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Table of Contents

Panel of Referees

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Zoltan Erdey	PhD	South African Theological Seminary
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Strive for Peace and Holiness: The Intertextual Journey of the Jacob Traditions from Genesis to Hebrews, via the Prophets

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Abstract

Interpreters approach the problems generated by the exhortation in Hebrews 12:14–17, that believers should strive for peace and holiness, and avoid the apostasy of Esau, in a variety of ways but with limited success. At issue are: the structural relationship between the pericope and its surrounding passages, the identity of the μετα παντων of Hebrews 12:14a, the conceptual links between its clauses, and the literary role of Esau. Given the manner in which the author employs the Old Testament throughout the epistle, the solution to these problems is likely to be derived from identifying the passage's Old Testament background. This article proposes that themes from the Jacob-Esau saga and their interpretations by the prophets echo in the background of the passage. Hebrews, it argues, has interpreted episodes in the exile of Jacob to Mesopotamia and return to Bethel as prefiguring the migration of the people of God to Mount Zion. Believers who apostatise will be following the bad example of Esau. This interpretation has the advantages of fitting the socio-historical context behind Hebrews, accords

[1] The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

with the argument of Hebrews 12, and sheds light on the identity of the μετα παντων.

1. Introduction

Hebrews 12:14–17 (ESV) reads as follows:

> Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birth-right for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

The problems associated with interpreting this passage are well-known. They include, (a) delineating its literary structural relationship with the rest of the chapter, given the abrupt manner in which it begins and ends, (b) identifying who the μετα παντων (everyone) in Hebrews 12:14a represented, whether it included the persecutors of the readers, or referred only to fellow Christians, (c) explaining each of the clauses, some of which are quite formulaic and appear disjointed from each other, and (d) clarifying the rhetorical and literary functions of the apparently arbitrary reference to Esau.

In general, three categories of approaches are adopted by interpreters. One category regards the passage as an interlude separating the preceding Hebrews 12:1–13 from the climatic passage describing the 'arrival at Mount Zion' (12:18–29) that follows (e.g. Ellingworth 1993; Lane 1991; Vanhoye 1976; Isaacs 2002; Attridge 1989). While Hebrews certainly employs interludes elsewhere in the letter, this particular approach is less than satisfactory. Apart from leaving the

pericope rather stranded, it also fails to provide an objective basis for resolving the interpretive problems that the passage generates.

A second category of approaches integrates the pericope into the whole of Hebrews 12, but explains the clauses as direct ethical instructions typical of the sometimes staggered ethical instructions at the closing stages of the New Testament letters (e.g. Brown 1982; Bruce 1990; Davies 1967; Moffatt 1924:206; Montefiore 1964). In effect, therefore, this group of approaches suffers from the same problems as the first category. In particular, it does not provide a coherent narrative underlying the ethical instructions. Neither does it help explain the introduction of Esau as exemplar of apostasy.

A third and more recent approach regards the passage as continuing the epistle's pilgrimage or migration to Zion motif (DeSilva 2000:455; Koester 2001:521; O'Brien 2010; Son 2005). So it is argued that the clauses coherently relate to the author's general aim of urging his readers to progress further in their spiritual journey of faithfulness to God on their way to possess the Promise. This has the advantage of fitting in very well with, and continuing the new covenant theme of, the whole epistle. It also helps to explain how the passage merges into the arrival at Mount Zion theme in 12:18–29. However, it does not explain how all the clauses within the passage coherently fit together, nor does it clarify the rhetorical role of Esau.

The fact is, in addition to the explicit reference to Esau, all the clauses in the passage appear to resonate with themes associated with the Jacob-Esau saga in the Old Testament. It is therefore possible that an examination of the saga and its interpretations may help provide further clues for interpreting and resolving the problems generated by the passage. This article is aimed at doing just that.

The argument will proceed in the following manner. Firstly, the literary style of the warning passages in which the author of Hebrews[2] employs the Old Testament in an allusive manner will be summarised and exemplified with Hebrews 6:4–8. Secondly, relevant themes from the Jacob-Esau saga in Genesis will be identified, and their subsequent interpretations by the Old Testament prophets, and the LXX translation, noted. Thirdly, an excursus into the interpretation by relevant literature of Second Temple Judaism will provide a context for the interpretation by Hebrews. Fourthly, echoes of the Jacob-Esau saga in Hebrews 12:14–17 will be identified and described. Finally, the implications of this approach will be enumerated.

2. The Old Testament Examples in the Warning Passages of Hebrews

The intriguing technique with which the author of Hebrews employs the Old Testament in his homily has been described variously as similar to Philo's allegorical method (Moffat 1924:xlvi), as typological (Goppelt 1982:176) and as a *Midrash pesher* similar to what pertained in the Dead Sea Scrolls (Kistemaker 1974:174). Johnson (2003:241), who regards the method as unique, describes it as the creation of a 'symbolic world' within which scripture is appropriated as the author's own and applied to solve the pastoral problems of the community.

This technique is particularly evident in the warning passages in which the author employs scripture in an already interpreted allusive manner,

[2]It is assumed that Hebrews is not a Pauline letter, even though it was written by a man (Heb 11:32) well known to Timothy (Heb 13:23). He wrote from prison to a community of Jewish Christians in the Diaspora, perhaps in Rome. It is also assumed that Koester's (2002:103–123) formulation of the most probable social history of this congregation is correct.
Unless otherwise stated all Bible citations are from the NRSV.

rather than using explicit citations (Mathewson 1999:210; McKnight 1992:21–59). The negative exemplars of the warning passages, which are often explicit, serve the functions of illustrating the author's point regarding the consequences of apostasy (Gleason 1998:62–91; 2000:281–303). There are a few explicitly stated positive Old Testament exemplars, such as Moses in Hebrews 3, Abraham in Hebrews 6, and the faithful in Hebrews 11, and these illustrate the positive exhortations towards fidelity and faithfulness to God in the wider argument of the letter.

However, in a number of the warning passages, the positive Old Testament examples are presented in an allusive *double entendre* manner. The clauses are couched in such a way that, on one level, they directly address the congregation. Yet, on another level, the same clauses generate a resonating Old Testament narrative background which sheds considerable light on their meanings. The rhetorical strategy behind these *double entendre* positive examples is to lure the reader/hearer into sharing in the life and history of 'our forefathers' (Heb 1:1), who, together with the readers/listeners, were being jointly perfected (Heb 11:40). With the readers understanding themselves as sharing in the positive collective memory of the 'forefathers', they would be amenable to heed the negative warnings which also applied to the 'forefathers'.

So, for example, by describing the miracles that occurred at the inauguration of the congregation as 'signs and wonders' in Hebrews 2:4, the author, in a *double entendre* manner, parallels their beginnings with the exodus of Israel from Egypt. This is because in the Old Testament, 'signs and wonders' was a staple phrase often employed for describing the miracles of the exodus (Exod 3:20, 7:3, 15:11; Deut 4:34, 6:22, 7:19; Ps 135:8–9; cf. Rengstorf 1976:200–261). This allusive

yoking of the readers with the exodus generation enabled the author to in turn apply the warning of severe consequences of failure of faith for the exodus generation to his readers (Heb 2:2–3). The positive Old Testament examples in the warning passages thus not only counterbalance the negative: they also challenge the reader/hearer into taking sides with the positive and so renouncing the negative. Identifying the Old Testament backgrounds of the positive examples of the warning passages is therefore a crucial step in their interpretation.

The warning passage of Hebrews 6:4–8 may appropriately serve to illustrate this rhetorical strategy. After all, it is similar in structure and content to Hebrews 12:14–17, both passages abruptly beginning with arresting terms, namely, αδυνατον ('impossible') in Hebrews 6:4 and ειρηνην ('peace') in Hebrews 12:14. They also have similar literary structures in which a positive subsection (6:4–5 and 12:14) is counter-balanced by a negative subsection (6:6-8 and 12:15–17). In addition, in style, sections of both passages are made up of individual, seemingly disconnected formulaic clauses, each increasing in length and complexity. Then also, the impossibility 'to restore again to repentance' in Hebrews 6:4 is paralleled by Esau's failure to obtain a change of mind despite his tears (Heb 12:17). Accordingly, a brief examination of how the Old Testament is employed in Hebrews 6:4-8 will likely provide a standard for understanding how it also operates in the background of Hebrews 12:14–17.

Scholarly opinions regarding the Old Testament background of Hebrews 6:4–8, however, markedly differ. Ellingworth (1991:42) is, for example, of the view that there is no Old Testament allusion at all in Hebrews 6:4–8. Yet, such an approach does not appear satisfactory, given the manner in which the author constructs the warning passages. Though France (1996:245–276) has argued that Psalm 110 provides an overall narrative background to the passage, his suggestion does not

help to identify the specific allusions behind the clauses. On the other hand, Attridge (1989:169) has proposed that because of the allusions to Deuteronomy 11:11–12 in the covenantal blessings and curses in Hebrews 6:7–8, the migration through the wilderness motif provides this Old Testament background. This approach gives a more satisfactory explanation of the latter part of the passage, but fails to adequately account for the Old Testament allusions in its positive first half.

The most satisfactory proposal considers the influence of themes derived from the wilderness experiences and enumerated in Nehemiah 9. Nehemiah 9 contains 'the Prayer of the Levites', and was subsequently utilised in the liturgical prayers of the synagogues (Liebreich 1961:227–237). In the prayer, the faithful recount God's acts of power and blessings throughout the wilderness years of their ancestors. Some of the clauses that are employed in the prayer echo in the background of Hebrews 6:4–6. So, salvation as spiritual enlightenment in Hebrews 6:4 alludes to the pillar of cloud that guided the wilderness generation (Neh 9:12; cf. 9:19). The statement that God provided his 'good Spirit to instruct them, and did not withhold [His] manna from their mouths' (Neh 9:20; cf. Num 11:25) parallels the tasting of the heavenly gift and the word of God, and the sharing in the Spirit described in Hebrews 6:4–5 (cf. Mathewson 1999:209–225; Oberholtzer 1988:83-97; 1988:185–196; 1988:410–419).

Thus, there is every reason to believe that the positive clauses in Hebrews 6:4–5 are *double entendre* descriptions of the positive experiences of the Hebrews congregation, but using terminologies that also describe the positive experiences of the exodus generation as found in Nehemiah 9. In other words, Hebrews has borrowed the positive language from the Old Testament to depict the contemporary

experiences of the readers/listeners. Since the author's readers were partaking of this immensely positive collective memory of the 'forefathers', they should repudiate the negative examples that follow in the warning.

It is a similar strategy, in which intertextual echoes provide the narrative background to the warning passages, which is adopted in Hebrews 12:14–17. An intertextual echo is an unstated metaleptic use of previously existing scripture or tradition in another text (Hays 1989:29–32). Often, the new text is easily understood without recourse to the background echoes. Occasionally, however, lingering problems persist until the intertextual links are identified. In the case of Hebrews 12:14–17, I hypothesise that the Jacob-Esau saga provides the clues for solving the lingering problems. The literary-theological elements from the Jacob traditions form the background of the positive section of that passage, whereas elements about Esau provide the background of the negative section.

3. Themes from the Jacob-Esau Saga and their Interpretations

By the first century AD, the familiar episodes of the Jacob-Esau saga recorded in Genesis 25:19–35:29 had become a very rich resource for the collective memory of the Jewish people. The Old Testament prophets theologically interpreted the narrative as a typological prefigurement of Israel's migration from Egypt, and polemically applied it to explain the nation's difficult relationship with other nations and with Edom in particular. They have also deployed it in a pastoral manner to reassure exiled Israel of their future return to the Promised Land as a transformed people (Edelman 1995; Hendel 1987; Kaiser 1985:33–46; Krause 2008:475–486).

In addition to this broad outline, the individual episodes of the saga became an important resource in Qumran and Hellenistic Judaism, especially for their liturgical language and exhortations toward piety (cf. Ruiten 2012:595–612). In the New Testament, there are traces of the influence of the saga in John's gospel (e.g. John 1:51, 4:1–15; cf. Neyrey 1982:586–605; 1979:419–437), the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32; cf. Bailey 2003; 1997:54–72), and Paul's theology of election (Rom 9–11; cf. Kaminsky 2007). In the present section therefore, I will set out some of the interpretations of direct relevance to our passage.

3.1. The key literary-theological themes of the Jacob-Esau Cycle in Genesis

There are several reasons for the considerable influence of the Jacob-Esau narratives on subsequent generations of the faithful. In Genesis, the saga is presented in a self-contained chiastic structure that emphasises the theme of fulfilment, making it attractive for reflections by its readers (Fokkelmann 1975; Ross 1988:85).[3] In addition, the literary *tôledôt* formula indicates that the cycle aetiologically explains how Jacob became Israel, thus underlying its foundational pedigree (Blenkinsopp 2000:58–59). More importantly, and for our purposes, its episodes reiterate specific theological themes, replicate peculiar literary motifs and create various linguistic puns and plays on words (Kidner 1967:161–187; McKeown 2008:126-161; Speiser 1964:193–276). This no doubt made it attractive for theological reflections by its subsequent expositors. The most relevant of these themes, for our purposes, are, (a) strife, conflict and pursuit, (b) the blessing and favour of God, (c)

[3]The literary boundaries of the Jacob cycle are disputed by commentators. Whereas some interpreters such as Fishbane (1975:15–38) place the end at Gen 35:22, others such as Wenham (1994:169) and Fokkelmann (1975:85–241) place it at Gen 35:29.

'seeing' God's face, (d) weeping, (e) encounter with angel(s), and (f) defilement.

The pursuit theme is mixed with the strife and conflict themes in Jacob's difficult relationships with Esau (Gen 25:26, 27:41), Laban (Gen 31:21–22, 42) and the Shechemites (Gen 34; cf. 35:5). Both strife and conflict themes are fused together in the momentous wrestling with the angel that occurred at Penuel, and poignantly epitomised by the angel's statement to Jacob: 'you have striven with God and with humans' (Gen 32:28). As it turned out, however, Jacob's subsequent meeting with Esau, like his difficult relationship with Laban, ended with a peace treaty and temporary settlement in Salem[4] (meaning 'peace'), thus providing a sharp contrast within the narrative between the themes of 'striving' and 'peace' (Matthews 1999:97–98).

Similarly the themes of blessings, favour and grace of God feature heavily in the Jacob cycle (Gen 28: 13–15; 30:27; 32: 24–30; 35:9–15). This theme is further paralleled with Jacob 'seeing' Esau's face, generating an interesting irony within the literary-theological movement of the cycle (Gen 32:20). At the wrestling match at Penuel, the theme of blessing received a potent emphasis when Jacob refused to let go until he was blessed by the angel. Once blessed, he encapsulated the episode with the statement, 'I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved' (Gen 32:30).

The theme of defilement features in Rachel's theft of her father's teraphims (Gen 31:19; 35:4), and the defilement of Dinah which is described as 'an outrage in Israel' (Gen 34:7), a phrase synonymous with, and subsequently interpreted in the rest of the Old Testament, as a

[4] Whether Salem is a name of a place (so KJV) or a euphemism for simply stating that Jacob came peacefully or safely to Shechem (so NIV and NRSV) is disputed by interpreters (see Wenham 1994:300).

major spiritual defilement equivalent to apostasy among God's people and deserving of the death penalty (e.g. Deut 22:21; Josh 7:15; Judg 19:23–24; 20:6; 1 Sam 25:25; 2 Sam 13:12).

The theme of 'weeping' also subsequently became relevant for later interpretations of the cycle. It is noted, for example, that Esau cried 'an exceedingly great and bitter cry' (Gen 27:34) for the substitute blessing from Isaac. Jacob also 'wept aloud' upon meeting Rachel for the first time (Gen 29:11), and again when he met Esau near Penuel (Gen 33:4). At the death of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, the burial site in Bethel was named *Allon-bacuth*, which means, 'the oak of weeping' (Gen 35:8). These themes served as the basic building blocks for the edifices of the theological interpretation of the Jacob cycle by Israel's expositors, a summary of which now follows.

3.2. Interpretations of the key themes in the Jacob Cycle by the Old Testament Prophets

Though Brodie (1981:31–60) has argued that the Genesis account of the Jacob-Esau saga post-dated those of the prophets, it is more likely that the author of Hebrews understood the prophets as interpreting Genesis rather than the other way round. Accordingly, identifying what the prophets made of the Genesis account of the saga will be instructive. The interpretations by Hosea, Jeremiah, and Isaiah are most relevant for our purposes.

3.2.1. Interpretation of the Jacob traditions in Hosea 12

Hosea 12 is a typical example of the homilectical interpretation of the Jacob cycle comparable to Hebrews 12:14–17. In order to address a specific pastoral situation in Israel, the prophet directly associates his generation with the patriarch and so draws applicable lessons for

addressing his contemporaries. Even so, there are a number of uncertainties with regard to Hosea's precise interpretive approach to the tradition. Vermes (1970:203–220) and Gertner (1960:274), for example, describe Hosea 12 as a typological *Midrash* on the Genesis account. Good, on the other hand, regards the passage as commenting on five incidents in the Jacob cycle, one of which is not recorded in Genesis (1966:137–151). Holladay alternatively argues that all the references to the Jacob tradition in Hosea are from Genesis (1966:53–64; cf. Ackroyd 1963:259 n.1; Francisco 1963:35; Holt 1995:30–51; Kaiser 1985:33–46).

Notwithstanding these scholarly disagreements, three conclusions may be made from Hosea's interpretation of the Jacob traditions, conclusions that are relevant for interpreting Hebrews 12:14–17. Firstly, the prophet selects seven episodes from the saga and rearranges them in an apparently non-chronological and poetic chiastic style (Holladay 1966:53–64). These episodes are, namely, (a) Jacob's grasping of his brother's heel at birth (Hos 12:4a; Gen 25:26), (b) his exile to Paddanaram (Hos 12:13a; Gen 28:5), (c) his servitude for two wives (Hos 12:13b; Gen 29:15–30), (d) his wrestling with the angel (Hos 12:4b; Gen 32:23–33), (e) his change of name (Hos 12:4b; Gen 32:28; 35:10), (f) his reconciliation with Esau (Hos 12:5b; Gen 33:4) and (g) his encounter with God at Bethel (Hos 12:5c; Gen 28:13,19; 35:15). This chiastic rearrangement of the episodes in the Jacob tradition indicates their pastoral homiletic development by the prophet, an approach likely also to have been attractive to the author of Hebrews.

A second and more specific conclusion to be drawn from how Hosea interprets the Jacob tradition is how—in addition to confirming that the wrestling match at Penuel was with an angel (Hos 12:3–4)—Hosea also adds that Jacob *bãķãh,* 'he wept' as he sought the angel's favour (Hos 12:4). This additional information that Jacob 'wept' before the angel, is

not found in the Genesis account; interpreters disagree on its meaning and implications. Holladay (1966:57) suggests that it refers to the meeting between Jacob and Esau; but, this is unlikely, since Hosea 12:4 describes Jacob's encounter with God. It is possible that Hosea had an additional tradition on Jacob available to him, which he now states (so, Ginsberg 1961:339–347; Good 1966:147), or that he fused Jacob's Penuel encounter with his subsequent experience at Bethel in Genesis 35 (so, Kaiser 1985:33–46; Good 1966:147).

Given the prominence of the theme of 'weeping' in the Jacob-Esau saga as a whole, however, it is more likely that this introduction of the theme into the Penuel account in Hosea 12:3–4 was the prophet's own interpretation of Jacob's importunate plea for blessing from the angel (as in Mal 2:13; cf. Bentzen 1951:58). In that case, in introducing the theme of 'weeping' into the account of the encounter at Penuel, Hosea sharply contrasts Jacob's importunate plea for blessing from the angel (which was duly rewarded with blessings) with Esau's 'exceedingly great and bitter cry' (Gen 27:34) for a substitute blessing from Isaac, (which was refused). This sharp contrast in the two forms of importunity may have been very important for the author of Hebrews as it is replicated in our passage.

Thirdly, in Hosea 12:12–13, the prophet specifically interprets Jacob's bitter experiences with Laban and consequent flight as prefiguring the sojourn and migration of the Israelites from Egypt, that is, as the exodus of 'Israel up from Egypt' (Hos 12:13; cf. Hubbard 2009:222). In other words, Jacob's experiences are interpreted as if the nation of Israel existed within the patriarch at the time. This theological fusion of Jacob's exile with the nation's exile features strongly in the other prophets, and sets the foundation for how the author of Hebrews also employs the migration motif in his homily. Certainly, the author of The

writer of Hebrews, according to whom Levi was in Abraham's bosom when the latter paid tithes to Melchizedek (Heb 7:9–10), would have made a similar typological interpretation of the Jacob narrative.

