despite differing views and stories about Hades, to the Greeks the state of the dead was ultimately unknown. As such, Hades could refer to a place of torment, especially in later writings, to a place of marginal, shadowy, non-bodily existence, or it could be just another name for the tomb.

In the Septuagint (LXX) Hades appears over one hundred times. Most commonly it translates the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל (henceforth "Sheol"), and sometimes דּוּמָה, "silence,"[7] בּוֹר, "pit,"[8] and derivatives of מָוֶת, "death."[9] I shall refer to both the Hebrew and the LXX texts. There are several things we need to note.

First, Sheol/Hades is where everyone goes at death. There is no distinction between the righteous and the wicked. It becomes the home of respected figures like Jacob, Job, and David,[10] as well as of the bloodthirsty Joab or the idolatrous king of Babylon.[11]

Second, there is no life or consciousness in Sheol/Hades. In contrast to some cultures that envisioned meaningful existence in the afterlife, the Bible portrays Sheol/Hades as a place of silence[12] and lifelessness where human existence has come to an end. Job 7:9, for example, compares the person who goes to Hades to a cloud that vanishes: "As a cloud vanishes and is gone, so is he who goes down to the grave [Sheol]."[13] A person's days come to an end without hope. The expectation for something better dies with him/her.[14] There is no memory in Hades;[15] and there is no longer any communion with God.[16] It is a place of silence, darkness, and oblivion.[17] Thus, a person who dies, in effect, ceases to exist.[18] Psalm 88:11

[7] R. Whitaker, F. Brown, S.R. Driver and C.A. Briggs, *The Abridged Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* (Oak Harbor: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1997), s.v. (henceforth, BDB).
[8] BDB, s.v.
[9] BDB, s.v.
[10] E.g., Gen 37:35; 42:38; Job 14:13; 17:13; 1 Kgs 2:9-10.
[11] 1 Kgs 2:6; Isa 14:9-10.
[12] R. Bauckham, "Dead", in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. D.N. Freedman; 6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:787-88.
[13] All Bible references are from the NIV unless otherwise indicated.
[14] E.g., Job 17:16; Eccl 9:5.
[15] E.g., Isa 26:14; Eccl 9:5; Ps 6:5.
[16] Pss 115:17; 88:10-12; Isa 38:18.
[17] Cf. Job 17:13; Ps 88:5.

aptly notes: "Is your love declared in the grave, your faithfulness in destruction?" Ecclesiastes 9:5 is even clearer: "For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing."

Third, Hades is simply another name for the physical grave. In Job 17:13 the writer, reflecting on the fate he expects will soon befall him, complains that Hades has become his home; that his bed is the darkness. The mention of a bed is an obvious reference to the custom of burying the dead in a horizontal position.[19] He then adds that the worm[20] and corruption have become his partners, meaning that the body will decompose and his existence will come to an end (Job 17:14). In Job 21:26, the wicked who go down to Sheol/Hades sleep in the earth, another reference to the horizontal position of the body in the grave: "Side by side they lie in the dust, and worms cover them both." Psalm 9:17 equates Hades with the dust. In language that reflects Genesis 2:7 and 3:19, the wicked "return" to Sheol/Hades, i.e., to the dust from which they had been formed (cf. Job 17:16). In Psalm 16:10 Hades is where decay reigns. The destiny of humans is similar to that of animals.[21] The dead lie in silence. Hades is a synonym for the grave.[22]

There is, however, one text that seems to depart from the above depictions, namely Isaiah 14:9-10. Here the prophet depicts a lively exchange between the king of Babylon who has descended in disgrace to Hades, and the dead rulers of the earth.[23] This lively motif, however, is the

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[18] Eccl 9:6. In this respect it is no surprise that on two occasions (Pss 94:17 and 115:17) Hades is the translation of the Hebrew דּוּמָה, which carries the idea of "stillness" or "silence." Something similar can be said of the three texts (Job 33:22; Prov 14:12; Isa 28:15) where it is the translation of derivatives of מָוֶת ("death").

[19] The notion of a dead person in a horizontal position, often accompanied by the idea of sleeping, is common (eg. Job 14:13, 21:26, 26:6, Pss 31:17, 88:5, Isa 14:8, 11, 18, Ezra 32:27). For a discussion of burial customs see E. Bloch-Smith, "Burials," in Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1:785–89.

[20] Hebrew רִמָּה also used, for example, of the worms in rotting food in Exod 16:24: see W. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1972, s.v. The LXX uses σαπρία, "corruption," "decay," rather than "worm."

[21] Ps 49:14, 15, Eccl 3:19, 20, 12:4.

[22] A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament – Matthew* (Nashville: Broadman, 1930), 132.

[23] N. Wyatt, "The Concept and Purpose of Hell: Its Nature and Development in West Semitic Thought," *Numen* 56 (2009): 161-184, uses this oracle as well as the story of the

embellished, metaphorical language of an eloquent poet, rather than anticipation of vibrant existence in Hades.[24] Isaiah 14:11 returns to the images alluded to above: in Hades, the glory and rejoicing that accompanied the king of Babylon while alive suddenly come to an end. With language reminiscent of the physical grave and the horizontal burial position, the writer explains that maggots (רִמָּה) are the bed beneath him and worms (תוֹלֵעָה) his covering.

Finally, there is some debate whether there was an anticipation of resurrection. References to bodily resurrection are sparser in the OT than in the NT. Partly through the influence of Form Criticism and the History of Religions school of thought, it became generally assumed that resurrection appears only in the latest strata of OT tradition, well after the exile.[25] Today, however, with a re-examination of the evidence a growing number of scholars are convinced that despite the scarcity of direct allusions, belief in a resurrection is reflected in many early texts[26] like Job 14:11-17, 1 Samuel 2:6, Hosea 6:1, and Daniel 12:2. With an anticipation of Sheol/Hades as only a temporary home, the dead remain there until they are raised.

2. Early Jewish Literature

The picture in non-Biblical Jewish writings is more complicated. A number of documents use similar language to that of the OT. Sheol/Hades is the destiny of all people, wicked and righteous alike. *Testament of Abraham* A

death of the family of Korah in Num 16 to assume belief in a lively if suffering-filled afterlife, in parallel with ancient pagan near eastern beliefs. Careful reading of both texts does not support his conclusions.

[24] C.f. J.D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66* (Word Biblical Commentaries 25; Waco: Word Books, 1987), 209.

[25] G.W.E. Nickelsburg, "Resurrection," in Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:684–86; cf. A. Thiselton, *Life After Death: A New Approach to the Last Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 4, who in his touching study on the topic of death is wrong in seeing Hades as a possible place of conscious, unhappy existence, but is right in emphasizing that the true hope is not in an immediate afterlife but in the resurrection at the end of the age.

[26] E.g., F.I. Andersen and D.N. Freedman, *Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 419-21; N.J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Netherworld in the OT* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969); M. Dahood, *Psalms I: 1-50* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 183, 222-23.

8:9 portrays all as gathered by the "sickle of death" and going to Hades.[27] There is also a frequent association between Hades and the dust. *2 Baruch* 42:8 implies that all the dead are now lying in the dust. *Sibylline Oracles* 1:81-84 depicts Adam and his generation going to Hades and being covered by the earth. In *1 Enoch* 51:1 there is a parallel between the earth and Sheol.[28] In *2 Baruch* 11:6 the dust is called upon to announce to the dead that they are happier in their state than those who are alive. In 1Q *Thanksgiving Hymns* 11 the poet offers thanks because God has saved his life from the pit, from Sheol, and destruction. In 1Q *Thanksgiving Hymns* 11:19-23 the hope is expressed that God will "raise from the dust the worm of the dead to an [everlasting] community."[29] In 1Q *Thanksgiving Hymns* 14:34 the dead "lie in the dust." And in 4Q Amram, Fragment 1ii 1-16, "the sons of dark[ness will go to the shades, to death] and to annihilation."[30]

A common motif that likewise links the dead to the earth is where resurrection is presented as the earth giving back the dead. In *1 Enoch 51:1* the earth, Sheol, and destruction appear together as near synonyms and give back the dead that have been entrusted to them. In *4 Ezra* 7:32 the earth gives back those who sleep in it. In *2 Baruch* 42:8 the dust is called to give back that which does not belong to it.[31]

Sometimes, the dead are described as being asleep without any consciousness, even being at peace. In the *1 Enoch* 102:5-11, for example, the righteous that have perished appear to become like "those who were

[27] Cf *T. Ab.* A 19:7; *1 En.* 22:1-14; 51:1; 102:5-11; *4 Ezra* 4:42; 7:72.

[28] G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 70-78, 84-87, 112-29.

[29] Translation by J.J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 120.

[30] Translation by F.G. Martinez and E.J.C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 275. Collins, *Apocalypticism*, 117-122, has argued that despite such references, the Dead Sea community anticipated bliss for itself and punishment for the wicked immediately after death (he cites 1 QS 4:6-8; 1 QS 4:11-14; 18-19). The question is not fully settled and it should be no surprise if in the Qumran literature that spans over two centuries of writing, both views should be present as is the case in other near contemporary Jewish literature.

[31] For a list and discussion of the relevant Jewish and Christian texts see R. Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 269-90.

not."[32] In *Wisdom* 2:1 a person comes to his/her end at death. In *4 Ezra* 7:32 the dead are pictured as sleeping. In *2 Baruch* 11:4 the righteous sleep "at rest in the earth" (cf. *2 Baruch* 42:7). In *Psalms of Solomon* 2:2 people who die are as though they had never been.

In other ways, the picture is decidedly different. Sometimes Hades, no more associated with the dust, becomes a hollow place in the earth (*2 Bar.* 21:23), where the supposed immaterial souls or spirits of the dead go. The idea of soul "chambers" or "treasuries" appears.[33] Often the chambers are common to all souls but at least in two instances the righteous are distinguished from the wicked (*1 En.* 22:1-14; *Ps.-Philo* 15:5).

Bauckham correctly observes that there were two views on human fate in Jewish thought: the unitary and the dualistic. The unitary was "the simplest and doubtless the earliest Jewish notion" in which death was not a separation of body and soul but rather the death of the "bodily person."[34] The dualistic, by contrast, made a clear distinction between body and soul and seems to have been influenced by Platonic dualism. Often the two appear alongside.[35]

Resurrection plays an important role in non-Biblical Jewish writings.[36] In *4 Ezra* 4:42 the "the earth"[37] is compared to the womb of a pregnant woman, anxious to deliver. The dust will give back what does not belong to it (*2 Bar.* 42:8). Sheol will return the deposits she received (*1 En.* 51:1). In *2 Baruch* 50:2 the dead return to life in exactly the same form in which they died. As such, Hades/Sheol is only a temporary home for the dead. It is not a place of punishment; rather punishment will come in the day of judgement. After the resurrection, Hades itself will cease, the realm of death will be sealed, and its mouth will be shut.[38]

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[32] G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch: Chapters 1-36, 81-108* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 521, interprets the view expressed in 102:11 as "the effective annihilation of the person." This is the worldview the author of the passage ascribes to sinners, and he then proceeds to counter-argue that death is not annihilation, but a place of suffering for sinners (103:7-8) and of waiting for judgment (104:5).

[33] E.g., *Ps.-Philo* 32:13; 15:5; 21:9; *2 Bar.* 30:1; *4 Ezra* 4:35.

[34] Bauckham, *Fate*, 275.

[35] Bauckham, *Fate*, 276-7.

[36] Nickelsburg, *Literature*, 84-87, 112-129

[37] So the Ethiopian and Georgian versions.

[38] *2 Bar.* 21:23; *Ps.-Philo* 3:10.

In very few instances, Hades becomes the place of eschatological punishment. Jeremias links this development to the entrance into Judaism of belief in the immortality of the soul.[39] In *Pseudo-Phocylides* 112-113 Hades is the eternal home for all, not because of a coming day of judgement, but on account of the soul's supposed innate immortality. In *1 Enoch* 63:10 and 103:7 Sheol is considered an oppressive place of torment, which, at least in the latter text, could be said to last forever.[40]

By way of summary, we may say that early non-biblical Jewish writings most commonly reflect OT thinking and language. However, we note the beginnings of a differentiation between body and soul as well as an incipient tendency to view Hades as the place of final punishment mainly due to Greek philosophical influence.

3. Hades in the NT

The word Hades occurs eleven times in the NT, four in the gospels, two in Acts, and five in Revelation. The gospel references will be discussed in more detail below. For now we will look at the seven occurrences in Acts and Revelation beginning with Acts 2:27 and 31. The former is a quotation from Ps 16:10:

Because you will not abandon me to the grave [MT Sheol/LXX Hades], nor will you let your Holy One see decay (Ps 16:10).

"Because you will not abandon me to the grave {Hades], nor will you let your Holy One see decay" (Acts 2:27).

The latter contains Peter's comments on that text:

Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave [Hades], nor did his body see decay (Acts 2:31).

The context is Peter's sermon on Pentecost. Psalm 16:10 could be understood as a prayer expressing either confidence that God will deliver from death, or hope in the resurrection; or perhaps both.[41] In Acts it is

[39] J. Jeremias, "ᾅδης," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (ed. G. Kittel; trans. G.W. Bromley; 10 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:147 (146-49).
[40] Nickelsburg, *Enoch*, 511, translates 103:8b as follows: "… and the great judgment will be for all the generations of eternity."
[41] P.C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50* (Word Biblical Commentary 19; Waco: Word, 1983), 158.

understood as a messianic prophecy about the resurrection of Jesus. Peter says that even though David, the author of Psalm 16, died and was buried, he had not risen; on the contrary, his grave was still intact in Jerusalem (Acts 2:29). The text therefore must apply not to David, but to David's offspring, the Messiah. David died and is still in the grave; Jesus died, was buried, but came out of the tomb alive. Here, therefore, Hades is neither a place of punishment, nor a place of conscious existence, but another name for the grave, just as is the case with Sheol/Hades in the OT.

This connection to the physical grave is confirmed by the use of the verb ἀνίστημι (Acts 2:24, 32), "to rise" from the dead, but literally "to stand up again."[42] The related verb ἐγείρω, also used repeatedly of resurrection, also has the meaning of "causing someone to rise."[43] Both verbs tie the concept of resurrection to the grave. In the grave a person lies horizontally; at resurrection he/she comes alive and is able again to stand up in the vigor of life.

The next reference is Revelation 1:18: "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."[44] The title "the Living One," is often used of God.[45] It suggests that unconquerable life is inherent in the divine person and, in this respect, Jesus has full power over death and resurrection.[46] This aspect of the person

[42] Cf. W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature* (trans. W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrinch; rev. and exp. F.W. Danker; 3rd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. (henceforth, BDAG).

[43] BDAG, s.v.

[44] R. Harper, "Hades in Revelation," in Date and Highfield, *A Consuming Passion*, 190-210, discusses the use of Hades in Revelation as well as briefly in some key gospels texts and concludes correctly that Hades is distinct from Gehenna, but incorrectly that Hades is a place of torment. The problem with Harper's methodology is that he takes the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, interprets it without due consideration of genre, relation to non-biblical parallel tales, and superimposes this outlook on the remaining biblical texts. While the parable should be given its due attention, and is discussed below, it is important in biblical theology to see the overall weight of the evidence, and in this respect both in the OT and NT Hades is synonymous with the grave.

[45] E.g., Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; 1 Sam 17:16; 2 Kgs 19:4; Isa 37:4, 17; Jer. 10:10; John 5:26; 11:25; 14:6; Rev 4:9; 10:6; 15:7.

[46] J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 55; R.G. Bowles, "The Offer of Life," in Date and Highfield, *A Consuming Passion*, 320 (307-323).

of Jesus brings to mind OT texts about God's lordship over Sheol.[47] Here, death and Hades appear to be synonymous and this close juxtaposition between life on the one hand and death/Hades on the other supports the outlook we found in the OT.

In Revelation 6:8 death and Hades appear again together:

I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

John sees in vision a number of apocalyptic horses and riders bringing woes upon the earth. The fourth horse is pale, χλωρός, in colour, literally a yellow-green pale).[48] Robertson suggests the colour is a symbol of death;[49] while Massyngberde Ford thinks that it could depict a corpse in an advanced state of decomposition.[50] The rider of this horse is death who in turn is followed by Hades[51] with the combination death/Hades being a hendiadys.

Finally, in Revelation 20:13-14 Hades and death appear again together this time in an eschatological context:

The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.

In addition to death/Hades, it is noteworthy that the sea also gives back the dead. In the ancient Near East it was very important that the dead

[47] E.g., 1 Sam 2:6; Job 11:8; Deut 32:39; Hos. 6:1-3.

[48] BDAG, s.v.

[49] A.T. Robertson, *The General Epistles. The Revelation of John* (Nashville: Broadman, 1958), 342.

[50] Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, 57.

[51] The Greek for death is θάνατος, which in the LXX often translates דֶּבֶר which means "pestilence" rather than "death." Hence, some like G.R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (London: Oliphants, 1978), 133, have proposed that what is pictured here is possibly a pestilence followed by death. Two elements weigh against such a suggestion. First, in Revelation Hades always appears together with death (Rev 6:8; 20:13, 14), and the combination seems to be a hendiadys. Second, pestilence is mentioned as one of the four means through which death comes about (6:8c), so it would not make sense for the Revelator to have pestilence represent both the rider of the horse and one of his weapons.

received a proper and honourable burial.[52] Those lost at sea would obviously not get that. The text, therefore, assures that all the righteous dead will have a place in the resurrection, irrespective of how they died and whether they were properly buried.[53]

The contrast of sea and Hades is a contrast between water and dry land. The text underlines the universality of the resurrection; all the righteous will rise. [54] In the process, it also connects Hades to the physical grave and the dust – water and dust will both give back their dead.

In Revelation 20:14 death and Hades meet their end when they are thrown into the lake of fire, which, in turn, is called "the second death." This creates a curious picture: death meets its end through death. The phrase "second death" appears three more times in Revelation (Rev 2:11; 20:6; 21:8) and in all cases refers to the eschatological punishment that awaits the wicked but not the righteous. The picture of Revelation 20:14 therefore is not so much of a personified death/Hades who is thrown into the fire and dies; rather Hades comes to an end when the wicked die the second death. There is now nobody else to die so death becomes defunct.[55]

From the above discussion of Hades in the NT outside the gospels, Hades is always connected to temporal death and the grave. It is never a place of suffering, never a place of consciousness, and never the eschatological judgment of the wicked.[56] It is closely connected to the concept of physical resurrection from the physical grave as evidenced by the use of the verb ἀνίστημι. Imagery and references to the OT are strong. The Hades texts do not show any evidence of the concept of the immortality of the soul that was beginning to appear in Jewish non-biblical literature.

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[52] Bloch-Smith, "Burials," 785-89.

[53] Beasley-Murray, 302.

[54] So R.H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 366; A.F. Johnson, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 589-90.

[55] Cf. 2 *Bar.* 21:23 and *Ps. Philo* 33:3 where Hades' mouth is sealed forever.

[56] Wyatt, 161-184, without due argumentation assumes that a collection of words like Gehenna, Hades, Sheol, the Pit and the Grave had more or less "coalesced in meaning" and shared elements with Greek and Roman cosmology. Quite the contrary is the case with the terms Hades and Genenna sharply differentiated. Though the former was a common term in Greek cosmology, in biblical use it denoted something completely different, as discussed throughout this study; and the latter is absent from Greek and Roman cosmologies.

HADES: IN THE GOSPELS

1. Matthew 11:20-24 and Luke 10:12-15

Having looked at the different literary contexts, OT, NT, early Jewish writings, we now turn to the gospels, the main focus of this study. Hades does not appear in John, so that gospel will not be discussed. There are four references to Hades in the gospels, two in Matthew (11:20-24; 16:18) and two in Luke (10:12-15; 16:19-31).

[20]Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. [21]"Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. [22]But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. [23]And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. [24]But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you" (Matt 11:20-24).

[12]I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. [13]"Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. [14]But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. [15]And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths" (Luke 10:12-15).

The saying about Hades in Matthew 11:23 parallels that in Luke 10:15. It occurs in a small pericope (11:20-24) in which Jesus pronounces a woe on three Galilean cities because they have failed to believe in him. This is one of several woes which appear, in turn, in the general context of 11:2-30, which may be divided into three parts: Jesus' work in relation to (a) John the Baptist (vv. 2-19); (b) its apparent failure (vv. 20-24); and (c) its real success (vv. 25-30).[57] The main theme of this unit seems to be the acceptance or rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.[58] John the Baptist has

[57] W.C. Allen, *St. Matthew* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), 113.

[58] W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, Vol. 2 (New York: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 265.

accepted him and receives words of praise (11:3, 11); so have the "little children," the simple folk (11:25). However, the "wise and learned" have rejected first John and now Jesus (11:16-19, 25). The woes against Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (11:20-24), therefore, serve as a warning to all who reject Jesus.