3.2.2. Interpretation of the Jacob traditions in Jeremiah 30–31

The intertextual relationship between Hosea and Jeremiah is well documented, and indeed, Coote (1971:391) has argued for a correspondence of the wilderness concept in Hosea 12:10 and Jeremiah 2:31. It is therefore not completely surprising that Jeremiah would also adopt a similar interpretation of the Jacob cycle as does Hosea. Indeed, there are extensive parallelisms between Jeremiah 21–31 and Genesis 27–33. As pointed out by Brodie (1981:31), 'the relationship of Jacob with Esau (Gen 27:30–33:20) and of Jacob/Israel with God (Jer 21:1–31:12) both follow a pattern of alienation, northern sojourn, and reconciliation, and contain several other points of resemblance'. Just as Jacob brought his people from exile in Paddanaram to Bethel, God promises through Jeremiah that he would also lead his people back from Babylonian exile (Holladay 1966:17–27).

Of particular relevance to our present concerns is Jeremiah's use of the Jacob traditions to depict the return of Israel from exile in Jeremiah 30–31.[5] In Jeremiah 30:6–12, the prophet implicitly interprets Jacob's march to Bethel as a march to Zion. So, for instance, Jacob's rescue from servitude turns him into the servant of God who ministers to all peoples, a notion later associated with the exodus generation (Jer 30:8–9 cf. Gen 35:9–11; Exod 19:5–6). Wrestling with the angel is also interpreted as *yõlêd*, 'labour pains' from which he is rescued, perhaps with a hint of spiritual transformation or even rebirth (Jer 30:6–7).

[5] Together, these two chapters made up of a collection of poems of hope expounding exodus theology, are self-contained and act as a separate entity within the whole book. It is commonly labelled as the 'the little Book of Consolation' (Beckling 2004).

Israel, like its ancestor Jacob, will return from exile in peace and ease (Jer 30:10); though in the process, both Jacob and Israel will be disciplined with a hurt that is '*ā'nüš,* 'incurable' (Jer 30:12 = the limp of Jacob). The exiles are therefore invited to, 'Come, let us go up to Zion' (Jer 31: 6, 9, 12), an exhortation which parallels the command to Jacob's company to 'go up to Bethel', the house of God, where a special manifestation of God awaited them (Gen 35:1). This link in Jeremiah, between Bethel and Zion is important, for the Bethel narrative, like Zion's, was 'a sanctuary formation narrative' (Westermann 1980:85). In Hebrews 12:22, the destination of the believer's migration is also stated as Mount Zion.

Another important development of the interpretation of the Jacob tradition in Jeremiah's oracle is his poem on the new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31–34. Worship, joyful celebrations, and the establishment of the new covenant with God's people mark the return to Zion in Jeremiah. This passage promising the new covenant was of major importance to the author of Hebrews, who quotes it in full in Hebrews 8:8–12. This new covenant interpretation of the tradition also serves as the background of the description in Hebrews 12:22 of the coming of the people of God to Mount Zion, 'the city of the living God', to worship in the presence of Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant.

3.2.3. Interpretation of the Jacob Traditions in Isaiah 34–35

Kratz has stressed the pivotal role of the name Jacob/Israel in the book of Isaiah where it serves as 'a *leitmotif* with which we can understand the development of both Isaianic prophecy and the various stages in the composition of the book' (2006:104–105). Indeed, the interchanging of both names as designations for the patriarch and for his descendants in Isaiah is so frequent that, in certain passages, the primary referent is unclear. In so doing, Isaiah introduces elements from the patriarchal

narratives in an allusive manner to intermingle with typological references to the exodus motifs. As in Hosea, and Hebrews, the experiences of Isaiah's contemporaries are yoked with the Jacob traditions.

The oracle of Isaiah 34–35, which like Jeremiah 30–31 is self-contained, is relevant for understanding the prophetic interpretation of the Jacob-Esau saga. Isaiah 34 pronounces judgment on the nations and singles out Edom for special indictment (cf. Matthews 1995:118). This is coupled with Isaiah 35, which on the other hand promises the faithful a new wilderness exodus through which they will see God's glory (Isa 35:2). In the wilderness, a holy highway will be opened for the faithful to return to Zion (Isa 35:10; cf. Kratz 2006:107). The wilderness will be transformed into a garden of joy and celebration. Isaiah therefore exhorts the returnees to, 'Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees' (Isa 35:3; cf. Oswalt 1991:162). Contrasted with the judgment pronounced on Edom in Isaiah 34, this description of peace, joy, and holiness as pilgrims walk in the 'Holy Way', reflects the sharp juxtaposition of the Jacob and Esau traditions that occurs in Genesis.[6] As we shall shortly see, several citations from Isaiah 35 play pivotal roles in Hebrews 12:1–13 to serve to anticipate the allusions to the Jacob-Esau saga in Hebrews 12:14–17.

3.2.4. Summary of interpretations of the Jacob traditions by the Prophets

In summary, the Old Testament prophets interpreted the Jacob-Esau saga in directions which serve as solid foundation for the interpretation by Hebrews. Hosea summarised the episodes in discrete lessons and

[6]For more on the contrasting themes in Isaiah 34–35 see Miscall (1999). For the use of the Jacob traditions in other parts of Isaiah, see Watts (2004:481–508) and for further exploration of Jacob-Esau relationship in Ezekiel, see Woudstra (1968:21–35).

applied them in allusive manner to his contemporaries. Of particular interest is the sharp implicit contrast Hosea makes between Jacob's importunate plea for God's favour and Esau's equally importunate but rejected plea. Jeremiah develops the theme of the migration of Jacob to Bethel for a special encounter with God into a new covenant exodus-migration of God's people to Zion to worship God. Isaiah draws parallels from the contrast between Esau and Jacob in Genesis with the contrast of judgment on Edom with blessings on those who walk in the 'Holy Way' of the new covenant to Mount Zion. All these are mirrored in the use of the tradition by Hebrews.

3.3. The Jacob traditions in Genesis LXX

Since all the Old Testament citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews are from the LXX, it is to be expected that Hebrews' interpretation of the Jacob-Esau saga would also be derived from the LXX (Gheorghita 2003:3; Leschert 1994:16). As it happens, the translators of the LXX solved a number of difficulties in the Hebrew versions of Genesis by introducing emendations that indicate their theological understanding of the saga. It is possible that these emendations existed in versions of the Hebrews Bible available to the translators and which are now no more extant. Even so, the LXX translations provide an instructive basis for understanding how the inspired authors of the New Testament, such as the author of Hebrews, interpreted the scriptures. Four of these emendations are of particular interest, namely, (a) the parallels between Jacob's migration and the exodus of Israel, (b) the elimination of ambiguities in the MT's account of Jacob's wrestling encounter with the angel at Penuel, (c) the interesting translation of Genesis 32:28b, and (d) the depiction of Jacob's return to Bethel. These will now be explained in turn.

3.3.1. Jacob's migration from Paddanaram in Genesis LXX

As is the case with the prophetic interpretation, aspects of Jacob's flight from Paddanaram to Bethel are translated in such a way that the whole flight parallels the exodus of Israel from Egypt. For example, Genesis 31:46 (LXX) contains the phrase καὶ ἔπιον ('and drank') the equivalent of which is lacking in the MT. It preempts, however, Exodus 24:11 (LXX) in which the migrating Israelites ἔφαγον καὶ ἔπιον ('ate and drank') at the foot of Mount Sinai. Similarly, and as noted by Harl (1989:235), Rachel's words in Genesis 31:15, that her father *meḵārānû*, 'sold us', is translated with the interesting phrase πεπρακεν γαρ ημδς, which appears to be a careful play on words aimed at paralleling Rachel's life with Israel's slavery in Egypt.

Moreover, Jacob's hurried departure from Paddanaram in Genesis 31:20 LXX is rendered with the word ἀποδιδράσκει, a word which was more often used for the escape of a slave. Hayward (2005:41–45) has also identified that the description of Jacob's encounter with the camps of angels at Mahanaim in Genesis 32 is rendered in such a way that it appears to parallel Moses' experience at the burning bush. Unlike the Hebrew MT which lacks that phrase, Genesis 32:2 (LXX) indicates that Jacob ἀναβλέψας εἶδεν ('looked up') to see the angels, an emphasis which appears to pre-empt Exodus 3:2. Thus, in theologically paralleling Jacob's migration from Paddaranam to Bethel with the exodus of Israel to the Promise, the reader of the LXX translation is provided guidance on how to interpret the narrative.

3.3.2. Translation of the wrestling at Penuel in the LXX

The LXX translators reduced the ambiguities in the MT's description of Jacob's wrestling match with the angel at Penuel, and in so doing provided explicit guidance on the theological interpretation of the narrative. So, for example, Genesis 32:32 (LXX) reads: ἀνέτειλεν δὲ

αὐτῷ ὁ ἥλιος, ἡνίκα παρῆλθεν τὸ Εἶδος τοῦ θεοῦ· αὐτὸς ('the sun shown upon him as he passed the divine form'). As translated by the NRSV, the MT reads, 'the sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip'. In other words, instead of naming the place as Penuel, as it is in the MT, the LXX translates it as Ειδος θεου (divine form). In this way, the LXX parallels the wrestling episode with the liturgical blessing in which God's countenance 'shines' upon his people (Num 6:25–26). Put another way, the wrestling with the angel is interpreted by the LXX as an importunate plea for God's blessing and favour.

3.3.3. The LXX translation of Genesis 32:28b

A crucial editorial change was made in the translation of Genesis 32:28b which the MT, as translated by the NRSV, reads, 'you have striven with God and with humans and have prevailed'. In the LXX, one of the words 'and' in the MT is removed and the verbal form of 'prevail' is emended into an adjective. The resulting rendering of Genesis 32:28b (LXX) reads, Οτι ενισχυσας μετα θεου και ανθρωπον δυνατος ('you have prevailed with God and with humans you are powerful').

This rendering separates the angel's eulogy into two dissimilar parts, namely, (a) with God, Jacob prevails, and (b) with men he is strong or powerful. So, in addition to the blessing and change of name, the LXX portrays Jacob as conferred with two separate virtues, namely, one virtue is towards God and the other is towards men. As will become apparent shortly, this separation of the angel's eulogy into two discrete virtues became vital for the interpretation by Hebrews, with one virtue, peace, towards everyone, and the other virtue, holiness, towards God. Incidentally, a similar two-way directed interpretation is also followed by Philo.

3.3.4. Jacob's return to Bethel in the LXX

The interesting choice of ἐπιψάνη to translate God's self-revelation to Jacob in Bethel (Gen 35:7; *niğlũ* in the MT), and the fact that this is the only place in Genesis LXX where the word is used, is also significant. This peculiar choice of word may suggest that the translators invested the Bethel encounter with profound sacred meaning. Indeed, the LXX links ἐπιψάνη with 'seeing' God's face in the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:25–26: ἐπιφάναι κύριος τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ σὲ καὶ ἐλεήσαι σε, ἐπάραι κύριος τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ σὲ καὶ δῴη σοι εἰρήνην (in the NRSV: 'the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you. the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace'). Consequently, it may be concluded that the three major motifs of the Jacob tradition at Bethel and Penuel are grace, seeing God's face, and peace, all of which are echoed in the priestly blessing of God's people.[7]

3.3.5. Summary of the Jacob tradition in the LXX

The LXX translation of some of the key elements of the Jacob tradition correlates well with the interpretation by the prophets as typological prefiguration of Israel's migration to the Promise. Moreover, Jacob's wrestling match at Penuel is interpreted as importunate seeking of God's blessing, which is rewarded also with 'seeing' God's face and receiving his peace. The LXX translation then illustrates the progressive theological interpretation of the Jacob tradition that paved the way for various trajectories among interpreters in Second Temple Judaism (STJ), and Hebrews.

[7] The Psalter also contains several references that link God's blessings, grace, and peace with the manifestation of God's face (e.g. Pss 11:7; 16:11; 17:15; 21:7; 27:4,13; 36:10; 42:3; 61:8; 63:3; 140:14. For an analysis of the background of the language of seeing God in the Psalms, see Smith 1988:171–183.

3.4. Excursus: interpretation of the Jacob traditions in Philo's works

A brief excursus into how relevant elements of the Jacob traditions were interpreted in some of the literature of STJ is warranted, since they parallel how Hebrews also interpreted the traditions. Of key interest is the interpretation by Philo.[8] It must be forcefully stated from the outset that the author of Hebrews was no student of Philo. His thorough-going Christology, his restrained allegorical method which is Christocentric and his full subscription to the primitive Christian kerygma marks him out as diametrically different from Philonism. The differences between these two authors are 'so critical as to make it highly unlikely that any similarities of vocabulary are due to the direct influence of the one upon the other' (Williamson 1970:9).

Even so, it must not be dismissed as irrelevant that both Philo and the author of Hebrews were contemporary diaspora Jews, immersed in the LXX and sharing roughly similar interpretative traditions. A few of the parallels in their hermeneutical approaches have, for example, been described in a number of specific passages of Hebrews, such as the Melchizedek *Midrash* of Hebrews 7 (Thompson 1977:209–223) and the language of 'perfection' in the whole epistle (Dey 1975). Accordingly,

[8] The interesting case of the DSS fragment labelled $_4Q_{15}8$ in which a quotation of the Penuel encounter (Gen 32:24–32), is fused with Exodus 4:27–28 may suggest that the Qumran community paralleled Jacob's experience at Penuel with Moses' experience at the burning bush in Sinai, as the LXX also does (cf. Tov 1995:653). The affinities between Qumran and Hebrews have been noted by O'Neill (2000:24–38), Bateman (1995:11–27) and Fitzmyer (1963:305–321). For a discussion of how the theology associated with Bethel became transformed into the theology of Mount Zion in the literature of STJ, as in Jubilees 32:9–22; *Genesis Rabba* 69:7; *Targum Yerushalmi I* Genesis 28:11, 17; *Targum Neofiti* 28:17, see Houtman (1977:337–351). Josephus, like his contemporaries regarded the Romans as descendants of Esau (Feldman 1988:101).

a brief examination of some of Philo's interpretations of the Jacob traditions may help shed light on that by Hebrews.

Philo indeed interpreted the flight and exile of Jacob in allegorical terms as equivalent to spiritual exercises to improve the patriarch, comparable to the training of an athlete. The younger Jacob, to Philo, symbolised toil and development (*De Sac* 119), and lover of virtue (*De Somniis I.8.45*) who through his struggles overthrew passions and wickedness (*Legum Allegoriae* III.68.190). His very name signified learning and progress (*De ebrietate 20.*82). There is also a recurring commentary on the education of both Jacob and Esau. Throughout, Jacob is obedient to his parents, whereas Esau is 'obstinate and ignorant' (*De virtutibus 38.*208). Jacob, therefore, needed training, the objectives of which were twofold, namely, to escape from Esau who represented evil, and to learn virtue and perfection. Using the notion of suffering as educational, Philo interpreted Jacob's hardships as pruning and as means of character formation (De *Ebrietate* 80–81). As we shall find, similar emphases occur in Hebrews 12:1–13.

Philo also allegorically interpreted the wrestling encounter as an exhibition contest at a graduation ceremony to mark the completion of the training of the athlete. The wrestling, to Philo, represented a diligent struggle to overcome what was wrong in Jacob (*De Mutatione Nominum* XII. 81). He compared the angel to a 'gymnastic trainer, [who] invites him to the gymnasia, and standing firmly, compels him to wrestle with him until he has rendered his strength so great as to be irresistible, changing his ears by the divine influences into eyes' (*On Dreams* XX. 1.129). So, to Philo, the reward for Jacob was to spiritually progress from just hearing God to 'seeing' God.

Like the LXX, Philo stressed that the angel's eulogy depicts virtues in two directions, namely, (a) Jacob is stamped with a better character and

perfected in virtue in relation to men, and at the same time, (b) he acquires a new name which is in God's direction. Philo uniquely defined this new name, Israel, as meaning 'the one who sees God' (*Legum Allegoriae* II.9; III.66). This special designation became, for Philo, an overriding paradigm for depicting the goals of increased 'spirituality' (Hayward 2005:192). He connected his notion of 'seeing God' with the sanctuary motif, as the ultimate goal of piety and spiritual growth (Hayward 2005:182 cf. Goodenough 1935:8). Those who wrestle effectively with evil passions and win will, like Jacob, be granted the crown of beholding God in his sanctuary (*De Mutatione Nominum*, XII 81 cf. *Leg Alleg*. III.100). These Philonic interpretations of the Jacob traditions are different from what is found in Hebrews. They nevertheless provide a context for understanding how the author of Hebrews also employs the Jacob-Esau saga to address the pastoral difficulties of his readers.

4. Echoes of the Jacob-Esau Saga in Hebrews 12:14–17

From Hebrews 12:1,[9] the author of Hebrews increases the tempo of his movement motif towards its rhetorical climax at Mount Zion in Hebrews 12:18–29. His overall aim in this section of the homily was to exhort his readers towards devout faithfulness, disciplined endurance, and dogged persistence to the finishing line. He achieves this in a variety of ways, one of which was to employ the Jacob-Esau saga as an Old Testament narrative background in Hebrews 12:14–17. Yet, even

[9]Commentators differ in identifying the beginning of the subsection. Lane argues that there is a complete shift in genre and mood from the historical recital in Heb 11 to pastoral exhortation from Hebrews 12:1 (1991:403). In this sense, Hebrews 12:1–3 is an introduction followed by its development in the subsequent passages. Others, such as DeSilva (2000:425), argue for starting the section at Hebrews 12:4, and regard Hebrews 12:1–3 as crowning the list of the faithful with Jesus. Since there is considerable crossover between these subsections, I shall treat the chapter as a whole.

before this passage, there are anticipations[10] of the saga in Hebrews 12:1–13, a brief enumeration of which are therefore in order.

4.1. The Jacob tradition in Hebrews 12:1–13

The anticipations in Hebrews 12:1–13 include, (a) the athletic imageries of running and wrestling in Hebrews 12:1–3, (b) the use of Isaiah 35 in Hebrews 12:1–13, (c) the education of sons as metaphor for endurance in Hebrews 12:5–11, and (d) the reference to lameness and joint dislocation in Hebrews 12:13.

In Hebrews 12:1, the author transfers the hearer/reader into an athletic gymnasium to describe the Christian life as a race and αγωνα, ('wrestling contest') in the presence of a great 'cloud of witnesses'. Other athletic imageries include the wrestling terminologies in Hebrews 12:4 (ἀντικατέστητε, 'resist face to face', and ἀνταγωνιζόμενοι, 'struggle'), and γεγυμνασμενοις ('disciplined exercise') in Hebrews 12:11[11] (cf. Croy 1998:43–44; Pfitzner 1967). These athletic imageries need not directly refer to the Jacob traditions *per se*. However, as already noted, there was a tendency towards interpreting Jacob's flights, and his wrestling match in particular, along lines similar to what occurs in Philo's works. There is no reason why the author of Hebrews would

[10]Anticipations and pre-announcements are common literary strategies of the author in which he announces and intimates subjects in advance, but does not pursue them until several verses or passages later (cf. Vanhoye 1963). Even before the anticipations in Hebrews 12:1–13, the author mentions Jacob on three occasions, namely, his sharing God's promise with Isaac and Abraham (Heb 11:9), receiving the blessings from his father Isaac (Heb 11:20) and blessing Joseph's sons just before his death (Heb 11:21). It is evident therefore that our author was very familiar with the Jacob tradition.

[11]This emphasis on training is also found in Hebrews 5:14. Other athletic imageries in Hebrews include the Christian life as a contest in Hebrews 10:32, and possibly Hebrews 6:20 where Jesus is described as 'forerunner on our behalf' who has entered the Holy of Holies.

not have made a similar interpretation, but infused with his overriding Christocentric hermeneutics.

The frequent use of motifs and explicit quotations from Isaiah 35 in Hebrews 12:1–13 (Isa 35:1–2 in Heb 12:1–3, Isa 35:3 in Heb 12:12–13, Isa 35:6 in Heb 12:13, and Isa 35:5 and 8 in Heb 12:14) equally anticipate the subsequent use of the Jacob-Esau saga in Hebrews 12:14–17. As noted already, in both Hebrews 12 and Isaiah 35, the journey of the returning faithful ends at Mount Zion. It is not possible to prove whether the author of Hebrews exactly intended to indicate the influence of the Jacob traditions behind his use of Isaiah 35. All the same, his recourse to the prophetic passage adds to the overall theme of the influence of the traditions in this section of his homily.

The author's focus on suffering as a source of παιδευει 'instruction' (Heb 12:7a, b, 8a, 9a, 10a, 11a) and the frequent use of υιος, 'son' (Heb 12:5ab, 6, 7ab, 8) generates a potent imagery of a household in which children received instruction and training for their future roles. In this household, discipline is a mark of legitimate sonship.[12] Given the prominence of this theme in reflections on the saga in Second Temple Judaism,[13] it is likely that this may have added to the author's recourse to the saga in Hebrews 12:14–17.

[12] In the earlier parts of the homily, Hebrews linked the Sonship of Jesus with the believer's sonship (e.g. Heb 2:10-15). Here, in Hebrews 12:1–13, a similar picture emerges where Jesus' attitude to suffering becomes a paradigm for his brothers and sisters. For exploration of the concept of sibling relationship in Hebrews, see Gray 2003, 355–351 and Croy 1998:196–222.

[13]In the Book of Jubilees, for example, there are extensive embellishments of the Isaac household situation depicted in Genesis 25:27–28; 27:41–47. Jacob, it is said, learned to write, whereas Esau repudiated any such education (Jub 19:14). Jacob is portrayed as extremely close to Abraham, who saw to his training to inherit the promises (Jub 19:26–30). In contrast, Esau is described as unruly, and of whose deeds Abraham

The references to the lame and, particularly, ἐκτραπῇ (joint dislocation) in Hebrews 12:13 are probably not meant to be deliberate allusion to Jacob (Gen 32:25).[14] All the same, the potent imagery of a traveller returning to Zion while limping with a dislocated joint may well have prompted the author's recourse to allusions to the Jacob-Esau saga in the next verse (Heb 12:14). Certainly, when combined with the athletic and wrestling imageries, the explicit and implicit use of Isaiah 35, and the notion of educative discipline of sons, the reference to the lame and joint dislocation metaphors in Hebrews 12:1–13 indicates the author's anticipation of the saga in Hebrews 12:14–17.

4.2. Echoes of the Jacob-Esau saga in Hebrews 12:14–17

Hebrews 12:14–17 follows these anticipations with each of the clauses making a homiletic interpretation of some of the episodes in the Jacob-Esau saga. The positive exhortation of Hebrews 12:14–17 echoes Jacob, who 'sees the Lord', whereas the counterbalancing negative warning is explicitly associated with Esau. Jacob represents the persevering and enduring people of faith migrating to Mount Zion, and Esau represents those who reject the life of faith and are in the end also rejected at Mount Sinai. In encouraging the congregation to pursue peace with everyone and holiness towards the Lord, the author of Hebrews has transformed Jacob's dual pursuits in the tradition into spiritual quests for these two Christian virtues. Just as through his importunity and perseverance with the angel the patriarch obtained the grace and blessing, the congregation should also persevere for the same. Just as Esau, despite his equally importunate plea before Isaac, failed to obtain

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disapproved. Josephus also commented on Esau's disregard for parental discipline as opposed to Jacob's submission (*Antiquities* I.18.4).

[14]Though Genesis 32 LXX highlights that Jacob left Penuel limping, it refers to the *numbness* of the thigh (32:26 and 33) rather than dislocation of the hip joint as the MT does.

the blessing, apostates who fall short of God's grace will also be rejected.

With this narrative echoing in the background, the first readers of Hebrews, who shared this scriptural 'symbolic world' with the author, were being drawn to associate with, and perceive themselves as joining, their 'forefather' Jacob/Israel in returning to Bethel/Zion. Though limping from persecution, they should be assured of God's grace and blessing and a Bethel/Mount Zion epiphany. They should therefore repudiate the unfaithfulness of Esau. An analysis of these echoes in the background of Hebrews 12:14–17 now follows.

4.2.1. Διωκετε in Hebrews 12:14 and the Jacob-Esau saga

The encouragement to strive for, or pursue peace was a common first century exhortation (e.g. Rom 12:18; 14:19; 1 Pet 3:11; cf. Ps 33:15b LXX). With the community experiencing public persecution and congregational friction from within, such an exhortation addresses a palpable danger. However, the words have also been couched to fit into the themes of the homily, as well as generate resonating scriptural background that gives rhetorical force to the words.

One indication of this use of the tradition is the use of the word διωκετε ('strive') in Hebrews 12:14. Διωκετε fuses the two athletic imageries of running a race and wrestling that pervades in the preceding Hebrews 12:1–13. On the one hand, it describes a swift and hurried dash in pursuit of something, or while being pursued (so the NRSV). On the other hand, it also describes a purposeful struggle, striving or wrestling for something (so the ESV and KJV). It is in these two fused elements that it echoes the Jacob traditions.

In addition, διωκετε was more often used in the negative hostile sense to describe the persecution or harassment of an opponent. Coming as it does after the athletic and wrestling imageries in Hebrews 12:1–13; διωκετε indicates that Hebrews 12:14–17 continues the migration motif. The persecuted congregation were ironically being urged to 'persecute' peace. This imagery fits the picture of Jacob's hurried flight from Laban, and resonates with his stop at Penuel, where the theme of pursuit is combined with that of wrestling with the angel and the peace which follows it.

4.2.2. Peace and holiness in Hebrews 12:14 and the Jacob-Esau saga

The linkage of peace with holiness as the goals of the believer's pursuit is peculiar to Hebrews.[15] Yet, the structure of Hebrews 12:14a suggests that the author is making a distinction between peace and holiness in terms of their subjects. Peace, he notes, is towards men, whereas holiness is towards God. This echoes the two-level interpretation of Jacob's reward for his victorious wrestling with the angel. Just as Jacob strove 'with God and with humans' (Gen 32:28), the readers are now urged to strive for peace with humans and holiness towards God.

In Genesis 27–35, Jacob pursued peace in his relationships with Laban, Esau, and the Shechemites. His temporary settlement at *Salem* in Shechem (Gen 33:18a LXX) would have attracted the attention of the

[15]Though the New Testament contains separate exhortations to pursue peace and also to pursue holiness, this is the only place where the two are explicitly linked (e.g. Matt 5:8; 1 Thess 4:3; Rom 6:19; 1 Cor 1:30; 1 Pet 1:2). For Lane (1991:449) and Isaacs (2002:146), this linkage suggests that the two virtues are to be interpreted objectively rather than as subjective experiences. One may quibble with this drastic distinction between objective and subjective peace and holiness. The author's use of διωκετε demonstrates his overall theology in which the movement motif is used in both an objective and subjective sense. For, like salvation (Heb 2:1–4), rest (Heb 3–4), perfection (Heb 5–6) and 'the promise' (Heb 11), peace and holiness are also to be pursued under the overall proviso of obtaining God's grace and mercy (cf. Heb 4:16).

author of Hebrews, for Hebrews specifically observes the significance of the meaning of Salem as 'peace' with regard to Melchizedek (Heb 7:2). The wrestling match represented the climax of Jacob's pursuit of this peace. It was after that encounter that he could settle for peace with Esau. Peace with human beings could therefore only be achieved as God grants us peace, for God is the source of peace (Heb 13:20). So peace in Hebrews 12:14a is both objective and subjective.

If the proposal that the Jacob tradition echoes in the background of Hebrews 12:14 is correct, then it must be taken that the μετὰ πάντων refers to everyone, including the persecutors, and not exclusively to believers. Interpreters disagree as to the likely referent for the μετὰ πάντων, whether it applied only to Christians (so Lane1991:449–50) or to everyone including the persecutors (so Bruce 1990:348; cf. DeSilva 2000:457–459). Often, the judgement is made based on passages outside Hebrews which exhort Christians to pursue peace with their neighbours (e.g. Koester 2001:531) or, in some cases, on subjective elements. However, none base the judgement on the passage itself. Giving due consideration to the influence of the Jacob tradition on Hebrews 12:14 provides objective criteria for resolving this problem. Just as Jacob pursued peace, even with his persecutor Esau, so also were the first readers being urged to pursue peace with all, including their persecutors.

Holiness or sanctification is to be pursued in a similar vein. The imperative tone of Hebrews 12:14b suggests an exhortation to pursue holy living or continue in the process of sanctification (cf. McCown 1981:59; Bruce 1990:348; Héring 1970:96; Rose 1963:116; cf. Isaacs 2002:146). However, this interpretation must be tempered with the fact that in Hebrews holiness is considered in a more objective positional sense than an ethical action to be performed. Consequently, like peace,

holiness is both objective and subjective. The congregation were to pursue holiness, but only under the proviso that it is God in Christ who provides the persevering believer with that virtue.

Consideration of how the Jacob traditions resonate in the background of the passage will further illuminate this understanding of Hebrews 12:14b. The change of the patriarch's name at Penuel represented a transformation of his spiritual status (Hamilton 1995:333; Horsley, 1987: 1–17). In the words of Ross (1985:349), 'Jacob's becoming Israel is the purification of character. Penuel marks the triumph of the higher over the lower elements of his life'. By demanding a confession of Jacob's name, the angel was designating Jacob's transformation: 'Your name shall no longer be Jacob' (Gen 32:28 LXX). This transformation is along the lines of perfection or holiness in Hebrews (cf. Peterson 1982).

Unlike Philo, the author of Hebrews would not have understood the transformation of Jacob in terms that excluded the operation of the grace of God. Nevertheless, what Philo shares in common with Hebrews is that in response to his perseverance and importunity, Jacob received a new character and quality from God.

4.2.3. 'See the Lord' in Hebrews 12:14 and in the Jacob-Esau saga

One of the strongest indications of echoes of the Jacob traditions in Hebrews 12:14-17 is the author's statement that without holiness, no one will 'see the Lord'. The majority of commentators regard the phrase as formulaic. So, according to Bruce (1990:348), for example, the phrase parallels 'the pure in heart' seeing God in Matthew 5:8, and follows on from the common Old Testament liturgical formula in which the righteous hope to see God in his temple at Mount Zion (Ps 11:7; 17:15; 36:10; 42:2; 63:2; 140:14).

In the New Testament, to 'see the Lord' was the main thrust of the believer's eschatological hope (1 Cor 13:12; 1 John 3:2; Rev 22:4). Davies therefore interpreted the phrase in Hebrews as referring to seeing Jesus at his Second Coming (1967:123). Though such an interpretation may not be too far from the author's intention, the emphasis in Hebrews 12:14 is not so much on the Second Coming of Christ as it is on the goal of the believer's pilgrimage (cf. Koester 2001:531). Equally, DeSilva (2002:459) understands the phrase as synonymous with 'eternal life' as in Romans 6:22, and Lane argues that it is equivalent to coming 'into the presence of God' (1991:450). In all cases, holiness is no doubt a prerequisite for such an experience.

There are reasons, however, to believe that while it is possible that the author is quoting a well-known liturgical formula, the fact that this formulaic phrase was derived from the Jacob traditions explicitly served his rhetorical and pedagogic purposes. Certainly, upon reading about Esau shortly after, a first century Jewish reader of Hebrews 12:14–17 intimately familiar with the scriptures, as most Jewish readers were, would also have immediately heard echoes of Jacob's Penuel experience in the background. At least, and as noted with regard to Philo's interpretation of the tradition, the theology of the beatific vision of God was closely associated with the Jacob tradition (Balentine 1983:49–65; Fossum 1995:13–39; Hayward 2005:191; Kirk 1991:9; Smith, 1988: 171–183; cf. Bruce 1990:349 n.102). The use of the phrase in Hebrews 12:14 underlines this theological association.

4.2.4. Obtaining God's grace in Hebrews 12:15 and Jacob-Esau saga

Hebrews 12:15–16, which is designed to counterbalance the positive exhortation of Hebrews 12:14, is made up of three parallel negative warnings with the same ultimate purpose of avoiding apostasy. Each one of these clauses is preceded by μη τις ('not some'), and

successively increases in length and complexity, as is also the case in Hebrews 6:4–8. This literary structure of Hebrews 12:15–16 suggests that the author is progressively outlining the features of Esau's apostasy rather than describing different aspects of apostasy. In other words, each clause refers to an aspect of the apostate behaviour of Esau that must be rejected. This in turn supports the present proposal in which the positive section (Heb 12:14) is motivated by Jacob's experiences, and the negative section by Esau.

In the first clause of the warning, the readers are urged to ensure that 'no one fails to obtain the grace of God'. The author is here not insinuating that the believers do not already have God's grace (cf. Heb 4:16; Bruce, 1990:349 n.103). The sense of the clause suggests the need for a continuous supply of grace needed for the journey. The grace or favour of God is after all an important gift in the epistle, required by the pilgrim/migrant in his migration to God's city. The cultic expositions of the earlier and central portions of the epistle explain how this grace is secured and provided for the believer (cf. Heb 4:16 and 12:28). Therefore, it is clear that the inevitable consequence for failure to obtain grace is apostasy. There is no question of completing the migration without obtaining this grace.

The question is what is the Old Testament background of this first clause? Katz (1958:214) has proposed that the language of Deuteronomy 29:17 (LXX) may have supplied the author of Hebrews with a suitable paraphrase for Hebrews 12:15a. Indeed the use of μη τις on two occasions in Deuteronomy 29:18 (LXX) may well support his interpretation. Nevertheless, the absence of any reference to favour or grace in Deuteronomy 29:18 (LXX) limits Katz's explanation. A more likely explanation is that the author had Esau in mind as an example of the person described in Deuteronomy 29:27 (LXX), as one who lived 'callously' and so failed to obtain the grace and favour of God.

Wilckens (1976:596) has pointed out that υστερων ('fall short', Heb 12:15) carries the connotations of arriving too late for a gift or blessing. Hence first century Jewish readers familiar with the Jacob-Esau saga would have had no difficulty in understanding the clause as indeed referring to Esau.

As noted earlier, the prominent motif of favour and blessing largely follows Jacob, whereas Esau is portrayed as one who failed to obtain the blessing despite his 'exceedingly great and bitter cry' (Gen 27:34). Whereas Jacob's importunity with the angel led to obtaining the blessing, Esau's desperate pleas could not reverse Isaac's blessings. Accordingly, the warning to the readers to ensure that none from among them should fail to obtain the grace of God is a *double entendre* statement. On the one hand, they should all follow Jacob's example of perseverance and importunity to retain the grace. On the other hand, they should equally make sure that none from among them becomes like Esau who fell short of obtaining that grace.

4.2.5. Root of bitterness that causes defilement in Hebrews 12:15 and Jacob-Esau saga

Commentators generally agree that the more complex second clause in Hebrews 12:15–16 (i.e. 'that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled') is a paraphrase of Deuteronomy 29:17b (LXX) (cf. Koester 2001:531). This quotation warns against apostasy among the people of God. The 'root of bitterness that springs forth a shoot' in the deuteronomic context, directly described an individual or group of individuals within the covenantal community who rejected the covenantal life, turned to idol worship and thus caused abomination among God's people. The phrase was subsequently employed to describe the broader concept of serious

sin within the community (e.g. IQH IV.14) and parallels the evil unbelieving heart which turns away from the living God (Heb 3:12).

Two possible intertextual allusions to the Jacob-Esau saga may be located as supporting the use of Deuteronomy 29:17b (LXX) in Hebrews 12:15. One relates to Esau and the other to Jacob. If, as we shall shortly argue, the third clause in Hebrews 12:15–16 describes Esau, then he could also be described as 'the root of bitterness'. As already noted, first century Jews regarded Esau as an apostate.

On the other hand, the paraphrase from Deuteronomy 29:17b (LXX) is further qualified by Hebrews to state that the root of bitterness leads to the defilement of many in the congregation. There is no reference to community defilement in Deuteronomy 29:17b (LXX), even though it is implied, and so it is possible that this is the author of Hebrews' own adaptation. In that case, the minor theme of defilement in Jacob's camp caused by the idols would suit the context very well (Gen 35:2–3). After all, Hebrews would likely have interpreted Moses' instructions in Deuteronomy 29:17b (LXX) as prefigured by Jacob's instructions in Genesis 35:2–4: 'Put away the foreign gods that are among you…' So, both intertextual allusions, i.e. evoking defilement in Jacob's camp, and describing Esau as 'root of bitterness', could have equally influenced the second clause. In both cases, the readers are urged not to emulate such negative examples.

4.2.6. Esau in Hebrews 12:16–17 and the Jacob-Esau saga

There are two main points of debate among interpreters regarding the reference to Esau in Hebrews 12:16–17. The first relates to whether Esau is being described as both sexually immoral and godless or only as a godless person. Though the argument cannot be fully rehearsed here, interpreting 'sexual immorality' as a literal description of Esau's behaviour introduces new difficulties into the passage. At the least such

a literal interpretation raises questions as to whether Hebrews regarded sexual immorality as equivalent to apostasy. Though he was no antinomian, it is unlikely that the author of Hebrews would have regarded sexual immorality *per se* as apostasy.

One proposed solution by interpreters to this particular problem is to argue that the word πορνος ('sexually immoral') is used on its own without reference to Esau. So Elliot (1917–18:44–45) for example, has argued that the participle η ('or') that separates πορνος ('sexually immoral') from βεβηλος ('godless person') indicates that the author of Hebrews did not have Esau in mind as *both* sexually immoral and godless. He suggests that πορνος is a separate category of sin against which the author warns the congregation. Similarly, Bruce (1990:350) believes that πορνος is being used literally, and since there is no biblical record of Esau's sexual immorality, the warning is a direct message to the congregation not to harbour any such persons in their midst. Indeed, the translators of the NIV also make this judgment by translating Hebrews 12:16a as 'see that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau'. In this sense, only 'godless' is said to apply to Esau.

As stated earlier, there are difficulties with this approach. It is true that the author of Hebrews would not have overlooked any deliberate sin (Heb 10:26–31). He warns in Hebrews 13:4 that God would punish the adulterer and sexually immoral person. Hence, he takes that sin extremely seriously. Even so, it is unlikely that he would have regarded sexual immorality *per se* as an unpardonable sin equivalent to apostasy (cf. Lindars 1991:14).

Moreover, his omission of another μη τις between πορνος and βεβηλος makes it likely that he had Esau in mind as *both* sexually immoral and godless. After all, passages such as Numbers 25:1–2 and Hosea 1:2 do the same thing in linking sexual immorality with idolatry. In addition,

several late Jewish traditions characterised Esau as a sensual and sexually immoral person (*Jub* 25:1; 7–8; 26:34; 35:13–14; Philo, *On the Virtues* 208–210, *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 4:201, *Allegorical Interpretation* 3.2; *Genesis Rabba* 65). There is no reason why the author of Hebrews would not have thought the same. Hence, even if Hebrews used πορνος in 12:16 literally, he was still referring to one of Esau's characteristics as a sexually immoral person.

Having said all that, however, it is much more likely that the author of Hebrews used both πορνος and βεβηλος in Hebrews 12:16a in a metaphorical sense to depict Esau as an apostate (cf. Malina 1972:10-17; Jensen 1978:161–184). A number of Old Testament passages certainly use these two terms to describe apostasy. Numbers 14:33 LXX, a chapter well known to Hebrews (cf. Heb 3–4), for example, describes the sin of apostasy in the wilderness as 'fornication'. Equally, Judges 2:17 describes the generation during the time of the Judges as people who 'lusted' after other gods. Πορνος and βεβηλος are therefore being used by Hebrews in the figurative sense as typical descriptors of an apostate like Esau. Such a person falls short of obtaining the grace of God. So, taking into serious consideration the idea that the Jacob-Esau saga provides the background to the passage reinforces this interpretation.

The second problem related to Esau's role in Hebrews 12:14–17 is with regard to the 'change of mind' in Hebrews 12:17. As several interpreters have noted, the clause is ambiguous (cf. Koester 2001:533). In the Genesis account, it was Isaac's change of mind which was at the fore. Yet, there is a sense in which the change of mind could be God's since the blessings on Jacob were regarded by Isaac as irrevocable (Gen 27:33). There is also a third sense in which the change of mind could be Esau's, since he had no opportunity to repent, certainly, not as much as Jacob had (Lane 1991:458). The ambiguity, therefore, relates to the

possibility that by 'change of mind' the author of Hebrews was referring to Esau's, as well as Isaac's and/or by proxy, God's.

Taking into consideration the fact that the whole Jacob-Esau saga resonates in the background of the passage brings these difficulties into sharp relief. If, as I have argued, the positive example of the exhortation is an allusion to Jacob, then Hebrews is also contrasting the two in Hebrews 12:17. Just as Esau shed bitter tears before Isaac, Jacob sought the blessing of the angel with perseverance and importunity (cf. Hos 12:4). Jacob had the opportunity for his life of deceit to be changed, and he was granted the grace and blessing for that transformation to occur. Esau, on the other hand, did not. Both protagonists sought change of minds, theirs and God's. Yet, whereas Jacob was duly blessed by the angel, and indeed blessed with peace, holiness, and 'seeing' God; Esau could bring about no change of mind at all, his own, Isaac's, or God's. He was rejected. The unbelieving apostate, Hebrews warns, could reach a point where personal psychological repentance becomes impossible, in addition to the divine refusal that comes with it.

4.2.7. Οὐ γὰρ in Hebrews 12:18 and the Jacob tradition

A final indication that the author was using the negative warning of the passage to portray Esau as an example of apostasy is the transition to the climactic Mount Zion passage in Hebrews 12:18. The inferential ου γαρ ('not for') at the beginning of the verse links the single sentence in Hebrews 12:18–24 contrasting the Sinai and Mount Zion covenants with the contrast between Jacob and Esau in Hebrews 12:14–17. According to Casey (1977:308–309), the 'two passages stand together as warning and ground for warning'. Esau in this context shared the same status of the apostates who 'refused Him who speaks' (Heb 12:25). Jacob on the other hand, who persisted to arrive at the glorious epiphanies of Bethel (cf. Gen 28:11–22; 32:1–2; 35:6–15) represents

those who persevere in faithfulness to arrive at Mount Zion. Accordingly, there is no reason to sharply separate Hebrews 12:14–17 from the subsequent passage Hebrews 12:18–29, as well as the preceding Hebrews 12:1–13. The Jacob traditions and their interpretations provide a coherent narrative background fitting together the whole of Hebrews 12.