The woes are pronounced within the context of eschatological punishment. Matthew 11:20 does not appear in Luke and in Matthew functions as an introduction to the woes. It is a prelude to the final judgement. The word "woe" itself connotes a solemn warning of imminent threat.

In Matthew 11:21-22 the final judgement plays a prominent role. Chorazin and Bethsaida[59] are condemned because they have failed to believe the divine manifestations of power displayed in Jesus. By contrast, if Tyre and Sidon had seen the works Jesus did in these Galilean cities, they would long ago have repented. The mention of Tyre and Sidon injects a touch of irony and points to the magnitude of the guilt of the Galilean cities. These two cities on the coast of Lebanon were not only Gentile, but are repeatedly condemned for their wickedness by the Hebrew prophets.[60] Thus, even notoriously evil Gentiles would have been more receptive to Jesus' ministry than the chosen people of God. The solemn warning of Jesus is that in the day of judgement, Tyre and Sidon will carry a lighter sentence than the one to be pronounced on Chorazin and Bethsaida.

Matthew 11:23-24 carries a similar warning phrased differently. This time the juxtaposition is between Capernaum and Sodom: 11:24 repeats the idea of 11:22 – namely that the unrepentant inhabitants of Capernaum will receive a heavier sentence than those of Sodom who did not hear and see Jesus. But 11:23b is modelled on the saying concerning Tyre and Sidon in 21b. It sets the stage for the mention of Sodom in 24.

[59] Beyond this verse (and Luke 10:13), we know little about the work of Jesus in these two cities. Except for a couple of references in Jewish writings (*b. Menah*. 85a; *t. Mak*. 3:8), Chorazin is nowhere else mentioned among the ancient writers. Bethsaida seems to have been be the native town of Peter and Andrew and also of Philip (John 1:44; 12:21). It lay in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee and must have been a large village since Herod Philip made it into a city and renamed it Julias. The feeding of the 5000 took place nearby (Luke 9:10, 25) and it was also the sight of a healing miracle (Mark 8:22-26).

[60] E.g., Jer 25:22; 27:3; 47:4; Joel 3:4; Zech 9:1-4; cf. 1 Macc 5:15; Jdt 2:28.

Matthew 11:23a condemns Capernaum in language taken from Isaiah 14:13-15,[61] an oracle directed against the king of Babylon (14:3). He will go to Hades which in this instance is another name for the grave (14:11; see the discussion above). The prophecy reflects the destruction of Babylon which would be brought about not by human hand but by God's power (14:5, 22). The name of Babylon will be wiped out and so will her people (14:22); as for the land, it will become unfit for habitation (14:23).

Capernaum esteemed herself to be as high as the heavens[62] but will end up in Hades. In contrast, if the mighty works done in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, the latter would still be around.[63] Matthew 11:23, therefore, concerns the temporal destruction of Sodom. Unlike Sodom, Capernaum has had the opportunity to hear Jesus and see his mighty works but still has not repented. Capernaum, therefore, can expect a similar fate, as indeed happened when Capernaum was destroyed by the Romans.

The context in Luke is somewhat different: Jesus is sending out the seventy to prepare the way for him (10:1).[64] Luke 10:3-12 contains directions about how they should conduct their work, as well as the prospect their ministry might be rejected (10:10-12). Luke 10:16 concludes Jesus' mission charge. Luke 10:12-15 parallels closely Matthew 11:21-24. So while the context might be different, the sayings about Hades are nearly identical.

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[61] R.H. Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel with Reference to Messianic Hope* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 81.

[62] The exact meaning of the Greek here is unclear. The Greek sets the phrase in the form of a question: "Will you exalt yourself to heaven?" There is a textual problem: there are two variants of the verb ὑψόω ("to exalt"), both of which have strong manuscript support. The first, which NA[28] prefers, is active and suggests that Capernaum attempted to exalt herself. The second is passive meaning that the city had been raised by other factors. Why exactly Capernaum would have considered herself exalted is not clear. Perhaps it had to do with geographical position, or that it was possibly a rich city, or that it was a matter of pride. A likely possibility is that its importance came from the extensive ministry of Jesus there since the "woes" passage deals with the cities that rejected Jesus. It appears to have been the centre of Jesus' Galilean work (Matt 4:13; Mark 2:1); Jesus healed several people there (Matt 8:5; Mark 1:21-28; 2:1-12; Luke 7:1-10; John 4:41-54) and taught in its synagogues (Luke 4:31-38).

[63] This is the force of the Greek, ἔμεινεν ἄν μέχρι τῆς σήμερον (Matt 11:23). This is an allusion to the destruction of Sodom (Gen 19).

[64] C.F. Evans, *Saint Luke* (London: SCM, 1990), 443-45.

What does Hades involve in these two passages? Jesus does not explain; but from the above brief discussion we can draw some conclusions. First, Hades is a reference to death and destruction, perhaps a synonym for the grave. This is indicated: by the allusion to Isaiah 14 where Hades and the physical grave are parallel expressions (Isa 14:9, 11); by the use of OT imagery where, as noted, Hades is another name for the grave; and by the association of Hades with the physical destruction of Capernaum during the Jewish rebellion against Rome. Certainly there is no hint or suggestion that Hades is a place of continued conscious existence.

Second, while the two passages take an interest in eschatological judgment, the reference to Capernaum and Hades seems to reflect Capernaum's temporal destruction. Any eschatological application would be secondary.

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2. Matthew 16:13-20

[13]When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" [14]They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." [15]"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" [16]Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." [17]Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. [18]And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. [19]I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." [20]Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

One of the more important uses of Hades is found in Matthew 16:18. This saying of Jesus is found in the context of a dialogue between the disciples and Jesus concerning his messianic identity (16:13-20). This incident happens at Caesarea Philippi shortly before Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem. The pericope can also be found in Mark 8:27-30 and Luke 9:18-21; but Matthew 16:17-19 with its reference to Hades has no parallel in the other two Synoptics.

(a) The Central Focus of the Pericope

Though several exegetical questions arise and are discussed in many commentaries, our purpose here is rather specific: to determine the function and meaning of Hades. I will therefore limit my analysis to three issues, namely: (a) the central theme of this passage; (b) the precise identity of the rock on which the church will be built; and (c) the function of Hades in relation to (a) and (b).

Discussions of the pericope usually centre on the words of Jesus to Peter concerning the founding of the church.[65] While this is understandable, there is a danger of missing the primary focus of the pericope. This focus is, without doubt, the messianic identity of Jesus. In Mark, after a short narrative introduction, the pericope begins with the question: "Who do people say I am?" (Mark 8:27). After a brief discussion in which Peter, possibly expressing the conviction of the rest,[66] confesses him to be the Christ, the pericope closes with an admonition to the disciples "not to tell anyone about him" (8:30). In Luke we see a similar pattern with slight differences in wording (Luke 9:18-20).

Matthew's account also focuses on the messianic identity of Jesus[67] with an even greater emphasis than Mark. Thus, in place of Mark's "I am" in the question, Matthew has substituted the title Son of Man – "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"[68] Davies and Allison suggested that Matthew's

[65] Davies and Allison, 2:617-25; R.H. Gundry, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 329-30.

[66] That Peter is expressing a conviction shared by the other disciples is suggested by the form the discussion takes: Jesus asks *them* (disciples), Peter replies, then Jesus admonishes *them* rather than Peter, not to say anything about his identity.

[67] J.C. Fenton, *The Gospel of Matthew* (London: Penguin, 1976), 264-69.

[68] The phrase "Son of Man" has been discussed at length and opinions are divided concerning its meaning; for an overview see, e.g., I.H. Marshall, "Son of Man," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (ed. J.B. Green and S. McKnight; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 67-87. G. Vermes, "The Present State of the Son of Man Debate," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 29 (1978): 123-34, has argued that in all sayings of Jesus, the phrase is a substitute for "I." Perhaps a majority of commentators considers it a messianic title: see, e.g., Marshall, "Son of Man," 775-81; Davies and Allison, 2:617. The phrase "son of man" occurs 93 times in Ezekiel as a reference to the prophet and 14 times in poetic writings also to refer to human beings. In Dan 7:13 it occurs not as a title, but as a description ("one like a Son of Man") of a heavenly being. He receives royal power, dominion and glory. His relation to Israel is analogous to that of Michael to his "people"

wording aims to bring together three messianic titles of Jesus – Messiah, Son of Man, and Son of God.[69]

When Jesus asks the disciples who they think he is, in Mark Peter replies, "You are the Christ," while in Luke the reply is, "the Christ of God." Matthew has the fullest and most emphatic account of the answer: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."[70]

At the pericope's conclusion where Jesus admonishes the disciples to keep silent about what has been said, Matthew again gives us a fuller and more Messiah centered account. Thus, in Mark Jesus tells the disciples "not to tell anyone about him," (Mark 8:30), while in Luke he says that they should not tell anyone (Luke 9:21). In Matthew, however, Jesus admonishes the disciples not to tell anyone *that he is the Christ* (Matt 16:20).

Finally, it is worth noting the importance of this pericope in the unfolding of Jesus' identity. All three synopticists have already stated their conviction that Jesus is the Messiah.[71] Yet, the incident in Caesarea Philippi is the first instance that followers of Jesus acknowledge this identity. In this respect, Caesarea Philippi marks a turning point in the relationship between Jesus and the disciples. Jesus can now tell them boldly of his coming death and resurrection. This is especially so in Matthew; 16:21 begins with the phrase, "from that time …" indicating a change in circumstances.

We conclude that the central focus of all three Synoptic accounts, especially of Matthew, is the Messianic identity of Jesus. This will become important when we discuss Hades below.

(Dan 12:1). In the NT it occurs solely on the lips of Jesus as a self-designation, and always with the definite article. He, like the heavenly figure of Dan 7:13, is likewise a royal figure (Matt 21:4, 9) who receives dominion and glory (Matt 24:30; 26:64; cf. Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 22:69). These last references are direct allusions to Dan 7:13, which suggests that for the Synoptic writers, Jesus is the heavenly figure of Dan 7:13. Marshall, "Son of Man," 776, notes that on two occasions when Jesus is identified by others as the Messiah, he replies with a Son of Man saying (Mark 8:29-31; 14:61-2). The phrase is nowhere in the gospels or the rest of the NT used of others. The above suggest that at least for the Synoptic evangelists, the Son of Man was a title closely related to Jesus' messianic identity.

[69] Davies and Allison, 2:617.

[70] Gundry, *Matthew*, 330, notes that the title "Son of God" characterizes Matthew's Christology, and anticipates the statement that Peter has received divine revelation, because it is only through revelation that Jesus can be recognized as such (Matt 11:25-27).

[71] Matt 1:1, 16-18; 2:4; 11:2; Mark 1:1; Luke 2:11, 26; 3:15-16; 4:41.

(b) The Rock on Which the Church Will be Built

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus predicts that he will build his church upon a rock. This saying has since become an issue of great controversy about who the rock is. Is it Peter who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah? Or is it Jesus?

Davies and Allison opt for Peter.[72] They suggest that behind this saying lies the influence of Isaiah 51:1-2 which talks about Abraham being a rock from which Israel had been hewn. Peter becomes the father of a new Israel, the Christian Church, in the same way that Abraham was the father of the old Israel. They furthermore suggest that the name change from Simon Bar Jonah to Peter echoes the change of Abraham and Sarah's names that accompanied the promise that Abraham would become the father of a great nation.

This interpretation has substantial weaknesses. First, there is no direct evidence that Isaiah 51:1-2 played any role in early Christian ecclesiology. Second, it is not certain that the rock of Isaiah 51:1-2 is Abraham. Instead, Isaiah asks Israel to look to the Lord who will comfort Zion. In light of the many Isaianic references to God as the Rock of Israel[73] it seems likely that the rock of Isaiah 51:1-2 is the Lord rather than Abraham. Third, nowhere else in the NT is Peter the foundation of the Church. In Galatians 2:9 Peter is called a "pillar," but appears on an equal footing with James and John with James mentioned first. And there is a considerable difference between a pillar and the foundation stone.[74]

Fourth, the association of Peter with the rock poses questions concerning the syntax of Matthew 16:17-19. The name πέτρος, Peter, is masculine whereas the noun πέτρα, rock, on which the Church would be

[72] Davies and Allison, 2:625. Fenton, 265-9, takes a similar view and cites Matt 10:2; 14:28-32; 15:15; 17:24-27; 18:21, as well as Luke 22:31-34 and John 21:15-22. However, none of these texts establishes a primacy for Peter to the point of making him the foundation of the church.

[73] E.g., Isa 8:14; 17:10; 26:4; 30:29; 44:8.

[74] C.K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Black, 1968), 87-88, has in turn suggested that 1 Cor 3:11 could imply Peter was thought to be the foundation of the Church prompting Paul to refute the claim. Barrett's suggestion goes beyond exegesis to speculation. The problem in Corinth was not excessive attention to Peter, but simple factionalism (1 Cor 1:11-15). While there can be little doubt that Peter played a prominent role in the early Church, other individuals were equally prominent (Acts 15:13; Gal 2:12).

built, feminine.[75] The distinction concerns not only gender but meaning; while πέτρος means "stone," πέτρα signifies a "rock" or "boulder."[76]

Moreover, five times Jesus addresses Peter in the second person: "blessed are you," "you are Peter," "I will give you the keys," "whatever you bind," and "whatever you loose." By contrast, the saying concerning the rock is in third person: "on this rock…" If the rock is Peter, then we have person disagreement in the syntax.

Taking into account the above objections, the association of Peter with the foundation rock of the Church cannot be substantiated exegetically. Rather, the association of the rock with Jesus seems more plausible. Several elements point in this direction.

A number of texts refer to God as a Rock. In Isaiah 17:10 God is the Rock of the strength of Israel. In Isaiah 44:8 he is the Rock of the security of Israel. In Isaiah 28:16 God promises to establish Zion on a firm rock foundation.[77] More importantly, such texts were freely used in the early Christian church as references to Jesus.[78] Matthew 21:42 points to Jesus as a rock in fulfilment of OT prophecy;[79] and Jesus is the rock on which wise men build their homes in Matthew 7:24-27.

The association of Jesus with the rock better explains the choice of the third person in the phrase "on this rock." In 16:13 instead of Mark and Luke's first person "who do people say I am?", Matthew has the question in the third person, "who do people say the Son of Man is?" However, in 16:15 he parallels Mark and Luke in the first person: "who do you say I am." Thus, while in Matthew the second person is consistently used when Jesus addresses Peter, both the first and the third person are used when Jesus refers to himself. The selection of the third person in the rock saying serves an exegetical function: in the first question Jesus presents himself in

[75] D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (London: Oliphants, 1972), 55, cautions that one should not emphasize this difference too much since in the Aramaic which Jesus spoke there is no gender difference. While this caution is valid, the fact remains that in the Greek form of the saying as it appears in the gospel there is a gender difference that should not be considered incidental.

[76] BDAG, s.v.

[77] In the Isaiah targum, this text was understood to refer to a person rather than a literal stone; to an idealised king (the Messiah?) who would rule over Jerusalem.

[78] E.g., Rom 9:23, 33, 1 Cor 10:3.

[79] Cf. Ps 118:22; Luke 20:17; Isa 28:16; Acts 4:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6-7.

the third person as a messianic figure (Son of Man), but the people have failed to recognise this and instead regard him simply as a prophet; in the second question Jesus uses the first person "I" and thus turns attention to his present, plain appearance. Yet, Peter sees beyond this appearance and recognises the messianic majesty in his teacher. In this respect, the beatitude that Jesus pronounces on Peter (16:17) is fully deserved. The people have seen a Son of Man but recognise only a prophet; Peter sees a humble Jesus but recognises a Messiah.

This juxtaposition becomes the defining point and chief characteristic of the ones who will compose the Church. The Church is not built on Jesus as a simple human being, but on Jesus as the anointed of God. Those who recognise in him the anointed of God have found the true foundation and become building stones, like Peter, in this spiritual temple. Hence the different words πέτρα and πέτρος reflect the relationship of the human rocks that are placed on the anointed rock, the true foundation. In this respect, "rock" becomes a further messianic title for Jesus.

(c) The Gates of Hades

The mention of the gates of Hades comes in 16:18. In order to understand this saying, two questions need to be addressed. First, there are two feminine nouns in 16:18, πέτρα and ἐκκλησία, rock and church. Does the phrase "will not overcome it [ESV "prevail *against it*"] refer to the rock or to the church? Second, is the expression "gates of Hades" a simple reference to death, or does it carry broader connotations?

Central to the first question are three words, which stand in the following sequence: the two nouns πέτρα and ἐκκλησία and the pronoun αὐτῆς (rock, church, it). The proximity of the pronoun to the second noun could suggest that it is a reference to it, the gates of Hades shall not prevail against the church.[80] This, however, is not necessarily so. The history of interpretation of this text shows varied approaches.[81] Grammatically both options are plausible. For the moment, I will tentatively suggest that αὐτῆς refers to the rock (Jesus) on the grounds that Jesus the Messiah is the

[80] Fenton, 269.

[81] J.P. Lewis, "'The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail Against it' (Matthew 16:18): A Study of the History of Interpretation," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38 (1995): 354 (349-67).

epicentre of this pericope, and that it can apply to the Church only in a secondary sense. I will return to this shortly.

The meaning of the phrase "gates of Hades" has also drawn conflicting interpretations. Allen, for example argues that the phrase means that the organised powers of evil would not prevail against the organised society representing the teachings of Jesus.[82] Davies and Allison opt to see a conflict between demonic forces and the Church in which the latter emerges triumphant.[83] Sullivan, rather surprisingly, envisions the Church attacking Hades and rescuing its inhabitants.[84]

There is, however, considerable evidence that "gates of Hades" simply refers to death. While this phrase does not appear elsewhere in the NT, it is fairly common in the LXX and somewhat less so in the early Jewish literature. In these it is always a reference to death.[85]

If we bring together the above considerations, then the saying becomes a reference to the death and resurrection of Jesus – the gates of Hades will not prevail against Jesus the rock; though the Messiah will die, he will not remain in the tomb but will rise a victor. The verb κατισχύω translated as "prevail" (ESV) adds an interesting insight. The verb is a compound word of the preposition κατά, "against," but which can also carry the idea of "keeping under."[86] The second element, ἰσχύω, means to "be strong against". The two together mean "prevail;" but may also convey the idea of "prevail by keeping under" thus adding credence that the saying is a reference to the resurrection of Jesus:[87] Hades, or the tomb, will not be able to keep Jesus dead "in the ground."

Bringing the discussion together, Matthew 16:13-20 is all about the Messianic identity of Jesus and his triumph over death. The "gates of

[82] Allen, 176. Cf. Rev 6:8; 9:1-6; 20:3, 7-8, 1QH 13. See also, H. Hommel, "Die Tore des Hades," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 80 (1989): 124-25, who maintains that the church will eventually prove stronger than the gates of Hades.

[83] Davies and Allison, 2:632.

[84] L.E. Sullivan, "The Gates of Hell," *Theological Studies* 10 (1949): 62-64.

[85] Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 132. Cf. Isa 38:10; Pss 9:13; 107:18; Job 38:17; compare with Wis 16:3; 3 Macc 5:51.

[86] LSJ, s.v., renders it as "downwards," indicating motion from above.

[87] Fenton, 269, correctly evaluates the meaning of the "gates of Hades" in relation to resurrection, but feels that the words apply to the members of the church who share in the resurrection of Jesus.

Hades" are a reference to death. They would not be able to keep Jesus dead in his tomb. Rather, he would rise a victor, as he did. It is on him, the Rock, that the church would be built, and little stones, like Peter, who acknowledge the messiahship of Jesus becoming building blocks in the establishment of the church, God's spiritual temple on earth.

3. Luke 16:19-31 – The Rich Man and Lazarus

We have examined a broad scope of literature. We noticed that throughout the OT and NT, Hades refers to death and the physical grave[88] without any hint of continued existence after death. We noticed that this picture also holds true to a large extent in non-Biblical Jewish writings, but with some exceptions.

We now come to the last Hades text, contained in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus[89] (henceforth, the parable), whose depiction of Hades is at complete odds with everything biblical examined so far. Hades is not the grave, but a place where real persons with full bodily functions converse and experience bodily pleasure and pain. Though often cited as support, the parable does not fit the immortality of the soul outlook either. It depicts not immortal souls floating in heaven or hell but actual persons with full physical capacities, tongue, fingers, and the ability to see, hear, speak, and feel heat and cold.

The parable is unique with no direct or even remote relation to other bible stories or depictions of Hades. Bock has called it the "most complex"

[88] Cf. E.E. Ellis, "The New Testament Teaching on Hell," in *Eschatology in Bible and Theology* (ed. K.E. Brower and M.W. Elliott; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 199 (199-220).