4.2.8. Jacob-Esau Saga and the socio-historical situation of the first readers of Hebrews

Before summarising our findings and drawing out their implications, it is right to raise the important question as to whether it is at all plausible that the first readers/hearers of Hebrews would have readily detected such apparently intricate intertextual echoes resonating in the background of Hebrews 12:14–17. Such a query may, in the first place, be adequately answered by the simple fact that this manner of use of the Old Testament is the consistent method employed by the author of Hebrews in the whole letter. Our passage is no different from other parts of the epistle. So, in effect, this question really relates to other sections of Hebrews as well (cf. Dochertey 2009).

In addition, however, it can be argued that the putative socio-historical situation of the first readers of Hebrews would most likely have made them amenable to detecting immediately the Jacob-Esau saga resonating in the background of our specific passage, Hebrews 12:14–17. Despite a number of disagreements in some of the details of this socio-historical situation, contemporary scholarship appears to have reached a considerable degree of consensus on its broad outline. It is widely held, for example, that the first readers were most likely based in Rome, were mostly (if not all) Jewish, and were experiencing persecution from their non-Christian neighbours, most of them Romans

(e.g. Allen 2010:61–74; Cockerill 2012:19–24; Koester 2001:64–79; O'Brien 2010:15–25).

In that case, the first readers would certainly have regarded Esau as the progenitor of their Roman persecutors. After all, most first century Jews believed that the Romans descended from Esau (Feldman 1988:101). Stiebert has indeed argued that this perception of the Romans by first century Jews begun with the Old Testament prophets not only in applying the Esau narratives specifically to Edom, but also in the wider prophetic polemics against the Babylonian oppressors of the Jews. In her words, the 'negative depiction of Esau in the literature after the Hexateuch, belongs to the larger pattern of prophetic inversion and anti-foreign Second Temple ideology' (2002:33). Accordingly, the first readers of Hebrews would not have missed the glaring paradox whereby the faithful descendants of Jacob were being again persecuted by the descendants of Esau.

The explicit reference to Esau in Hebrews 12:14–17, coming as it does near the rhetorical climax of his homily, therefore, played a very important rhetorical and polemical function in the author's efforts to shore up the flagging faith of his persecuted Jewish congregation in the diaspora, likely in Rome. By juxtaposing Jacob and Esau, the author was using an Old Testament language as a code to identify the different behaviours and outcomes between persevering believers and others in their society who had not only rejected the gospel but opposed those who persevered in it. Apostates from among them would be following the footsteps of Esau, who became the persecutor of 'the forefathers'.

4.2.9. Summary of echoes of Jacob-Esau Saga in Hebrews 12:14–17

In summary, it has been shown that several elements of the Jacob traditions and their interpretations by the prophets and literature of

Second Temple Judaism provided the narrative background for the warning passage of Hebrews 12:14–17. The positive section echoes themes associated with Jacob, while the negative section echoes themes associated with Esau. As summarised in Table 1 below, each of the individual clauses also derives its rhetorical force from the background generated by the Jacob-Esau saga. The first readers who would have readily appreciated these intertextual links would have also understood the passage as associating them with Jacob, and urging them to therefore repudiate the bad example of Esau.

Table 1 Summary of echoes of the Jacob tradition in Hebrews 12:14-17

Clause	Background in Jacob-Esau saga and its interpretations
διωκετε ('strive')	Jacob's swift and hurried dash in pursuit or while being pursued, his purposeful striving or wrestling with the angel, and his dogged efforts towards peace with Esau, Laban and the Shechemites.
Peace and holiness	The two-level interpretation of Jacob's reward for his victorious wrestling with the angel, namely, peace with his persecutors as well as holiness through his transformation of name and character
'see the Lord'	The first century theology of the beatific vision derived from the idea of Jacob as one who 'sees the Lord'

Failure to obtain God's grace	Esau as exemplar of the description in Deuteronomy 29:27 LXX, namely, as one who failed to obtain the grace of God, in sharp contrast with Jacob whose importunity was rewarded with divine grace.
'root of bitterness'	Esau as apostate 'root of bitterness' and defilement in Jacob's camp caused by the idols (Gen 35:2–3).
Explicit reference to Esau	The notion of Esau as a sensual and sexually immoral person was not uncommon among first century Jews. But more likely used as figurative language to describe Esau as apostate. The reference to 'change of mind' sharply contrasts the failed importunity of Esau with Jacob's successful importunity.
Others	The anticipations in Hebrews 12:1–13 (athletic and wrestling imageries, educative discipline of sons, the use of Isa 35 and the reference to joint dislocation in Heb 12:13) and the inferential link, Οὐ γὰρ, with the following passage describing the arrival at Mount Zion.

5. Conclusion and Implications of the Findings

It has been argued, convincingly I hope, that the Jacob-Esau saga and its interpretations by the Old Testament prophets, and Second Temple Judaism, echo in the background of the exhortations of Hebrews 12:14–17. Jacob's strivings, flight, and pursuit of peace even with his

persecutors, his persistent importunity in wrestling with the angel at Penuel, the resulting reception of the blessing of God's favour and grace, the transformation in his character, his 'seeing' God's face, and the Bethel encounter are all interpreted in a manner as to closely associate the patriarch with the readers. In luring his readers/hearers to share in the positive collective memory of the Jacob tradition, our author predisposed them to heed the subsequent dire warning to avoid the apostasy of Esau.

There are several implications of these findings. First of all, as has been shown, the Jacob-Esau saga helps explain how the passage fits into the flow of the argument of Hebrews 12. The chapter reflects the migration to Zion motif, beginning with perseverance in faithfulness, through endurance of suffering to ensuring the completion of the pursuit of the goals of the migration, arriving at Zion in peace and holiness. The ethical instructions directly address the congregation; yet, they derive their rhetorical force from their link to the Jacob-Esau saga. This Old Testament narrative lures the hearer/reader to partake of the life of the migrating Jacob and so repudiate the apostasy of Esau.

Secondly, the Jacob-Esau saga provides an objective basis for interpreting the μετα παντων of Hebrews 12:14. On the basis of the intertextual links, μετα παντων should be rendered as 'all manner of people', including the persecutors.

Thirdly the Jacob-Esau saga provides a coherent narrative background to the apparently disjointed ethical instructions in the passage. This certainly enhances the meaning and rhetorical import of the clauses in the passage.

Fourthly, as has been shown, the proposal fits very well with the putative socio-historical circumstances of the readers. They would more likely have associated their persecutors with Esau, and so readily

personalised this exhortation in a pastoral manner. Their faith as Christians had become a major source of suffering and resulted in their discouragement, flagging zeal and spiritual malaise. In inviting them to imaginatively share in Jacob's experiences, their hope of a rewarding epiphany just around the corner would be rekindled, and the warning to pay careful attention to their faith would achieve its intended results.

Fifthly, this proposal suggests that Hebrews was a significant relay station on the post-biblical Christian interpretations of Jacob's peculiar experience of the patriarch at Penuel (Sheridan, 2002:218–229).

Finally, I suggest that this proposal will enhance homiletic activities on Hebrews 12:14–17. Contemporary preachers will, for example, find the Jacob traditions as important illustrative resources in their expositions on the various clauses in Hebrews 12:14–17. Furthermore, I suggest that framers of the Church Lectionary Readings may well consider pairing readings of the Jacob traditions in Genesis 27–35 with Hebrews 12. As this article has shown, Hebrews 12 provides a New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament Jacob traditions. The two are best read together.

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New Creation Theology in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2

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Abstract

This analytical essay deals with the theme of new creation theology in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2. The major premise is that new creation theology is a defining characteristic in Paul's teaching. The biblical and theological analysis of this passage indicates that the Lord Jesus is the beginning, middle, and culmination for all of physical and spiritual reality. More specifically, Paul disclosed that the Son's atoning sacrifice at Calvary makes reconciliation possible between the Creator and repentant, believing sinners. In turn, the Messiah's redemptive work has inaugurated a new era in which the conversion of individual believers is part of God's larger plan to bring about the renewal of the entire universe, concluding with the new heavens and new earth.

1. Introduction

This analytical essay deals with the theme of new creation theology in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2.[2]The major premise is that new creation theology

[1] The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

2 Within academia, an analytical essay examines and interprets a literary text (such as a portion of scripture). In this case, the threefold goal is as follows: to articulate a major premise; to exposit the relevant biblical texts in their original languages, especially as they relate to the major premise; and to selectively engage pertinent scholarly sources, particularly to ensure the discourse remains factual and objective.

is a defining characteristic in Paul's teaching. To contextualize the treatise, section 2 broaches the concept of new creation theology within the Pauline corpus. Next, section 3 summarises what Genesis 1–3 reveals about the old, Adamic creation. Then, in section 4, additional background information from other relevant Old Testament passages and extra-canonical Jewish writings, is presented. Together, these two sections help to establish the narrative framework and theological context from which emerges Paul's discussion of salvation history in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2, the latter being the focus of section 5. This is followed by the Conclusion in section 6, which synthesizes and elucidates the major findings of the discourse.

2. The Concept of New Creation Theology within the Pauline Corpus

Smith (2012) identifies the 'mission of God' as a key 'unifying theme of Scripture' (28). He further clarifies that the *missio Dei* encompasses God's redemptive activity 'across time' to 'reconcile all people' (112) to himself (referred to as 'salvation history' or *Heilsgeschichte* in German) and his efforts to reestablish his 'righteous and benevolent reign over all creation' (referred to as the 'kingdom of God'). In their deliberation about the 'mission of God', O'Brien and Harris (2012:147–8) go further when they reason that the *missio Dei* encompasses more than just the notion of 'salvation history centred on' the Messiah. Just as important is the Lord's active involvement throughout 'creation

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This approach is considerably different from an argumentative treatise. The primary aim of the latter is not to undertake an erudite exposition of scripture (though it may involve this as a secondary aim); instead, it is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the assumptions, claims, and conclusions of various secondary sources. Doing so requires presenting and evaluating multiple sides of diverse viewpoints, especially as

history', which extends from the old Adamic 'creation' narrated in Genesis 1–3 to the 'new creation' described in Revelation 21–22.

Emerson (2013:73) narrows the focus when he observes that the 'narrative context' of Paul's writings 'emphasizes Christ's work of new creation'. In this regard, the Greek phrase *kainé ktísis*, which is rendered 'new creation',[3] occurs two times within the Pauline corpus: 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15.[4] As Marshall (2004:294) points out, it is as if this 'terminology' was 'accepted language' readily grasped by the apostle's 'readers'. The first text pertains to the spiritual union believers have through faith in the Messiah. The second passage reveals that in order for the lost to be spiritually regenerated, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision makes any difference; instead, it is a person's humble response in faith to the truth of the gospel. Corresponding to the imagery of the 'new creation' is that of 'new life' (*kainóteti zoes*), as seen in Romans 6:4. Paul wrote that just as the Son was 'raised from the dead', so believers are joined with him in his resurrection to experience the fresh quality and vitality of new life.

In order for there to be a new creation, it must be preceded by an old creation. Noteworthy is the contrast Paul made in his writings between the 'old self' versus the 'new self'. For instance, Romans 6:6 states that the believer's 'old self' (*palaiòs ánthropos*; literally 'old man') was crucified with the Son. Paul was referring to everything people were before trusting in the Son for salvation, when they were still enslaved to

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they relate to the central theoretical argument developed by the author (cf. Booth, Colomb, and Williams 2008:13–15; Mouton 2001:xii–xiv; Vyhmeister 2008:4–5).

3 Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from scripture are taken from the 2011 NIV.

4 A scholarly explication of Galatians 6:15, particularly as it relates to the theme of Paul's new creation theology is beyond the scope of this essay. Such an undertaking

sin (cf. 3:9), were ungodly (cf. 5:6), and were an enemy of God (cf. vs. 10). In short, the 'old self' is a person's metaphysical state before being born again. The apostle declared in Ephesians 2:15 that prior to the advent of the Messiah, Jews and Gentiles existed as distinct human entities; but now with the Son's resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven, he 'creates' (a rendering of the Greek verb *ktízo*) believing Jews and Gentiles into one 'new humanity' (*kainòn ánthropon*; literally 'new man'), that is, an entirely new metaphysical body known as the Church.

In Ephesians 4:22–24, Paul figuratively referred to the removal of the 'old self' (*tòn palaiòn ánthropon*; literally 'the old man') and the donning of the 'new self' (*tòn kainòn ánthropon*; literally 'the new man'). As in Romans 6, the 'old self' in Ephesians 4:22 denotes the sinful nature within people, which gives rise to unholy ways of thinking and acting. Like worn-out clothing, this deteriorating and wretched state of existence is replaced by the spiritual transformation that comes through faith in the Son. Moreover, verse 24 discloses that the 'new self' is 'created' (a rendering of the Greek verb *ktízo*) in God's image or likeness (literally, 'according to God'). Similarly, in Colossians 3:9–10, Paul made a sharp distinction between the 'old self' (*tòn palaiòn ánthropon*; literally 'the old man') and the 'new self' (*tòn néon*; literally 'the new [man]'). The apostle also referred to the latter as 'being renewed' (*tòn ánakainoúmenon*) to become increasingly like the 'Creator' (*tou ktísantos*). The picture is that of believers stripping off all the disgusting habits they had when in their unregenerate state and clothing themselves with godly behaviour that reflects the 'image' (*ekóna*) of the Lord.

(tentatively) remains the focus of a forthcoming journal article that seeks to build on and extend the insights arising from the present analytical essay.

3. The Old Adamic Creation in Genesis 1–3

The information broached in the preceding section is representative of the new creation theology that appears in the writings of Paul. Westermann (1974:39) explains that the 'New Testament message receives its historical place' from the 'source and context' found in the creation texts recorded in the Old Testament. In particular, Genesis 1–3, with its account of humanity's creation and subsequent fall, provides a crucial literary backdrop and theological foundation for Paul's teaching.

For instance, in Romans 8:19–22, the apostle explained that the present metaphysically corrupted state of the old creation is the result of sin and death entering the human experience (cf. 5:12). Paul noted that at the end of the present age comes the revealing of the 'children of God' (8:19) as well as the 'redemption' (v. 23) of their 'bodies'. Apparently, both occur simultaneously, related as they are to the release of the entire cosmos 'from its bondage to decay' (v. 21), in which the term 'cosmos' denotes the 'entire universe as an organized entity' (Oden 1992:1162). In the meantime, 'creation waits in eager expectation' (v. 19) and believers 'groan inwardly' (v. 23) for their promised freedom.[5]

While it is beyond the scope of the present section to undertake a detailed biblical and theological analysis of the Genesis creation narrative, it is beneficial to provide a cogent elucidation of what chapters 1–3 reveal about the old, Adamic creation.[6] Specifically, the

5 For a detailed biblical and theological analysis of Romans 8:1–39, cf. Lioy 2011:142–151, along with a representative (though not exhaustive) list of various works this monograph cites that provide a meticulous analysis on specialized topics being deliberated.

6 For a detailed biblical and theological analysis of Genesis 1–3, cf. Lioy 2005:23–55; Lioy 2010:5–15; and Lioy 2011:13–23, 25–37, 86–104, along with a representative (though not exhaustive) list of various works these monographs cite that provide a meticulous analysis on specialized topics being deliberated.

old Adamic creation was predominately theocentric in outlook and stressed the following three doctrinal truths: God's supreme reign over the cosmos; his active presence and involvement in the world; and his care and provision for his creation, including humankind.

Regarding the aetiology of humankind, several affirmations arise. One key tenet is that the emergence of *homo sapiens* was God's final and decisive act of creation. His choice to make people in his image encompasses both a special character (or quality) and a role (or task). Also, while the first human couple existed in a genetically pristine state as persons having moral integrity, they wilfully sinned against God. As a result, the primeval pair experienced spiritual separation from him and one another. A further dire outcome is that to this day, all Adam and Eve's physical descendants are born as mortal creatures for whom the *Imago Dei* has been defaced (though not obliterated).

From a New Testament perspective, the teleology of the human race is centred in the Saviour. As the underlying agent of creation, he brings the promise of new life to fruition, along with the assurance that future glory will supplant present suffering. The Messiah's resurrection from the dead is also the guarantee that at his Second Advent, believers will receive resurrection bodies that are glorious and imperishable. Furthermore, when the Saviour returns, he will bring about for his followers a final victory over Satan, sin, and death. In the interim, he enables them to become increasingly more like him.[7] These observations point to a shift in emphasis from a predominately theocentric outlook in the old Adamic creation to a Christocentric

7 For a detailed biblical and theological analysis of the New Testament perspective on the teleology of the human race centred in the Saviour, cf. Lioy 2005:57–87; Lioy 2010:87–134; and Lioy 2011:127–212, along with a representative (though not exhaustive) list of various works these monographs cite that provide a meticulous analysis on specialized topics being deliberated.

orientation in the writings of Paul, including 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2, which is the principal focus of this analytical essay.

4. Background Information from Relevant Old Testament Passages and Extra-canonical Jewish Writings

Paul's new creation theology, including that found in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2, did not arise in a conceptual vacuum; instead, he formulated his views within the context of a vibrant literary tradition that extended beyond the opening chapters of Genesis to include other relevant Old Testament eschatological passages, as well as pertinent Jewish apocalyptic literature written during the Second Temple period (commonly understood to extend from 530 BC to CE 70). It is conceded that Paul nowhere directly quotes extra-canonical Jewish writings. Echoes and parallels occur, but not explicit citations on the intertestamental literature. That said, it is reasonable to surmise that the apostle, as a highly educated and accomplished Pharisee, was familiar with this literature.

In light of the preceding observations, and in order more fully to appreciate Paul's distinctive perspective, it is worthwhile to consider the general outlook for the renewal and restoration of creation foretold in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, along with the viewpoints expressed within selective extra-canonical writings of Judaism.[8] To begin, in

8 The scholarly literature on this topic is extensive. Also, it is beyond the scope of this essay to undertake an exhaustive analysis of the pertinent background information from relevant Old Testament passages and extra-canonical Jewish writings. Instead, given the modest intent of this section, the following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the discourse: Brueggemann (1997); Chisholm (1991); Clifford (1985); Dyrness (1977); Harner (1967); Harrison (2009); Jacob (1958); Lessing (2010); Marlow (2012); Motyer (2001); Ollenburger (1987); Osborn (2000);

Isaiah 42, the prophet spoke about a coming 'servant' (v. 1), the Messiah, through whom the Lord would bring justice and salvation to people. Verse 8 affirmed that the prophecy about the Servant was given by God and not the 'idols' venerated by the inhabitants of pagan nations. Verse 9 related that earlier predictions had come to pass for God's people, including Israel's epochal departure from Egypt (43:16–17).

In 43:18–19, the Lord directed the redeemed not to limit their thoughts to those past events; instead, he urged them to direct their attention to a completely 'new' undertaking. It was a time when God would defeat their oppressor and restore his people to the Promised Land. According to 48:1–5, long ago Israel's God had foretold their defeat and captivity. He did this so they would not conclude that the idols they worshiped brought about the cataclysmic episode. Then, in verse 6, he declared 'new' events—particularly, Israel's restoration to Judah—which previously he had concealed from their conscious awareness.

Similarly, new prophecies foretelling redemption—such as those about the Servant—would be fulfilled. Only the all-knowing, all-powerful Creator could successfully disclose these unique salvific oracles in advance. Moreover, passages such as Jeremiah 31:31, 33:25–26, Ezekiel 11:19, and 18:31 pointed to a fresh beginning in which God would usher in the renewal of creation (both its physical and metaphysical aspects), the spiritual transformation of his redeemed people, and an unparalleled opportunity for him to dwell with them. Isaiah 65:17–25 and 66:22 bring this future-oriented perspective into sharper relief. On the one hand, these prophecies applied in part to the exiles who returned from Babylon, especially the transformation of

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Reumann (1973); Schifferdecker (2008); Smith (1993); Towner (1996); and Waltke and Yu (2007).

Judah, Jerusalem, and its temple; on the other hand, the language clearly went beyond any fulfilment in ancient history.

For instance, the prophet recorded God's declaration that at his initiative, he would 'create' (*bore*; qal, participle, masculine, singular; Isa 65:17; cf. Gen 1:1) a 'new heavens' (65:17; 66:22), along with a 'new earth', and these would replace the old heavens and earth. Also, the new creation would 'remain' (66:22) or 'endure' forever; likewise, the 'descendants' (*zarakem*; lit. 'seed') of the redeemed, along with their collective 'name', would abide for unending generations to come. Corresponding oracles are found in Revelation 21:1, where the visionary declared that he saw a 'new heaven', as well as a 'new earth'. The latter would be total replacements for their old counterparts, which the Creator had destroyed. He evidently did this to eliminate any corrupting presence or influence of sin (cf. 2 Pet 3:7, 10–12).