[89] The absence of features that identify this literary unit as a parable, and the use of a proper name for the poor man (unique in the parables), have led to speculation as to whether this passage does indeed constitute a parable. Some consider this not a parable but a true life story. However, the details of this parable as discussed in this study, and its depiction of the afterlife do not reflect the biblical view of death. The unit begins with the phrase "There was a certain rich man," similar to the introductions to three other Lukan parables (Luke 14:16-24, 15:11-31 and 16:1-8). On the other hand, vv. 19-31 contain strong similarities with a number of folktales, as will be discussed below. We may therefore call it a parable modelled on popular folktales. L. Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers*, Vol. 1 (Washington: Review and Herald, 1966), 239, interestingly, calls it a "parabolic fable."

of Jesus' stories.[90] It is for such reasons that scholars of different outlooks advise that it should *not* be viewed as a road map of the afterlife.[91]

In this short study I will argue that Jesus borrows a genre of story prevalent throughout the ancient Mediterranean world, and deconstructs it in such a way so as to discredit the genre. The depiction of Hades is important not for what it appears to depict, but for what it aims to negate.

(a) Jesus Borrows: The Non-biblical Background

Scholars recognize that there is no direct parallel to this parable in the Bible. They also recognize that similar stories were prevalent throughout the Mediterranean. The closest non-biblical parallels are what we call stories of reversal of fortune, whereby at death the rich suffer and the poor receive rich rewards.

A number of such ancient tales are extant. The best known is an Egyptian folktale.[92] Setme and his son come across two funerals, one of a rich man with splendid honours, the other of a poor man who is cast into a common necropolis. Setme envies the funeral of the rich man. His son, who is the reincarnated sage, knows better. He takes his father on a tour of the underworld where they see the rich man in torment, while the poor man stands justified by the side of the judge of humankind.

A similar Jewish tale is the Bar Mayan tale[93] about a sinful rich tax collector who dies and receives a splendid funeral. A poor Torah scholar also dies, but receives a most humble burial. This leads an onlooker to question the justice of God. In reply, God reveals that the fate of the two after death is reversed. Bar Mayan had done one good deed in his life, and receives his reward in his splendid funeral. The poor scholar had done one bad deed, atoned through his poor burial. The tax collector can now face the torments of hell without respite and the poor scholar the joys of heaven without hindrance.

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[90] D. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1986), 1377.

[91] E.g., see the cautions of J.B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 607-608; and W. Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1869), 1038.

[92] The tale was first pointed out by H. Gressman, *Vom reichen Mann und armen Lazarus: Eine literargeschichtliche Studie* (Berlin: Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1918). The story dates from a 1st century AD manuscript, but is probably much older.

[93] *j.Hag*. 2.77.

The Greek philosopher Lucian (ca. AD 120-180) tells a similar tale of three men who die and are taken to Hades—the rich tyrant Megapenthes, the poor shoemaker Mycilus, and a philosopher.[94] In the judgment, the philosopher and Mycilus are found spotless and are sent to the blessed isles, while Megapenthes, who is found guilty, is punished accordingly.

Beyond such tales that closely parallel our parable, the motif of communication between the dead and the living, discussed in the parable, is also common. A few examples will suffice. Plato (428-348 BC) tells the story of Er the Pamphylian,[95] who is killed in battle but revives several days later. While "dead" Er visits Hades and sees a judgement in which the good go to heaven and the wicked are punished. He is specifically told to return and report what he has seen, presumably to warn the living. Plutarch (AD 46-120) tells a similar story about Thespesius, and Clearchus of Soli about Cleonymus.[96]

Lucian tells another tale about Cleomenes who falls ill, but his time has not yet come. In a case of mistaken identity, he is brought to Hades, only to be informed that his neighbour Demylus should have been brought instead. Cleomenes is, therefore, sent back and within a few days Demylus dies.

Such tales, though from a pagan background, found their way into Jewish and Christian tradition. The Talmud (*b. Berak*. 18b) tells an apocryphal story of Samuel the prophet to whom some orphans entrust a substantial amount of money which he deposits with his father Abba. Abba hides the money, but dies before informing Samuel. Desperate to retrieve the entrusted money, Samuel visits Abba in the underworld, learns the location of the hidden money, restores it to the orphans, and all is well.

A Christian example is the story of Jannes and Jambres (1st-2nd century AD), about two magician brothers who, according to tradition, opposed Moses in Pharaoh's court.[97] Jannes dies. Jambres calls his spirit up from the

[94] R. Hock, "Lazarus and Micyllus: Greco-Roman Backgrounds to Luke 16:19–31," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (1987): 455 (447-63).

[95] Plato, *Resp.* 10.614B-621B.

[96] R. Bauckham, "The Rich Man and Lazarus: The Parable and the Parallels," *New Testament Studies* 37 (1991): 238 (225-46).

[97] This tale is told in the rather late Christian document, *The Apocryphon of Jannes and Jambres.* Genesis neither numbers nor names the magicians who opposed Moses, nor does it state they were brothers. Jewish tradition named them as Jannes and Jambres, a tradition known in 2 Tim 3:8.

underworld through necromancy and Jannes informs him of his sufferings and urges Jambres to repent.

In the tales of reversal of fortune at death we have a parallel to the reversed fortunes of the rich man and Lazarus, and in the tales of communication with the dead, we have a parallel to the rich man's request that Lazarus inform the five living brothers. The non-biblical context of the parable is fairly evident, and according to Hock, such stories were common.[98]

Such tales had three common elements. First, contrary to the Bible which declares that the dead "know nothing" (Eccl 9:5), such tales presuppose that the dead know more than the living and their witness can lead to repentance. Second, a message from the dead could come in a variety of ways, like bodily or disembodied visits, ghosts, or necromancy. Bodily resurrection is never involved because in the pagan cultures where such tales originally developed there was no teaching of bodily resurrection (Acts 17:32). Third, tales of revelations from the dead always include an eyewitness, usually named, usually well known, perhaps in an effort to give such tales credibility.

With this background in mind we can now turn our attention to the parable. Bauckham has suggested that it is often at the point where a story departs from the expected that its importance lies.[99] We will compare the parable with such tales and point out the areas where it departs from the expected.

(b) The Parable's First Part – Deconstruct to Discredit

The parable has two parts: (a) the rich man's request for relief; (b) his request that Lazarus be sent to the five living brothers. The first part of the parable begins in a similar way to other such tales: a rich and a poor man die and at death their fortunes are reversed. Despite this conventional beginning, a number of peculiarities immediately begin to assault the reader.

First, Lazarus, while alive, tried to "eat" crumbs falling off the rich man's table (Luke 16:21).[100] The Greek χορτάζω does not mean "eat," but

[98] Hock, 455-63.
[99] Bauckham, "Rich Man," 328.
[100] Bible references are from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

"being filled," "satisfied,"[101] filled with food to the full. Can someone really be filled and satisfied with crumbs falling off a table?

Second, when Lazarus dies he is taken to "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22 RSV). Abraham's bosom appears nowhere else. Most assume it is a byword for heaven.[102] However, in the parable it appears as a literal description: the rich man looks up and sees "Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom" (Luke 16:23 RSV). Do the righteous dead sit on Abraham's bosom? How many can sit there?

Third, when the rich man sees Abraham in the distance he "called/cried out" (NIV/NKJ) to him (Luke 16:24). The Greek is φωνέω. It means, "to call out,"[103] and carries no drama. A person in severe torment, like the rich man, would have "shrieked," "cried out" (Greek κράζω), or at least called out "with a very loud and pain-filled voice."[104] But the rich man does not. He raises his voice just enough to be heard, but perhaps not too loud to disturb.

Fourth, the rich man in Hades experiences torment (KJV/NKJ), anguish (ESV/RSV), or agony (NIV) (Luke 16:24). The Greek ὀδυνάομαι and the cognate ὀδύνη are used four other times in the NT[105] and refer to emotional anguish, grief, sorrow.[106] So the rich man is in literal flames, but experiences emotional anguish, which he tries to quell with literal water!

Fifth, to quell his pain, the rich man requests that Lazarus dip "the tip of his finger" (Luke 16:24) in water and bring it over. He could have asked for a cup of water; or at least that Lazarus scoop some water. The tip of the finger can only carry a minuscule amount of water which would surely evaporate in the fires of torment. Fitzmyer sees a hyperbole to highlight the

[101] BDAG, s.v.
[102] Cf. the translation, "Abraham's side" (e.g., ESV and NIV).
[103] BDAG, s.v.; LSJ, s.v.
[104] LSJ, s.v.
[105] Luke 2:48; Acts 20:38; Rom 9:2; 1 Tim 6:10.
[106] Cf. Gen 44:31; Exod 3:7; Deut 26:14; Prov 29:21; Hag 2:14; Zech 9:5; 12:10; Isa 21:10; 40:29; 53:4; Lam 1:13. See also Gen 35:18 where though Rachel's son is born in the physical pain of birth, she names him Ben-Oni, υἱὸς ὀδύνης, "son of sorrow," highlighting perhaps her emotional anguish over her physical pain.

severity of the torments.[107] Hardly. The description sounds more ridiculous than scary.

Sixth, the rich man expects that miniscule amount of water will "cool" his tongue (Luke 16:24). The Greek is καταψύχω,[108] a compound word made up of the verb ψύχω "to make cold" and the prefixed preposition κατά which functions to make something more emphatic.[109] To illustrate, in Modern Greek καταψύχω refers to the freezer of the fridge which freezes the food. The rich man, therefore, expects the minuscule amount of water, carried on the tip of Lazarus' finger over the tormenting fires to freeze his tongue and quell his emotional anguish!

I would like to propose that the use of such awkward, exaggerated, even ridiculous imagery is intended to undermine the credibility of the genre it is modelled on, the pool of tales of supposed interactions with the underworld, some of which were outlined above. Such use of exaggeration is not uncommon in the Bible.[110]

(c) The Parable's Second Part – Deconstruct to Reinforce the Biblical Outlook

In contrast to the first part of the parable, the second is solemn, and poignant. We noted that all tales from the non-biblical background shared three common characteristics. They: (a) can enlighten the living; (b) do not include resurrection; and (c) include eyewitnesses. Jesus deconstructs all three points.

First, when the rich man requests that Lazarus be sent to the five living brothers to warn them, he is confident this will be so: "I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment" (Luke 16:27-28).

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[107] J. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X–XXIV* (The Anchor Bible 28b; Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), 1133.

[108] LSJ, s.v. Liddell and Scott define it as "cool," "chill," "refresh," while they render the related adjective κατάψυχρος as "very cold."

[109] See e.g. S.E. Porter, J.T. Reed, and M.B. O'Donnell, *Fundamentals of NT Greek* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 132-33.

[110] E.g., 2 Sam 16:20; 1 Kgs 18:27; 22:13-16; Isa 46:6-7; Jer 10:5; 12:5; Matt 23:24; Mark 7:25-30; John 1:45-46; 2 Cor 12:13; Gal 5:12.

The reply shocks him: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them listen to them" (Luke 16:29). Evidently the witness of Scripture ("Moses and the prophets") is more than adequate.

The rich man replies, "No" (Luke 16:30). The Greek, οὐχί, is emphatic, meaning "NO!" The rich man who has accepted without complaint his miserable fate as well as Abraham's refusal to send relief, cannot accept that a revelation from the dead is immaterial to repentance, and rebels. His incredulity probably reflects the incredulity of the masses, who similarly believed in the efficacy of revelations from the dead.

To drive the point home, Jesus repeats the statement with more emphasis: "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31). Supposed revelations from the dead cannot bring repentance; only Scripture can.

From an inter-biblical perspective, there is a connection here with the resurrection of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha. The Pharisees had rejected the testimony of Scripture about Jesus as well as the Biblical preaching and teaching of Jesus. Having rejected these, when Lazarus was raised from the dead, they rejected the manifested power of Jesus and rather than believe sought to kill Lazarus too (John 12:10).

Second, the parable juxtaposes two modes of return from the dead. In 16:27 the rich man asks Abraham to "send" Lazarus to his living brothers and in 16:30 that Lazarus "goes." Neither expression indicates resurrection. Any of the modes of communication between the living and the dead prevalent in the Mediterranean worldviews and discussed in the section on the non-biblical background was probably fine.

To the rich man's open-ended request, Abraham affirms that the only way a person can return from the dead is through bodily resurrection: "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

Third, and perhaps most important, is the eyewitness. In the parable, apart from Abraham, Lazarus is mentioned. This is the only parable which names characters. "Lazarus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Eliezer. Eliezer was Abraham's most trusted and only named servant (Gen 15:2). In non-biblical Jewish cosmology, Abraham was the highest human in heaven. So if heaven were to send a message from the dead to humanity, the best candidate would be Abraham's most trusted servant, Eliezer or

Lazarus.[111] Of course, the parable does not state that Lazarus is Abraham's servant Eliezer. But it is fairly obvious that in the audience's mind some connection between the two would be made. As such, Eliezer/Lazarus would be the ideal candidate to return from the dead.

So the parable creates the ideal eyewitness from the dead, but refuses to send him. Not because God cannot send someone back from the dead through resurrection; neither because God does not want to help the five brothers in need of repentance; but because it is not necessary or useful: "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31). And God will not do that which is unnecessary; neither has he done so in the past, nor will he do so in the future. With one bold statement Jesus dismisses all supposed revelations from the dead.

In essence, through the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Jesus repeats the prohibition of Deuteronomy 18:10-12 that there should be no interaction whatsoever with anyone who claims to communicate with the dead, because such supposed communications do not come from God.

CONCLUSION

This study has argued that Hades as used in both the OT and the NT (the main focus of our attention) is a synonym for the grave. It refers to the physical reality of death. In the OT we saw that it translates Sheol as well as other associated words in connection with the physical reality of death. It is whole persons that die, not bodies versus spirits or souls. At no place is Hades a place for supposed immaterial souls. We saw repeated references to the horizontal position of the body in the tomb, and repeated affirmations that the dead cannot communicate either with God or anyone else. Biblical Hades depicts death as a state of non-consciousness. After death a person remains in the physical grave awaiting the resurrection. We also saw a very high level of consistency.

The only exception is Luke 16:23 which appears to depict continuing human existence in full bodily form after death in Hades. But even this text, when understood in context, aims to negate what it appears to endorse

[111] V. Tanghe, "Abraham, son fils et son envoye (Luc 16,19–31)," *Revue Biblique* 91 (1984): 557-77, considers Lazarus to be Abraham's envoy, since Lazarus is the Greek version of the Hebrew Eliezer, Abraham's servant (Gen 15:2; cf. 24:2).

by decrying the popular ancient genre of tales whereby the living could communicate with the dead. At no point in the biblical material is Hades a place for spirits. Death is a physical reality which causes the cessation of the totality of a person. No existence is envisaged apart from the body.

What are the implications of seeing death as the complete cessation of life? They are immense. Human cultures seem fascinated by the idea that death is not really death; that some aspect of human existence, a soul or spirit, continues to exist after a person dies. We noted how in the non-biblical Jewish writings, while the biblical view predominates, there already was a tendency, under Greek influence, to move towards continued existence after death. Christianity followed a similar path, whereby the NT view of death as the complete cessation of life was replaced gradually by a view that death is a transition from a bodily into a non-bodily form of existence. However, the clear belief in a resurrection at the Parousia of Jesus has helped Christians keep in focus the reality that the real hope of the believer is at the Parousia.

However, in areas which Christianity entered in relatively recent times and encountered animism, Christianity has found it hard to eliminate the very strong pre-Christian beliefs in continued existence after death and efforts to communicate with spirits. Christianity and a substratum of animism seem to operate side by side in uneasy co-existence.

This seems to be the case in Melanesia, the traditional religions of which are saturated with belief in spirits.[112] Spirits can be ancient divinities or dead ancestors.[113] They inhabit space in very close proximity to humans and can be contacted through rites, shamans, sacred dances, and sorcery, among other things.[114] They are believed to interact with humans, can bring wealth or poverty,[115] and play a role in the smallest aspects of life.[116] While

[112] E.g., T. Swain and G. Tromph, *The Religions of Oceania* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 117-18.

[113] E.g., P.L. Newman, "Supernaturalism and Ritual Among the Gururumba" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1962), 65-82; see also N. Bartle, *Death, Witchcraft and the Spirit World in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea* (Point 29; Goroka: Melanesian Institute, 2005).

[114] Swain and Tromph, *Religions of Oceania*, 142.

[115] J. Thiele, "Papua New Guinea's Distinctive Culture: Advice for Investors," *Language & Linguistics in Melanesia* 31 (2013): 82-89.

the Bible knows of spirits in the form of good and fallen angels (e.g., Heb 1:14), the former always appear to humans in physical form, and the latter are to be shunned. Against an animist backdrop, the biblical outlook on Hades and death, as described above, calls on Christians to abstain from any communication with the supposed world of the dead (cf. Lev 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut 18:1-14; 1 Chr 10:13-14; 2 Chr 33:6; Isa 8:19; 1 Tim 4:1), since the dead are, indeed, dead.

[116] G.J. Humble, "Sorcery and Animism in a South Pacific Melanesian Context," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 9 (2013): 2 (1-19); cf. E. Mantovani, *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions* (Point 6; Goroka: Melanesian Institute, 1984).

WHAT ABOUT THE *WANTOK* SYSTEM?

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Abstract
The terms "*wantok*" and "*wantok* system" elicit a wide range of feelings, from heartfelt thankfulness for close relationships to near despair when the *wantok* system intervenes to disrupt transactions in modern society. The terms are ubiquitous in common speech in Melanesia, but surprisingly little used in academic literature, unless dismissively. From the perspective of Aristotelian political philosophy, the affection felt between *wantoks* is the binding glue of the pre-political communities to which the people of single language groups belong. It is not to be dismissed. The challenge is to unite these communities into a single political community or country in a way that both acknowledges the value of the pre-existing relationships and enables a much broader range of relationships with different rules to flourish. There are signs that this is beginning to happen, and suggestions are made about how it could be fostered. Aristotelian political philosophy offers ways of understanding and dealing with these issues that are not available in modern political theory.

Keywords
Wantok, *wantok* system, kinship, reciprocity, respect, political community, modern state, Aristotle, *kastom*, change, human rights, virtue

INTRODUCTION

The terms "*wantok*" and "*wantok* system" occur surprisingly infrequently in the academic literature. When they do occur, they are often used in parentheses and with reference to difficulties experienced in Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, such as failures of development projects or corruption in government. In common speech, however, the terms are ubiquitous and display a wide range of meanings and elicit a wide range of feelings. A *wantok*, literally "one talk" in *Tok Pisin*, the most widely spoken official language of PNG, is the speaker of a common first or indigenous language and so is a relative, friend, or neighbour in a manner that encompasses communal culture and kinship.

The *wantok* system is a network of relationships and obligations which we will explore shortly. A question frequently asked in response to discussions about political or economic development in PNG or Melanesia generally is: "What about the *wantok* system?" This article will explore the associated meanings and feelings with a view to gaining a more nuanced understanding of the *wantok* system, its place in Melanesian life, its value, the problems it causes, and how we might answer the question, what about the *wantok* system?

This article will work from an Aristotelian perspective and illustrate how the *wantok* system would be viewed from within that context. The writer has argued elsewhere that an Aristotelian political philosophy is more sympathetic to the cultures and needs of Pacific island peoples than that of the early modern philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and G.W.F. Hegel.[1] In particular, Aristotelian philosophy acknowledges pre-political communities such as families, villages, and clans as the foundation of human society, rather than beginning, as early modern philosophy does, with an imagined solitary individual. Further it proposes a political community built on affection rather than on the fear that forms the basis of the modern state through its control of the instruments of force. Aristotle also envisages a political community that can function well without the massive economic engines of modern Western states.

In his *Politics*, Aristotle examines the formal possibilities of human association beyond family and clan, that is, the possible ways in which a political community might constitute itself. He acknowledges that it is not strictly necessary to form these larger communities. They are founded "not only for the sake of living but rather primarily for the sake of living well."[2] While it is natural for human beings to move in this way, it does not happen by nature. Human beings must use their reason to establish the best ways to organise themselves. The best is not the same everywhere but is defined by the pre-political communities out of which the political community or

[1] See A. Murray, *Thinking about Political Things: An Aristotelian Approach to Pacific Life* (Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2016). In this book I lay out an understanding of Aristotle's political thought in a manner available to non-philosophers and also argue against some of the modern presuppositions. The book also includes four essays on aspects of life in Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia. This article is based on the first essay.

[2] Aristotle, *Politics* III, 9 (1280131), in *The Politics*, trans. C. Lord (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), 98.

country springs and by the material conditions in which they live – factors such as the character of the people, their current arrangements, culture, geography, history, and contact with other peoples. It is from this perspective that we will examine the *wantok* system.

WANTOK IN POPULAR DISCOURSE

One way to explore popular perceptions is through the press and here we will survey some of the uses of *wantok* in the Papua New Guinea newspaper, the *Post-Courier*. It is used with warmth of feeling: "I was privileged to spend the night with my good *wantok* … and his wife at their house" (3 December 2004). Pride is also expressed: "PNG's *wantok* system is one of the most vibrant customary social support systems operating worldwide" (8 April 2008). Particularly telling are the expanded uses of the term. It enters into the names of sporting teams such as the Mendi *Wantok* Off-Cuts (27 March 2012) and of businesses such as Highlands *Wantok* Supermarket (5 March 2013). Commercial interests attempt to package their products in a friendly manner: *wantok moni* is a way of transferring money using a mobile phone (6 June 2013), and "*wantok* fares" are offered by Air Niugini (5 February 2007).

There is also ambivalence, as was expressed in an article on 5 June 2012:

> Papua New Guinea's *wantok* system can be a blessing and a curse. And this is where the problem lies. Many critics and detractors of the *wantok* system argue that it is the biggest obstacle to development, change and progress in Papua New Guinea and is probably one of the underlying reasons for corruption that is eating away at the heart of our society today. This may be true, but one thing is certain. The *wantok* system that we have today has been tried and tested down the centuries and is the foundation on which more than 800 unique cultures and more than one thousand tribes stand.

The writer is clearly torn between adherence to a cultural system that is and has been for so long fundamental to the lives of so many people, and the difficulties that it causes in a time of change, difficulties that include disruption of attempts at development of the country as a whole. In the writer's words, it is a blessing and a curse at the deepest levels.

Complaints against the effects of the *wantok* system are frequent. Many equate it with *nepotism*, which occurs when someone in authority gives a position or privileges to a clan member rather than to a more competent or deserving person. This makes it difficult, for instance, for people with otherwise good qualifications to find employment (24 June 2010) and conversely corrupts the businesses or government agencies that employ less than capable people (30 March 2006; 9 March 2010). Within organisations, bonds and reciprocal obligations between members of the organisation can also divert it from its purposes. Complaints are made about the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary's ability to discharge its constitutional duty (16 August 2005), about incapacity in the Defence Force (31 December 2012), and about "prison escapees roaming freely around the country" because of protection by their *wantoks* (7 December 2012). Problems internal to the *wantok* system are also raised: people given to gambling, knowing that their *wantoks* will support them (5 January 2012); women abused by their husbands without the protection of the law (10 July 2009); movement of people into settlements without land or work because their *wantoks* are there (28 February 2013); acceptance of inappropriate medicine from a *wantok* rather than going to a doctor (11 April 2008). At the political level, we hear that "people are not electing the best person during national elections. [They] vote for their *hausline*, *tambu* or *wantok* and this habit is alive and well" (2 November 2006).

Some writers show insight into what is happening and why the complaints arise. An economy based on money changes the way that people can reciprocate (14 January 2009) and life in urban areas among different peoples and with a cash-based economy puts the *wantok* system under stress (8 June 2012). Paul Barker put it in different terms.

> While the public demands the provision of the best staff and services, under the prevailing system of patronage leaders appoint *wantoks* and mates to key positions in exchange for support. Some politicians blame the community and custom for pressuring them, but this is a cop-out. A modern state cannot function on personal favours and obligations, but requires firm policies, procedures and standards, followed transparently. (17 July 2009)

The issue here is change and, in fact, momentous change. A system that worked well for small closed communities living in tightly defined

geographical areas is challenged when it is drawn into a developing political system that embraces many peoples and that has to deal with imported ideas, technologies, and economies.

What might be the solution? Some call for ethical standards (13 May 2013) and for appointments on merit (9 May 2013). A rule at Port Moresby General Hospital states that there is "no entertainment of the *wantok* system" (12 June 2013). One writer in the *Post-Courier* had a broader suggestion:

> The concept of *wantoks* needs to be extended, to broadly encompass the idea of Papua New Guineans being an actual united race of people. All Papua New Guineans must consider themselves part of one great *wantok* race. This is not such a hard thing to do. Whenever a Papua New Guinean sees a fellow countryman overseas they recognise and greet each other first and foremost as Papua New Guineans. They know that, in the wider world, their tribal origin matters much less than the fact that they are from the same country. They are both essentially *wantoks* regardless of what tribe either may originally come from. When the Kumuls played against the Junior Kangaroos recently in Port Moresby, there were no Engans in the crowd, there were no New Irelanders, no Taris, no Papuans nor Sepiks. There were only Papua New Guineans urging on the Papua New Guinean team. (15 November 2005)

These discussions and many like them carry a great amount of wisdom. The *wantok* system is deeply entrenched in Papua New Guinean culture and will not go away. It gives people a sense of belonging to a community and the obligation of reciprocity ensures that people are looked after. It does, however, create difficulties when it is joined to modern systems of governance and organisation. During the remainder of this article we will rely on the academic literature to examine these issues and look at possible ways forward. This is not to say that a solution to the tensions will be easy or come quickly, because the change being experienced by Melanesian peoples is enormous. Especially in the case of PNG, it is complicated by a large population of extraordinary diversity and by geographical obstacles. We should, however, appreciate the large volume of intelligent discussion that is going on at the popular level.

WHAT IS THE *WANTOK* SYSTEM?

The term *wantok* arose in colonial times, when Papua New Guinea indigenes found themselves working on plantations away from their families and traditional lands. A communal people, they sought others with whom they could relate and on whom they could rely. Where possible, these were people who spoke the same language as them, although they lived in a land of some 830 languages. Ideally, they were kin or from the same clan or tribe. The *wantok* system, therefore, has its roots both in pre-colonial kinship systems and in the increasing disruption to traditional life brought by European contact. Prior to contact, kinship groups tended to be small and geographically isolated from their neighbours. People were divided into kinsfolk and strangers.[3] Although trade was practised, groups were largely self-sufficient and depended on subsistence farming. Kinship systems varied greatly across New Guinea and the islands of Melanesia, but it was generally common to them that members were related by marriage and descent and that reciprocity and the giving of gifts were critical dimensions of these cultures. In colonial and post-colonial times, movement of peoples has meant that the range of a person's significant relationships has grown to include not just kin but also people from the same language group, from the same geographical area and, more recently, from the same religion, the same province or from the whole country.[4] The term *wantok* is what philosophers call an *analogous concept*. It begins with a core or original meaning and extends, maintaining that core meaning but also allowing difference.

The wantok system is a set of arrangements that defines who is in a particular group and that organises how the members of that group relate to one another. The relationships are personal and built on affection. Respect is a significant virtue. Reciprocity—the giving and receiving of gifts—is

[3] See H.I. Hogbin, *Kinship and Marriage in a New Guinea Village* (London: Athlone Press, 1963) 13–37. Literature abounds on kinship systems. See, for instance, R.M. Berndt, *Excess and Restraint: Social Control Among a New Guinea Mountain People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). See also A. Strathern and P.J. Stewart, *Kinship in Action: Self and Group* (New York: Prentice Hall, 2011). For a helpful article on how to negotiate kinship relationships, see R.D. Shaw, "Understanding Kinship and Social Structure," *Catalyst* 10 (1980): 92–104.

[4] See S. Dinnen, *Law and Order in a Weak State: Crime and Politics in Papua New Guinea* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 11–16.

central to the morality of the group, so that most transactions of goods are more than simply commercial. There may be calculation of value, but the exchange is more significant for the relationship it sustains. The arrangements are set in custom (*kastom*) rather than legislation and groups are generally led by a *bigman*, who has demonstrated ability in managing relationships and generosity in caring for the group and seeing to its external relationships. Solomon Islander, Gordon Leua Nanau, summarises the system in this way:

> The "*wantok* system" is a way of organising a society for subsistence living that ensures the survival of a group of people. It emphasises reciprocal networks and caring for each other's needs as and when necessary and ensures the security of members from external forces and threats.[5]

The *wantok* system, therefore, provides safe relationships so that people can, for instance, move from their village of origin to the city and be assured of accommodation, basic sustenance and company. Reciprocity ensures that those living in the city do not lose touch with their village and are able to return. Communities can function well and care for persons even under difficult circumstances, although carers do have their limits and failure to reciprocate can lead to gradual exclusion.[6] Nevertheless, at times, the obligation to reciprocate can strain the recipient's limited pool of resources.

From the Aristotelian point of view, a *wantok* group is a pre-political community. It is this rather than a political community for two important reasons. First, because life is governed by *kastom*, it does not imagine that its rules can change. In fact, *kastom* does change but only either slowly over an extended time or more quickly in response to generally external

[5] G.L. Nanau, "The *Wantok System* as a Socio-Economic and Political Network in Melanesia," *OMNES: The Journal of Multicultural Society* 2 (2011): 35 (31–51).

[6] See M. Monsell-Davis, "Urban Exchange: Safety-Net or Disincentive? *Wantoks* and Relatives in the Urban Pacific," *Canberra Anthropology* 16 (1993): 45–66. Monsell-Davis also compares the *wantok* system to the Fijian *kerekere* system. See also M. Goddard, "From Rolling Thunder to Reggae: Imagining Squatter Settlements in Papua New Guinea," *Contemporary Pacific* 13 (2001): 1–32. See also E. Gilberthorpe, "Fasu Solidarity: A Case Study of Kin Networks, Land Tenure and Oil," *American Anthropologist* 109 (2007): 1 (1–112).

threats, pressures, or opportunities. This does not mean that *wantoks* do not engage in "politics," but rather that they are not engaged in thoughtfully and constantly amending their laws and customs in search of better arrangements. Secondly, at least in its primary form, members are kin rather than people who are different. Nevertheless, Aristotle builds his political community out of existing pre-political communities and he sees the *polis* or country as bound together by affection or friendship (*philia*). In contrast, the Idea of the Modern State does away with pre-political communities so as to make the "individual" the basic unit of the political community and imagines a state bound not by friendship but by fear in the form of the coercive powers of the state itself. Security and opportunity are found in the guise of rights and a state capable of enforcing them.[7]

Even, therefore, in the formation of a large and diverse country, the *wantok* system can be seen in a positive light. At present, most of the population of PNG live in rural areas away from cities and towns and at some distance from government. The *wantok* system underpins community order and tribal governance. It ensures systems of care and of restorative justice through village courts. It is the cultural energy that holds communities together. It is not unreasonable to hope that, as PNG forms as a nation, this same energy will generate a force for socio-political ordering.[8] The extension of the term that we noted earlier need not just be a play on words. It can, rather, denote an extension of the deep communal relations that bind kinship groups to relations that bind the whole country. The political question is, how do you construct a constitution and institutions in a way that recognises the networks of relationships that are already working in the country?

WHEN DOES THE *WANTOK* SYSTEM BECOME DISRUPTIVE?

It is not surprising, on the other hand, that the *wantok* system is frequently regarded as disruptive in the face of modern development. This disruption,

[7] This is not to say that fear is absent from traditional PNG life. Hostility from neighbours and the practice of sorcery have long been present. See N. Bartle, *Death, Witchcraft and the Spirit World in the Highlands of New Guinea* (Goroka: Melanesian Institute, 2005) and F. Zocca, *Sanguma in Paradise: Sorcery, Witchcraft and Christianity in Papua New Guinea* (Goroka: Melanesian Institute, 2009).

[8] Suggested by Bal Kama in a private communication.

as we have seen, is born out of the dislocation that followed colonisation. In addition, as can be seen clearly in the case of PNG, the amount and rate of change that the people of Melanesia are undergoing is immense, and change usually disrupts people's lives. Although Britain and Germany proclaimed protectorates over East New Guinea in 1884, it was not until the 1930s, when planes flew over New Guinea, that the outside world recognised that large populations lived in the Highlands, and it was not till the 1960s that the majority of these people experienced contact with government officers (*kiaps*). If we recognise that the world as a whole has had difficulty coping with the rate of technological, social, economic and political change, the challenge to PNG is made clear. It is made more difficult not just by ethnic diversity, but by the fact that the different regions – Papua, Momase, New Guinea Islands, and the Highlands – have had different experiences along different time lines. There are, however, deeper reasons.

PNG became an independent country in 1975, Solomon Islands in 1978, and Vanuatu in 1980, which in the current world political system meant that they became sovereign states recognised by the United Nations and took on the form and structure of the modern *state*, also called the *nation-state*. The claim to be such a state implies certain assumptions. First, it assumes a *nation*, that is, a single people who are culturally and ethnically one and who recognise themselves as such so as to be able to live together peacefully. Second, it assumes an array of institutions in which officials act strictly in accord with their function and the rules surrounding it rather than in accord with personal allegiances and motives or in hope of gain. The most important of these institutions are the legislature or parliament, composed of democratically elected politicians usually belonging to ideologically formed parties; the government, composed of ministers and officials in the bureaucracy; and the judiciary, which is independent of both parliament and government and impartial towards those whom it judges. Third, it presupposes a large economy that generates financial surpluses sufficient to run the apparatus of government and to allow the government to provide a wide range of services, particularly in education, health, transport, communications, and security.

Left unchecked the *wantok* system has the potential to disrupt all of these assumptions.[9] If *wantok* groups in Melanesian nations are too strong and too singular in their commitment to their own group to the exclusion of others, how can a nation be formed?[10] At the level of state institutions, Melanesia has an unfortunate legacy from colonial times in which many view the state as a source of material goods, that is, as a kind of patron, rather than as an institution in which all participate and in which political actors work constructively for the good of the whole.[11]

Indeed, the *wantok* system has shown that it is able to subvert most institutions. Politicians are often accused of showering beer or other goods on small parts of an electorate, generally *wantoks*, in order to gain power and get access to government "slush funds." Public servants may feel pressured to give preference to their *wantoks* rather than to strictly follow law and policy. Finally, judges and magistrates are often pressured by their *wantoks*, or are perceived to favour them. PNG, in particular, has great natural resources, especially in minerals, gas, oil and timber, and these are generating increasing revenues; but there are complaints that the money is not managed properly and services are diminishing across the country, and that this can be attributed to the failure of its institutions.[12]

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[9] J. Connell, *Papua New Guinea: The Struggle for Development* (London: Routledge, 1997), covers a broad spectrum of the problems confronting development in PNG.

[10] See, for instance, A. Ploeg, "Cultural Politics among the Siassi, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-en Volkenkunde* 149 (1993): 768–80. D. Akin, "Compensation and the Melanesian State: Why the Kwaio Keep Claiming," *Contemporary Pacific* 11 (1999): 35–67, explores the rather strong resistance of the Kwaio people of Malaita in the Solomon Islands to integration into a nation or even to recognition of the national government.

[11] See L. Goldman, "'Hoo–Ha in Huli': Considerations on Commotion and Community in the Southern Highlands," in *Conflict and Resource Development in the Southern Highlands of New Guinea* (ed. N. Haley and R.J. May; Canberra: ANU E Press, 2007), 85 (69–88). See also R.J. Gordon and M.J. Meggitt, *Law and Order in the New Guinea Highlands: Encounters with the Enga* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 1985), esp. Chapter 6, "The Politics of Spoils."

[12] See S. Dinnen, "In Weakness and Strength: State, Societies and Order in Papua New Guinea," in *Weak and Strong States in Asia-Pacific Societies* (ed. P. Dauvergne; Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1998), 38–59. P. Larmour, "Corruption and Governance in the South Pacific," *State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Discussion Paper* 1997.5 (<http://ips.cap.anu.edu.au/ssgm/>, accessed 15 July 2013), gives a sensitive account of the issues around corruption and traditional practices such as gift-giving. His later paper,

A final word needs to be said about how the *wantok* system can disrupt local life. First, it can make it impossible to run a small business successfully. Any business, whether it is a shop, a piggery, or a chicken farm, needs to gather sufficient money and resources to begin, and then to protect its profits so as to replenish stock or resources that have been sold. If the *wantok* system intervenes so that those resources are taken up in the cycle of gift-giving, the business will collapse. Second, there are growing claims that the *wantok* system makes living in urban areas more difficult. Although it assists those who have recently arrived in a town and those who have experienced hardship, as cities develop people have to rely on the cash economy, and money that is easily let go is soon dissipated altogether.[13]

HOW MIGHT *KASTOM* AND MODERNITY MEET?

There is growing recognition among researchers that the modern state in its standard forms may not suit countries such as those in Melanesia. Rod Nixon puts it this way:

> How realistic is it to superimpose the structure of the modern state indiscriminately, and expect in every instance that societies will reform their social and administrative systems in accordance with the model, even

"Evaluating International Action Against Corruption in the Pacific Islands," *State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Discussion Paper* 2007.1 (<http://ips.cap.anu.edu.au/ssgm/>, accessed 15 July 2013), examines efforts to reduce corruption across the Pacific. A. Tivinarlik and C.L. Wanat, 'Leadership Styles of New Ireland High School Administrators: A Papua New Guinea Study," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 37 (2006): 1–20, study the efforts of school principals to balance modern administration and communal values. See also J. Turnbull, "Solomon Islands: Blending Traditional Power and Modern Structures in the State," *Public Administration and Development* 22 (2002): 191–201.

[13] See, for instance, M. Umerzaki and R. Ohtsuka, "Adaptive Strategies of Highlands: Origin Migrant Settlers in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea," *Human Ecology* 31 (2003): 3–25. For other experiences, see K. Barber, "The Bugiau Community at Eight-Mile: An Urban Settlement in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea," *Oceania* 73 (2003): 287–97; and B.Y. Imbun, "Mining Workers or 'Opportunist' Tribesmen? A Tribal Workforce in a Papua New Guinea Mine," *Oceania* 71 (2000): 129–49.

> when this contradicts the momentum of their own economic and cultural realities?[14]

Similarly, Sinclair Dinnen declares:

> Contrary to much of the prevailing policy discourse, international state-building is not simply a technical exercise of capacity-development, but also raises important issues of politics and legitimacy.[15]

Questions are also raised about whether people want the kind of development they are being offered.[16] The frequently asked question, however, is: "What about the *wantok* system?" We will conclude this article with three suggestions from the academic literature and a couple of common-sense observations.

The first suggestion is that Papua New Guineans, Solomon Islanders, and ni-Vanuatu continue to build linkages between one another that go beyond their own immediate groups. We saw in the quotations from the *Post-Courier* that this is happening in Papua New Guinea, and in our analysis of the term *wantok* we saw that it is used analogously, extending possibly to the whole country. The meaning of the term is extended, but it can still carry a sense of connectedness and affection. We might call this *nation-building*, and there is evidence that it is happening.[17] The *wantok* system has the potential to provide the cultural energy for this growth. Much of the change is occurring by means of smaller groups, such as regional associations, churches and sporting clubs, which develop linkages among people who previously saw themselves as very different. "These ongoing developments are part of organic processes contributing to the

[14] R. Nixon, "The Crisis of Governance in New Subsistence States," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 36 (2006): 81 (75–101).

[15] S. Dinnen, "State-Building in a Post-Colonial Society: The Case of the Solomon Islands," *Chicago Journal of International Law* 9 (2008): 52 (51–78).

[16] For a sensitive account, see M. O'Collins, "What if they Don't Want your Kind of Development? Reflections on the Southern Highlands," in *Conflict and Resource Development in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea* (ed. N. Haley and R.J. May; Canberra: ANU E Press, 2007), 135–48.

[17] See S. Feeny, M. Leach, and J. Scambary, "Measuring Attitudes to National Identity and Nation-Building in Papua New Guinea," *Political Science* 64 (2012): 121–44.

emergence of new groupings and identities beyond traditional local ones. They include a slowly developing sense of national identity."[18]

The second suggestion is that Papua New Guineans and the neighbouring Melanesian nations themselves develop and articulate properly national ethical positions. There is reason to suggest that the public ethical language of human rights does not fit well with Melanesian values and that in any case there may not be the means to enforce these rights.[19] Collaborative efforts between Melanesian scholars and various communities could "help define ethical standards, based on: ideas of what the "good life" is, how it is attained, and how it may be destroyed; how people should conduct themselves in business; how wealth should be distributed; how the family (in the extended sense) should be included in the running of business; and so on."[20] What are the qualities of character that will allow Melanesian life in its changing circumstances to flourish? It is not romanticism to suggest that Melanesians have the resources in their culture, religion, and experience to answer these questions.[21] In fact, Bernard Narakobi began articulating these ideas for PNG in the 1970s.[22]

The third suggestion is that researchers and professionals should work on culturally effective technical solutions to institutional problems. In 2005, Abraham Hauriasi and Howard Davey studied accounting in Solomon Islands.[23] They concluded that:

> Core indigenous values are increasingly threatened by the integration of the Solomon Islands into the global economy and the dominance of narrow economic values. It is important to highlight how compatible or otherwise

[18] A. Regan, "Clever People Solving Difficult Problems: Perspectives on Weakness of State and Nation in Papua New Guinea," *State Society and Governance in Melanesia Working Paper* 2005.2, <http://ips.cap.anu.edu.au/ssgm/>, accessed 15 July 2013.

[19] See O. O'Neill, "Agents of Justice," *Metaphilosophy* 32 (2001): 180–95.

[20] E. Huffer, "Governance, Corruption, and Ethics in the Pacific," *Contemporary Pacific* 17 (2005): 132 (118–40).

[21] A. Arua and D.J. Eka, "Wantok System," *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 18 (2002): 6–17, attempt to do just this.

[22] See, for instance, B. Narakobi, *The Melanesian Way* (Boroko: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies and Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1980).