The preceding notwithstanding, the seer was not thinking merely of a world free of sin and hardness of heart. More importantly, the eschatological vision consisted of a creation new in all its qualities. Accordingly, Revelation 21:2 depicted the 'new Jerusalem' as a 'holy city', which the Creator sent down out of 'heaven'. Also, he magnificently adorned the New Jerusalem (the 'bride') for her husband (the 'groom'). The implication was that the city surpassed the beauty of everything else God had previously made. There is no consensus on whether this domicile should be taken as a literal city where God's people would dwell for all eternity or a symbol of the redeemed community in heaven. In either case, the seer declared that a new world was coming, and it would be glorious beyond imagination.

Second Peter 3:13 mentioned that Christians awaited with expectancy a 'new heavens' and a 'new earth', for it was there that 'righteousness' (i.e. equity and virtue) truly existed. Verse 14 added that the redeemed

longed for such an elysian future. Consequently, they were to ensure that whenever the Messiah returned, he would find them living in concord with each other and striving to be morally unsullied and irreproachable in their relationships. This sentiment is reinforced in 1 John 2:28, where the writer directed his readers to remain in living communion with the Saviour. Doing so would ensure that at his second advent, they would feel confident assurance, rather than shame, in his holy presence.

The grandeur and glory of the new creation depicted in Isaiah 65 would eclipse any recall the righteous experienced of past traumatic events. Even weeping and crying would give way to gladness, rejoicing, and delight. For this reason, the Lord commanded his people to 'exult' (v. 18) and 'rejoice' always and for all time over what God would 'create' (*bara'*). Specifically, he pledged to 'create' (*bore*; qal, participle, masculine, singular) the New Jerusalem as a place of happiness, and the people inhabiting the city would be a source of joy for the community of the redeemed. Even the sovereign of the cosmos would delight in the New Creation. According to verse 19, he would 'rejoice' over Jerusalem and 'exult' over the city's inhabitants. No one within the eternal abode would ever again hear the voice of 'weeping' or the cry of 'distress'.

Likewise, the seer revealed that in the eternal state the Creator would permanently 'tabernacle' (Rev 21:3) among the redeemed of all ages. They would always be graced by the 'tent' of his divine presence. In fact, he would claim them as his chosen people, and they would revel in him being their God. Also, at least five scourges of human existence would no longer exist in the celestial abode—tears, death, sorrow, crying, and pain. The new order of things would eliminate all these forms of anguish (v. 4). The Creator assured the righteous remnant that he would fulfil his promise to do away with the old order so that every

aspect of the cosmos would be made 'new' (v. 5). What was inferior and transitory would give way to what was superior and everlasting.

In Isaiah 65:20–25, the prophet described what the new creation would be like for God's people. Interpreters differ over whether these verses refer to the heavenly state (the metaphorical view) or to a future period in which the Messiah would rule on earth (the literal view). Regardless of which hermeneutical approach is preferred, the passage contains four promises of blessing. Those who made the newly created Jerusalem their domicile would experience the following: (1) long lives; (2) productive labour; (3) God's prompt response to their prayers; and (4) an environment free from hostility. When taken together, these blessings suggest that the Creator would reverse the effects of the Fall when he inaugurated the new order.

As noted, the first blessing is longevity (v. 20). The Old Testament indicates that lives stretching to hundreds of years was the rule in early human history. Similarly, in the new creation, infant mortality would drop to zero, for all would live to adulthood. Moreover, a tombstone recording a life span of 100 years would not be remarkable for denoting a long life, but for denoting a short life. The second blessing in the new creation was fruitful endeavours (vv. 21–23). The people of Isaiah's time lived and died with the vagaries of agricultural life. Droughts and pestilence caused great damage. The pagans prayed to fertility and weather gods and goddesses; but the Lord's chosen people were supposed to trust him to supply all their needs.

After the Fall, God's curse on humanity included the declaration that labour to earn food would be difficult (cf. Gen 3:17–19). In the new creation, people would continue to work, but they would have no worries about harvesting the yield resulting from their undertakings. Others (perhaps unscrupulous rich people or invaders) would never take

what the redeemed had earned with their own hands. Generation after generation, the people of God would be blessed. Isaiah related these truths in terms that could be understood. For instance, God's people would live in the houses they built and eat the fruit of their vineyards (Isa 65:21). The Lord would prevent invaders from taking these from them. In fact, God would enable his people to live a long life and enjoy what their hands produced (v. 22). The labour of the redeemed community would not be in vain, and their children would not be destined for calamity (v. 23). After all, the Lord would grace innumerable generations of parents and their children with safety, health, and prosperity. Such blessings would be both physical and spiritual in nature.

The third blessing in the new creation was answered prayer (v. 24). In the ancient Eden orchard, Adam and Eve enjoyed the immediate presence and conversation of the Lord. Similarly, while people in the new creation were praying, even before they made their request, God would answer them. This described a close fellowship between God and people. Such a circumstance is echoed in Revelation 22:3–4. The seer noted that in the new creation the Father and the Son would be seated on their thrones, and the redeemed would worship and serve them continually. God would establish unbroken communion with his people, and he would claim them as his own.

Of noteworthy mention is the fourth blessing in the new creation, namely, peace (Isa 65:25). The Fall introduced hostility into the world, and murder was committed by each successive generation; but in the new creation, even the animals would stop preying on one another, for perfect harmony would reign. This expectation for wellness and wholeness was repeated in the Apocalypse. God promised to give water from the life-giving fountain to everyone who was thirsty (Rev 21:6). This pledge was a vivid reminder of the refreshment and satisfaction

believers would enjoy in heaven. In the eternal state, God would satisfy the yearnings of their soul. This assurance was grounded in the Lord's own nature. Those who prevailed over temptation and persecution during their earthly sojourn would receive an everlasting inheritance as children of the eternal Creator (v. 7).

In the seer's description of the great heavenly city, he referred to the tree of life, first mentioned in the book of Genesis (Rev 22:2; cf. Gen 2:9). In fact, many themes introduced in Genesis find their fulfilment in Revelation. For instance, in Genesis: the sun is created; Satan is victorious; sin enters the human race; people run and hide from God; people are cursed; tears are shed, with sorrow for sin; the garden and earth are cursed; paradise is lost; and people are doomed to death. Then, in Revelation: the sun is not needed; Satan is defeated; sin is banished; people are invited to live with God forever; the curse is removed; there is no more sin, tears, or sorrow; God's city is glorified; the earth is made new; paradise is regained; death is defeated; and believers live forever with the Lord.

As noted at the beginning of this section, Paul's new creation theology was influenced by non-canonical Jewish writings penned during the Second Temple period. It was an era in which pagan governments oppressed religious communities. In response, the visionaries authored apocalyptic treatises declaring the Creator's eventual triumph over the wicked and his vindication of the righteous remnant. Admittedly, the primary focus was on the redeemed as a group, rather than the Creator's transformative work within each believer by his Spirit (especially as seen in Paul's writings, including 2 Cor 5:11–6:2). Furthermore, just as Isaiah 65 and 66 foretold God's establishment of a new created order, so too, pertinent Jewish literature written during the intertestamental

period spoke about a glorious era in which the Lord would renew the cosmos and reign sovereign over it.

By way of example, 2 Baruch 32:6 points the faithful to an eschatological day when the 'Mighty One'[9] would 'renew' his 'creation'. A future 'hope' is noted in 57:2 when the 'world' would be 'renewed', including the 'promise' of 'life'. Later on, God's 'Servant, the Anointed One' (70:10; cf. 72:2) is portrayed as reigning in 'eternal peace' (73:1) over the divine 'kingdom', and establishing worldwide 'joy' and 'rest' (cf. Isa 9:6–7; 11:1–9; Zech 14:9). In like manner, Tobit 15:5 depicts the Creator restoring his chosen people to their homeland and enabling them to 'rebuild the temple'. They also witness the conversion of the nations and marvel at Gentiles worshipping the Lord 'in truth' (v. 6). The Sibylline Oracles 3:808 adds that the Gentiles would offer sacrifices to the 'great king' (cf. Isa 2:2–4; 56:6–7; Mic 4:1–4; Zech 8:20–23; 14:16–19).

First Enoch 72:1 refers to the 'new creation' that 'abides forever'. Similarly, 91:16 speaks of the 'first heaven' retreating and ending, along with a 'new heaven' appearing and all its celestial 'powers' shining 'forever'. Likewise, Jubilees 1:29 comments on the 'day of the [new] creation' as a time when God would renew the 'heavens', the 'earth', and whatever they contained by his mighty power. In that future day, the Lord would establish his 'sanctuary' in 'Jerusalem', which was located on 'Mount Zion', and bring about an era of 'healing', 'peace', and 'blessing' for 'all the elect of Israel'. Later, in 4:26, it is declared that in the 'new creation', God would consecrate the 'Garden of Eden', the 'Mount of the East', 'Mount Sinai', and 'Mount Zion'. In turn, this would lead to the 'sanctification' of the 'earth', including the

9 All quotes from the Pseudepigrapha are taken from Charles (1913) and Charlesworth (1983). Also, all quotes from the Deutero-Canonicals/Apocrypha are taken from the NRSV.

elimination of planet's 'guilt' and 'uncleanness' for innumerable 'generations' to come. In 4 Ezra 7:75 is recorded the priestly scribe wondering whether, following his 'death', he and his pious colleagues would be preserved in 'rest' until the moment when God renewed the 'creation', Finally, the Apocalypse of Abraham 9:9 depicted God pledging to show the patriarch what the Creator brought into existence and subsequently 'renewed' by his 'word'.

In stepping back from the preceding discourse, several insights arise. Whether it was the end-time writings authored during the Old Testament era or the Jewish apocalyptic literature penned during the Second Temple period, the focus was on a future messianic age of redemption when God delivered his people. The salvation could be from their own sinful inclinations or the oppression of their pagan foes. In both cases, the emphasis was on the faith community as a group, rather than the lives of individual believers. Prior historical events, such as the Israelites' exodus from Egypt or their return to the Promised Land from exile in Babylon, became archetypal of the Lord's deliverance. Indeed, the Servant's atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world accomplished a new exodus and established a new covenant.

The righteous remnant's deliverance from slavery in Egypt, along with their subsequent restoration to their homeland, became the basis for convincing them that the Creator would vindicate them, especially by dealing decisively with their antagonists. The people of God were encouraged to look beyond the limited scope of past historical events, as well as the confinements associated with their own temporal circumstances. They were to recognise that the Lord intended to replace the old order with a completely new one. In both canonical and extra-canonical Jewish writings, the latter were referred to as the 'new heaven' (or 'heavens') and the 'new earth'. These designators, which

also appear in eschatologically-oriented New Testament literature, pointed to a metamorphosis so radical and far reaching that it would result in a fresh beginning for the regenerate inhabitants of God's kingdom.

The divine promise of the material transformation of the universe was accompanied by his pledge to spiritually renew the righteous remnant. He would also bless his redeemed children with an unparalleled opportunity to commune with him. They would become people known for their virtue and equity, which suited their residence in an eternal domicile known as the 'holy city' and the 'new Jerusalem'. In short, both the people of God and their magnificent abode would be characterised by righteousness. Concord would replace acrimony, and piety would supersede debauchery. Furthermore, the prior traumas connected with temporal earthly existence would give way to gladness and rejoicing, especially as God's people exulted in the blessing of his glorious, sustaining presence. Indeed, the joys of the new cosmic order would so eclipse the sorrows of the old order that the latter would soon be forgotten and never again recalled.

5. The New Creation Theology of Paul in Second Corinthians 5:11–6:2

As noted in section 1, sections 3 and 4 help to establish the narrative framework and theological context that emerges from Paul's discussion of salvation history in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2. In 5:9–10, the apostle emphasized the importance of believers' living in a way that pleased the Lord, for they knew that at the end of the age he would appraise how they conducted themselves during their earthly sojourn. The future time of reckoning motivated the apostle to please the Lord by serving others in His name as long as Paul lived on earth. Also, by his example, he encouraged his readers to do the same. The apostle's reference in verse

11 to the 'fear of the Lord' (*phóbon tou kyríou*; an objective genitive) is an intentional link to the preceding passage.[10] Paul did not have in mind a cringing dread, but rather a reverential disposition produced by an awe of one's accountability before the all-knowing Creator (cf. Prov 1:7; 9:10; 14:2; 15:33; Eccl 3:14; 12:13).[11]

A superficial overview of 2 Corinthians 5:11 might lead to the incorrect supposition that the Greek phrase *ánthropous peíthomen* ('trying to persuade people') mainly referred to unbelievers; however, the immediate literary context indicates the apostle had in mind at least

10 In this section, the latest editions of the Nestle-Aland / United Bible Societies' *Novum Testamentum Graece* have been used. Also, unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are my personal translation of the respective biblical texts being cited. Moreover, I have intentionally refrained from filling every paragraph and page in this portion of the analytical essay with an excessive number of formal citations from secondary sources. So, for the sake of expediency, the following are the lexical and grammatical sources I consulted in the researching and writing of the corresponding discourse: *A dictionary of biblical languages: Greek New Testament* (J Swanson); *A grammar of the Greek New Testament* (N Turner, JH Moulton, and WF Howard); *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (FW Danker, ed.); *Exegetical dictionary of the New Testament* (H Balz and G Schneider, eds.); *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains* (JP Louw and EA Nida, eds.); *Greek grammar beyond the basics: an exegetical syntax of the New Testament* (DB Wallace); *Greek New Testament insert* (B Chapman and GS Shogren); *New international dictionary of New Testament theology and exegesis* (C Brown, ed.); *The Lexham discourse Greek New Testament* (S Runge, ed.); *The new linguistic and exegetical key to the Greek New Testament* (CL Rogers); *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (G Kittel and G Friedrich, eds.); and *Theological lexicon of the New Testament* (C Spicq; JD Ernest, ed.).

11 The scholarly literature on 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2 is extensive. Also, the majority of relevant exegetical and theological works frequently convey the same sort of information on this Pauline passage. So, for the sake of expediency, the following are the representative secondary sources that have influenced the discourse: Balla (2007); Barnett (1997); Beale (2011); Best (1987); Bruce (1980); Garland (1999); Gundry-Volf (1993); Guthrie (1981); Harris (2005); Hughes (1962); Keener (2005); Kistemaker (1997); Ladd and Hagner (1993); Lenski (1961); Levison (1993); Lowery (1994); Martin (1986; 1993); Marshall (2004); Morris (1986); Mueller (1934); Plummer (1978); Sampley (2000); Schreiner (2008); Stott (2006); Thielman (2005).

some of the Christians at Corinth. This understanding is reinforced by the fact that Paul had to spar with several sets of opponents, including false prophets from outside the congregation as well as antagonists from within the fellowship. In trying to convince his readers about his honesty and truthfulness in proclaiming the gospel, Paul opened himself up to them. He was confident that the sincerity of his motives was clearly evident (*pephanerómetha*; perfect, passive, indicative) to God; and the apostle hoped (*elpízo*; present, active, indicative) that the moral sensitivities (*syneidesesin*; lit. 'consciences') of his readers would lead them to a similar conclusion.

Paul explained that, in choosing to be so transparent, he had no desire to solicit any acclaim (*synistánomen*; present, active, indicative; lit. 'commend' or 'request approval'; v. 12) from the believers at Corinth. The apostle's previous decision to defend the integrity of his ministry (cf. 3:1; 4:2) was due to the fact that outsiders had come to the church and questioned his authority. For this reason, Paul sought to remain above board in his conduct as a minister of the gospel. He also wanted to give his readers a favourable 'opportunity' (*aphormén*; or 'occasion'; 5:12) to respond to his antagonists, who revelled (*kauchoménous*; present, either middle or passive, participle; lit. 'boast') in having a showy ministry (*prosópo*; lit. 'appearance'), rather than in cultivating a genuine, virtuous character (*kardía*; lit. 'heart').

Barnett (1997:282) explained that outside the New Testament, the Greek noun *aphormé* ('opportunity', 'occasion') was used as a 'military' metaphor to refer to establishing a suitable base of operations or a beachhead for troops. In verse 12, the idea was that of Paul providing the Corinthians with an appropriate starting point for them to affirm (*kauchématos*; lit. 'boast about') the purity of his motives to his detractors (cf. 1:12–23). Paul did not think it was necessary for him to prove his claim to be an apostle, especially since his God-given

authority as a church leader was the basis for his mandate to establish a congregation in the city (cf. Acts 18:9–11; 1 Cor 1:1–2; 2 Cor 1:1). In persuading the Corinthians, the missionary wanted them to objectively consider the evidence. By doing so, they could discern that Paul's heart-driven ministry contrasted sharply with the pretentiousness of his opponents.

There are at least three different views regarding what Paul meant in 2 Corinthians 5:13 when he used the Greek verb *exéstemen* (aorist, active, indicative; 'beside ourselves'). He could have been referring to a charge levelled by his critics that he was guilty of making outlandish claims as an apostle, or that he was off-centre in his presentation of the gospel, or that he was characterised by aberrant religious behaviour. The corresponding verb *sophronoumen* (present, active, indicative) emphasized Paul's ability to reason in a lucid, sensible way. On the one hand, some concluded that Paul was insane; on the other hand, he insisted that whatever he did was intended to glorify God and benefit Christians. Accordingly, the apostle rejected the charge of his rivals that he was merely concerned about making a name for himself.

In verse 11, Paul noted that his accountability before the Saviour was one incentive for the apostle to be virtuous in his ministry to others. According to Keener (2005:184), verse 14 disclosed that the 'love of Christ' was a second motivating factor. The Greek phrase *agápe tou Christou* is best understood to be a subjective genitive, namely, the love that originated from the Saviour. Expressed differently, the mercy he showed to humankind, as evidenced in his atoning sacrifice, compelled Paul to serve others sacrificially. The Greek verb *synéchei* (present, active, indicative) denoted exercising continuous control over something. Here, it was as if Paul felt the grip of an outside celestial force exerting itself on him. Specifically, he had received Jesus'

unconditional love; in turn, as Harris (2005:419) states, the apostle was left with no other 'choice' than to reach out to the lost with the gospel, and minister to the needs of his fellow believers.

There is no scholarly consensus concerning the best way to understand the Greek statement rendered 'one has died for all; therefore all have died' (v. 14). In particular, does 'all' (*pánton* and *pántes*, respectively) refer to all people or all Christians? If it means all people, then perhaps Paul was emphasising two important and interrelated theological truths: (1) Jesus' death confirmed the spiritual death of unbelievers (cf. Rom 3:23; 6:23; Eph 2:1); and (2) his substitutionary, atoning sacrifice (cf. the use of the preposition *hypér* in 2 Cor 5:14) caused believers to die to their unregenerate self (cf. Gal 2:20). Regardless of which interpretation is preferred, the implication was that through faith in the Son, repentant sinners received new life in their baptismal union with him and had a mandate to serve the lost rather than their sinful nature (cf. Rom 6:3–7).

In 2 Corinthians 5:15, Paul reiterated the importance of being spiritually regenerated and transformed in the way one lived (cf. the dual use of Greek verb *záo*, 'to live,' i.e. *zontes* and *zosin*, respectively). The historical reality of the Son's death (*apothanónti*; aorist, active, participle) and resurrection (*egerthénti*; aorist, passive, participle) provided the motivation for the redeemed to live for him (cf. the use of the conjunction *hína* to express purpose). This meant that believers were no longer to adopt the pagan mind-set and mores of the present age; instead, they were to let the Spirit, through the ministry of the Word, metamorphose their intellect, emotions, and will (cf. Rom 12:1–2).

This ongoing process of change included refusing any longer to evaluate (*oídamen*; perfect, active, indicative; 'know' or 'understand'; 2 Cor 5:16) people according to selfish human considerations (*sárka*; lit.

'flesh') or assess them from an external human perspective. For Paul, the latter included discontinuing the use of an unregenerate mind-set (*sárka*; lit. 'flesh') to appraise (*ginóskomen*; present, active, indicative; 'perceive' or 'comprehend') Jesus of Nazareth (in which the Greek verbs *oida* and *ginósko* are more or less synonymous). The apostle inferred, however, that before his conversion he had mistakenly regarded (*egnókamen*; perfect, active, indicative) the Son as a mere human being, as well as a blasphemer and lawbreaker who deserved to experience God's curse in an ignoble form of death (cf. Deut 21:23; Gal 3:13).

Having a transformed perspective was the result of the new birth changing a believer's life. Paul declared that repentant sinners became a 'new creation' (*kainé ktísis*; 2 Cor 5:17) when they were united to the Son by faith (cf. the use of the Greek phrase *en Christo*). (In this context, the rendering of *ktísis* as 'creature' seems less accurate.) As Levison (1993:189) observes, there are three aspects operative in Paul's thinking about the 'new creation': (1) 'individual converts'; (2) the 'community of faith'; and (3) the 'cosmos as a whole'. While of primary concern here for the apostle was the spiritual status of each believer, being born again also had ramifications for the body of Christ, as well as the entire universe. Put another way, the believer's change in status had broad metaphysical and ontological implications.