[23] A. Haurisi and H. Davey, "Accounting and Culture: The Case of Solomon Islands," *Pacific Accounting Review* 21 (2009): 228–59, available at <www.emeraldinsight.com/0114-0582.htm>.

> these western values are with these indigenous values and to consider how these conflicting values could be adapted to engender positive outcomes.[24]

They drew up a series of proposals for how both accounting practices and Solomon Islands culture might adapt to achieve satisfactory outcomes.

A good deal can also be learned from common sense and from shared experience, as we saw in the excerpts from the *Post-Courier* in the first section of this article. Two points will be sufficient here. First, all people learn to live in more than one community and "system," whether they be families, clubs, workplaces or sporting teams. Each of these groups have different rules and people know what they are and are able to act rightly at the right time. Where a tightly defined *wantok* system has dominated, balance needs to be asserted by the other "systems." People need to attend to the system they are working in at the moment and to follow its rules. We saw this functioning in the hospital notice—"no entertainment of the *wantok* system."

Second, Papua New Guineans and their Melanesian neighbours would be wise to look around and see where local solutions have been tried and tested. If a businessman has found a way in which to separate money and resources that are his to share with his *wantoks* from money and resources that belong to the *bisnis* and so are not to be shared, this may demonstrate a technique that can be used by others. Government officials have put signs on their office doors saying, "No *wantoks* allowed."[25] Papua New Guineans, Solomon Islanders, and ni-Vanuatu could also look more broadly to solutions found by Polynesians and Micronesians, who have confronted similar problems but who live in smaller and less complex countries.

[24] Haurisi and Davey, "Accounting and Culture," 252.

[25] Michael Kouro was proud of such a notice on his office door when he was Public Solicitor in PNG.

SUMMARY ARTICLES

This section of the journal contains summary articles of graduate student research which have not been peer reviewed. Contributors are asked to identify the key components of their argument and to edit and, where necessary, rewrite their master's thesis so that the published “article” can stand on its own as a piece of work and, thereby, obviate any need for the reader of the journal to access the thesis itself.

EVIL AND HUMAN SUFFERING IN VIEW OF GOD'S PLAN OF REDEMPTION IN THE GREAT CONTROVERSY CONTEXT

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INTRODUCTION

The reality of evil and human suffering raises fundamental questions about human life and meaning. While God is good and powerful, evil often seems to outweigh good in the world. Good Christians also suffer despite their faithfulness to God. Is God impotent?

When asking whether suffering lies inside or outside God's will, indeed if anything that happens could ever go against God's will, attention directly turns to one divine attribute that everyone thinks about when they suffer—God's power. If God is powerful, why is evil and human suffering happening? Why is God withholding his power?[1]

This essay examines the issue of evil and human suffering from the perspective of warfare in order to shed some light on these questions. The warfare model, also known as the "great controversy" or "cosmic conflict" model is taken from the biblical worldview, which has as its basis belief in a triune creator God who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and good. However, belief in an all-knowing, all-powerful, and good God leads to questions about the problem of evil and human suffering, which in turn leads to God's solution, the plan of redemption.

The term "great controversy" refers to the conflict between God and Satan. Comparing Old Testament (OT) scriptures such as Ezekiel 28:11-16, Isaiah 14:12-14, and New Testament (NT) scriptures such as Revelation 12:7-10 and other parts of the Apocalypse provides insights into this cosmic battle.[2] The "plan of redemption" is God's plan for complete

[1] R. Rice, *Suffering and the Search for Meaning: Contemporary Responses to the Problem of Pain* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2014), 43.

[2] F.B. Holbrook, "Great Controversy," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (ed. R. Dederen; Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 969 (969-1009).

deliverance and restoration through the work of Christ, who delivers humanity from the hostile powers of evil (Eph 1:7; Rom 3:24). The act of redemption deals with the great conflict and provides an apparently reasonable clarification and response to the issue of evil and human suffering.

Thinking Christians and theologians accept the ontological views of language that cause the problem of God and evil. Among these commitments are that God exists in objective reality and is not mainly the construction of human minds. God really is all-powerful and perfectly good. Evil exists, but God's goodness is moral, and we best understand his moral goodness in the familiar human concepts of love and justice.[3] By way of counter-arguments, theologians and philosophers, have developed various theories of theodicy. Theodicy refers to a justification of God's goodness and justice in view of the existence of evil and suffering.[4]

Since different theodicies have different strengths, it will be good to first discuss them briefly. The different theories will then be discussed in view of the great controversy towards the end of the essay.

DIFFERENT THEORIES OF THEODICY

The *Classical Theory* claims that God is omnipotent and he can do anything he wills of which he is capable; but he cannot do what is logically impossible. God's goodness and power are logically compatible with evil and suffering. However, even an all–powerful God cannot necessarily remove all suffering from the world because this good and all–powerful deity would bring the greatest state of goodness into the world.[5] The existence of evil, pain, and suffering caused God to go forth seeking after humanity. He went a long way from being God to becoming man. He welcomed the tax collectors, spoke hope to the prostitutes, and healed the sick. Those who came to him in search of the meaning of life were ushered

[3] J.R Schneider, "Seeing God Where the Wild Things Are: An Essay on the Defeat of Horrendous Evil," in *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil* (ed. P. Inwagen; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 227 (226-62).

[4] J. Bernard and S. Hartmann, "Theodicy," in *The Brill Dictionary of Religion* (5 vols.; ed. K. von Stuckard; Boston: Brill, 2007), 4:1878 (1878-79).

[5] R.M. Green, "Theodicy," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (15 vols.; ed. M. Eliade; New York: Macmillan, 1987), 14:434 (430-41).

into his goodness. Thus, the existence of evil causes people to seek the goodness of the loving God.

The *Free Will Theory* was developed by Plantinga[6] in response to Mackie's[7] argument against free will. This theory maintains that God creates humans and non-humans that are freely capable of doing what is morally right and wrong. As it turns out, the free beings God created have exercised the freedom to do wrong. This became the source of evil and suffering which we see and experience.[8]

The *Soul-making Theory* was developed by John Hick from Irenaean theodicy. The theory holds that human beings were created morally and spiritually immature. Hence God allowed the existence of evil and suffering to bring humans into perfect loving relationship with the Creator.[9] This idea offers a theodicy in respect to natural evil as well as moral evil. The natural evils are essential to an environment in which morally and spiritually immature beings can grow towards their perfection.[10]

The *Communion Theory* holds several related positions. However, the best known one is the idea of God as a compassionate deity who suffers with his creatures and is passionately present in their moments of distress. This position does not explain why God allowed evil and suffering from the beginning, yet it opens doors to question God's goodness and power as it comforts and sustains the believer in the moment of trial. The reality of evil and suffering is not denied; instead it is heightened. What is usually seen as an experience to be avoided is accepted as an experience with God.[11]

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[6]A. Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 63. Plantinga contends that Mackie operates with a faulty definition of omnipotence. God's omnipotence means that God can do anything that is logical while his omnipotence will not violate the rules of logic. He cannot make a square into a circle.

[7] J.L Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence, *Mind*, *n.s*. 64 (1955): 209 (200-12). If the whole creation was created by an all-powerful and good God, why did he not remove the possibility of doing evil and let free beings be completely free in doing all the good things?

[8] Plantinga, 434.

[9] J. Hick, "An Irenaean Theodicy," in *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theology* (ed. S.T. Davis; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 46 (39-52).

[10] J. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 368.

[11] Green, 434. See also K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. III, Part 3 (ed. T.F. Torrance and G.W. Bromiley; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2009), 69; and J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 5. Both argue in terms of this theory.

The *Eschatological Theory* is based on the belief that human life exceeds personal death when the righteous receive their full eternal reward and the wicked their appropriate punishment.[12]

The *Great Controversy Theory* holds that human beings are involved in the conflict between superhuman forces of good and evil.[13] Evil and human suffering originated from Lucifer, God's archenemy (Rev 12:7-9). Humankind's rebellion against God is part of the cosmic conflict. The cosmic conflict is also about God's love and his supremacy as displayed in his creation. The creation is an expression of God's love and his love is the basis of his sovereignty. The great controversy theory also speaks of God's self-sacrificing love as the power that defeats evil and suffering, and that will ultimately rescue and restore humanity in the events of the eschaton. How the warfare originated and humanity got involved are the primary issues that need to be understood.

THE ORIGIN AND CONTEXT OF EVIL AND GREAT CONTROVERSY

Among many theories given as to how evil arose and why God allowed its existence is the suggestion that evil originated with a war in heaven over God's authority. The scripture is clear on the existence of evil and the controversy between good and evil; but the origin of evil seems to be unclear to many. However, Ezekiel 28:1-19 and Isaiah 14: 4-23 in the OT and Revelation 12:7-10 in the NT explain the origin of evil and the cosmic conflict between good and evil.

Most Bible scholars refer to the prophecies of Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 as relating solely to the kings of Babylon and Tyre. However, such an interpretation seems inadequate for two reasons. First, the interpretation overlooks the close connection between the two texts and other scriptures dealing with the satanic world (e.g., Dan 10:13 and Eph 6:12). Second, it fails to take into account that the descriptions exceed the scope of any earthly ruler.[14] The imagery in Ezekiel 28:11-19 exceeds the local reference to the king of Tyre in phrases such as: "You were in Eden the garden of God" (v. 13); "you were anointed as cherub;" "you were on the holy

[12] G.R. Osborne, "Theodicy and Apocalypse," *Trinity Journal* n.s. 14 (1993): 74 (63-77).

[13] Rice*, Suffering and the Search for Meaning,* 76.

[14]M.F. Unger, "Satan," in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (ed. E.F. Harrison, G.W. Bromiley, and C.F.H. Henry; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960), 972-73.

mountain of God" (v. 14); "you were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you" (v. 15); "so I drove you out in disgrace from the mount of God … O guardian cherub" (v. 16).[15] This description unveils the activities in the heavenly courts and it seems appropriate to the fall of Lucifer.[16]

Ezekiel turns the description of the king of Tyre into a description of Lucifer. Certain characteristics prevent us from applying the latter attributes to the literal king of Tyre. He was not in Eden. He was not the guardian cherub (v. 14). As for Isaiah, he starts with a prophecy against literal Babylon, but shifts into a figurative description of Lucifer, who has fallen from heaven (14:12), and who attempted to raise himself above God (v. 13).[17]

The prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah provide the background, showing where and how the controversy started. The conflict began with Lucifer, who envied God's power and sowed dissention among his angelic colleagues. The dissention led to open conflict against God and, as a result, Lucifer and his followers were cast out of heaven (Ezek 28:16; Rev 12:7-9).[18] The scripture seems to be clear on the origin of evil. However, the issues in the controversy need to be identified in order to provide an even clearer view of the cosmic conflict.

1. Issues Involved in the Great Controversy

The issues are not stated directly in the scripture. However, several Bible passages provide hints. First, *God's law* seems to be under attack: Satan, disguised as serpent, challenged Eve to choose independently rather than obey God's law (Gen 3:4). John defines sin as the "breaking of God's law" (1 John 3:4). It is clear from that epistle that it is referring to the moral law. Sin is also viewed as transgressions against God's will (Ps 40:8). The scripture says that "the devil has been sinning from the beginning" (1 John

[15] All biblical citations are taken from the New International Version unless otherwise stated.
[16] L.C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-40* (WBC 29; Dallas: Word 1990), 95.
[17] G. Christo, "The Battle between God and Satan in the Book of Job," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 11 (2000): 285 (282-86).
[18] R. Rice, *The Reign of God* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1985), 128.

3:8). This implies that Satan questioned the need for angels to be subjected to God's moral commands.

Zechariah shows how angels submit to God's commands in terms of human deliverance from sin. Satan condemned Joshua before God as unworthy of redemption. However, the angel of the Lord objected to Satan's accusation, assuring Joshua that he could be delivered from Satan's condemnation (Zech 3:1-7). Thus, angels are subject to God's moral commands in order to secure humanity's salvation.

Second, *God's love and justice* is questioned. Satan is described as an accuser who accuses people day and night (Rev 12:10). Satan presents Job's obedience as self-serving and asserts that when it becomes clear that obeying God will not benefit him, Job will abandon God (1:6-12). Satan also accuses God for forgiving and accepting Joshua (Zech 3:1-5). The real issue here is God's justice: is God fair when he saves evildoers and declares them righteous? "Lucifer argues that God can show justice only against the violator of the law, it is unjust to show mercy to the violator."[19]

Third, there is *humanity's freedom to be independent*. Satan boasted that he wanted to be like God (Isa 14:13-14). Self-became the center of his thought, he thought he was capable of managing his own life apart from God. Satan lured Eve to make her own choice independently from God by saying that she would be like God (Gen 3:1-3).[20]

Finally, the *relationship between God and humankind* is questioned. God is a relational deity whose purpose for creating free moral beings was to have a free loving relationship with them. He came looking for Adam and Eve when they fell (Gen 3:8). God still called Israel his own people even though they had rebelled against him (Ezek 36:23-27). Hosea dramatized God's desire for human relationship in his marriage relationship with the promiscuous Gomer (Hos 1-3).[21]

Satan constantly seeks to attack on these four fronts in the great controversy and the following are some examples of this in the scripture.

[19] Holbrook, 975.
[20] Holbrook, 975.
[21] N.R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols.; Berrien Spring: Andrews University Press, 2011), 2:285.

2. Biblical Evidences of Great Controversy in the OT

The cosmic conflict biblical framework requires God's revelation in response to Satan's accusation. The serpent in Genesis 3 appears to know the secret of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which God alone knows. The serpent has supernatural knowledge.[22] It is not merely a speaking snake, but Satan himself.[23] The serpent's persuasive argument to disobey God's command is a direct hint about Satan's rebellion. Satan introduces the knowledge of breaking God's commands and independence from God to humankind. The curse of enmity between the woman's offspring and the serpent (Gen 3:15) hints of the fall of the ancient serpent from heaven (Rev 12:9). An inference can be drawn that the conflict between God and Satan continues on the earth.[24]

The context of the book of Exodus is a conflict between two supernatural powers in the courts of Pharaoh (Exod 7:8-13). Ordinary human beings cannot cast their rods down and have them turned into snakes. The fact that the magician's rods becoming serpents shows that Egyptians had contact with some source of supernatural power apart from that of Moses. That the magicians were held in high esteem implies that they must have experienced at some point the actual results of their practice of magic.[25] "Serpent," translated from the Hebrew word *tannim*, refers to a more frightening creature than a snake. The symbol of *tannim* indicates chaotic forces which God defeated in the exodus.[26] Satan, the author of chaotic powers, was behind Pharaoh trying to obstruct God's plan of redemption. Here is an insight into the cosmic controversy.

The wars of OT times were seen as battles of the gods. God has always been represented by the nation of Israel. The Levites killed 3000 men and women who rebelled against God and worshipped an idol (Exod 32:27-35). Sennacherib mockingly said that God could not deliver the people of Judah from his hand. He asked the people of Judah and their king to stop trusting

[22] H. Gunkel, *Genesis*, trans. M.E. Biddle (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 15.
[23] M.J. Erickson, *Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 158.
[24] C. Westermann*, Genesis 1-11: A Continental Commentary*, trans. J.J. Scullion (Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress, 1994), 259.
[25] S.H. Horn, "Exodus," in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* 7 vols. (ed. F.D. Nichols; Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1978), 1:520-28 (henceforth, *SDABC*).
[26] T. Fretheim, *Exodus* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1991), 113.

God and submit to him (2 Kgs 19:1-35). Sennacherib displayed Satan's arrogant attitude in accordance with the pattern of the great controversy.

Daniel also unveils the battles of the earthly powers and kingdoms. A example of such supernatural involvement is found in Daniel 10:13. The angel Gabriel was resisted by the prince of Persia for 21 days. Then Michael, the chief prince, came and released him. In ancient Jewish thought, YHWH was the ruler of Israel, a role given to Michael.[27] An angelic being similar in the rank to Gabriel is seen as the patron of the Persian kingdom. Thus, the prince of Persia who resisted Gabriel is not a human prince but the accuser of Michael.[28] Here is another indication of comic controversy.

The book of Job also shows the interplay between God and Satan before the universe (1:6). Satan is declared to be the leader of this world (Job 1:7). God points to Job to show Satan that humans on the earth are not completely under his domain. Although Satan inflicts intense pain and suffering using both moral and natural evils, Job was never shaken out of his faith. The fact that Job's test was mentioned in the major meeting between God and Satan may suggest that the universe is involved in the same question. Thus the book of Job again demonstrates the great controversy that has involved human affairs in the cosmic spiritual battle.[29]

Zechariah shows Satan standing at the right side of Joshua, accusing him as the violator of God's law. God rebukes Satan and restores Joshua (Zech 3:1-8). The heart of the issue is not Joshua but God's love and mercy extended to fallen humanity. Satan accuses God of being unfair to accept Joshua, who has violated God's law, one of the issues in the cosmic conflict.[30] This is another example of the cosmic controversy being portrayed.

Since the battles of the OT, which were regarded as the battles of the gods, the belief in supernatural powers waging battles provides a background for ancient people to interpret the occurrence of both moral and

[27] R. Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant: Biblical Themes of Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2007), 24.
[28] D. Stuart, "Michael," in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (4 vols.; ed. G.W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 3:347 (347-48).
[29] Gulley, S*ystematic Theology*, 1:433.
[30] R.L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (WBC 32; Dallas: Word, 1984), 199.

natural evils and human sufferings. The NT appears to shed more light on the cosmic conflict as it is the fulfilment of the OT.

3. Biblical Evidences of Great Controversy in the NT

There are four distinct elements of great controversy scenarios in the four gospels. First, at the birth of Jesus King Herod searched the entire town of Bethlehem and its vicinity and killed every male child aged two and below (Matt 2:7-17). He did this intending to destroy the Christ; but he was unsuccessful because the angel warned Joseph who took the child and his mother and fled to Egypt (vv. 13-14). This is a demonstration of the devil using the civic authority of the day to destroy the promised offspring of the woman (Gen 3:15).

Second, the temptation of Jesus Christ in Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, and Luke 4:1-13 portrays another view of the great controversy. Satan said, "If you are the Son of God, order these stones to become bread (Matt 4:3)." Satan tempted Jesus to use his power for self-satisfaction, which is against God's nature.[31] Then the adversary showed him all the kingdoms of the world and said to him, "All these I will give you if you will bow down and worship me" (v. 9). This implies breaking of God's law that states, "you shall have no other gods before me" (Exod 20: 3). Finally, the tempter said, "If you are the son of God, throw yourself down." This is misusing God's name and misapplying his promise (Exod 20:7), which is breaking of God's law. The issues in the great controversy are once again in view.

Third, with respect to Christ's authority and the law, the gospel of Luke portrays two important features in regards to Christ's conflicts. The first conflict deals with his authority to forgive sin. The Pharisees questioned Jesus as to what authority he had to forgive the sins of people. They accused him of blasphemy, saying that only God can forgive sin (5:17-26). This shows lack of belief and, even more, God's love and justice is questioned by implication. The second has to do with the issue of the Mosaic Law and the traditions that Jesus disregarded. The religious leaders accused Jesus for eating with tax collectors and healing on the Sabbath

[31] D.H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville: New Testament Publications, 1992), 22

(5:27-6:10). In both instances God's love and justice were attacked under the guise of law-breaking.[32] Here is another hint of the great controversy.

Finally, as regards God's love and justice, the gospel of John portrays God as the giver. He sends Jesus on a mission of deliverance to lost people (3:16; 10:10). Jesus came to the world with no helpers and many opponents such as the Pharisees (5:18; 7:1; 10:31), Judas (12:4-6; 13:27-30), the powers of darkness (1:5; 16:33), and the Roman authorities (18:3; 19:1-3). The Jewish leaders realised that Jesus was speaking with authority, so they question his authority over the law of Moses. They claimed to be God's people and accused Jesus of being possessed by a demon (8:48-54).

Jesus, knowing who was attacking him from behind the leaders spoke directly to them. "You belong to your father the devil and you want to carry out your father's desire" (John 8:44a). God sent Jesus to deliver humankind, while Satan worked through the Jews to attack God's plan. Judas also became the accuser's helper to try to destroy the divine plan.[33] Again God's love was under attack, another example of the great conflict in action.

Christ's death on the cross is the climax of the four gospels and it is where the devil's hidden dealings were revealed. The death of Christ affirms that Satan is the accuser and the instigator of all kinds of evil. This is seen in the attitude of the Jewish religious leaders, who knew the prophecy of the coming Messiah, but were unwilling to accept or submit to him. Satan involves humans who choose to ignore the principles of life: "Love the Lord your God with all your hearts and with all your souls and with all your minds … and love your neighbours as yourselves" (Matt 22:37-38). People who ignore this blueprint for life become the agents of Satan in inflicting pain and suffering upon their fellow human beings.

Having seen the evidences of great controversy in both the OT and NT, it becomes apparent that God is not indifferent to or unaffected by human suffering. As seen in the OT, God revealed himself to his prophets and people. The incarnation of Christ in the NT implies that God can limit

[32] J.D. Kingsbury, "The Plot of Luke's Story of Jesus," *Interpretation* 4 (1994): 374 (369-78).

[33] M.W.G Stibbe, *John as the Story Teller: Narration Criticism and the Four Gospels* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 123-24.

himself to our human context.[34] However, Satan has a number of weapons that a God of love cannot use and this explains why there is so much terrible evil in the world. These Satanic weapons prevent God from simply controlling evil and make it necessary for God to war against it.[35] The solution to this great struggle lies in God's plan of redemption.

4. God's Sovereignty in the Plan of Redemption

The scripture contains numerous occasions when Satan tried to destroy God's plan of redemption, and he has had successes along the way. We should not expect God to exercise absolute divine authority in the controversy. Just as God's power did not stop the controversy from originating in heaven and later affecting the earth, he continues to allow humans freedom in post-fall history.

God warned Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16-17), but he did not prevent them from doing so (Gen 3:1-6). After they fell (Gen 3:1-6), God promised that through the incarnated Son he would crush Satan's head while Satan would strike his heel (Gen 3:15). Rhetorically, crushing of the head is worse than the striking of the heel. The crushing of the head on the cross implies an ultimate defeat from which there is no recovery and it is also an eternal reminder of that great victory.[36] In using the metaphor of crushing the head, Genesis provides an affirmation statement of God's plan to deliver and to restore humanity.

Christ lineage would be through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Satan, therefore, did everything he could to ruin this lineage. God's foreknowledge did not stop Abraham from exercising his free choice to have Ishmael (Gen 16:1, 5, 11).[37] Although God chose Abraham's descendants, they were not free from Satan's attack. Satan continued to cause problems for the people of Israel, the lineage of the Messiah.[38] God

[34] Gully, *Systematic Theology*, 2:289.
[35] G. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil; Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downer Grove: InterVarsity, 2009) 192.
[36] Horn, "Genesis," in *SDABC*, 1:232-33.
[37] Gulley, *Systematic Theology*, 2:305
[38] J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, trans. J. King (Edinburgh: Calvin's Press, 1923), 414.

told Abraham that his descendants would be strangers in a foreign land and would be mistreated. But the Lord promised to deliver them while punishing the nation that enslaved them (Gen 15:13-14).

God is all-knowing (Josh 22:22) and the God of all knowledge (1 Sam 2:3). He foreordained certain activities in his foreknowledge. In his foreknowledge he understands the logical sequence and relation among various events. This means that God foreordains things simultaneously in a logical order. But this logical order can be manipulated by humanity's consistent disobedience. However, God always responds to rebellious acts in a redemptive manner, as seen in his consistent responses to the rebellious acts of the Israelites. God always knew that Christ would be born and would die. He understood this concept logically as well as chronologically.[39] Hence, God told Abraham what would happen to his children; but he never foreordained Satan's cunning activities. It was Satan's choice to enslave and attempt to destroy the Saviour's lineage in Egypt.

Pharaoh took pride in his own strength which made him unwilling to submit to powers higher than himself. His pride, derived from his earthly power, made him feel equal to God.[40] This is the exact picture the prophet Isaiah painted of Satan (14:13-14; cf. Ezek 28:2b). Satan wanted to keep the Israelites out of the promised land by using Pharaoh. This was an attempt to make the promise of the Messiah of no effect. Pharaoh became an instrument in the hands of Satan (Ezek 29:3).[41]

The journey of the Israelites portrays God's achievement in leading a group of people from Egypt to the promised land. It tells the story of their alienation from God. Before the events of Sinai there are four stories with a component of estrangement: the deliverance at the Red Sea (Exod 14:11-12); the bitter water at Marah (Exod 15:24); the gift of manna (Exod 16:4); and the water from the rock at Meriba (Exod 17:2-3). In each of these stories Israel's survival is at stake; but God responds graciously to their doubts and fears and supplies their needs. The estrangements after Sinai

[39] J. Feinberg, "God knows all Things," in *Predestination and Free Will* (ed. D. and R. Basinger; Downer Grove: InterVarsity, 1986), 36 (19-43).
[40] W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 403. Note also Exod 5:2.
[41] Gulley, *Systematic Theology*, 2:306.

were of a different order and the people were punished. The events recorded in Numbers 25:1-5 are the climax of the apostasy and rebelliousness which happened during Israel's journey.[42] These events can be set out as follows.

Apostasy – the golden calf (Exod 32)
Discontent – the quail at Taberah (Num 11)
Rebelliousness – Israel at Kadesh and Hormah (Num 14)
Discontent – snakes (Num 21)
Apostasy – Shittim (Num 25:1-9)[43]

In the climactic story the Israelites were unwilling to comprehend God's struggle to ensure their future against the threat from the Moabite king. In contrast to his devotion, Israel showed shallow commitment and lack of confidence in the providence of God.[44] Their sins were the controlling factor in the journey to the promised land. Following the pattern in the great controversy, Satan seemed to be attacking God's plan of redemption by causing Israelites to rebel against God by involving them in sexual immorality just before they reached the promised land (Num 15:1-9).

The same pattern appears in the story of David. Satan knew God had promised David that his kingdom would be forever (1 Sam 7:8-16). Satan targeted David as a means of defeating God's plan by causing Saul to be jealous of David (1 Sam 19:10-11, 23:7-28). God withdrew his spirit from Saul causing him to become mentally unstable. Abnormal psychological conditions were believed to be due to the influence of spirits. The spirit that entered into Saul was not subject to the will of God. Saul's experience resonates with the description of the empty house in Luke 11:24-26: when God's spirit withdrew, another spirit moved in. Saul was controlled by the evil spirit and began to attack David.[45] Here is yet another indication of Satan attempting to spoil God's plan of redemption.

[42] P.J. Budd, *Numbers* (WBC 5; Waco: Word, 1984), 281.
[43] Budd, 281.
[44] D.T. Olson, *Numbers* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1996), 152.
[45] G.B Caird and J.C Schroeder, "1 Samuel," in *The Interpreters Bible* (12 vols.; ed G.A. Buttrick et al.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1953-56), 2:853-1040.

A further example is seen in the attitude of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. He boasted before the nation of Judah that their God could not deliver them from his hands. He told the people to turn from God and Hezekiah's admonition to trust in God (2 Kgs 18: 28-30, 19: 9-10). Satan is known in the scripture as a murderer and the father of lies (John 8:44). Sennacherib displayed Satan's attitude as he planned to destroy Judah by claiming God was a deceiver. God intervened on behalf of Israel and destroyed Sennacherib's army (2 Kgs 19:35).

The same outline appears in the story of Esther, even though the names of God and Satan are never mentioned. Satan planned to destroy all the Jews through the decree initiated by Haman, and authorized by King Xerxes of Persia (Esth 3:13). Haman claimed divine honors for himself, he became a Jew-hater, and wished to destroy all the Jews. It was not merely a personal dispute between Mordecai and Haman that is related in the book of Esther and remembered on Purim, but a conflict threatening national existence and the lineage of the Messiah.[46] Purim remembers the victory gained by the Jews over their enemies, and the deliverance effected by God on their behalf.[47] It recalls the source of the victory and the protection gained over the Israel's enemies.[48] Purim celebrates God's intervention in delivering his people and triumphing over the adversary (8:8-17).

The same pattern is seen in the NT. King Herod ordered all the male infants in Bethlehem to be killed, in order to murder Jesus, but God showed the plan to Joseph in a dream and the family escaped to Egypt (Matt 2:13-18). The slaughter of infants by Herod was another chapter in Israel's whole experience, summed up in Jesus, the promised Messiah.[49]

The story of Jesus Christ is also summed up in the history of Israel in Egypt and the Exodus. Jesus was always the Saviour of Israel, participating both in their victories and their agonies. Satan had always sought to threaten the purpose of God throughout Israel's history.[50] His defeat in

[46] B.W. Anderson and A.C Lichtenberger, "Esther," in *The Interpreters Bible*, 3:847-48.

[47] L. Jacobs, "Purim," in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (16 vols.; ed. C. Roth and G. Wigoder; Jerusalem: Keter, 1972), 13:1390-95.

[48] B.C. Gregory, "Purim," in *Dictionary of the Wisdom, Poetry and Writings* (ed. T. Longman III and P. Enns; Nottingham: InterVarsity, 2008), 631-634.

[49] W.F. Albright and C.S Mann, *Matthew* (Anchor Bible 26; Garden City: Doubleday, 1971), 19.

[50] D.A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* (WBC 33A; Dallas: Word, 1993), 36.

Christ's incarnation, ministry, death, and resurrection saw Satan casted out of heaven (Rev 12:13; Luke 10:18; John 12:31) Christ came so that he would destroy the works of Satan (Matt 12:28-19; Acts 10:38; 2 Tim 1:10), and Satan rebels against God's redemptive work.[51]

This overview of God's plan of redemption and the way God exercised his power in the cosmic conflict provides a way of looking at human history with regard to the issue of evil. The scripture records God's judgements on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24-29), the global flood (Gen 7), the miraculous crossing of the Jordan, and the destruction of Jericho (Josh 3-4). All of these are examples of God's power in judging evil while delivering the obedient. One thing that stands out clearly in these acts is humanity's freedom of choice. Evidently, free will is not a hindrance to God's exercise of absolute sovereign power.[52] This gives a balanced view of how God responds to the issue of evil and human suffering.

EVALUATING THE MAIN THEORIES IN THEODICY WITH A VIEW TO THE GREAT CONTROVERSY

Many theories have been developed as a response to the problem of evil and human suffering. This section investigates only five theories in view of the great controversy framework to evaluate whether or not the theories are biblically sound.

1. Great Controversy and Classical Theory

The classical theory is a rational attempt to reconcile the existence of evil in the world with the doctrines of divine omnipotence, and God's all-knowing and goodness. David Griffin offers the usual four step problem statement. (1) If God is all-powerful, he could prevent all evil. (2) If God is good, he would want to prevent all evil. (3) Evil exists. (4) Therefore, God is either not all-powerful or all-good or both.[53] The common conclusion theists assume with this model is that God allows evil to exist in order to bring

[51] A.F. Johnson, "Heb-Rev," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary with New International Version* (12 vols.; ed. F. Gabelein; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 12:515-16.
[52] Gulley, *Systematic Theology*, 2:307.
[53] D.R Griffin, "Creation Out of Nothing, Creation out of Chaos, and the Problem of Evil," in Davis, *Encountering Evil*, 108 (108-25).

about greater good in humans. Consequently, this theory is also referred to as greater good theodicy.[54]

The problem with this theory is not that God and evil are logically incompatible, but rather that the compatibility of God and the apparent pointlessness of much evil is questionable. This challenge has forced theists to hold that an all-powerful, all-knowing, and good God would not allow pointless evil; yet gratuitous evil does seem to exist. The burden of generating a positive theodicy is on the theist, and that burden has been largely neglected in theological circles.[55] For a theist to develop a positive theodicy, it has to be scripturally-based. As noted in this thesis, the great controversy theory appears to be the only biblical model that provides insights into the origin of evil and human suffering.

Problem 1: "If God is all-powerful, he could prevent all evil." The great controversy concept shows that the Bible teaches God's supremacy over the earth, and it also teaches that God does not control the behaviour of free agents, whether humans or angels. Evil is the choice of a created non-human being, Satan. God cannot manipulate his agent's free choice if that agent is to remain free. Rice comments that what was at stake in the cosmic battle was God's reputation. Because Satan resented God's authority, he accused God of being a tyrant over his created beings, depriving them of their dignity (Ezek 28:16).[56] Satan's false accusation against God instigates the conflict.

The scriptures indicate that God does not use force, instead he demonstrates self-sacrificing love toward humanity (John 3:16; Phil 2:6-11). God's love reflects his sovereignty which he wanted to show through Jesus Christ. Christ's self-sacrificing love exposes evil for what it is before humanity.[57] The plan of redemption is a demonstration of God's authority over evil. Each time God manifests and fulfils his plan of redemption, Satan is unmasked and his evil works are brought more under control. Thus, God's love is more than just incompatible with evil, the scripture

[54] C.S Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), 27-28. See also J.S. Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problem of Evil* (rev. and exp. ed.; Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 176.

[55] M.L. Peterson, "Christian Theism and the Problem of Evil," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21 (1978): 45 (35-46).

[56] Rice, *The Reign of God*, 129.

[57] Gulley, *Systematic Theology*, 2:293; see also Boyd, 156-57.

affirms that "where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (Rom 5:21).

Problem 2: "If God is good, he would want to prevent all evil." The great controversy concept holds that God's goodness to his created beings is manifested by honouring human choices. When Moses asked God to show him his glory, God cause all his goodness to pass before Moses (Exod 33:18-19). Then the Lord came down and proclaimed his name in front of Moses saying, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving their wickedness, rebellion and sin" (Exod 34:5-7). The very nature of God's good acts was revealed to Moses. God's goodness proved to Moses that God would be gracious to the Israelites, despite their rebelliousness and evil deeds.[58] This was a statement of God's sovereignty, along with his favour and compassion. It was God's goodness that allows the existence of evil;[59] yet his goodness will not let the guilty and evil go unpunished (Exod 34:7). God deals with evil in ways that demonstrate the real nature of his benevolence.

Problem 3: "Evil exists" and, "thus, God is either not all-powerful or not all-good or both." This too can also be evaluated in the light of the great controversy. Given the preceding paragraphs, evil exists because of a good God whose supremacy is based on love. It is not evil which causes God to bring about good, but rather evil has distorted perceptions of God's goodness and love.[60]

The weakness in the classical theory is that it never identifies the cause of the problem of evil and suffering and who started the problem. The theory only reconciles the existence of evil with God's attributes. There is a possibility of concluding that God is probably the cause of the issue. However, in view of the great controversy theory, this is not true. The great controversy theory spells out clearly how the issue of evil and suffering originated, and how God is responding to the issue in the light of the scripture.

In the great controversy theory God has to bring to light the distortion caused by Satan in the cosmic battle. He wrestles against the adversary by

[58] Fretheim, 299.
[59] J. Durham, *Exodus* (WBC 2; Waco: Word, 1987), 299.
[60] Durham, 298.

extending his power of forgiveness and compassion to rebellious humanity while unveiling the true nature of Satan. The scripture exposes Satan as a liar, deceiver, and slanderer of God (John 8:44). By contrast, God is seen as consistent in all of his attributes.[61] Great controversy theory demonstrates that God deals with evil and suffering in ways that illuminate the real nature of his authority and goodness. The problem with classical theory is that not all evil brings about the greatest state of goodness.

Every intelligent being in God's created universe is subject to his authority while retaining their freedom. Yet Holbrook affirms that absolute freedom does not exist in natural order or human society. The issue is not about escaping from authority, instead it is about identifying under which authority life will be made the most meaningful now and eternally.[62] God's authority allowed humankind and the angelic hosts to enjoy the freedom they have. However, Lucifer in his free will developed the spirit of enviousness over God's authority (Ezek 28:15-16). This leads to the next theory which is the free will theory.

2. Great Controversy and Free Will Theory

The free will theory builds on the idea that evil resulted from the creatures' exercise of free will. The fault, then, lies with God's created beings and not with the omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good creator. The great controversy also accepts the fact that God created both the angels and humankind as free moral beings. The scripture is clear on the role of free will in the origin of evil. Lucifer was blameless from the day God created him till wickedness was found in him (Ezek 28:15). God is the creator of perfect and righteous beings. However, evil emerged from one such perfect created being's free will. Mackie argues that if an all-powerful, all-knowing, and perfectly good God created the earth containing free creatures, he should include beings that would always choose to do right.[63] But if God had done that, then free will would no longer be free will, and God would still control the choices of his created beings.

Given that God's unconditional love is the basis of his omnipotence, and that he created both non-human and human beings out of his love, it makes

[61] Gulley, *Systematic Theology*, 2:293.
[62] Holbrook, 976.
[63] Mackie, 208.

sense that God would respect the free choice of his created beings. Free beings which are programmed by God to always do what is right implies that the free beings are not significantly free; they are not doing what is right freely.[64] The idea of God's sovereignty and moral freedom is demonstrated in the instruction given to Adam not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17).

The instruction given shows that humanity and the creation are subject to God's authority; yet the choice of whether to obey or not was theirs. Gully notes that God's sovereignty never stopped Eve and Adam from eating the forbidden fruit (Gen 3:6).[65] The obvious reason is that God respected their free will choice.

Lucifer's case is quite different in the sense that he envied God's authority and wanted to be like God (Isa 14:12-14). By being observant and comparing himself with the rest of the angels, Lucifer became proud and thought God was not fair in his authority over the created beings. Lucifer claimed that the free will given by God was inadequate for the created beings (Ezek 28:17-18). Rice suggests that Lucifer accused God of being a tyrant.[66] Such an accusation would undermine God's sovereignty. Boyd contends that nothing is essentially praiseworthy in sheer power. What is commendable about God's power is not the exercise of the authority he has, but that because of his character he does not exercise all the power he could.[67] His love surpasses his sovereignty. Lewis adds that the greatest miracle of divine omnipotence and the greatest testimony of God's sovereignty was the fact that he created beings who possess the power to say no to him.[68]

Although Satan protested that free will was inadequate; he used his own free will to hurl his accusations against God. Satan's selfishness murdered Christ, while Christ's selfless love redeemed humanity. Calvary is fully compatible with what God has done, is doing, and will do to end evil and

[64] Plantinga, 30.
[65] Gully, *Systematic Theology*, 2:306.
[66] Rice, *The Reign of God*, 129.
[67] Boyd, 148.
[68] Lewis, 127.

suffering through his plan of redemption. [69] God's authority reflects his love and humanity's free choice to choose to believe in him (John 3:16).

The weakness and the long standing challenge to the free will theory is that it does not offer answers to natural evil. Natural evil occurs causing human beings suffering and pain outside of their free will choices. Is there any force or being behind such natural evil causing many problems to human beings against their will? Moreover, how can one explain the fact that sin entered the creation when everything was perfect and morally good?

The great controversy model affirms that Lucifer was ordained as a guardian cherub at God's throne. God gave him ability to be a commanding angel (Ezek 28:14). God never controlled the authority given to Lucifer, which implies that he had the freedom to demonstrate his given authority either for or against God. As it turned out, Lucifer used his God-given abilities and freedom to rebel against God which started the cosmic rebellion between good and evil (Rev 12:7-9) from which springs great controversy theory. Further, there is no indication in the scripture of God withdrawing the gift from Satan. Satan can do anything within his supernatural abilities as he did in the presence of God. He caused fire to fall from the sky and burned up all Job's sheep and servants, which the surviving servant interpreted as the fire from God (Job 1:16). He caused a tornado from the desert that destroyed all Job's children (1:18). It is clear from Job's experience that Satan can and is able to cause natural disaster to inflict pain and suffering.

Satan also afflicted Job with painful sores all over his body (Job 2: 7). This proves that Satan is able to inflict disease upon humankind. He can multiply germs and viruses that can lead to much pain and suffering. Although the Bible does not use the scientific language of causation (e.g., germs and viruses), such agents of causation are not incompatible with belief in Satan. They can be conceptualized as tools he uses.

The free will theory is open to several objections, one of which is how can one explain the fact that sin entered the creation when everything was perfect and morally good? The great controversy theory answers this questions by locating the origin of sin in Lucifer's mind (Ezek 28:15). In comparing himself with other the angels he thought that he was more like

[69] Gully, *Systematic Theology*, 2:292-93.

God and so could become a god (Isa 14:13,14). Even though it is not mentioned in the scripture, the loving creator God must have talked to Lucifer in an effort to change his mind. Using his free will, Lucifer chose to disobey God. That is when evil entered into God's perfect creation through the exercise of free will to disobey God's instruction (1 John 3:4)

3. Great Controversy and Soul-making Theory

Soul-making theory teaches that God created spiritually immature human beings who were morally neutral and capable of choosing either good or evil.[70] Futher, because God created humanity spiritually immature, he has allowed the existence of evil for the purpose of soul-making.[71] People only grow and develop through the exercise of freedom in a spiritually ambiguous world.[72] Humans are free beings, free to bring evil and suffering upon both themselves and others. This implies that the natural environment contains natural evils as one element which contributes to soul development.[73] The divine intention for humanity was to develop perfect finite beings in loving relationship with their Creator. Hence, God allowed both the natural and human evil to exist.

The idea that natural evil plays a part in soul development makes sense. However, the creation of humanity as spiritually immature raises a question about the biblical description of the creation of human beings. God said, "Let us make man in our image in our likeness" (Gen 1:26). Cairus remarks that the physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual endowments, as well as the ability to commune with God are integral to God's image.[74] The image has a capacity to relate to God. This means that God can enter into personal relationship with humankind and make a covenant with them.[75] Human function in its sphere has to be commensurate with God in his sphere because human beings are God's agents (Gen 2:4-6, 15) and substitutes (Ps

[70] S.T. Davis, "Free Will and Evil," in id., *Encountering Evil*, 72 (69-83).
[71] Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 69.
[72] Hick, "An Irenaean Theodicy," 46.
[73] Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 323, 327.
[74]A.E. Cairus, "The Doctrine of Man," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 208 (205-33).
[75] K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. III, Part 1 (ed. T.F. Torrance and G.W. Bromiley; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2009), 183-84.