To illustrate, God radically reshaped the sinful lives of the regenerate, and in a sense, recreated them. Consequently, what previously existed (*archaia*; esp. the old, sinful nature) was removed (*parelthen*; aorist, active, indicative; lit. 'pass away' or 'cease to exist') to make room for what was 'new' (*kainá*) both chronologically and qualitatively. The triune God was the sovereign source and agent in bringing about this completely different existential reality. Put another way, he alone

inaugurated and accomplished the inner recreating of the believers' fallen human nature. Indeed, the Greek phrase *tá pánta ek tou Theou* (lit. 'all [these] things [are] from God'; v. 18) emphasised that he was the sole author of this second creation, just as he was of the first. Furthermore, with the advent of the Messiah, a new era of reconciliation was inaugurated (cf. the use of the verb *katalláxantos* and the related noun *katallages*).

Fittingly, as Barnett (1997:296) elucidates, the conversion of individual believers (an anthropological-existential emphasis) was part of God's larger plan to bring about the renewal of the entire universe, concluding with the new heavens and new earth (a soteriological-cosmological emphasis; cf. Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1). Specifically, the initiative the Father took in 'reconciling' (*katalláxantos*; aorist, active, participle; 2 Cor 5:18) the lost to himself (*hemas heauto*) was accomplished through (*diá*) the agency of his Son. In turn, God entrusted (*dóntos*; aorist, active, participle) to evangelists such as Paul (along with all believers; cf. the use of the inclusive first person personal pronoun *hemas*, 'us') the 'task' (*diakonían*; or 'ministry') of proclaiming the good news, namely, that the Creator wanted to reestablish the broken relationship (*katallages*) between himself and the unregenerate.

In verse 19, Paul clarified the core teaching of the gospel. Specifically, it was through the Son's atoning sacrifice that the Father was establishing peace (*katallásson*; present, active, participle; lit. 'reconciling') between himself and the creation (*kósmon*; lit. 'world'). The preceding truth indicated that Paul, in his teaching on the atonement, did not just have individual believers in mind. As Martin (1986:136, 146, 152, 158) noted, the apostle was also emphasising a broader theological 'horizon', namely, one that included the entire universe (cf. Col 1:19–20).

Even so, as Barnett (1997:298–9) pointed out, in 2 Corinthians 5:19, *kósmos* also included earth's human inhabitants, all of whom were estranged from the Creator, languishing as slaves to Satan and sin, and existing under the dominion and censure of the Mosaic Law. The Greek verb *katallásso* (lit. 'reconcile') denoted the overcoming of ill will and alienation, along with the renewing of love, peace, and harmony between two parties. When sin entered the human race and established control over people, God in his absolute holiness could not allow human beings to remain in his presence (at least in the same sense as before). Sin caused people to rebel against God and live without any consideration of their Creator. Because of their sinfulness, the Lord stood opposed to them.

Amazingly, the Father, out of his unconditional love for the lost, allowed his Son to die on the cross. In turn, the Son's love for the unsaved prompted him to become an atoning sacrifice. Through the work of the Redeemer, a change of relationship was made possible in which enmity could be replaced by harmony and fellowship. God was the one who took the initiative to bring people back to himself in a new sphere of existence; and the peaceful relationship repentant sinners experienced with the Father was based on what the Son did at Calvary.

In turn, the Lord conferred (*thémenos*; aorist, middle, participle; v. 19) on believers such as Paul the responsibility of urging others to receive the message (*lógon*; lit. 'word') of his gracious offer of peace and forgiveness (*katallages*; lit. 'reconciliation'). The apostle responded to this profound display of God's mercy by becoming a steward of the gospel the Father entrusted to his care. This consisted of announcing that the Son's redemptive work on the cross made it possible for the Father to pardon the lost and re-establish their relationship with him. Paul explained that God, instead of keeping an inventory (*logizómenos*;

present, either middle or passive, participle; lit. 'count' or 'reckon') of past 'transgressions' (*paraptómata*; or 'trespasses'), graciously offered forgiveness and peace to all who believed. The apostle felt privileged that the Creator had bestowed on him the task of declaring the good news to others.

Paul regarded the Christian's role in proclaiming God's reconciliation as that of 'ambassadors' (*presbeúomen*; v. 20) on behalf of the Messiah (in which the Greek phrase *hypér Christou* appears at the beginning of the verse for emphasis). As Harris (2008:446) remarked, the apostle considered himself to be 'God's mouthpiece' to the Corinthians, as well as to others around the world who needed to hear the gospel. Through Paul (and other heralds of the good news; cf. the use of the inclusive first person personal pronoun *hemon*, 'us'), the Saviour urged everyone to be restored to friendship (*katallágete*; aorist, passive, imperative; lit. 'be reconciled') with God. The tenses of the two verbs the apostle used—*parakalountos* (present, active, participle; lit. 'make an appeal or plea') and *deómetha* (present, middle, indicative; lit. 'beg,' 'implore,' or 'entreat')—indicate that an ongoing effort was put forth to convince people of their need for redemption.

In the first century CE, ambassadors represented the leader of one country to another. These officials did not act on their own authority or promote their own agendas; instead, they communicated and advocated the position of their nation's leader. During Paul's day, this title was usually reserved for Cæsar's legates in the East. The duties of such an appointee were varied. As representatives of the Roman Empire, Cæsar's emissaries were constantly putting out political fires, which would ignite in conquered lands. While Rome's first priority was to maintain its power, it was also interested in upholding law and order.

The empire's ambassadors were essential to maintain the *Pax Romana* (or Roman peace, as it was called) between Cæsar and his dominions. His representatives were given a great deal of authority, as well as the power to negotiate. On the one hand, they pledged never to compromise Cæsar's interests; on the other hand, they sought to achieve some sense of reconciliation with each of the conquered countries. For this reason, ambassadors were usually considered messengers of peace, even when Rome's vassal states and client kingdoms sometimes regarded Cæsar's directives as provocative. Because they were his representatives, his envoys had the rights of a diplomat in any country, regardless of the possibility that their right to safe conduct would sometimes be violated. Indeed, the ambassador of an occupying power was often in personal danger.

Verse 21 provides one of the most incisive and significant explanations in scripture of how the Son objectively, decisively, and completely accomplished the reconciliation of transgressors with the Father. As Hughes (1962:211) affirmed, the passage is a theological *tour de force* that overflows with 'wonder'. On the one hand, throughout the Messiah's earthly sojourn, he never violated God's commands, which indicates that Jesus led a life totally free from sin (cf. the Greek phrase *tón mé gnónta hamartían;* 'the one who did not know sin [experientially]'; John 7:18; 8:46; Acts 3:14; Heb 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet 1:19; 2:22; 3:18; 1 John 3:5); on the other hand, in what Stott (2006:148) labels a 'mysterious exchange', God literally 'made [Him] to be sin' (*hamartían epoíesen*; 2 Cor 5:21) or (in accordance with Hebraic idiomatic usage) to become a sin offering to propitiate humanity's iniquities (cf. Isa 53:6; Rom 8:3; 1 Cor 15:3; 1 Pet 2:24).

At Calvary, the Redeemer took the place of the lost as their sacrificial substitute and bore the punishment they deserved (cf. the use of the

Greek preposition *hypér*, twice in 2 Cor 5:20 and once in v. 21). The *hína* conjunction (adverbial to denote purpose and result; v. 21) indicated that the Son willingly became humanity's representative sin-bearer, not only so that repentant sinners could have their iniquities forgiven, but also so that they could be made right with the Father. If the phrase *dikaiosýne Theou* ('righteous of God') is an all-inclusive genitival construction, then it would mean that the Father was simultaneously the possessor, source, and agent of righteousness, which through the Son, he imputed to believers (cf. Rom 1:17).

The 'four arms of the cross' (Wittmer 2013) are a useful illustration for making sense of what Jesus did on behalf of the lost: (1) 'downward, toward Satan'–this *Christus Victor* 'aspect of the cross' was a reminder that the Son 'died to defeat Satan', the archenemy of believers who 'held the power of sin and death' (cf. Col 2:15; Heb 2:14–15; 1 John 3:8); (2) 'upward, toward God'–this 'penal substitution' aspect of the cross was a reminder that the Son appeased the 'Father's wrath' and 'satisfied' his eternal justice by 'bearing' the 'penalty' of humanity's sin in their 'place' and as their perfect substitute (cf. Rom 3:25–26; Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 John 2:2; 4:10); and (3) 'sideways', toward the lost–this aspect of the cross provided a 'moral influence' and 'example' by demonstrating how much God loved humankind (cf. Rom 5:8; 1 John 3:16: 4:7–12). In short, the divine 'goal' was *Christus Victor*, the 'means' was 'penal substitution', and one 'benefit' (among many) was the Messiah's 'example' of 'love' for all people.

God worked (*synergountes*; present, active, participle; 2 Cor 6:1) through bondservants such as Paul to unceasingly urge (*parakaloumen*; present, active, indicative) individuals such as the Corinthians not to ignore or squander the divine gift of 'grace' (*chárin*; 'unmerited favour') they had 'received' (*déxasthai*; aorist, middle, infinitive) by faith. There are at least two different ways of interpreting the Greek

phrase *eis kenón* ('in vain' or 'uselessly'). One view is that the apostle's pointed remark was for those in Corinth who heard the gospel but remained unregenerate. Because they refused to believe, they were not reconciled to God, despite listening to and understanding Paul's proclamation. Another view is that receiving God's unmerited favour without result or efficacy implied that the behaviour of the Corinthians was not measuring up to their Christian profession. Expressed differently, their lifestyles had become a denial of what they professed to believe.

In either case, in verse 2, Paul quoted Isaiah 49:8 to illustrate the urgency of his appeal. In its original context, the verse foretold that at the divinely appointed time (*kairo dekto*, 2 Cor 6:2), the Lord, through his chosen Servant, would restore the faithful remnant of Israel from exile to their homeland. Ultimately, the promise of liberation from captivity, freedom from sin, and pardon from iniquities was fulfilled in the Saviour. Here, the Greek phrase *heméra soterías* is taken as a descriptive genitive; in other words, it refers to a day in which salvation from God was revealed and inaugurated.

Through the use of the Greek verb *idoú* (aorist, active, imperative; 'behold' or 'listen') twice in verse 2, Paul stressed to the Corinthians that 'now' (*nyn*) was the divinely appointed time (*kairós euprósdektos*) for them to welcome the gospel; likewise, this was the day for them to experience the offer of salvation (*heméra soterías*). The apostle wanted his readers to know that if they procrastinated—namely, if they put off their decision to respond appropriately to the Son—they put their souls in mortal jeopardy. For this reason, Paul urged them to embrace and act on the message of reconciliation while they still had the opportunity to do so.

6. Conclusion

This analytical essay dealt with the theme of new creation theology in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2. The major premise was that new creation theology is a defining characteristic in Paul's teaching. To properly contextualize the endeavour, background information from Genesis 1–3 concerning the old, Adamic creation was cogently deliberated. This undertaking drew attention to two important realities: (1) the absolute, creative power of God is the backbone for properly understanding the origin and development of the cosmos; and (2) the Saviour operates as the underlying agent of creation.

It is reasonable to infer from a biblical and theological analysis of the Genesis creation texts that whereas the latter narrative concerning the old Adamic creation is primarily theocentric in outlook, the Pauline writings concerning new creation theology are predominately Christocentric in orientation. This statement is brought into sharper relief in light of the following affirmations: whereas physical and spiritual death came through Adam, new life comes through the Messiah (cf. Rom 5:1–21); present suffering one day gives way to future glory (cf. 8:1–39); Jesus' resurrection from the dead serves as a pledge of the imperishable, glorious nature of the believer's resurrection body (cf. 1 Cor 15:1–58); Jesus makes it possible for believers to share in his glory (cf. Heb 2:5–18); and at Jesus' second coming, he brings about a final victory over Satan, sin, and death for believers (cf. Rev 20:1–22:21).

To help further establish the narrative framework and theological context of Paul's discussion of new creation theology in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2, relevant Old Testament passages and extra-canonical Jewish writings were considered. In turn, the analysis resulted in several pertinent emphases. For instance, what was inferior and transitory in the

non-human natural world would give way to what was superior and everlasting. Also, the Creator would reverse the effects of the Fall when he inaugurated the new order and caused perfect harmony to reign throughout the cosmos. Moreover, the Lord's chosen people were to trust him to supply all their needs, for God promised to bless unending generations of the redeemed with wellness and wholeness. Finally, the eternal Creator would grace his children with an everlasting inheritance. The latter included God establishing unbroken communion with his people and claiming them as his own.

The contextualisation resulting from the preceding investigation fostered a more nuanced examination of Paul's new creation theology in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2. Specifically, the prevailing doctrinal outlook from the Old Testament era and intertestamental period informed the apostle's understanding of the Christian life, the way in which he pastored the believers in Corinth, and the approach Paul took in addressing the spurious allegations made by the false teachers plaguing the congregation. For instance, the reality of all people one day standing before the Lord's presence invigorated Paul to be a minister characterised by integrity, to clarify that the religious frauds were self-serving, and that Jesus' true followers in Corinth were to remain virtuous in their conduct (cf. 5:9–10).

The future eternal focus of Paul's new creation theology contrasted sharply with the temporal earthly perspective of his detractors. Whereas they were characterised by arrogance and ostentation, the apostle served others from a sincere heart. Furthermore, on the one hand, Paul's antagonists exaggerated their talents and accomplishments; on the other hand, Paul sought to honour the Creator and edify those being recreated after the image of the Son. It was Jesus' love for the lost, as seen in his sacrificial death on the cross, which impelled Paul to give of himself to

others unstintingly. The latter included proclaiming the good news to the unsaved and offering pastoral care to the apostle's brothers and sisters in Christ.

The cross event provided the basis for Paul's new creation theology. For instance, Jesus' crucifixion established that the lost existed in a state of spiritual death. Also, the Redeemer's atoning sacrifice indicated that the spiritually regenerate were to die to their pre-conversion selves. The latter included renouncing depraved and narcissistic desires and striving to convey the Saviour's love to unbelievers. Moreover, as Christians paid attention to the celestial realities awaiting them in the eternal state, they had greater incentive to abandon the pagan attitudes and moral principles dominating the current age.

Paul's new creation theology was not an esoteric, philosophical premise; instead, at the heart of the apostle's teaching was the reality of repentant sinners being born again and experiencing the spiritual transformation of their minds. Just as God was the sole author of the first creation, so too, he was the exclusive agent of the second creation. In broad terms, the latter involved the renewal of the entire universe. More specifically, the dawn of a new era included the inner recreating of the fallen nature of Jesus' followers. Indeed, the salvation of the lost was necessary to and could not be separated from the Creator's reconciliation of the world to himself.

Through the believers' proclamation of the gospel, God invited the lost to experience a restored relationship with him, one characterised by concord rather than ill will, and pardon in the place of recrimination. This was an ongoing ministry the Creator entrusted to all members of the Church. As benefactors of the new birth, his followers had the privilege and obligation to convince the lost of their need for redemption. It was imperative for them to know that when Jesus

became a sin offering on their behalf at Calvary, he defeated Satan, appeased the Father's wrath, and made it possible for divine righteousness to be reckoned to repentant sinners. For the Saviour's disciples, the present moment was the opportune time to conform their lives to the gospel they proclaimed to the unsaved.

In summary, the new creation theology Paul articulated in 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2 depicts the Messiah as the *télos* (i.e. purpose, goal, and fulfilment) of the human race. In this Christ-centred way of thinking, the Saviour is deemed to be the intrinsic author of creation. He alone is the source of temporal and eternal existence, as well as the one who brings to pass the promise of new life and future glory for the redeemed. Likewise, he is the sole agent who holds the cosmos together and carries it along to its divinely-intended consummation.

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The EDNA Model for Doing Research in Practical Theology: A Biblical Approach

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Abstract

This article is a proposal of the EDNA model for doing practical theology using a Biblical approach. The proposed model covers four areas of research in practical theology. When placed together, these areas of research form an acronym that spells out the name EDNA: (1) Exploratory research asks: 'What has led to the present situation? (2) Descriptive research asks: 'What is happening now?' (3) Normative research asks, 'What should be happening?' and (4) Action research asks, 'How should we respond?'

The article is organised around these four areas of research. After grounding the EDNA model theologically and philosophically, an attempt is made to ground and describe the function of each of the EDNA model's four areas of research in practical theology. This is done, firstly, by defining each of the four areas of research, as presented in the social sciences; secondly, by conducting a phenomenological analysis of recurring themes in a selection of recognised theological research models by prominent practical theologians to provide a grounding for each of the four areas of research; and, thirdly, by analysing the function of each

area of research in the selected models. Finally, the EDNA model is illustrated using two examples from the New Testament and also applied to the local church.

1. Introduction

Numerous models are used in practical theology research today, such as the Osmer, the Browning, the DECIDE and the LIM models. Zerfass (1974:166) defines a model as 'a set order of signs and interconnections which should correspond to a certain number of relevant characteristics within reality, in real circumstances'.

As a researcher, one might choose to utilise one of the following models in practical theology: 'Paul Ballard and John Pritchard's "Pastoral Cycle" of experience-exploration-reflection-action or Richard Osmer's "four tasks" of empirical-interpretive-theological-pragmatic' (20). However, whichever model you might choose in your research programme, your approach should be able to answer the following questions: '"What is going on?" "Why is it going on?" "What ought to be going on?" and "How might we respond?"' (The Reflective Practitioner 2013:20).

However, despite the variety of models today, the author contends that there is a need for an optimal model for doing theology from a biblical perspective. The Osmer model is currently one of the most widely used models for doing research in practical theology. However, it can be argued that it needs to be adjusted to meet the requirements of doing theology optimally and scripturally. For example, Smith (2010a:111–113) points out the following weaknesses of Osmer's approach:

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[1] The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

1. 'Osmer approaches the tasks of practical theology from a liberal Protestant perspective' (p. 111). Smith indicates that he would 'prefer a conservative evangelical approach' (p. 111).
2. Osmer's approach was 'written for congregational leaders' (p. 111). Smith claims that he would prefer it to be focused more on 'seminary-based research projects' (p. 111).
3. Smith states that he 'would like to see greater emphasis on the scriptures, especially in the normative task' (p. 112). On the positive side, he indicates that Osmer's model does show 'a reasonable focus on scripture and his model is certainly usable even by those who hold more conservative theological views' (p. 112). On the negative side, however, Smith feels that it is regrettable that Osmer shows a greater reliance 'on theological concepts and on theories from the arts and sciences to guide practical theological interpretation than on in-depth study of scripture' (p. 112). Smith presents the following argument in this regard: 'For anyone with a high view of scripture, even practical theology must be exegetical theology' (p. 112).
4. Smith states the he is 'distinctly uncomfortable applying the label "normative" to new understandings of God or Christian life and values derived by observing contemporary models of good practice' (p. 112). He claims that 'for Osmer, all theories and theologies are fallible and perspectival, so such new understandings would be held lightly' (p. 112). Smith argues that 'for the overwhelming majority of faith communities in Africa … Christian doctrines and ethical norms are deemed to be based on the infallible word of God, and hold an authority akin to the very word of God' (p. 112).
5. Smith feels rather let down by Osmer in his chapter on the pragmatic task, when he says, 'I was hoping to find a system for developing a theological theory of action based on the three

> foundational tasks, closing the circle of reflection from praxis through theory and back to praxis' (p. 113). However, instead of what he hoped for, Smith 'found a discussion of how to lead a congregation through change' (p. 113).

A further weakness of Osmer's model is that the interpretive task is placed after the descriptive task. In Osmer's model the key question for the interpretive task is: 'Why is it going on?' In this particular task the interpretive guide is required to 'identify the issues embedded within the episodes, situations, and contexts he has observed, and draw on theories from the arts and sciences to help him understand the issues' (Smith 2010a:104–105). However, it can be argued that the interpretive task should rather precede the descriptive task to enable the researcher to obtain a better understanding of, (1) what is the nature and extent of the present situation, and (2) what led to the present situation.

Traditionally, a literature review is placed at the beginning of a thesis, where the researcher is expected to provide an analytical overview of the significant literature published on the selected topic. It would, therefore, be more appropriate to combine the interpretive task with the literature review in the form of an exploratory task to gain better insight into the nature and extent of the situation and to seek explanations for observed problems in the situation. This would help the researcher to explain the situation, by answering the question: What has led to the present situation?

This argument correlates with the Zerfass model, which places the step of theological tradition before the situation analysis. The Zerfass model inter-relates theological tradition, praxis, situation analysis, practical theological theory and redefined praxis (Zerfass 1974:166 ff).

The purpose of this article is to propose the EDNA model for doing research in practical theology. An attempt will be made to ground the

EDNA model theologically and philosophically, then to define each of the four areas of research, as presented in the social sciences, and finally to ground and describe the model by analysing the function of each of its key areas of research, as presented in a selection of recognised theological research models by prominent practical theologians.

The author acknowledges that the EDNA model does not break any new ground *per se*. It is mainly a synthesis and reworking of other models along the lines of theory-practice-theory. In particular, the EDNA model seeks to remediate a perceived deficiency in the pre-existing approaches and, in doing so, offer a useful method that attempts to move in a more optimal direction.