8:3-8; 115:16). They did not merely turn out in the image of God, but were carefully designed to be such.[76]

The "image" portrays the product of the creation rather than the process. The formation of human beings was the final product of creation.[77] It was after the creation of human beings that the approval formula changed from being "good" to "very good" (Gen 1:31; cf. 1:4, 9, 12, 18, 21, 25). Everything was "good" in accordance with its kind, with the emphasis "very" at the end of the creation of humans implying that the existence of evil in the creation of God is absolutely denied and excluded.[78]

Human beings created in God's image points to their role as God's representatives over the lower creation (Gen 1:26b; Ps 8:6-8). They were created to glorify God, and to represent his goodness, wisdom, and power (Ps 19:1-4; 100:1-4). God's glory cannot be represented by morally and spiritually immature beings.[79] The scripture provides clear evidence that God created fully mature human beings both morally and spiritually.

The great controversy theory demonstrates that God has set a high standard in the creation of humans (Gen 1:31). At the fall, Adam and Eve dropped below the benchmark God had set. Their eyes were opened and they realized they were naked (Gen 3:7), a sign of emptiness when they had previously been filled with God's glory. They covered themselves with fig leaves because they were ashamed (Gen 3:8), an indication of trying to come up to God's standard from their fallen state. Leupold comments that they saw God's glory and presence as offensive. For them to feel no guilt shows that they were living in a perfect state and had no occasion to feel guilty. The feeling of guilt showed disharmony between God and humans.[80] There was no longer human capability for eternal existence.

After 130 years Adam had sons and daughters in his own image and likeness (Gen 5:1-3). Henry points out that Adam's image is sinful and defiled, frail, wretched, and mortal.[81] It is the reverse of the divine image and appears in an immature state; i.e., humans now needed soul-making. In

[76] Cairus, 207.
[77] J.G. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC 1; Dallas: Word, 1987), 30.
[78] C.F. Kiel and F. Delitzsch, "Genesis," in *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 1:67-92.
[79] Carius, 207.
[80] H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis 1-19* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1942), 138.
[81] *Mathew Henry's Concise Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 12.

the great controversy Satan's main purpose was to inflict pain and destroy the soul; but God uses his authority to protect and justify humanity and his character through his purpose/plan of redemption.

Soul-making theory rings true about human experience. The response to evil and suffering in the world does not come in a logical formula but out of actual experience. Soul-making theory recognizes that Christian faith is a pilgrimage of spiritual development.[82] However, the weakness of this theory is that some forms of evil and suffering, such as the holocaust of the Jews, were so massive and irrational that they destroyed the soul instead of contributing to soul development.[83]

In addition, the understanding of the doctrine of the creation of humanity is confused in soul-making theory. The statement of divine intention (Gen 1:26) is important. It shows that human beings did not merely turn out in the image of God, but were carefully designed to be such.[84] How can a morally and spiritually immature being be God's steward and representation? The "image" portrays the product of the creation, rather than the process. The creation of human beings is the final product of creation.[85]

The great controversy theory demonstrates that God set a high standard in creating humankind, which was very good (Gen 1:31). At the fall Adam and Eve dropped below the benchmark God had set. Their eyes were opened and they realized they were naked (Gen 3:7). They covered themselves with fig leaves because they were ashamed (Gen 3:8). This is an indication of trying to meet God's standard from their fallen state. They saw God's glory and presence as offensive. The feeling of guilt demonstrated the new disharmony between human beings and God.[86]

Further, the great controversy theory views massive and irrational evil and suffering as an attack from the adversary. People who carry out horrendous evils manifest Satan's attributes. The scripture contains records of people such as Pharaoh (Exod 6-7), Haman (Esth 3:13), and Sennacherib

[82] T.G. Long, *What Shall We Say? Evil, Suffering and the Crisis of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 84.
[83] M.C. Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 52.
[84] Cairus, 207.
[85] J.G. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC 1; Dallas: Word, 1987), 30.
[86] Leupold, 138.

(2 Kgs 18: 28-30; 19: 9-10), who attempted to wipe out the Israelites through slavery and genocide. God permits what happens to each individual, family, community, and race (Rom 8:28). He permits Satan to attack any individual or family, as portrayed in the book of Job. He allows accidents, genocides, holocausts, and permits people to suffer because such suffering fits into his redemption strategy for unmasking and destroying Satan's power.[87] God is passionately present in times of distress. This leads to the next model, communion theory.

4. Great Controversy and Communion Theory

Communion theory provides insight into God as a compassionate deity, who suffers with his creatures and is passionately present in their moments of distress. This theory does not explain why God allowed evil and suffering from the beginning; yet it open doors to explore God's goodness and power as he comforts and sustains the believer in moments of trial. The reality of evil and suffering is not denied; instead it is heightened. What is usually seen as something to be avoided is accepted as an experience with God.[88] In this setting the great controversy model portrays God as the incarnate redeemer, who demonstrates his saving power in taking upon himself the curse of sin and by defeating the power of evil in his death on the cross,[89] thereby providing a true demonstration of who God is and his sovereignty.

God is not detached, cold, and distant from human agonies. He is Emmanuel, God with us. If suffering is present in the history of humanity, this explains why God's goodness was demonstrated in the power of humiliation on the cross. The incarnated Christ is the proof of God's union with humanity in his suffering.[90] The conflict theory portrays God's love as the power to deliver and sustain humanity. The anguish in Gethsemane

[87] E. Christian, "The Great Controversy and Human Suffering," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 10 (1999): 96 (90-98).
[88] Green, 434; see also Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. III, Part 3, 69; Moltmann, 5.
[89] Christian, 96.
[90] J.E. Echeverria, "The Gospel of Redemptive Suffering: Reflections on John Paul II's *Salvifici Doloris*," in *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil* (ed. P. van Inwagen; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 126 (111-47).

shows that powerlessness characterizes God's reign.[91] The way of God in the world is not a display of the love of power, but a display of the power of love.

The weakness in the communion theory is that while it upholds faith in God, it does not provide reasons why evil and suffering happen. The great controversy model likewise upholds faith in God's saving power. It also identifies the origin of evil and puts forward God's plan of redemption as the divine solution to the issue of evil and suffering. Humans suffer because we live in the battlefield where evil and good are in conflict. The conflict will end when God completes his work for humanity's redemption, and that will happen at the eschaton, which brings us to the final theory to be examined.

5. Great Controversy and the Eschatological Theory

The eschatological theory is based on the belief that human life extends beyond personal death. The righteous will receive their full reward and the wicked receive their appropriate punishment at the end of time.[92] The great controversy theory regards the end-time reward of the righteous and punishment of the wicked as the ultimate divine deliverance. This will happen when God brings to a close his redemptive work. The great controversy will end. God will physically destroy Satan (Rev 20:7-10). He will wipe away all tears. There will be no more pain, suffering and death, no more mourning (Rev 21:3- 4).

Along with the extinction of death, grief, affliction and suffering also disappear. The order of human existence marred by sin and its accompanying distress gives way to the perfect order of eternal peaceful existence.[93] This is the ultimate fulfilment of the plan of redemption. "They shall be my people and I will be their God" (Jer 32:38).

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[91] D. Neville, "God's Presence and the Power: Christology and Theodicy in Mark's Crucifixion Narrative," in *Theodicy and Eschatology* (ed. B. Barber and D. Neville; Adelaide: ATF Press, 2005), 25-26 (19-66).

[92] Green, 434; see also Osborne, 74. For many Christians, this entrance into rewards is conceptualized as beginning at death. See M.J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 1175-80.

[93] R.H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 373.

The weakness in the eschatological theory is that it only provides hope for the future but does not address the present issue of evil and subsequent pain. It only hopes that the future will be different from what is seen now.[94] The problem of theodicy in the scripture raises the question, "How long, O Lord?" (Ps 6:1-2, 88; Dan 9:19-20; Hab 1:2; Rev 6:10). Texts of this kind show that theodicy is not simply an intellectual exercise; it is an intense and desperate search for meaning. This quest for meaning was answered by offering an eschatological solution (Dan 12:2-3). It was revealed that in the future God will ultimately solve the problem of evil and human suffering.[95] In view of the great controversy, eschatology can be seen as a logical development in response to the experience of evil and suffering. The present, however trying, can be understood as a step on the way to realization of God's redemptive purpose.[96]

Examining the five different theories in conjunction with the great controversy theory reveals that the problem of evil and suffering happens as the outcome of the great conflict. This world is a war zone in the great struggle between God and Satan. Christian notes that in the war zone, both people and the land are affected. Life in a war zone is dangerous. Crops are ruined, forests destroyed, water is poisoned, roads and fields are mined, bombs fall on unexpected areas, people starve, suffer, and die.[97] Both natural and moral evils are the result of the fall and rebellion. Satan is able to cause natural disaster and disease to destroy the environment and people.

CONCLUSION

Evil belongs to the syllabus of religion, which is expected to say something about the nature, source, and consequences of evil. How has evil developed and to what extent does it affect humanity? Can it be eradicated? Different theories have been developed as a response to the problem of evil and human suffering. Classical or Greater Good theory reconciles the existence

[94] F. Sontag, "Anthropodicy and the Return of God," in Davis, *Encountering Evil*, 142 (137-60).

[95] B. Barber, "Theodicy, Eschatology and Postmodernity," in Barber and Neville, *Theodicy and Eschatology*, 202 (201-207).

[96] M. O'Brien, "Theodicy and Eschatology; Old Testament Considerations," in Barber and Neville, *Theodicy and Eschatology*, 16 (1-18).

[97] Christian, 92.

of evil in the world with the doctrine of all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good God. The usual conclusion of this theory is that God allowed evil to exist in order to bring about something good. However, the problem with this is that the compatibility of God and the apparent pointlessness of much evil is questionable. When evaluating this theory in view of Great Controversy theory, the existence of evil is not the reason for God to bring about greater good. Evil exists because of God's goodness in giving free will choices to both the angels and human beings. God has the power to control the apparent pointlessness of evil yet his goodness does not allow him to manipulate the free will choices of his created beings.

The Free Will theory builds on the idea that evil resulted from the creatures' free will. The fault, then, lies with God's created beings and not with the all-knowing, all-powerful, and perfectly good creator. The great controversy theory also accepts the fact that God created both the angels and humankind as free moral beings. The scripture is clear on the role of free will in the origin of evil. Lucifer was blameless from the day God created him till wickedness was found in him (Ezek 28:15). However, the weakness and the long-standing challenge to the free will theory is that it does not offer answers to natural evil. Natural evil occurs causing human suffering and pain outside of our free will choices.

Among many theories given as to how evil arose and why God allowed its existence is the suggestion that evil originated with a war in heaven over God's authority. The books of Ezekiel (28:1-19) and Isaiah (14: 4-23) in the OT and the book of Revelation (12:7-10) in the NT provide the background of the origin of evil and the cosmic conflict between good and evil. The conflict began with Lucifer, who envied God's power and sowed dissention among his angelic colleagues. The dissention led to open conflict with God and, as a result, Lucifer and his followers were cast out of heaven (Ezek 28:16, Rev 12:7-9).

In the great controversy God's law was one of the components that was attacked. Satan, disguised as a serpent, challenged Eve to choose independently rather than obey God's law (Gen 3:4). The serpent's suggestions promised that violation of God's command would bring freedom. In the process human freedom to act independently was attacked and undermined. The serpent claimed to know what God knew, just as Lucifer boasted that he would be like God (Isa 14:13-14). God's love and

justice were also questioned by the serpent in the controversy in the garden. In the same way, in accusing God for forgiving and accepting Joshua (Zech 3:1-5), Satan argues that God can only bring justice against the violator of the law and that it is unjust to show mercy. Finally, the relationship between God and humanity was confronted. God is a relational deity whose purpose for creating free moral beings was to have a free loving relationship with them. God's searching for humankind at the Fall proves his desire to reclaim his creation and bring it back to himself (Gen 3:8).

God's rescue plan, the plan of redemption, is the only and ultimate solution to the problem of evil and human suffering. The redemption plan became a reality through Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection. At his coming he was met by the adversary who sought to destroy him. The purpose of Satan's attack was to stop God's plan of redemption by using King Herod to kill the Son of God. When his physical attempt to kill Jesus was defeated, Satan attacked him through spiritual temptation and was again defeated (Matt 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). Christ's death on the cross is the climax of the four gospels and this is where provision was made for the plan of redemption to be fully accomplished. Satan was unmasked. The death of Christ confirmed Satan's character as the instigator of all kinds of evil and human suffering, and showed to the world God's willingness to sacrifice everything to restore his creation.

BOOK REVIEWS

Andrew Murray, *Thinking about Political Things: An Aristotelian Approach to Pacific Life* (The Marist Series 3; Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2016), i-xiv, 193 pp.

In three years of teaching philosophy to Papua New Guinean nationals in a Catholic seminary in the Highlands, my most successful class was a course on economic and political theory. The brighter students embraced the economists who gave them the conceptual tools they needed to understand their own experience of the great changes and constant clashes in worldviews that have taken place since Western contact, which in some places in PNG was only in the 1930s, 1940s, or 1950s. For example, studying the economic theories of John Locke and Adam Smith empowered my students to understand the presuppositions of Westerners, including missionaries, who tried to buy pieces of land for axes and razorblades, and to articulate their own traditional understanding of land as communally owned and inalienable from the community. For myself, a highly educated American, such intellectual empowerment is one of the primary goals of all my classes. I wish to mediate to my students the best of the Western intellectual tradition so that they can acquire the concepts and develop the critical thinking skills which will enable them to navigate successfully their future roles as priests in a society in which traditional, Christian (in different varieties), and secular values and practices exist side by side, sometimes in competition, sometimes in synthesis, and all too often with inconsistencies. My goal is not to Americanize or Westernize my students, for I have no delusion that Western societies are ideal societies or that American values are the same as Christian values. Rather, it is to develop in them the critical and speculative thinking skills that are taken for granted in Western liberal arts education, so that my students can be liberated in their mental life, even as their country was politically liberated forty years ago. Now, having read Andrew Murray's *Thinking about Political Things*, I wish that it had been on hand to use as a text in my economic and political theory course, for he and I share a similar vision of the service that a classically-trained philosopher can offer to the people of the Pacific.

Thinking about Political Things is "a work of political education" (7). Murray seeks to use the topics, distinctions, and concepts found in Aristotle's political works to illuminate the political situations and problems of the Pacific island countries and to give Pacific Islanders the conceptual tools needed to better address them. One thesis of the book is that modern political theory, which began with Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527) and continued with philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and John Locke (1632–1704), is ill-suited for Pacific life and that the Pacific Islanders were ill-served when the various colonial powers sought to implant the political structures of the modern nation state upon their former possessions. The modern state arose out of the old European monarchies, which had sought to establish centralized control over relatively large territories and populations (e.g., France, Spain). According to Murray, modern political theory assumes that humans are naturally solitary individuals, motivated by a desire for pleasure, who are at war with each other. Realizing the difficulties of anarchy, the people of a region voluntarily give their power to a sovereign (whether a king or parliament), who has a monopoly on lethal force. This sovereign maintains the peace and enforces economic contracts, through threat of irresistible force, so that the people have the security needed to prosper and live "relaxed and comfortable" lives (151). Modern states generally treat ethics and personal happiness as a private matter to be taught by religion, allowing people to pursue diverse lifestyles and contrary understandings of happiness so long as they do not harm others. In their 20th century incarnations, modern societies are expected to generate enough income for a complex bureaucracy, strong military forces, and extensive government services.

While the modern state has been relatively successful in large, multi-racial countries with plentiful resources, such as the United States, and in smaller European countries with people who readily identify as a single nation (Denmark, France), Murray argues that this model and theory are simply out of place in the Pacific. In the current Pacific countries, there is little tradition of strong, centralized government or of the rule of written law. Apart from Tonga, which alone escaped colonization, most of the present national boundaries are artificial legacies of colonialism that either group together people of different ethnic backgrounds (such as PNG and the Northern Solomons) or divide up the more natural grouping (PNG and

West Papua, the Samoas, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands). Populations – Nauru has a population of 10,000, Guam has 160,000, Vanuatu 262,000, PNG has the most at 7 million – and natural resources tend to be small and scattered, so that it is simply unrealistic to expect that the Pacific nations will be able to develop the complex economies of the West or even of Southeast Asia. Colonial population shifts have also resulted in large originally non-native populations in some countries such as Fiji and the Mariana Islands. More importantly, pre-political structures such as the family, village, and tribe tend to be foundational in the personal identity of Pacific Islanders, so that the Western emphasis on individualism is simply alien. Pacific Islanders traditionally experienced life holistically, meaning that spiritual, social, economic, and political relations were all tied together. As a result, the Western practice of assuming different roles and dividing different spheres of life from each other (e.g. religion and politics) presents difficulties. Therefore, Murray concludes, "Too often, Pacific island countries have received constitutions, laws, and policy that might better suit their large neighbours. It is now time for them to learn from one another about how to best to adapt the kind of life possible in their countries to a world in which global forces play an increasingly significant part" (42).

Murray is right that Aristotle can help Pacific islands develop their own alternative models to the modern state, because Aristotle (384–322 BC) himself is pre-modern. The ancient Mediterranean world mostly consisted of small political communities (city-states) much more similar in scale to island nations than to most modern states. While Greece had advanced literature and arts and trade, much of society was still concerned with food production, and pre-political structures such as tribes still existed. Perhaps reacting to Plato's abstract political theory, Aristotle studied how the various city-states in Greece actually functioned, and thus his political theory is infused with realism and an eye for detail that can help contemporary readers to rethink their presuppositions about politics and to be open to new possibilities. The gulf between Aristotle and most modern political thinkers is clearly expressed by Aristotle himself:

> It is manifest therefore that a country is not merely the sharing of a common locality for the purpose of preventing mutual injury and exchanging goods. These are necessary pre-conditions of a country's

> existence, yet nevertheless, even if all these conditions are present, that does not make a country, but a country is a partnership of families and of clans in living well and its object is a full and independent life (*Politics* III.5.1280b30–35).[1]

Aristotle goes on to say that friendship is the goal and the glue of social life, so that politics seeks not just living in common but citizens doing beautiful deeds for and with each other. For Aristotle, a country is more than just a mutual defence pact directed towards economic prosperity. It is a community united in friendship directed towards a common vision of the good life (happiness) in which all its members are to share. The political community is built upon the pre-existing natural communities of the family and tribe and is not in competition with them. Aristotle's description of political life fits my own experience of life in PNG, in which local communities seek right internal and external relations (friendships, *wanbel tru*) in order to achieve *gutpela sindaun* (the good, peaceful life). Thus, in this area and many others, Aristotle can help Pacific Islanders to think more clearly and deeply about political concepts they already have, rather than to replace their traditional political ideas with modern political theories.

Thinking about Political Things outlines most of the topics and concepts of Aristotle's *Politics* in ten short and easy-to-read chapters. Some material from Aristotle's works on *Ethics, Rhetoric*, and *Poetics* is also included, as are insightful contrasts with modern political theory. Murray often uses examples from the political situations of various Pacific nations as illustrations and applications of Aristotle's ideas. Additionally, the book contains four "excursions" on the *wantok* system in Melanesian, Fiji's on-going constitutional crisis, Tonga's successful monarchical government, and on the attempts of the native peoples of the Mariana Islands and Micronesia to survive colonization and achieve political autonomy. These excursions both discuss the specific political realities of the Pacific and use Aristotle's concepts to illuminate them. A modified version of the first excursion appears in this issue of the *Melanesian Journal of Theology*. To aid the reader unfamiliar with Aristotle, especially those who may be inspired to read the philosopher directly, Murray includes an outline of the

[1] Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1944). All quotations from the *Politics* are from this translation.

Politics and a chart showing how the chapters in *Thinking about Political Things* line up with the chapters of Aristotle's works. Finally, to aid the reader unfamiliar with the Pacific nations, Murray has included a chart of basic facts about the different nations (land area, population, GNP, political status) and extensive maps. This book is a model for making philosophy accessible to different audiences. I will now present detailed summaries of these chapters and then of the excursions, with additional comments that seek to clarify and, in some places, correct Murray's explanations of Aristotle's political thought.