2. The EDNA Model as a Biblical Approach: Its Theological and Philosophical Grounding

The EDNA model is grounded in evangelical theology, in which the Bible serves as the normative basis and standard for all Christian conduct and church practice. 'Indeed, much of evangelical theological identity and its Christocentricity [are] grounded in the confessional linkage whereby Scripture is the written Word of God' (Morrison 1999:165).

Furthermore, the EDNA model is based on the Five Solas (five Latin phrases) that emerged during the Protestant Reformation to summarise the Reformers' basic theological beliefs about the essentials of the Christian Faith. The Five Solas are as follows (Holcombe 2014):

1. 'Sola Scriptura ("Scripture alone"): The Bible alone is our highest authority'.
2. 'Sola Fide ("faith alone"): We are saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ'.
3. 'Sola Gratia ("grace alone"): We are saved by the grace of God alone'.
4. 'Solus Christus ("Christ alone"): Jesus Christ alone is our Lord, Saviour, and King'.
5. 'Soli Deo Gloria ("to the glory of God alone"): We live for the glory of God alone'.

The EDNA model, as a Biblical approach to practical theology, is also grounded in the Christian philosophy of life. Heitink (1999:6) defines practical theology as the 'empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society.' In terms of a biblical approach, the purpose of practical theology is two-fold.

Firstly, practical theology 'draws on and responds to people's interpretations of normative sources from scripture and tradition and helps ongoing modifications and transformations of their practices in order to be more adequately responsive to their interpretations of the shape of God's call to partnership' (Fowler cited in Jaison 2010:3).

Secondly, in practical theology, 'the point of theological reflection is not simply to contemplate or comprehend the world as it is, but to contribute to the world's becoming what God intends that it should be, as those intentions have been interpreted by the great theistic traditions' (Cowan 2000).

3. The EDNA Model Summarised

What is the purpose of the EDNA model? In the EDNA model, like in most models in practical theology, theological reflection—regardless of the number of steps—is 'concerned with explaining a practical situation, understanding the situation through a dialogue between cultural and theological perspectives, and finally changing the situation with renewed praxis' (*Situational and Existential Sources for Theological Reflection* 2013; Heitink 1999:165). The methodology used in the EDNA model, as used in many other models in practical theology, covers, amongst other things, the following three perspectives: 'interpretation of human action in the light of the Christian tradition (the hermeneutical perspective), the analysis of human action with regard to its factuality and potentiality (the empirical perspective) and the development of action models and action strategies for the various domains of action (the strategic perspective)' (Heitink 1999:165).

How can the EDNA model be summarised? The four areas of research in the proposed model are represented by an acronym that spells out the name EDNA: Exploratory, Descriptive, Normative and Action. Hence the EDNA model consists of the following four areas of research in practical theology:

1. Exploratory research asks: 'What has led to the present situation?
2. Descriptive research asks: 'What is happening now?'
3. Normative research asks, 'What should be happening?'
4. Action research asks, 'How should we respond?'

The EDNA model provides four areas of theological research in practical theology. Like the Osmer model, it provides 'effective

interpretive guides' that can be used in 'practical theological interpretation of episodes, situations, and contexts' (Smith 2010a:104–105). The table below indicates the basic function of each of the EDNA model's four areas of research in practical theology (see Figure 1):

Areas of research	Exploratory	Descriptive	Normative	Action
Question	What has *led* to the present situation?	*What* is happening now?	What *should* be happening?	How should we *respond*?
Function	Investigation	Information	Interpretation	Implementation

Figure 1: The four areas of research in practical theology

The EDNA model makes use of the term hermeneutical circle, to explain the relationship between the four areas of research in practical theology (see Figure 2). Even though the four areas of research are quite distinct, they are nevertheless closely connected. For this reason, the researcher needs to constantly move between the four areas of research. Hence, the use of the term hermeneutical circle (Smith 2010a:105).

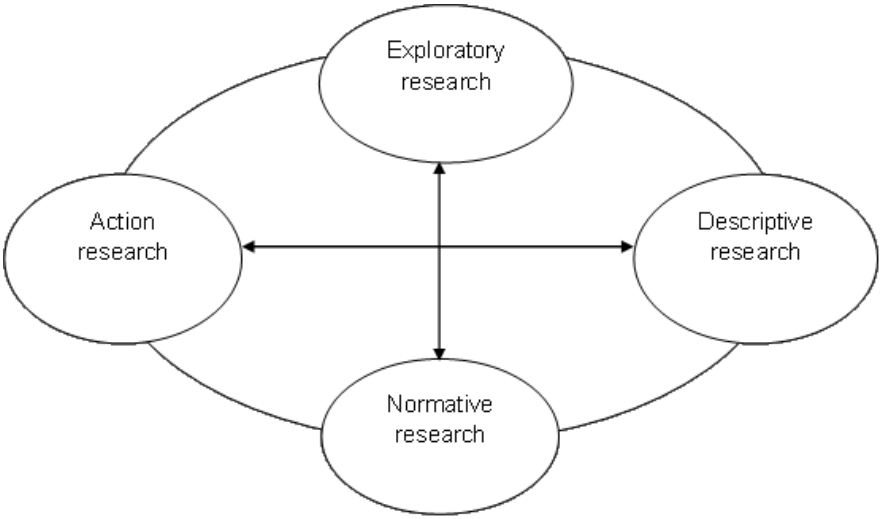

Figure 2: Relationships between the four areas of research

This article is organised around these four areas of research. In section 4, an attempt will be made to ground and describe the functions of each of the EDNA model's four areas of research in practical theology.

The interrelationship and correlation between each area of research in the EDNA model can be described as follows:

Firstly, exploratory research is closely related to descriptive research, since the former provides the latter with a good foundation and together they make up the theoretical and practical aspects of the present praxis. Exploratory research is also closely related to normative research, since the former requires the researcher to use biblical norms to evaluate the extent to which the church/community has departed from the standard of practice presented in scripture. Finally, there is a close correlation between exploratory research and action research, since the revised practice (the new praxis) could lead to a further exploration of the

present situation and an improved understanding of the biblical norms. This in turn could become a repeating cycle.

Secondly, the last three areas of research in the EDNA model are closely interrelated. For example, descriptive research ('the world as it is') is closely related to normative research ('the world as it should be'). Furthermore, descriptive research ('the world as it is') is closely related to action research, since the latter indicates the steps that need to be taken in order to transform the present practice into the new praxis, in accordance with the guidelines provided by the normative research ('the world as it should be').

4. The EDNA Model: Its Sociological and Phenomenological Basis

The EDNA model is also grounded in the social sciences, because all models in practical theology have their roots in sociology. Arguably the first model in practical theology was the praxis model for doing theology, which was derived from the social sciences. In particular, the praxis model originally had political connotations.

In this article, phenomenology will be used to ground each of the EDNA model's four areas of research. The phenomenological method in research can be described as follows:

- 'Phenomenology is the method … the investigator follows to disclose or to verbalise the essential elements of a particular appearance or phenomenon, as it essentially is in itself' (Van Rensburg and Landman 1988:442).
- 'Phenomenology of essences involves probing through the data to search for common themes or essences and establishing

patterns of relationships shared by particular phenomena' (Mamabolo 2009:50; Streubert and Carpenter 1999:52).

- A phenomenological analysis involves the following: 'The researcher listens to, compares and contrasts descriptions of the phenomenon under study.' This enables him or her to identify 'recurring themes and interrelationships' (Mamabolo 2009:54).

Biblical theology and systematic theology utilise a similar methodology in research. Biblical theology traces the chronological development of recurring themes throughout the Bible, while systematic theology examines recurring themes topically.

5. The EDNA Model Grounded and Described

An attempt will be made to ground and describe the function of each of the EDNA model's four areas of research in practical theology. This will be done, firstly, by defining each of the four areas of research, as presented in the social sciences; secondly, by conducting a phenomenological analysis of recurring themes in a selection of recognised theological research models (by prominent practical theologians) to provide a grounding for each of the four areas of research; and, thirdly, by analysing the function of each area of research in the selected models.

5.1. Exploratory research

What is exploratory research? Davies (2006) defines exploratory research as 'a methodological approach that is primarily concerned with discovery and with generating or building theory. In the social sciences exploratory research is wedded to the notion of exploration and the researcher as explorer' (Davies 2006).

Exploratory research is used in the social sciences to explore the situation and typically has four functions/purposes.

Firstly, it seeks to 'to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or person' (Bless and Hidgson, quoted in Smith 2000:42).

Secondly, it seeks 'to scope out the magnitude or extent of a particular phenomenon, problem, or behaviour … the nature and extent of the problem and serve as a useful precursor to more in-depth research' (Bhattacherjee 2012:6).

Thirdly, it 'seeks explanations of observed phenomena, problems, or behaviours … It attempts to "connect the dots" in research, by identifying causal factors and outcomes of the target phenomenon (Bhattacherjee 2012:6).

Lastly, it 'seeks to establish the general trend of things or activities in a given set up, without necessarily focusing on one single issue' (Exploratory research 2013).

Exploratory research invariably includes exploring relevant sources in the form of a literature review of a particular topic. A literature review has been variously defined as:

1. The 'process of reading, analyzing, evaluating, and summarizing scholarly materials about a specific topic' (Nordquist 2013).
2. 'An objective, thorough summary and critical analysis of the relevant available research and non-research literature on the topic being studied' (Hart 1998, quoted in Cronin, Ryan, and Coughlan 2008:38).

What is the basis of exploratory research in practical theology? To what extent is explorative research a recurring theme in selected models in

practical theology? Zerfass proposed a hermeneutical model (1974:167). 'He showed in this study how practical theology starts from the description of a concrete and usually unsatisfactory, praxis. Something must be done!' (Heitink 1999:113). Practical theology has 'the task to lead in this process of change in a way that is responsible from the perspective of both theology and the social sciences' (Heitink 1999:113). This requires exploring and interpreting church history, described in terms of the 'interpretation of human action in the light of the Christian tradition (the hermeneutical perspective)' (Heitink 1999:165). However, 'reflecting on this situation solely on the basis of church tradition does not lead to any real improvement. Praxis must first be examined with the use of a series of instruments from the social sciences' (Heitink 1999:113).

The first stage in Linton and Mowat's four-stage research process in practical theology is called 'situational exploration.' In this stage the 'situation refers the intuitive, pre-reflective stage; we begin to explore the nature of the situation and identify what we suspect [are] the key issues' (Smith 2010b:95).

In the Pastoral Cycle, the second stage is called 'exploration', which involves an 'analysis of the situation through insights from secular and religious critical perspectives' (Graham, Walton, and Ward 2005, quoted in, *The reflective practitioner* 2013:21).

In Schrier's DECIDE model, the second movement is called 'explore' (the interpretive movement) and is described as follows: 'Explore alternative non-theological models of explanation or understandings of this condition' (Schrier 2010, quoted in, *The reflective practitioner* 2013:22).

Cowan's (2000) LIM model (Loyola Institute of Ministries) has as its point of departure, identifying 'a problem in the real world, one that we have noticed and which concerns us … something of concern in the church or community' (Smith 2008:206). Using preliminary observations and reflections, one is required to 'state a problem and the underlying forces at work that are causing it' (Smith 2008:206). It appears that the first step in the research process of LIM model is of an exploratory nature.

The key question of exploratory research in the EDNA model is 'What has led to the present situation?' In line with the above definitions and on the basis of the above-mentioned models in practical theology, the main tasks of exploratory research in the EDNA model are presented in the form of an acronym that spells out the word SEARCH:

- **S**eek explanations for observed problems in the situation.
- **E**xplore the nature and extent of the situation.
- **A**nalyse the situation using insights gained from secular and theological perspectives.
- **R**ecognise and identify a real-life problem of concern in the church/community and 'the underlying forces that are causing it' (Smith 2008:206).
- **C**ritically analyse and summarise the available literature on the relevant topic.
- **H**ave key questions answered relating to the theological tradition (in church history) that has moulded present church practice.

5.2. Descriptive research

What is descriptive research? 'The descriptive research approach is an attempt to provide an accurate description or picture of a particular situation or phenomenon' (Dannelley 2013).

Descriptive research is used in the social sciences to describe the present situation and typically has four functions/purposes.

Firstly, its purpose is 'to observe, describe and document aspects of a situation as it naturally occurs' (Polit and Hungler 1999:195).

Secondly, it 'attempts to describe, explain and interpret conditions of the present i.e. "what is". The purpose of a descriptive research is to examine a phenomenon that is occurring at a specific place(s) and time' (Descriptive Research 2013: 70).

Thirdly, it 'presents an opportunity to fuse both quantitative and qualitative data as a means to reconstruct the "what is" of a topic' (Murphy 2013).

Lastly, it 'describes usually one or more characteristics of a group of people, technically known as a population … Sometimes the information gathered is strictly quantitative – numbers and percentages; other times it is qualitative, including the "why" along with the 'how many"' (Vyhmeister 2001:126).

In terms of the various descriptive research methods, 'The most prevalent descriptive research technique is the survey, most notably the questionnaire. Other forms of surveys include the interview (personal and by telephone) and the normative survey' (Thomas, Nelson, and Silverman 2011:19). Quantitative research methods 'emphasise

objective measurements and numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires or surveys' (Veneeva 2006). On the other hand, qualitative research methods focus on 'understanding social phenomena through interviews, personal comments etc.' (Veneeva 2006).

What is the basis of descriptive research in practical theology? To what extent is descriptive research a recurring theme in selected models in practical theology? Descriptive theology, as the first movement in theological reflection in Browning's model, is used to 'describe the contemporary theory-laden practices that give rise to the practical questions that generate all theological reflection' (Browning 1993:47).

In Osmer's model, the 'descriptive-empirical task asks: "What is going on?"' (Smith 2010a:99). This task involves 'gathering information to discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts' (Anderson 2012:73). In selecting a suitable method of research, Osmer claims that 'quantitative is ideal for extensive research, while qualitative is best for intensive research' (Smith 2010a:103). 'A combination of the two, previously frowned upon, is now considered acceptable' (Smith 2010a:103). Osmer provides a brief explanation of 'six methods of empirical research, namely, interviews, participant observation, artefact analysis, spatial analysis, demographic analysis, and focus groups' (Smith 2010a:104).

The second stage in Linton and Mowat's four-stage research process in practical theology is called cultural-contextual analysis. In this stage 'we use qualitative research and draw on theories from the social sciences to develop a deep and rich understanding of the complex dynamics of the situation' (Smith 2010b:95; Linton and Mowat 2006:96).

In Schrier's DECIDE model the first step is called 'describe' and is defined as follows: 'Describe the social condition, individual or group practice, activity or behaviour that you are addressing' (Schrier 2010, quoted in, *The Reflective Practitioner* 2013:22).

In Cowan's (2000) LIM model, the descriptive research requires one to 'interpret the world as it is' (Smith 2008:206). This task 'begins with a systematic investigation of the situation' and uses 'both empirical and literary methods' in order to interpret 'the what, the how and the why of the problem' (Smith 2008:206).

The key question of descriptive research in the EDNA model is 'What is happening now'?' In line with the above definitions and on the basis of the above-mentioned models in practical theology, the main tasks of descriptive research in the EDNA model are presented in the form of an acronym that spells out the word RECORD:

- **R**ecord, explain and interpret conditions of the present situation.
- **E**xamine a phenomenon that occurs in a particular place and time.
- **C**ollect information to discern patterns and dynamics in the present situation.
- **O**bserve and describe all aspects of the present situation.
- **R**econstruct a particular topic in the context of the present situation, by combining both quantitative and qualitative research. Use both empirical and literary methods to systematically investigate and interpret the world as it is.
- '**D**escribe the contemporary theory-laden practices that give rise to the practical questions' (Browning 1993:47).

5.3. Normative research

What is normative research? Normative research 'attempts to make prescriptions for how things should be done' (Das 2013). It 'tries to define how things should be' (*What is normative research* 2013a). Also, normative research is used in the social sciences to formulate and apply norms to the current situation and typically has four functions/purposes:

Firstly, it 'requires norms or values that we can use to determine what sort of social conditions is an improvement' (Fallis 2007:363).

Secondly, it 'is applied in order that it might affect change in social conditions' (Fallis 2007:363).

Thirdly, 'This approach has sometimes been called "applied research"' (What is normative research 2013b).

Lastly, it 'makes applicable and tangible recommendations' (Wollman 2013).

In addition, normative research in the field of theology takes into account the meaning of following ethical terms (Grenz and Smith 2003:19, 81):

- A norm 'is a rule, law or principle that governs or prescribes some aspect of moral conduct' (p. 81).
- Normative ethics 'has as its goal the formulation of standards and principles for human conduct, i.e. ethical norms' (p. 81).
- Christian ethics 'is the study of how humans ought to live as informed by the Bible and Christian convictions' (p. 19).

What are the characteristics of practical theology and its implications for the tasks required in normative research? First, practical theology is

normative, since it has as its goal the formulation of ethical norms, especially the norms of Christian ethics derived from the Bible. In particular, it deals with the 'application of God's revelation [The Bible] to the individual and the church.' As such, it 'represents the climax and the final point of theological endeavour' (Duce and Strange 2001:76, 77). In terms of the 'principles' approach to Christian ethics, the researcher 'seeks to discern, wherever possible, the principles underlying specific biblical commands, and then to apply them faithfully to current situations' (DeLashmutt 2013). Through reflection normative research seeks 'to correlate these insights toward guides for action' (Graham, Walton and Ward 2005, quoted in, *The Reflective Practitioner* 2013:21).

Second, practical theology is correlational. Practical theology can be defined as, 'the mutually critical correlation of the interpreted theory and praxis of the Christian faith with the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation' (Tracy 1983:76). It integrates, informs, and compares 'Christian resources with non-theological models to determine how they relate' (Schrier 2010, quoted in, *The Reflective Practitioner* 2013:22). Cowan (2000) stresses that practical theology research is correlational, since 'it evaluates the relationship between the world as it is and the world as it should be … [and] seeks an accurate understanding of the present situation and the preferred scenario' (Smith 2008:205). It is also critical, since 'it requires that we explicitly evaluate the inherited understandings that guide our interpretations and actions' (Smith 2008:205).

Third, practical theology is hermeneutical. Cowan (2000) stresses that practical theology research is hermeneutical, since it 'requires the ability to interpret accurately both our world and our traditions' (Smith 2008:205). Practical theology 'has the task of interpreting scriptures for

the life of the church today, in its structure, in its practice, its ethics and pastoral care' (Duce and Strange 2001:76).

Fourth, practical theology involves the application of the scriptures to the contemporary situation, in the life of the church. Practical theology is 'the study of theology in a way that is intended to make it useful and applicable … so that it can be used and is relevant to everyday concerns' (Houdman 2013).

What is the basis of normative research in practical theology? To what extent is normative research a recurring theme in selected models in practical theology? In Osmer's model 'the normative task asks: 'What ought to be going on?' It seeks to discern God's will for present realities' (Smith 2010a:99). Osmer describes the normative task in terms of 'prophetic discernment', which 'uses three methods to discover God's word for the present: theological interpretation, ethical reflection, and good practice' (Smith 2010a:99–110).

According to Osmer, theological interpretation 'focuses on the interpretation of present episodes, situations, and contexts with theological concepts' (Osmer 2008:139). 'Ethical reflection refers to using ethical principles, rules, or guidelines to guide action towards moral ends' (Osmer 2008:161). This is required because 'present practices are filled with values and norms' (Osmer 2008:149), which are often in conflict. In good practice the 'interpretive guide can draw on models of good practice, whether past or present, "to reform a congregation's present actions"' (Smith 2010a:100; Osmer 2008:153).

The third stage in Linton and Mowat's four-stage research process in practical theology is called 'theological reflection'. This stage requires 'critical reflection on the practices of the church in the light of scripture and tradition' (Linton and Mowat 2006:95). Although theological

reflection is present in the first two stages of the research process, it takes centre stage in stage three (Smith 2010b:95).

In Schrier's DECIDE model, the third movement is called 'Consider Christian resources' and is described as follows: 'Consider what biblical studies, historical theology, systematic theology, church history and other Christian resources might relate to the condition being studied' (Schrier 2010, quoted in, *The Reflective Practitioner* 2013:22).

In Cowan's (2000) LIM model, normative research requires one to 'interpret the world as it should be' (Smith 2008:206). He describes the research process as follows: 'we carefully select some aspect of our faith tradition … We undertake a historically and critically informed exegesis of the material chosen from our traditions' (Smith 2008:206). When Cowan uses the theological term 'our faith tradition' he includes the following: 'scriptural text, theological classic, church teaching, etc.' (Smith 2008:206).

The key question of normative research in the EDNA model is 'What should be happening?' In line with the above definitions and on the basis of the above-mentioned models in practical theology, the main tasks of normative research in the EDNA model are presented in the form of an acronym that spells out the word ACCORD:

- **A**pply the scriptures and church tradition to the contemporary situation in the life of the church. 'Interpret the Scriptures for the life of the church today, in its structure, in its practice, its ethics and pastoral care' (Duce and Strange 2001:76).
- **C**orrelate critically and evaluate the 'interpreted theory and praxis of the Christian faith with the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation' (Tracy 1983:76). Correlate

the insights gained from theological reflection on present church practice to obtain guidelines and ethical principles for action.

- **C**onsider and apply those Christian resources, which relate to the present situation being studied, such as 'biblical studies, historical theology, systematic theology, church history' (*The reflective practitioner* 2013:22). Construct and test a theory of action based on biblical, historical, and systematic theology.
- **O**btain an accurate understanding of the relationship between 'the world as it is' (the present situation) and 'the world as it should be' (the preferred scenario) in order to guide one's interpretations and actions.
- **R**eflect critically 'on the practices of the church in the light of scripture and tradition' (Linton and Mowat 2006:95). 'Interpret the world as it should be' by carefully selecting 'some aspect of our faith tradition', and then by undertaking 'a historically and critically informed exegesis of the material chosen from our traditions' (Smith 2008:206).
- **D**iscern the 'principles underlying specific biblical commands, and then apply them faithfully' to the current situation (DeLashmutt 2013).

5.4. Action research

What is action research? 'Action research is a practical approach to professional inquiry in any social situation … The context for professional inquiry might change, but the principles and processes involved in action research are the same, regardless of the nature of the practice' (Water-Adams 2006).

'Action research is intended to achieve both action and research. It is suited to situations where you wish to bring about action in the form of change, and at the same time develop an understanding which informs

the change' (Dick and Swepson 2013). It 'alternates between action and critical reflection. The reflection consists first of analysing what has already happened in previous steps, and then of planning what next step to take' (Dick and Swepson 2013).

Dick and Swepson (2013) indicate that action research can be described as typically cyclic and as critically reflective. The 'later cycles are used to challenge and refine the results of the earlier cycles … Researchers regularly and systematically critique what they are doing.'

Action research is used in the social sciences for improving the present practice/situation) and typically has the following functions/purposes: the 'improvement of practice, improvement of the understanding of practice, and the improvement of the situation in which the practice takes place' (Carr and Kemmis (1986), quoted in Water-Adams 2006).

What are the characteristics of practical theology and its implications for the tasks required in action research? First, practical theology is transformative, since 'its underlying drive is to bring the world into greater harmony with the word' (Cowan 2000, quoted in Smith 2008:205). It draws on and responds to people's 'interpretations of normative sources from scripture and tradition' (Fowler n.d., quoted in Jaison 2010:3) and helps 'ongoing modifications and transformations of their practices in order to be more adequately responsive to their interpretations of the shape of God's call to partnership' (Fowler n.d., quoted in Jaison 2010:3).

Second, practical theology is cyclical. According to Zerfass, biblical, historical, and systematic theology form the basis for constructing and testing a theory of action (Zerfass 1974:171). This theory, influenced by tradition, leads to a reinterpretation of scripture and to a revision of the theory to form a new theory. This initiates a 'progressive spiral', in

which the new theory questions the existing praxis leading to a re-examination of the theory (Heitink 1999:153, 154; Heitink 1999, *lecture notes*).

What is the basis of action research in practical theology? To what extent is action research a recurring theme in selected models in practical theology? In Osmer's model, the pragmatic task is 'to provide congregational leaders with guidance for leading congregations through the process of change. It seeks to answer the question, How might we respond?' (Smith 2010a:104).

The fourth stage in Linton and Mowat's four-stage research process in practical theology is called revised praxis. In this stage the conversation [between stages 1 and 3] [the situation and theological reflection] 'functions dialectically to produce new and challenging forms of practice that enable the initial situation to be transformed into ways which are authentic and faithful' (Smith 2010b:95; Linton and Mowat 2006:97).

In the Pastoral Cycle the fourth stage is called 'action', which involves 'new practices directed by reflective-practitioners that, once implemented, start another progressive spiral' (Graham, Walton, and Ward 2005, quoted in, *The reflective practitioner* 2013:21).

In Schrier's DECIDE model, the fifth movement is called 'develop' and is described as follows: 'develop a practical, concrete new action that can lead to new practices to transform the condition' (Schrier 2010, quoted in, *The reflective practitioner* 2013:22).

In Cowan's (2000) LIM model, the final step requires one to interpret our contemporary obligations, namely, 'to develop a feasible action plan that faithfully represents the will of God as interpreted in our faith

tradition and provides a doable remedy to the problem' (Smith 2008:206–207).

The key question of action research in the EDNA model is, 'How should we respond?' In line with the above definitions and, on the basis of the above-mentioned models in practical theology, the main tasks of action research in the EDNA model are presented in the form of an acronym that spells out the word ACTION:

- **A**lter present practices by developing 'a practical, concrete new action that can lead to new practices to transform the [present] condition' (Schrier 2010, as cited in *The reflective practitioner* 2013:22).
- **C**ontribute towards transformation by providing 'congregational leaders with guidance for leading congregations through the process of change' (Smith 2010a:104).
- **T**ake note of existing models. 'Draw on models of good practice, whether past or present', to improve the church's present practices (Smith 2010a:100; Osmer 2008: 153).
- **I**nterpret our contemporary obligations 'to develop a feasible action plan that faithfully represents the will of God as interpreted in our faith tradition and provides a doable remedy to the problem' (Cowan 2000; Smith 2008:206–207).
- **O**ngoing use of dialectical dialogue between the situation and theological reflection (for evaluation purposes) produces 'new and challenging forms of practice that enable the initial situation to be transformed' (Smith 2010b:95; Linton and Mowat 2006:97).
- **N**ew practices implemented, when directed by reflective-practitioners, start another progressive spiral of change. Draw on and respond to people's 'interpretations of normative sources

from scripture and tradition' in order to make ongoing modifications and transformations of present church practices (Fowler n.d., quoted in Jaison 2010:3).

6. The EDNA Model Illustrated and Applied to the Local Church: Two Examples from the New Testament

The following two examples have been selected from the New Testament to illustrate the EDNA model and its application in the local church:

6.1. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37)

1. Exploratory research asks: 'What has led to the present situation?'

What social and religious barriers (relating to the Priest, Levite, and Samaritan) could have caused a lack of neighbourly love towards the suffering Jewish man who was robbed in the parable? What historical and traditional factors have led to a lack of neighbourly love towards the disadvantaged and suffering in your local community?

2. Descriptive research asks: 'What is happening now?'

What happened to the Jewish man in the story as he was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho? (Luke 10:30). What is the present plight of the poor and the suffering in your community, in the vicinity of your local church?

3. Normative research asks, 'What should be happening?'

According to Jesus in Luke 10:27, how should we treat God and our neighbour? In the light of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, precisely who is my neighbour? What social and religious barriers need to be

crossed by your local congregation in order for them to show love towards their neighbours.

4. Action research asks, 'How should we respond?'

How did the Good Samaritan respond in a practical way to illustrate that he fully understood the meaning of genuine neighbourly love? (Luke 10:33–35). In which practical ways should your local congregation respond, to show their neighbourly love towards the poor and suffering in your community?

6.2. The cleansing of the Temple (Matthew 21:12–33)

1. Exploratory research asks: 'What has led to the present situation?'

What were the religious customs and financial arrangements that led to the money changers and merchants doing business in the temple and thereby desecrating it? What historical and traditional factors have led to the desecration of the place of worship in your local church?

2. Descriptive research asks: 'What is happening now?'

What were the money changers and the merchants doing in the temple that filled Jesus with righteous anger? Why did Jesus say that the temple had become 'a den of robbers'? What is presently happening in the worship service in your church that fills Jesus with anger?

3. Normative research asks, 'What should be happening?'

According to Jesus, in Matthew 21:13: 'My house will be called a house of prayer.' What is the meaning of the phrase, 'a house of prayer'? What practice(s) should your church be promoting to ensure that the place of worship is 'a house of prayer'?

4. Action research asks, 'How should we respond?'

How did Jesus respond, when he entered the temple area and saw all those who were buying and selling there? (Matt 21:12). What steps should your church be taking, in order to remove improper practices from the worship service and to encourage biblical practices that ensure the real worship of God, thus making it more like 'a house of prayer'?

7. Conclusion

In this article was a presentation of the EDNA model for doing research in practical theology from a biblical perspective. After grounding the EDNA model theologically and philosophically, an attempt was made to define each of its four areas of research in terms of the social sciences. A phenomenological analysis of recurring themes was then conducted in a selection of recognised practical theological research models to ground each of the four areas of research. This was followed by an analysis of the function of each area of research in the selected models. Finally, the EDNA model was illustrated using two examples from the New Testament, and it was then applied to the local church.

The 'name EDNA means delight or pleasure. It is generally used as a girl's name and is of Hebrew origin' (*Ask a question* 2013). I trust that researchers, who decide to use the EDNA model in their future research in practical theology, will find it to be both a delightful and pleasant experience. The Celtic 'meaning of the name Edna is fire' (*Behind the name* 2013). Hopefully, researchers will be fired with enthusiasm to use the EDNA model to the glory of God.

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Review of Willemer and White, *Entry Point: Towards Child Theology with Matthew 18*

Noel Woodbridge[1]

Willmer H and White KJ 2013. *Entry Point: Towards Child Theology with Matthew 18.* Mill Grove: WTL Publications.

1. Introduction to the Author

WTL Publications (2013) provide the following information about the authors of the book, Haddon Willmer and Keith White:

> Haddon Willmer (Emeritus Professor of Theology at Leeds University) grew up in Free Church evangelicalism and had a good liberal education in Brockenhurst and Cambridge, studying history and theology. He taught in the University of Leeds for 32 years and is Emeritus Professor of Theology. He is a jack of too many theological trades to be the master of any, working spasmodically on Barth and Bonhoeffer, politics and forgiveness, Bible and preaching, and mission in Leeds and wider afield. Since retiring, he has supervised thirteen doctoral students at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. He is an active trustee of Pace (Parents against Child Sexual Exploitation) and of the Child Theology Movement. He is married to Hilary, a Christian social activist, and together they have three children, seven grand-daughters and one grandson.

[1] The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

Keith J White and his wife, Ruth, live at Mill Grove, a Christian residential community that has been caring for children and young people in the East End of London UK since 1899. He is an Associate Lecturer at Spurgeons College, and a member of the faculty of the Asian Graduate School of Theology. As the founder and chair of the Child Theology Movement he has contributed to conferences and symposia around the world. Among the books he has written or edited are *A Place for Us*, *Caring for Deprived Children*, *Re-Framing Children's Services, Children and Social Exclusion, The Changing Face of Child Care, The Growth of Love, Reflections on Living with Children, Introducing Child Theology*, and *Childhoods in Cultural Contexts.*

2. Summary of the book

The book is 'the outcome of a sustained conversation on the text of Matthew 18:1–14' (p. 1). The passage 'provides the overall framework' (p. 15) for the exploration *Towards Child Theology with Matthew 18.* Besides the Introduction and Conclusion, the book is divided into seven chapters. The content of these chapters can be summarised as follows:

1. Child

"Jesus called a little child and had him stand among them …" (Matthew 18:2).

'The "child in the midst" of this book is simply the child placed by Jesus and standing beside Jesus' (p. 208).

2. Kingdom

"The disciples were discussing who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:1).

'The disciples were talking about greatness in the KINGDOM of God. That kingdom was the great concern of Jesus, the perspective within which he lived all his life, the presence and promise he proclaimed' (p. 15). 'Jesus placed a child in the midst, as a substantial, revelatory clue to the kingdom of God … The child is needed by the disciples as a clue to the way by which they might enter the kingdom of God' (p. 71). The 'child as seen and placed by Jesus signs the kingdom of God, which is a powerful, historically and biblically rooted, but dangerously ambiguous, concept' (p. 208).

3. Temptation

"Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil" (Matthew 4:1).

'Kingdom is always tempting because it stimulates ambitions and anxieties … Temptation means that people can miss the good and choose evil. Any encounter with the human project of kingdom puts people to the test' (p. 15). 'As the disciples brought Jesus back into fundamental temptation, the child strengthened him as an unspeaking witness against the false kingdom … What he found in the child was a way of signing the kingdom of God, of reaffirming his vision and commitment to its character, and of pressing the argument upon the disciples' (p. 101).

4. Disciple

"... unless you turn and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven ..." (Matthew 18:3).

"He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:38).

Jesus 'called people to be his DISCIPLES, to be with him in the service of the kingdom of God in the terms in which he signed and proclaimed it … by placing a child in the midst of the disciples, Jesus was reiterating his demand that disciples deny themselves, take up their cross and follow him' (p. 15–16). 'He placed a child in the midst of the disciples, who were evading the cross by seeking greatness. By his or her mere presence, the child silently restates the call to discipleship … the invitation to "come and die"' (p. 109).

5. Humility

"Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:4).

'Jesus placed a child in the midst to call his ambitious disciples to humility' (p. 122). 'That the child reiterates the call to discipleship can be seen in the meanings Jesus gives to the child placed in the midst. Denying self, radically symbolised by the cross, is a way of HUMILITY' (p. 16). 'The cross is inescapable in a faithful vision and following of Jesus. The significance of the child for disciples is that the call to humility and to become like the children is a restatement of the call to take up the cross and not an alternative way into the kingdom of God' (p. 212).

6. Reception

"Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me" (Matthew 18:5, ESV Anglicised Version).

'Fundamental to the story in Matthew 18 is the kingdom of God. What is it like and how is it to be entered? The child in the midst has given us the clue to answering these questions. There is no explicit mention of the kingdom of God in the words, "Whoever receives one such child in

my name, receives me. And whoever receives me, receives him who sent me" (Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48)' (p. 160). 'Father and Son are not named in this saying. Jesus is the one who is sent, and the receiving occurs in the actual practice of mission' (p. 162). 'Jesus chose disciples so that he could send them out to proclaim the kingdom of God (Matthew chapter 10). In this mission reception has a crucial function' (p. 165).

7. Father

"See that you do not look down on one of these little ones ..." (Matthew 18:10).

'Matthew 18:10: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven." Within the parameters set by these words we read the better-known, oft-quoted verse 6: "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believes in me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea"' (p. 178). 'Jesus did not despise a child, a little one. To see a child as a sign of the way into the kingdom of God is the opposite of despising. The warning not to despise even one little one is implied by Jesus' action of placing a child in the midst of the disciples' (p. 179). 'At the end of the story (Matthew 18:14) there is a repeat of verse 10, in different language: "It is not the will of my (your) Father that one of these little ones should perish." The message of the gospel is that God seeks, recovers and receives even the lost and the enemy: God forgives rather than being bound to give people what they earn (*deserve*). So the kingdom of God is here, both as a little seed, and also as a vision of new creation' (p. 214).

3. An Evaluation of the Book

3.1. Strengths of the book

First, this is a very practical book. The authors indicate that they have been led to write 'a kind of practical theology. The chapter on reception is where this becomes plain in a down-to-earth everyday way. There is no mistaking the call to each of us to welcome or receive a child in the name of Jesus' (p. 213).

Second, the book is in the form of an essay, which offers readers 'a stimulus to discussion, not as a teaching or a definitive analysis' (p. 213). The authors have *not* written 'a confessional statement of what the Child Theology Movement stands for'. However, they have written 'within the vision of what CTM is: a fellowship of thinking and active disciples exploring the gospel seed and sign of the child placed in the midst by Jesus' (p. 214–215).

Third, the book focuses on 'a mere ten verses of the Gospel of Matthew' (p. 213). This narrow focus allows the authors to analyse the passage in more detail and to provide readers with a comprehensive application in everyday life, of the biblical principles relating to Child Theology in the passage, in particular, in the field of missions.

3.2. Weaknesses of the book

First, the book claims to be 'an attempt to do Child Theology.' However, the authors readily concede that 'it is not definitive or intended to be so … And we fear that there will be those who will be disappointed because they were expecting a new section in what is understood to be systematic theology' (p. 212). Furthermore, they openly admit that they are 'not systematic theologians in any

conventional sense' and clearly state, 'it is not our intention primarily to contribute another systematic essay' (p. 212–213).

Second, the book lacks an in-depth exposition of Matthew 18:1-10, which includes a contextual analysis, verbal analysis, and literary analysis. Regarding its contextual analysis, the authors concede that 'we did not attempt to expound it in this context' (p. 213) and state that the book 'can, and perhaps should, be read as an extension of the idea of receiving a child through going out to find and recover the sheep gone astray (Matthew 18:12–14)' (p. 213).

4. Conclusion

Despite its shortcomings, Willmer and White's book presents 'a sustained conversation on the text of Matthew 18:1-14' (p. 11). This book is a ground-breaking contribution to the field of Child Theology and I strongly recommend it as a valuable source on Child Theology. I am convinced that it will serve as an 'entry point' to stimulate fruitful discussion on the topic, both within the Child Theology Movement and elsewhere, which will no doubt lead to even further developments in this important field of study and ministry.

Reference List

Willmer H and White KJ 2013. *Entry point: towards child theology with Matthew 18*. Mill Grove: WTL.

Editorial Policy

Positioning Statement Since

Conspectus is a scholarly publication that is evangelical in its theological orientation (i.e. predominately classical and historically orthodox in its interpretive approach), submissions entirely void of a theological component (i.e. engagement with the Old Testament and New Testament scriptures), along with submissions that deny, either directly or indirectly, the key tenets put forward in the SATS statement of faith, will not be considered for publication. It is in the discretion of the editorial board to make the decision, and their decision is final. *Conspectus* is a refereed evangelical theological e-journal published biannually by the South African Theological Seminary (www.satsonline.org). The journal is a publication for scholarly articles in any of the major theological disciplines.

Purpose

The purpose of *Conspectus* is to provide a forum for scholarly, Bible-based theological research and debate. The journal is committed to operate within an evangelical framework, namely, one that is predominately classical and historically orthodox in its interpretive approach, and that affirms the inspiration and authority of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. The journal seeks to publish well-researched essays and reviews on a broad range of suitable biblical and theological topics that are as clear and accessible as possible for the benefit of both specialist and non-specialist readers.

Standard

Conspectus aims to combine sound scholarship with a practical and readable approach. Submissions must present the results of sound research into a biblical, theological, or practical problem in a way that it would be valuable to scholars, pastors, students, missionaries, or other Christian workers.

Kinds of Articles

Conspectus publishes three kinds of theological research:

- *Scholarly essays* of 3000–10000 words on biblical, theological, or ministerial topics, and should demonstrate mastery of the current scholarship on the topic.
- *Book reviews* of 1000–5000 words reviewing publications in fields of interest to Conspectus. We favour detailed reviews that can offer students and pastors insight into the content, strengths, and limitations of the book.
- *Project reports* of 1000–4000 words reflecting the findings of theological research projects, including theses and dissertations.

Doctrinal Basis

In doctrine, the South African Theological Seminary is broadly evangelical. We believe in the inspiration of Scripture, the doctrine the Trinity, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the sinfulness of man, the need for salvation through the atoning death of Jesus Christ, the ministry of the Holy Spirit in and through believers, and the centrality of the local church to the mission of God. SATS stands on the triune doctrinal foundation—Bible-based, Christ-centred, and Spirit-led. *Conspectus* reinforces these three core theological tenets by means of scholarly

research that deliberates their meaning and application for the modern church.

Submitting an Article

The author of an article that is submitted for review is required to submit the names and contact details of three potential referees. The entire review process is completely anonymous from the perspective of both the reviewers and authors.

The Review Process

The article is provisionally evaluated by the senior editor or assistant editor of the journal to determine whether it is in line with the type of articles the journal publishes and is of sufficient academic quality to merit formal review. If in the opinion of the editor the submission is not suitable, the author is notified and the article is not sent to reviewers. If the editor sees some potential in the article, he proceeds with the remainder of the review process.

The senior editor advances the submission to two referees with appropriate expertise on the particular topic. The editor removes the name of the author from the submission. The potential reviewer receives an electronic copy of the submission, together with a Conspectus Review Form, which contains three sections: (a) the review criteria, (b) the recommendation, (c) developmental feedback (i.e. comments).

Each reviewer is required to make a recommendation, which must be one of the following four options: (a) publish without changes, (b) publish with minor changes, (c) publish with major changes, and (d) do

not publish. The reviewer is also expected to provide qualitative on aspects of the article that he/she believes could be improved.

The review process is developmental in nature; reviewers provide in-depth assessment of both the strengths and weaknesses of the article. If they recommend 'publish with minor changes' or 'publish with major changes', they are expected to explain the perceived deficiencies and offer possible remedies.

Based on the recommendations made by the reviewers, the editor compiles the feedback for the author, indicating any changes that are required prior to publication. The final decision as to which changes are required lies with the senior editor. When the required changes are substantial, the revised submission is returned to the reviewers so that they can confirm that the deficiencies which they raised have been adequately addressed.

In the case of conflicting reviews, the decision to publish or not publish lies with the senior editor. If the senior editor sees merit in the recommendations of both reviewers, he may forward the article to a third referee.

Before publication, the author receives a proof copy of the article in PDF format for final inspection and approval.

Closing dates for submissions:

- 28/29th of February for the March issue

31st of August for the September issue