Chapter 1 explains the purpose and thesis of the book, as summarized above, including an introduction to Aristotle and his writings. Murray notes sympathetically here and throughout the book that Pacific Islanders are annoyed when their countries are said to be "weak states" (1), for this implies that they have failed to correctly implement the model of the modern state. He suggests that the perceived failure may not lie with Pacific Islanders themselves, but is a conceptual failure of the West and former and current colonial powers to imagine alternative models of political communities, models that better fit the obvious fact that Pacific life is materially and culturally quite different from life in North America and Europe. All too often the good aspects of Pacific life – close communities with distinct traditions, food and shelter for almost all, close connections to the land and sea, and the ability to be at peace in the present rather than ever scrambling to get ahead – are not properly recognized and celebrated. That happiness is not the same as economic growth and may not depend upon strong central government is something that the West has forgotten, but that Aristotle and the Pacific recognize.

Chapter 2 draws upon *Politics* I to discuss the formation of countries. In contrast to Locke, Hobbes, and Rousseau, who imagine humans as originally living solitary and autonomous lives, Aristotle says that humans are naturally social and form extended households (parents and children, master and servants) and village communities in order to survive and because our rational and talkative nature orients us toward community life. These pre-political communities unite to form a political community or country so that the people can be secure and self-sufficient, and also because only a political company enables "the full flowering of the human nature" (14). Aristotle also distinguishes different kinds of rule: husband

over wife, parents over children, master over servant, king over subject, and citizen over citizen. To extend fatherly rule into politics is paternalism; to extend mastery rule into politics is despotism; and both fail to fully achieve a political community. The true virtue of a citizen consists in knowing how to rule according to the law and how to be ruled by the law. To me, this is a tremendous insight into the difficulty that non-Western countries have with democracy sliding into autocracy. The virtue of every prime minister and president can be measured by their willingness to be ruled by another. Any leader who places himself above the rule of law and the electoral process is a poor citizen who threatens the existence of the political community.

Here and in a later discussion in Chapter 9, Murray notes that Aristotle views the husband and wife as complementing each other, but not as being equals in the marriage relationship. Aristotle clearly indicates that it is barbarous for the husband to treat his wife as a servant or property. Marriage is a partnership in which the husband and wife complement each other's virtues and perform complementary roles in the household. He teaches that the rule of the husband over the wife is political insofar as it is for the good of the family (and not merely for the good of the husband) and involves deliberation and a division of household authority, but the rule is not political insofar as the authority is not shared equally and the wife never rules the husband.[2] While I find Aristotle's perpetual subordination of the wife problematic, his account of the household is certainly close to the traditional roles that men and women play in maintaining the household and family in the Pacific. Therefore, Aristotle's account of the household could help Pacific Islanders develop their own understanding of the husband and wife having equal but distinct authority in the family.

Chapter 3 uses Aristotle's criticisms (in *Politics* II) of ideal states, as presented by other philosophers, and of actual constitutions to discuss the need for statesmen to learn from the experiences of other nations, especially those with similar living conditions, and to avoid the error of political rationalism, which assumes that there is one best political model that should be imposed regardless of the circumstances. Murray explains

[2] According to Aristotle, in a republic, men of equal virtue take turns ruling and being ruled by each other. In marriage, the rule always belongs to the husband, though he is supposed to delegate to his wife authority over household tasks that women are more fit to accomplish. See *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.10.1160b33–38 and *Politics* I.5. 1259a40–1259b4.

that for Aristotle there are four senses of the best constitution: (i) the best possible without qualification; (ii) the best that certain circumstances allow; (iii) the best a certain people may achieve; and (iv) the best that is generally achievable. One of the basic points of *Thinking About Political Things* is that Pacific politicians ought to think about what is best for their country in terms of (ii) and (iii), and that Pacific communities should not judged against (i). Summarizing Aristotle's criticism of the communal society that Plato presents in the *Republic*, Murray discusses the questions of what brings political unity to Pacific nations and the value of individuals having enough land to enable themselves to learn responsibility and generosity.

Chapters 4, 5, and 7 cover the heart of the *Politics*: Aristotle's detailed discussions of citizenship, the various kinds of constitutions, the absolutely best constitution, the best constitution generally achievable, and how to keep the political community from collapsing. Within these general topics, Murray raises additional political "things to think about" such as the composition of and requirements for human happiness, the different kinds of political offices, and the nature of political speech. Here I offer my own summary of Aristotle on constitutions in order to clarify and supplement Murray's presentation. Most fundamentally, a citizen is a person eligible to hold political office and to participate in political deliberations. The political community is composed of the country's citizens, therefore, if political power is concentrated in the hands of a single person, Aristotle doubts whether the inhabitants of that country are properly citizens and whether a political community truly exists there. In general, Aristotle supports a wide distribution of at least some political power to the larger community, perhaps through voting or jury duty, so that the majority of the community feels personally involved in the political process. Aristotle begins his analysis of constitutions simply by repeating Plato's analysis in the *Statesman* that one can distinguish between rule that is directed towards the happiness of the whole community and is, therefore, just, and rule that is directed towards the short-term benefit of those who are ruling and is, therefore, unjust. One can then distinguish whether a single person, a few, or the majority of people are ruling, and thus identify the following pairs of just and unjust constitutions: monarchy and tyranny, aristocracy and oligarchy, and republic and democracy. I note that by "aristocracy" Aristotle does not mean the rule of landed nobility, but the rule of the best

qualified. Then, Aristotle moves beyond Plato to ask what are the qualities that entitle one to political power in the different constitutions. In the three just constitutions, office is awarded on the basis of moral and intellectual virtue. In the best constitution without qualification, the citizens will recognize either one person of outstanding virtue as king (monarchy) or will cultivate a cadre of talented individuals who will take turns ruling (aristocracy).[3] In terms of a second best constitution, if the general populace has developed moral virtues such as moderation, a republic can be established in which the people vote for the best rulers and the best laws (*Politics* III.11.1288a1–32). In the just constitutions, rulers and citizens alike will respect the rule of law, with the wise rulers understanding when exceptions to the letter of the law ought to be made.

In his discussion of the best constitution that is commonly achievable, Aristotle recognizes that in most political communities people are motivated not by a love of the common good, but by self-interest or the interest of their social class. Generally, each social class advances its own criteria for who ought to rule, criteria that result in the unjust constitutions that are not directed toward the flourishing of the entire community. For example, the poor say that all citizens are equally qualified to rule and thus desire direct democracy or a random distribution of offices, so that the poor are most likely to be the dominant faction in the government. The poor will treat freedom and equality as the goal of the state, so that the will and whim of the people is more powerful than the law or property rights. The rich will argue that wealth is a sign of political ability and education and will seek property qualifications on who can vote and who can hold office in order to marginalize the poor, so that the government will follow the interests of the rich. Lastly, if a society has a hereditary nobility, they will claim the right to rule based on good birth and will seek automatic inclusion within the political system. Conversely, Aristotle argues that freedom, wealth, and birth no more qualify someone to rule than they qualify that person to pilot a ship. Rather, ability is what should count. Thus, Aristotle identifies the relevant political abilities as the moral and intellectual virtues and describes in detail better and worse democracies and oligarchies, depending on the moral character of the dominant social class and the political structures they

[3] Such an aristocracy is discussed in some detail in *Politics* VII and VIII, which concern the best constitution possible without qualification.

create.[4] All too often, a political community collapses into an unending conflict between the rich and the poor, oscillating between oligarchy and democracy with periods of tyranny when one side commits itself to a strong man. Yet all is not doom and gloom, for Aristotle argues that skilled statesmen can create a constitution that blends together certain aspects of democracy and oligarchy so that the different social classes are involved in some aspect of the political process and, thus, the whole political community comes to embrace the constitution. Insofar as a blended constitution is directed towards the preservation of the country and not the interest of any one faction, such a blended constitution is called a republic. If this constitution also results in virtuous men being chosen as leaders, then it can even be considered an aristocracy. For example, this kind of aristocratic republic may involve the poor by allowing all to vote for office-holders and requiring office-holders to be publically audited at the end of their term. Voting itself has an aristocratic element because it involves choosing the best candidate for the job. At the same time, certain offices may have property qualifications, which may result in more educated people running for office. Aristotle leaves the details of this best widely achievable and most stable constitution to the actual statesmen.

As Murray indicates, the value of Aristotle's analysis for the Pacific is manifold. For example, governments should seek to involve the whole of their populace while also being able to govern effectively. Governments must avoid shifting into de facto oligarchies in which only the rich can successfully run for election. Aristotle opens up the possibility of an incredible variety of constitutional forms in which different methods can be used to connect different social groups to the political process. For example, whereas the modern state makes little provision for hereditary nobility or traditional chiefs, the Pacific nations ought to try to connect their constitution to their traditions, as, for example, Tonga does with its mixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. Given the relatively

[4] Murray says that oligarchs claim that wealth merits political office, democrats that freedom merits political office, and the virtuous say that capability merits political office. He claims that for Aristotle these are only partial views (70-71). This, however, is inaccurate. For Aristotle virtue, both moral and intellectual, is the real qualification for political office, just as skill in navigation is what qualifies one to be a pilot. Similarly, Murray says that those who seek virtue have a partial grasp of the human good (146), whereas for Aristotle the human good or happiness consists in virtuous activity.

small size of Pacific countries, experimentation with blended constitutional forms should be easier to accomplish in the Pacific than it is in large Western countries. Unlike the modern ideal of the stable state, Aristotle pictures a country as a living organism whose leaders must direct towards the common good in ever-changing circumstances. Murray also raises a number of questions about how to apply Aristotle's ideas to the Pacific. For example, who are the poor in Pacific society when urban areas tend to have cash economies but few gardens, and rural areas have subsistence economies but plentiful food? Additionally, Murray emphasizes that the distribution of political power and the distribution of the resources and wealth of a country are both matters of justice, in which the goal should be for as many as possible to be satisfied, so that they will love and support the constitution. Murray and Aristotle argue that the development of a middle economic class generally brings stability to the government and is a sign that the constitution is directed towards the good of all. The harmonization of varied claims for power and resources is especially important in multicultural Pacific societies.

Chapter 6 invites readers to think about what may be the best constitution given the particular circumstances of a country. Murray reinterprets Aristotle's comments on how race, climate, and economic activities affect a people's character to mean that a country's culture or cultures must be taken into account in setting up its political institutions. The small populations and resources of Pacific nations also make it difficult for them to achieve the material prosperity now taken for granted in the West. Creative partnerships among island nations or with Western nations may allow Pacific Islanders to enjoy certain goods and services. Perhaps it should be mentioned that these partnerships should not be exploitative, as when Western countries bribe Pacific nations to take in unwanted people (as when Australia set up detainment centres in Nauru and PNG or the USA sent terrorism detainees to Palau) or to vote a certain way in the United Nations. The chapter concludes with some thoughts on when monarchical government is appropriate.

Chapter 8 discusses in detail how Pacific nations might foster the happiness of their citizens. For Aristotle, happiness or human flourishing consists of developing and living out the moral virtues, which enable us to control our emotions and desires rather than being controlled by them, and

the intellectual virtues, which perfect our reasoning and enable us to make wise decisions and grasp the truth. Aristotle distinguishes entertainment whose goal is relaxation, from virtuous political activity which is strenuous but necessary for a flourishing community, and the activities of leisure, such as art, science, and speculative thought, in which man's highest rational capacities are developed and expressed. As Aristotle says in *Ethics* VI.12–13, political activity is directed at making happiness possible, while wisdom is happiness itself. How can a country steer its citizens away from the life of pleasure and ensure some leisure for them all? Can a country inculcate the moral and intellectual virtues in its citizens through education? Murray notes that the Pacific has a strong tradition of informally educating children who watch and imitate their parents at work, so that young children can be surprisingly self-sufficient, being able to cook their own food, fish, cross mountains, make gardens, etc. Conversely, if my own experiences in PNG are representative of the region, having the appropriate curriculum, material resources, and trained personnel for formal education is a continuous challenge for Pacific nations. In their appreciation for the educational and communal value of song and dance, Plato and Aristotle are quite close to Pacific Islanders, some of whom even identify the sing-sing (traditional festival) as a defining human activity.[5] In these questions about education and festivals, Plato's *Laws* fills in the religious aspect which Aristotle lacks. Plato argues that ethical training generally requires divine authority for it to be adapted by the whole community. Furthermore, religious festivals by their nature distribute the surplus of the community to all its members, and through song, dance, sacred drama, and traditional stories people lacking formal education or speculative ability contemplate divine realities. Even from a philosophical perspective, religion has a key role to play in the flourishing of the human community.[6]

Chapter 9 raises a number of economic issues inspired by Aristotle's pre-capitalist understanding of wealth. For Aristotle, material goods are

[5] J.C. Goodale, *To Sing with Pigs Is Human. The Concept of Person in Papua New Guinea* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

[6] For a discussion of festival as contemplative activity, see J. Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, trans. Alexander Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), chapter 5, and J. Pieper, *In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity*, trans. R. and C. Winston (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1965).

properly produced to be used. To produce a good simply for the purpose of selling it for money is contrary to the nature of the thing. For example, a shoe's natural purpose is to be worn, not to be sold. Therefore, over 2,000 years before Karl Marx, Aristotle understood that trade alienates one from the natural purposes of material goods. Furthermore, Murray focuses on Aristotle's idea that wealth is only valuable insofar as it enables a household to live well and virtuously. For natural wealth such as food, land, and timber, there is a natural maximum beyond which a household can no longer use its wealth but must give it away or trade it. There is no such limit regarding money, which does not rot or revert to jungle, but Aristotle firmly believes that money is a means to facilitate fair trade between people. By itself, money is useless and thus cannot bring about human happiness. Here, I wish Murray had discussed in greater depth the great difference between pre-capitalist understandings of wealth and those of capitalism. In capitalism, land, people, and money are commoditized: they are valued not for their use but for their ability to make money, which is seen as an end in itself. Even though traditional societies sometimes commoditize people (women and slaves) and things (pigs and shells), happiness is generally understood to be found in personal relationships, and so material goods have their value insofar as they are useful for family and communal living and for maintaining personal relationships. Thus, for example, in PNG, people will earn money because they have a pressing need such as school fees or doctor bills or social obligations such as bride price or funerals; but the idea of saving money for the general future or investing it for a future profit is difficult. As Murray notes, maintaining a business is difficult because the capital for the business is often used to pay for the welfare of one's tribesmen. Murray also raises issues such as the just distribution of the land and the difference between commercial justice (a fair trade between two parties) and distributive justice (the fair distribution of goods or evils through the community). The West tends to focus almost exclusively on commercial justice, whereas traditional Pacific societies focus on distributive justice. Thus, if a community in PNG feels that it is not benefitting appropriately from a development project on its customary land, it will sometimes simply end the project regardless of the contract. Not being taken advantage of is often more important than economic development.

The book concludes in Chapter 10 with a discussion of various things that are good for humans to have and do, and the question of which are prerequisites for happiness and in which happiness consists. Murray summarizes the main themes of his study and argues once again that Aristotle's political thought is much more appropriate to the realities of political life in the Pacific than is modern political theory. Murray closes with a series of questions for Pacific Islanders to ask themselves. For example, what intellectual and moral virtues do Pacific people need for successful living? What bodily goods and what external goods are necessary and desired, and how can people be moderate and just in their desires for and distribution of such goods? He also challenges Westerners to humbly acknowledge the good to be found in Pacific life and the evils found in modern Western societies. Finally, a brief epilogue challenges Pacific Islanders to respond to Murray's retrieval of classical Western political theory with a retrieval and renewal of their own "Pacific traditions of political theory and practice" (155).

Murray's four excursions into the political life of particular Pacific nations are meant to demonstrate how Aristotle's concepts and categories can clarify and even illuminate the value of aspects of Pacific political life that modern political theory finds problematic. They are meant to validate the relevance of Aristotle for thinking about political things in the Pacific. The first excursion, which is on the Melanesian *wantok* system, is a good example of the fruit of Murray's method. He correctly explains that *wantok* is an analogous concept, meaning that it covers a number of different realities that are related to a central meaning. The *wantok* system is an expansion of the traditional obligation to support one's tribesmen to people who are not tribesmen but who share a commonality when they are in a foreign setting. For example, if two men from Enga (a Highlands province) were in Chimbu (another Highlands province), they would expect mutual support from one another because of their common origin. However, if an Engan and a Chimbu man were in the distant capital of Port Moresby, they may expect support from each other as Highlanders. Finally, if an Engan and a man from the capital were in Australia, they would expect support from each other as PNG nationals. As Murray notes, the *wantok* system can easily disrupt political activities modelled on the Western system because those in power and those providing services will often give preferential

treatment to their *wantoks* and tribesmen, who will in turn support them in elections. Politics turns into a spoils system in which politicians seek to acquire public funds for the benefit of themselves and their tribesmen. Modern political theory, which generally considers only individuals and an all-powerful government, can only view the *wantok* system as a problem. Murray, on the other hand, argues that the *wantok* system represents pre-political relationships and obligations that ought to be the foundation of the political community of PNG. As Aristotle himself noted, a country is created by families and clans seeking to achieve the good life together. Before Western contact and colonization, PNG was divided into some 800 different linguistic groups and even more tribal groups, with most people being confined by fear to a small geographical area. Today, PNG nationals can travel throughout their country and most can communicate with each other through *Tok Pisin*. While most PNG nationals only feel at home in their tribe's area, one must acknowledge the tremendous progress that PNG has made in forging a national identity and the fact that the tribes are the foundation of PNG society. Therefore, political institutions and practices must be modified in order to take the pre-political reality into account. One example of this is the current preferential voting system in which each citizen gets three votes, with the expectation that the first vote will go to the candidate his tribe has chosen. Additionally, citizens should be educated in the moral virtues required for a just distribution of PNG's limited services and resources. Finally, I would suggest that the churches of PNG need to take a strong stand against favouritism and corruption by distributing their own offices and services to those who truly deserve them and by not accepting inappropriate gifts from the government.

The excursion on Fiji looks at the difficulties that the country has had since independence in 1970 of determining who is a citizen, of forging a harmonious national identity, and of fairly distributing political power among native Fijians and Indo-Fijians (originally sent to Fiji to administer the British colony there). Fiji continues to seek the best constitution for its post-colonial circumstances. Murray summarizes the intricate constitutional arrangements meant to resolve these issues and says that it is too early to know whether the 2013 constitution will succeed in uniting the people. He himself offers the Aristotelian suggestion that the problems will only end if the two peoples can unite in true friendship.

By contrast, the excursion on Tonga cautiously acknowledges the success of Tongans in thinking through and resolving their own political problems. Favourable cultural, geographical, and historical circumstances led to Tonga transitioning from a traditional monarchy to a "constitutional government under the king" in 1870 and then to a "constitutional monarchy" in 2010 (88). Tonga appears to be a good example of a blended government since the current constitution involves a monarch, representatives of the nobles, and elected representatives of the people. Murray, however, does not develop this point.

The last excursion uses the Mariana Islands and other countries in Micronesia as an example of thinking about what constitution is best for a certain people because of their circumstances. Murray explains that these islands were often bartering pieces in the imperial squabbles between Spain, Germany, the United States, Japan, and Great Britain. The native people of the Mariana Islands are now a minority, though a strong one, in their own islands. Many of the Micronesian countries have managed to achieve autonomy while remaining in association with the USA, so that they benefit from some of the power and resources of the USA. Yet Guam still does not have political autonomy because the USA wants to continue to use it as a military base. These chapters revealed to me my own country's disingenuousness in outwardly opposing colonialism during the twentieth century while snatching up territory in the Pacific. Murray offers interesting observations on how culture, history, and geopolitics have shaped the political possibilities of these tiny island countries, though the explicit ties to Aristotle's political thought ultimately become tenuous.

I offer two final comments. First, I hope that *Thinking about Political Things* will produce further studies of this kind. I would love to see further application of the details of Aristotle's political ideas to the specific challenges facing different Pacific nations. Additionally, I believe that other political and economic thinkers such as Montesquieu, a French political thinker who also argued that the constitution of a country must take into account the character of the people and their material conditions in order to be successful, would be helpful for the people of the Pacific. Plato might also be used to supplement some of Aristotle's political ideas, especially since a number of Aristotle's insights were probably inspired by Plato's *Statesman* and *Laws*. Second, while Murray is right in insisting that the

good found in traditional Pacific life must be acknowledged, missionaries and Pacific Islanders alike must not romanticize life in the Pacific. At least in PNG, the life expectancy is ten years less than in the USA and fifteen less than in Australia,[7] many people die from treatable diseases, and many people live in fear of sorcery and of the violence that follows sorcery accusations. The flourishing of rural communities is often hindered by the lack of basic educational opportunities, health services, communications, and transportation. Much thought, experimentation, and work must be done in order for Pacific nations to reach the happiness political life is directed towards.

In sum, Murray's study is far more than a retrieval of Aristotle's political thought for Pacific Islanders. It can serve as an introduction to political theory, in general, and classical political thought, in particular, as well as an introduction to the political history of the Pacific island nations. Murray has done an admirable job of producing a work of political education. I warmly recommend his book to all who wish to think more clearly and deeply about political things. I myself will use it next time I teach political theory to PNG seminarians.

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[7] CIA, *The World Fact Book*, at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2102rank.html#pp. Accessed 19 September 2016.